

Classified Insider

UNION NEWS FOR THE CLASSIFIED SERVICE

Summer 2017
Volume 7, Number 2



DELIVERING FOR THE UNION

Signing up new members one stop at a time Driver and local president Albert Lopez moves between 13 campuses

The Riverside County community of Menifee is on the upswing. More than 1,000 new homes are under construction, new businesses are opening their doors, and new families are moving in. The Menifee Union School District sees increased enrollment on the horizon.

The Menifee Council of Classified Employees is also expanding. In fact, the CFT recently honored the local for placing second in two categories recognizing member growth: most new members (151) and highest rate of growth (42 percent).

A good part of the credit goes to President Albert Lopez. Since taking office last August, Lopez has focused on convincing fee payers to join AFT Local 6109.

“We started asking people to take that next step,” he said. “We let them know about the benefits they would get as members, like being eligible to vote on contracts.”

Lopez has an ideal job for reaching employees throughout

schools, three middle schools and administration buildings.

He is quick to credit former president Robin Espinda for giving

cal, security, food service, bus drivers, tech aides, health aides and other staff. Espinda realized there was a problem when

ing response. These, combined with Lopez’s on-the-ground efforts, brought record-breaking member growth to Local 6109.

JAMIE LITTLE



Districtwide driver Albert Lopez is a natural fit for the local’s goal of ensuring every employee has the opportunity to become a full union member.

ing the organizing drive a solid foundation — an audit showing which employees were fee payers

several coworkers who should have signed union cards when they were hired began asking her how they could join.

“People were falling through the cracks,” Espinda said, “so we closed those cracks.”

The first step, she said, was a meeting with “district powers that be” to ensure that union membership is part of new employee orientation. Next was a mass mailing to current staff identified as non-members, which sparked a rous-

The local and district recently agreed to a salary reopener that raised wages 5 percent over two years, the same increase Menifee’s certified teachers negotiated. One of the biggest non-monetary issues at the table was addressed last. The previous contract allowed managers to write up staff “if they feel” his or her absences, for example, were excessive.

“That language has been

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“We started asking people to take that next step. We let them know about the benefits they would get as members, like being eligible to vote on contracts.”

— Albert Lopez, President, Menifee Council of Classified Employees

the district. As a delivery driver, he tools around in a Ford F150 between Menifee’s 10 elementary

and where they worked.

The Menifee local represents about 540 custodians, cleri-

Bringing playground aides into the classified service

AB 670 would give part-time “noon dutys” long overdue workplace rights

LESA ESTRADA has been a noon duty aide at Lawndale’s Anderson Elementary since her son began kindergarten here more than 25 years ago.

“All three of my children attended Anderson,” Estrada said. “I’ve seen kids grow up and bring us their children. Now some are bringing us their grandchildren.”

Estrada is one of about 60

playground aides who work two or three hours daily at the Lawndale elementary district’s nine campuses. Their jobs often mirror staff positions, but state law specifically excludes them from “the classified service.”

That barrier is falling. More than 40 part-time playground aides — “noon dutys” for short — recently signed AFT Local 4529 membership cards, and

Lawndale leads, brings aides into the union

“The noon dutys all love their jobs,” said Dan Meseraull, vice president of the Lawndale Federation of Classified Employees, “but if you’re a nonunion employee in a school district, you don’t have a voice.”



Dan Meseraull

Meseraull was spurred to action after his wife, Stephanie, a kitchen manager at William Green Elementary, related a sad story from a playground aide at work: The district promised the noon duty that it would pay her, but claimed there were no funds when the school year ended.

“And then my wife asked me, ‘Isn’t there something the union can do to help?’ That’s how this whole organizing campaign started.”

The Federation didn’t represent the aides, who often work just two or three hours a day, but Meseraull and President Carl Williams discussed the situation and decided there was nothing to lose by raising it with administrators. The aide was eventually paid, but Meseraull was just getting started. He put on his organizer’s hat and didn’t take it off until he had more than 40 signed union cards in hand.

Now the CFT is working to bring the benefit of being in the classified service to aides in all districts by passing statewide legislation.



BOB RIHA JR.

Playground aide Lesa Estrada says, “I’m here for the kids. If you’re here for the money, you’re wasting your time.”

sure the 700 students enter safely and don’t leave campus after they arrive.

After supervising recess she volunteers in classrooms, then she and the other aides monitor several shifts of children at lunch.

“I’m here for the kids,” Estrada said. “If you’re here for the money, you’re wasting your time. I’m embarrassed to even say what I’m paid.”

Without union representation,

part-timers are frequently short-changed and mistreated.

The bill now before the Legislature opens the door to new benefits. Assemblyman Tony Thurmond’s AB 670 would remove the exemption that excludes part-time playground positions from classified service. “Playground employees deserve the same protection and benefits as classified employees,” Thurmond said.

the Lawndale Federation of Classified Employees’ newest members sunshined their first contract proposals.

Part-timers are predominantly women, and are often the lowest wage-earners on campus. The job draws on Estrada’s energy, diplomacy, creativity, tenderness and grit. She begins her mornings at Anderson’s front gate, making

Union success: Audit to analyze technology and training plans

THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE

Audit Committee recently approved a motion by state Sen. Richard Pan, D-Sacramento, to review community college districts’ long-term strategic plans to upgrade instructional technology and training. The audit will include a large college district, a medium-sized one, and a small one as a cross-section of the state’s 72 districts.

Suleman Ishaque, chair of CFT’s Educational Technology Committee

— who works for the Los Angeles Community College District — expects the auditor to find that districts have few, if any, plans for ongoing training, even for employees in charge of campus information technology networks.

“Management’s expectation is that, if we’re IT guys, we should know about new technologies as



Suleman Ishaque

soon as they come along. Instead, they should be sending us to workshops with the developers, like the private sector IT guys.”

Ishaque, also second vice president of the AFT College Staff Guild, Local 1521A, believes administrators at all academic levels have failed to make plans, but the Ed Tech Committee, which includes representatives from early childhood

through university, decided to call attention first to community colleges.

Other systemic shortcomings, he added, are adequate staffing to maintain new and additional equipment, and training teachers and other campus users how to get the most of the technology.

“The audit isn’t punitive,” Ishaque explained. “The goal is to identify shortcomings and sponsor legislation to address them.”

Night shift custodians in Torrance organize to fight short staffing

IT'S 10 P.M. and Darlene Esquivel is just pulling into a staff parking lot alongside El Camino College's facilities management building. Esquivel is one of about 30 custodians on the graveyard shift who put the Torrance campus back in shape while more than 22,000 students sleep.

"We do everything from mopping and waxing to dusting," she said. "And whatever the day shift missed, we do that too."

About 380 staff belong to AFT Local 6142, the El Camino Classified Employees. Former local President Luukia Smith said, "Night shift is out here by themselves. There was no union rep, and they felt alone."

Five new organizing commit-

tee members — Onnis Flores, Barry Cunnigan, Earl Eiland, Lenya Bernal and Esquivel — dedicated two nights to speak with every custodian.

Organizers then held a training where they identified short staffing as the most pressing issue and drafted a petition calling on the district to collaborate on workloads.

"Short staffing has been an ongoing problem for years," Flores said, one made worse by budget cutbacks of the past decade. "We feel the pressure to do more and more, to the point that we feel bullied."

Custodians are assigned "runs," a regular set of rooms or floors in a building or facility similar to workloads

LUCY LANGWORTHY



Custodians drafted a petition asking the district to collaborate on workloads.

assigned to hotel staff. There are nearly 50 runs on campus, almost double the number of custodians. When vacations and sick coworkers are taken into account, staff are almost always forced to work two or

more runs per shift. They can be written up for insubordination if they don't do their regular run and any extra assignments.

"This campaign is our opportunity to make needed changes," Smith concluded.

Classified stand up for schools as safe havens

LAST YEAR, CANDIDATE

Donald Trump promised that one of his top priorities as president would be to deport an estimated 11 million immigrants.

Trump's election sent stress levels through schoolhouse roofs. Staff and parents at Berkeley's Longfellow Middle School organized a "Know Your Rights" forum within weeks of the November vote. About 200 people attended, drawn largely by immigration lawyers who provided participants with possible legal remedies.

"The whole school community came together and asked how we could help these kids and their parents," said Carol Perez, whose son attends Longfellow.

They formed a rapid response committee, and if there is an ICE raid, families have volunteered to host kids and parents facing deportation.

Perez is a member of the Berkeley Council of Classified Employees and works as a parent engagement counselor at Washington and Oxford elementary schools. "My job, my role, my heart is to protect these students," she said.

At Washington, Perez said, a teacher helped young students create a Muslim Students Union. Arabic is the third most widely spoken language in Berkeley schools. "Everyone

is welcome in our schools."

Berkeley is a sanctuary city that offers legal support for immigrants and a hotline to address rumors about ICE raids that spread on social media.

The nearby Central Valley farming communities are home to an estimated 331,584 undocumented immigrants and 224,958 U.S.-born children with an undocumented parent.

In Turlock, the school board recently reaffirmed that the unified district does not solicit, collect, or maintain information on students' immigration status, and that proof of residency is all that's required to enroll a student, according to Education Code Section 48204.1. The resolution directed the superintendent to support a safe and secure learning environment for all students.

>Find topnotch resources in the union toolkit at cft.org/safe-haven.



Robin Watkins, library technician from the San Diego AFT Guild.

ClassifiedCalendar

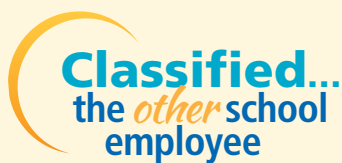
July 1 is the deadline for continuing college students to apply for **Raoul Teihet Scholarships**.

September 22 kicks off a union weekend in Sacramento with a Friday meeting of the **Council of Classified Employees**. On **September 23**, the **Standing Committees** meet and the **State Council** convenes...all at the Hilton Sacramento Arden West.

October 13-15 is the **Council of Classified Employees Conference** at the Anaheim Hilton. See page 4 for more information.

February 2 is another meeting of the **Council of Classified Employees** in Northern California.

March 23-25 is **CFT Convention** at the Hilton Orange County where the **Council of Classified Employees** meets on Friday night.



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OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

will be held **October 13-15** under the theme, "Classified... the other school employee" (yes, that's us!).

You can attend workshops on a wide variety of professional topics, hear inspirational speakers, and have some fun at Saturday night's soiree and other social events.

Scholarships are available to members from small locals and to members from locals that are attending the conference for the first time. Learn more about the scholarships online, where you can also register to attend the conference. The deadline to reserve hotel rooms at the conference rate is **September 21**.

We hope to see you in Anaheim!

REGISTER ONLINE NOW!

Classified Conference 2017 • October 13-15 • Anaheim Hilton

>Learn more about the conference and register at cft.org/your-work/classified/conference.

INSIDE!

- Organizing playground supervisors
- Technology audit request succeeds

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New CCE President: Meet Luukia Smith



I'M LUUKIA SMITH and I'm an accounting technician at El Camino College, where I have worked as a classified employee for 30 years. For more than half that time I also led the El Camino Classified Employees, AFT Local 6142, but stepped down earlier this year after I was elected to head the CFT Council of

Classified Employees.

My family is from Hawaii. I love the laid-back island culture, and my leadership style is pretty informal, but "laid back" and "informal" do not mean I'm a pushover. Far from it.

I'm excited to serve alongside Northern Vice President Janet Eberhardt, Southern Vice President Carl Williams, and Secretary Tina Solórzano Fletcher. We want to start by working with locals to identify the needs and issues facing members. Please feel free to email me at lsmith@cft.org.

My family is from Hawaii. I love the laid-back island culture, and my leadership style is pretty informal, but "laid back" and "informal" do not mean I'm a pushover. Far from it. — Luukia Smith

Organizing success

(Continued from page 1)

changed," Lopez said. "We have never been comfortable with 'if they feel' as a standard. Management needs more substantive backing before they admonish employees."

Staff received large payments for retroactive raises, reflecting long negotiations that included going to impasse.

"Moving forward economically is a constant battle," Lopez said. "We hear about the district already being in the red for years to come, but who knows if that's true, or just bargaining talk."

California Federation
of Teachers 
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A Union of Professionals

Classified Insider is published by the California Federation of Teachers, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. The CFT represents faculty and classified workers in public and private schools and colleges, from early childhood through higher education. The CFT is committed to raising the standards of the profession and to securing the conditions essential to provide the best service to California's students.

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