



To Teachers By Teachers For Teachers

Building Connections and Communication within our Association

Vol. 10 Issue 2

Oxnard Educators Association Newsletter

Stacie Thurman, Vice President, Editor-in-Chief

Nov./Dec. 2017

Just Between Us

by Robin Lefkovits, OEA President

In Union there is Strength...

Each year I try to write one article which highlights the benefits of union membership. I remind myself that I **KNOW** how important the union is because I deal with union issues every day, and I see what can happen, both positive and negative. I recognize that most teachers believe that if they are doing the right thing, concentrating on teaching their students and doing their job, nothing bad will ever happen to them. Not long ago I received an email from a longtime Oxnard School District teacher and OEA member who retired a few years back and moved away to be closer to family. He recently took a part time part time job (or so he thought) in a charter school near him. Having been a union member for many years, he didn't think about the ramifications of working for a charter school, and it certainly didn't occur to him that the following could happen to

him. The email is entitled, "Help--Job Hell." With his permission, I want to share it with you now:
"I was hired for this school year as a part time math teacher. Actually my title is "Math Specialist" and it was my understanding that I would work with four classes, grades 3,6,7,8 and pull out groups of students to work with. Now I am the math teacher. Actually I am now the teacher of record for 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. A few weeks into the school year, I was informed that I was the lead teacher for these three classes and was in charge of everything. Each week more duties are piled on my plate. Today I was told that I need to develop an elaborate common core grading format in which every student is assessed by several different methods; each test given needs to

Continued on page 2

Making a Difference



Kristin Cumins, Harrington School

Meet Kristin Cumins, kindergarten teacher, floral enthusiast, and secretary for the Oxnard Educators Association. Born in Provo, Utah and raised in Thousand Oaks, Kristin moved to Oxnard at the age of 19 and is currently in her eleventh year working for the Oxnard School District. Because she entered teaching at a time when the budget for teaching and retaining teachers was tough, Kristin has a variety of grade level experience. She's taught TK, kindergarten, 1st grade, and several different grade levels of combination classes. She found her niche in kindergarten saying, "I love seeing their progress and their eyes light up when they can accomplish something." When you walk into Kristin's classroom you find a room that is bright, colorful and organized; it's a place where children always feel safe and welcome. Kristin knows that building confidence in kindergartners is huge. She incorporates technology, such as the iPads, for center time and dedicates countless hours to prepping meaningful and engaging lessons for her students. Kristin received a master's degree from California Lutheran University in curriculum and

Continued on page 3

CTA Disaster Relief Fund

The CTA Disaster Relief Fund provides financial assistance to CTA members who have experienced significant losses due to disasters in California. Grants are available to any CTA Active, Student, or CTA/NEA Retired member in good standing. Members must be: 1) residents in any city or county declared by the State of California to have been subject to a natural disaster; or 2) residents of a dwelling declared unsafe to occupy by city or county officials due to a disaster. **No repayment of grants is required.**

The following is a summary of the CTA Disaster Relief Fund grants:

Standard: Up to \$1,500 for significant economic hardship related to damage to the member's primary residence, displacement, or disruption in utilities

Catastrophic: Recipients of the Standard Grant may be eligible for up to another \$1,500 if damages exceed \$50,000

Temporary Displacement: Up to \$500 for members displaced by a disaster (7 days or more), but not meeting the requirements for a Standard Grant

Please contact the OEA office (oxnardea@gmail.com or phone 981-6424) for an application. Applications are also available on the CTA website at www.ctamemberbenefits.org/df. All completed applications must be submitted to OEA President Robin Lefkovits for signature and approval (scan and email is fine). Call or email if you have any questions regarding the application.

Just Between Us

Continued from page 1

be evaluated in many ways. This is all in anticipation of parent conferences next week.

This Charter School has apparently had major problems with math for years. They have a new director (principal) and both of the teachers I work with are new as well.

After they started loading all these extra responsibilities on me, I pulled out the contract I had signed without really looking at it. It basically says that my employment is at will and they can do anything they want. At least that's what it sounds like.

I am writing to you to get any information you have about charter schools. I don't think there is a union, nobody has mentioned one. Do I have any rights to push back?

I had been treated so well by our union that I guess I took a lot for granted.

Any information you can provide would be helpful.

By way the way, thank you for the letter, kind note, and gift card I received when I retired.

Your union members have no idea.

The Oxnard Educators Association has a **GREAT** CBA (Collectively Bargained Agreement) with the Oxnard School District, continuously negotiated by your OEA Bargaining Team. Our rights are protected by our mutual contract. When we sign on to work for the Oxnard School District we expect our job to be the position for which we were hired. We have a contract that allows us to transfer into other positions, and we have a procedure for transferring.

We know we cannot be moved unless there are extenuating circumstances that the district must prove, according to the contract. We expect appropriate working hours, a duty free lunch, paid sick days, bargained raises, and health and retiree benefits. We take so much for granted because currently we don't live in a "right to work" state or work at a charter school with no contract. Our "rules" are in our contract and the union makes sure the contract is followed, with the help of OEA site reps, the OEA Executive Board and the OEA Bargaining Team. Your rights and your professionalism are protected. Your contract also helps keep administrative power in check, so that no administrator can decide you should teach a different grade because they think you would be "perfect" for it, or send you to a different school because you're not a "good fit" (euphemism for ~ they don't want you) at their school. In the upcoming months you will hear about the Janus case that is going to the U.S. Supreme Court. This case is part of a multi-million dollar campaign brought about by corporate CEOs, the wealthiest 1% and the politicians that do their bidding, to rig the economy in their favor by striking at the freedom of working people to come together in strong unions. It is a case with far sweeping implications for working families, our students and the communities we serve as teachers. According to Eric Heins, CTA President, "Their goal here is no secret: they want to use the Supreme Court to take away the freedom of working people to join together in strong unions, because unions give workers a powerful voice in speaking up for themselves, our students, families and communities."

The truth is that strong unions improve communities and the lives of union and nonunion members who live in them. Unions use their collective voice to advocate for policies that benefit all working people – like increases to the minimum wage, affordable health care and great public schools. Currently, no one is forced to join the union, but unions are legally obligated to represent all workers, even those who choose not to join. So teachers, firefighters, nurses and public employees who do not want to join contribute only toward the costs of the representation they receive. Abolishing "Fair Share" fees (which is what the Janus case seeks to do), would mean that some employees get benefits for free while others pay more than their fair share. Since everyone enjoys the benefits, job security and protections that the union negotiates, it is only fair that everyone contributes to the cost of those benefits.

Those of you who have called on the union for help over the years know how important the union can be, even for seemingly small problems at your site. Our contract with the district is VERY important; it contains "rules to live by" which make our lives and our students' lives at school stable and secure. As we look towards the future, please keep in mind the safeguards and protections the union has secured for you. We are all better because of our union.

"The benefits that unions win don't just go to the union members, they become the standard. When labor won the fight for an 8-hour day and 40-hour workweek with overtime pay, that became the standard. When labor fought for minimum wages, that became the standard, when labor fought for workplace safety, that became the standard. Labor's fight is a fight to set the standard for the rest of us."
~ Dave Johnson

There's Still Time...CTA Conferences

Good Teaching Conference South

March 2-4, 2018, Garden Grove

Equity and Human Rights Conference

March 2-4, 2018, Torrance

There is still time to apply for the conferences and trainings listed above. Priority will be given to members who have not previously attended. If you are interested, call the OEA office at (805) 981-6424 or email oxnardea@gmail.com to submit your name for consideration by the OEA Executive Board. Upon approval, OEA will cover the cost of the conference,

mileage, hotel, and meals not provided by the conference. Please note, all conference participants are asked to submit a brief written summary of their experience to the Oxnard Educators Association for our monthly newsletter.



If you are a California Casualty policy holder and have been affected by the fires in California, their claims team is immediately available to help. Please call 1-800-800-9410.



Help Kids Cope ... and Teachers too

Help Kids Cope is a FREE app and website developed by UCLA and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). For more information download the app to both android and apple devices.

Children will react differently to a wildfire and its aftermath depending on their age, developmental level, and prior experiences. Some will withdraw, while others will have angry outbursts. The following are typical reactions children exhibit following a wildfire or other natural disaster:

- Fear and worry about their safety and the safety of others, including pets
- Fear of separation from family members
- Clinging to parents, siblings, or teachers
- Worry about another wildfire
- Increase in activity level
- Trouble concentrating or paying attention
- Withdrawal from others
- Angry outbursts or tantrums
- Aggression toward parents, siblings, or friends
- Increase in physical complaints, such as headaches and stomachaches
- Change in school performance
- Long-lasting focus on the wildfire, such as talking repeatedly about it or acting out the event in play
- Increased sensitivity to the smell of smoke, sound of crackling fire, and hot dry winds
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in appetite
- Lack of interest in usual activities, even playing with friends
- Returning to earlier behaviors, such as baby talk, bedwetting, or tantrums
- Increase in teens' risky behaviors, such as drinking alcohol, using substances, harming themselves, or engaging in dangerous activities

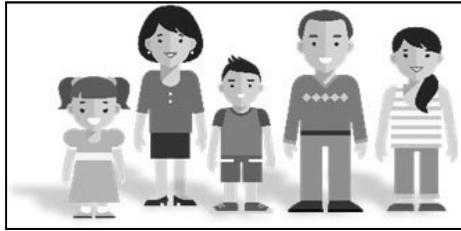
What teachers can do to help their students:

In a school with many students affected by a wildfire, plan shorter lessons, go at a slower pace, give less homework than usual, and expect a decline in performance for a short time. Identify students who had direct experience with the wildfire, particularly those who suffered losses or had to evacuate, as they are at increased risk for distress.

Monitor conversations you and your colleagues have about the wildfire, as you may share perceptions, feelings, and memories in ways that make children feel more anxious.

Encourage distressed students to meet with the school counselors.

Stay in touch with your students' parents and/or caregivers about academic



performance and behavior.

Suggest that your school review its crisis and emergency plans in order to better respond to future events. For those schools heavily affected by a wildfire, consider a post disaster mental health recovery program for students and school personnel. The NCTSN provides information on these programs and other material for educators.

What teachers can do to help themselves:

Teachers play an important role in helping their students recover. Simply returning to school promotes the welfare of children and families. Teachers should not neglect themselves as they work with children, adolescents, and families. Here are some self-care suggestions for teachers:

Take care of yourself emotionally. You and your family may have had a stressful experience and suffered losses like those of your students. To be able to support them, you must have support yourself.

Take care of yourself physically. Eat healthily, get enough sleep, drink plenty of water, and get proper medical care.

Communicate with others. Make sure that you and your fellow teachers schedule ongoing times to talk together and give each other support. Teachers might consider covering for each other, so that they can address important personal/family issues that arise.

Give yourself a break. Try not to overdo cleanup activities. To reduce injury, avoid lifting heavy items or working for extended periods.

Put off major decisions. Avoid making any life-altering decisions during this stressful, post wildfire period.

Take care of your own family. Even though you may be very committed to your students, you also need to spend time with and meet the needs of your own family members or friends.

If you have many wildfire-related responsibilities, talk with your school administrators about temporarily altering your work schedule.

Encourage fellow staff to support each other, providing both emotional support and occasional coverage for school duties.

Making a Difference

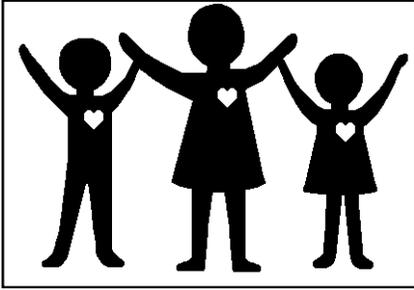
Continued from page 1

instruction with a concentration in reading, and she says that really prepared her for her career in primary education. She states, "Teaching is a really hard profession, but in the end it's worth it."

You know how they say, "you don't need the union until you need it?" Kristin is the perfect example of that. When asked why she became involved in the union she said, "I felt like I needed to be more informed, especially after having a personal issue with my hire date. I didn't realize how valuable the union was in fighting for my rights until I had my own issue." Kristin, along with many other teachers in the Oxnard School District, was involved with the Reduction in Force (RIF) early in her career. It was the union who fought for her to receive the correct seniority date, giving her more longevity and allowing her more opportunities for transfer. Having a better understanding of what the union does, made Kristin decide to get involved herself, first as Harrington site representative, and eventually as the OEA Secretary. She manages all of the memberships for OEA (not a small feat) and sits on the OEA Executive Board. Becoming involved in OEA has awakened many other interests for Kristin, including social justice causes, and helping her fellow colleagues. She says, "I'm not just going to stand by anymore." Kristin has been on several site committees such as School Site Council and Leadership. She says at Harrington she works with an amazing team of intelligent, experienced, teachers who share ideas and she feels "blessed" to work with them. Outside of school, Kristin has an innate talent and passion for all things floral. She worked as a florist for almost 20 years, and continues to occasionally design beautiful flower arrangements for her colleagues and their special occasions (especially when they beg). In her free time, Kristin enjoys traveling to Mexico or to the Caribbean, or participating in outdoor activities and enjoying the beach. Whether she is standing up for social justice, creating a safe place for her students, or supporting her colleagues, Kristin Cumins is making a difference in the Oxnard School District.

Gold Coast Trust Report

by Amanda Wilson, Gold Coast Trust Representative



The Gold Coast Joint Benefit Trust mailed out information regarding medications, eye care, and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for participants of the Trust affected or displaced by the wildfires. An email also went out on Monday, 12/11/17, with a PDF attachment of the sent mailer.

Reminders:

- This is a great time to utilize the telemedicine options provided by Kaiser and our PPO plan's PlushCare program.
- Optum will continue to be our EAP and mental health/substance abuse care provider through the end of the year. Effective January 1, 2018, EAP and mental health/substance abuse benefits will be provided through Anthem Blue Cross. Information was mailed out at the beginning of November.

If you have any questions about your medical benefits, including coverage and changes, please contact the Benefits Department at the district office.

Calendar



Dec. 2, 2017
CISCC Meeting
Pismo Beach, CA



Dec. 6, 2017
School Board Meeting
OSD Board Room



Dec. 14, 2017
Rep Council
CTA Office, Oxnard



Dec. 15—Jan. 5
Winter Vacation
(OEA Office Closed)



Jan. 11, 2018
Executive Board
OEA Office, Oxnard



Jan. 15, 2018
MLK Holiday



Jan. 19—21, 2018
State Council
Los Angeles



Jan. 25, 2018
Rep Council
CTA Office, Oxnard



Jan. 18 & 31, 2018
Bargaining
CTA Office, Oxnard



Jan. 26—28, 2018
Issues Conference
Las Vegas, Nevada

A Heartfelt Thanks...



A heartfelt thanks to the many members who have volunteered their time, supplies, and homes to those affected by the Thomas Fire. For up-to-date information, please visit Ready Ventura County at <http://www.readyventuracounty.org/>. For ways to help visit the United Way of Ventura County or make a donation to the Ventura County Community Foundation at vccf.org



From your OEA Executive Board

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