

# Classified Insider

UNION NEWS FOR THE CLASSIFIED SERVICE

Spring-Summer 2013  
Volume 3, Number 2



## INVESTING IN CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES

# Unions find innovative solutions for staff development

Career development has been a convenient target of budget cuts, but locals unions have found creative approaches for investing in staff.

A sabbatical program the AFT Guild negotiated with the San Diego Community College District allows nine classified employees a year to take 16 weeks paid leave to study at an accredited college.

Nathan Talo used his leave to take a giant step toward his psychology degree. Talo began working at Mesa College as a part-time account clerk 15 years ago, and is now a senior account clerk.

"I used to go to school full-time and work full-time," he said. "But I had to cut back when my son was born. Working 40 hours a week and caring for a child consumes your time." Talo is now a few credits away from his associate's degree and transfer to San Diego State.

The sabbatical program promotes employee professional growth, not training to perform a current job. Applicants must submit a brief study plan, the degree that may be attained, and potential value to



Nathan Talo took advantage of the sabbatical program negotiated by the AFT Guild.

SANDY HOFFAKER, JR.

the district. They must carry a full academic load and earn at least a C in each course. A staff member must have worked for the district six consecutive years, and must work at least twice as long as the leave when they return. Time on leave is counted as regular service.

During her sabbatical, Trina Larson, an administrative secretary at Mesa College, finished her doctorate in English literature at UC San Diego, while teaching freshman writing classes there for 11 weeks.

"We're extremely busy during these sabbaticals. You hope

you'll get a little downtime, but it doesn't work that way."

Robyn Kabonaizi works in the Veteran's Affairs office at San Diego City College and enrolled

selection of classes online, but professors are offering more online, such as posting class material."

**INSTRUCTIONAL AIDES** are also making the most of their training opportunities.

Carolyn Samoa, vice president for paraprofessionals at United Educators of San Francisco, said San Francisco Unified furloughed paras and cut professional development from 18 to six hours per year. Now the district is slated to receive at least \$8 million in additional funds, opening the door to restored para training.

While most of the district's 1500 paraprofessionals choose individual training, this year 45

## Senior Account Clerk Nathan Talo used his sabbatical to take a giant step toward a psychology degree he began years ago.

in an accelerated online master's program in teaching and learning with technology, which she has since completed.

"My goal is to set up classes online. We already offer a limited

special education aides paired with their classroom teachers in a new program funded by a union-backed parcel tax voters passed in 2008. The district was willing to fund nine additional hours in the paired program.

"What often happens," Samoa said, "is that you take a really good training, then go back to your classroom and find that your teacher learned something different. This way you learn together. It just made sense to go as a team because you work as a team in the classroom."

## Two actions may bring more professional training

**ONE** CFT supports Senate Bill 590 (de Leon, D-Los Angeles) that would establish a new staff development program and require local educational agencies to set aside funds for classified employees to learn best practices in student

learning, campus safety, special education and other topics.

**TWO** Faculty and staff in the community colleges may see five days of mandated professional development per year if the Community College Board of Governors

takes the recommendation of the Consultation Council. Classified representative to the council, Diana Ramon, from the Coast Federation of Classified Employees, said, "Going from zero to five days seems doable and wonderful."

# Meet leaders of the CFT Council of Classified Employees

**Paula Phillips** is president of the Berkeley Council of Classified Employees.

After earning a degree in human resource management and working in the private sector, she came to Berkeley Unified as an administrative assistant to the Personnel Commission. She saw the district grading internal job candidates harder than external applicants and didn't think it was fair.

The district repeatedly passed up Phillips for classified director and ordered her to train a series of outside hires. "I decided that if I couldn't effect a change as classified director, I could certainly effect a change as leader of the union."

**Carl Williams** started working for the Lawndale Elementary School District on noon duty and was soon hired as a special education instructional assistant. Six years later, he switched to custodian and was promoted to senior custodian last year.

Williams, a CFT vice president and active in the Lawndale Federation of Classified



Officers Carl Williams, Paula Phillips, Janet Eberhardt and Tina Solórzano Fletcher.

Employees for nearly 20 years, was elected president in 2009.

"Working in an organization made up mainly of teachers can help improve your working conditions as a classified employee. It matters to a lot of groundskeepers, custodians and, as we call them in my district, blue shirts, that someone on the executive council reflects their views."

**Janet Eberhardt** earned a degree in personnel management, but refocused her career on education, completing a

credential program and receiving a master's in counseling.

Eberhardt, a community relations specialist for San Francisco Unified since 1985, says, "First and foremost, I am a child and family advocate, pledged to effect positive changes in the lives of the

families and children that cross my path as an educator."

For 15 years, she has been a voice for paraprofessionals on the bargaining team for United Educators of San Francisco.

**Tina Solórzano Fletcher** is organizing and membership coordinator for the AFT Guild in San Diego. She joined the local's executive board in 1998, after district staff voted AFT their bargaining agent.

The Guild represents faculty and staff in the city's community colleges, and faculty in the Grossmont-Cuyamaca district.

Solórzano is now working on a degree in Native American studies. "I've always been interested in social justice and my dad was in the carpenters' union, so there was a lot of union talk in our household."

## Reach out to officers of the CFT classified division

**President** Paula Phillips [bccepaulap@gmail.com](mailto:bccepaulap@gmail.com)

**Southern Vice President** Carl Williams [carl\\_williams7@yahoo.com](mailto:carl_williams7@yahoo.com)

**Northern Vice President** Janet Eberhardt [jeber07@aol.com](mailto:jeber07@aol.com)

**Secretary** Tina Solórzano Fletcher [afttina@mac.com](mailto:afttina@mac.com)

Phillips and Williams are also members of the CFT Executive Council.

# Union working to keep campuses safe and secure

**CFT IS FOCUSED** on campus safety as it advances legislation and finalizes resolutions on gun control.

**Retrofit door locks** Doors that lock from the inside have been mandatory on new school construction since CFT-sponsored AB211 became law in 2010, but some districts have resisted retrofitting existing buildings citing cost. Spurred by the Newtown shooting, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed CFT-sponsored SB316 (Block, D-San Diego), but amended it so only districts that accept federal funds or

state facilities modernization funds will be required to retrofit the locks.

**Create bullying hotline** The Senate Appropriations Committee passed SB231 (Correa, D-Santa Ana) to create a 24-hour statewide bullying hotline staffed by psychologists who would provide immediate counseling and inform a bullied child's parents and school about the bullying.

**Keep schools weapon-free** Pat Egan, chair of the Safe and Non-Violent Schools Committee, said members are nearly done

recrafting several resolutions put before CFT Convention in March. "They call for three things," Egan said. "One, that campuses remain weapon-free except for authorized safety personnel; two, a ban on assault weapons like the one passed during



Campus Supervisor Tjoni Jacobs talks with a student at Soquel High School.

the Clinton Administration; and three, restore funds cut from mental health services and support legislation so that people identified with mental issues can't buy guns."



Santa Cruz campus security officer Robert Chacanaca at work.

## Congrats to Classified Employee of the Year Rena Pheng

**THE CALIFORNIA** Community Colleges recently named Long Beach City College custodian Rena Pheng a Classified Employee of the Year. The honor caught Pheng by surprise.

"I'm not crazy about interviews and all this attention," she said. "I never imagined receiving this award, especially since I do what I do because I love Long Beach City College, our students and staff — not for recognition."

The annual award is given to five classified employees who demonstrate commitment to professionalism, the community colleges, their campus and their community. Recipients are nominated by

members of their district community and endorsed by local boards of trustees. Winners receive \$500.

Pheng, a member of the Long Beach Council of Classified Employees, is described by her nominators as "a trusted employee who takes pride in her job, always goes the extra mile, and works hard to make sure that everything runs smoothly at the college." She studies at CSU Dominguez Hills yet still finds time to volunteer at Meals on Wheels and the Catered Manor Nursing Home.



Rena Pheng

## Classified who teach college classes preserve fair assignments and pay

**THE AFT COLLEGE** Staff Guild and the Los Angeles Community College District agreed in January that classified employees who accept adjunct teaching assignments do not need to reduce their classified hours if the assignment is outside regularly scheduled hours.

The memorandum of understanding also ensures that Local 1521A members who teach during their normal work hours will not have to reduce their classified assignments if they adjust their schedule with their supervisor to work those

hours at straight time. Compensation for adjunct assignment under this agreement complies with federal overtime requirements.

The district will make every effort to offer adjunct assignments outside a classified employee's regular work hours. If a Staff Guild member cannot teach for two consecutive semesters because the assignment falls within the regular classified work schedule, the employee may appeal to the college vice president or vice chancellor.

## Federal cuts cast chill over Berkeley school gardens

**BERKELEY UNIFIED'S** plan to uproot an innovative gardening and cooking program is drawing widespread community fire. For 15 years, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture has educated low-income families about good nutrition through school programs like the Network for a Healthy California.

But Congress is revising its funding formula and California will lose about 40 percent of its USDA grant. The state plans to shift the funds to local agency publicity campaigns.

The NHC program is deeply rooted in Berkeley. About two dozen members of the Berkeley Council of Classified Employees at 14 of 18 schools teach students how to grow produce and turn it into nutritious meals. Paraeducators Daria



Wrubel and Michael Bauce teach gardening and cooking, respectively, to 450 students at Thousand Oaks Elementary.

"The students make their own connections as they watch the plants grow in the garden and then eat them," Wrubel said.

Bauce said the students' enthusiasm has spread and many families now eat together

Gardening teacher Daria Wrubel grows awareness in the school gardens. Students build salads in the cooking class.



more often. "It's great for kids who had been coming to school hungry and depressed."

After hundreds of parents, faculty and staff packed two school board meetings in May, officials are considering bridge funding options until another revenue source is found.

## ClassifiedCalendar

**Council of Classified Employees** meets **September 28** from 4 to 10 pm at the Oakland Airport Hilton. Members are welcome. Earlier that day, **CFT Committees** meet from 10 am to 3:30 pm. And on Sunday, **September 29, State Council** meets from 9 am to 1 pm.

**Classified Conference**, the annual event for paraprofessional and classified members of the CFT, will be held **October 18-20** at the Hilton Orange County in Costa Mesa. It's a three-day conference, jam-packed with professional learning opportunities and themed social events. >Learn more on page 4.

**Council of Classified Employees** meets **December 7** in Southern California. Members are welcome.

**LOOKING AHEAD TO 2014:** The **CFT Convention** will be held **March 21-23** in Manhattan Beach. The **AFT PSRP Conference** is scheduled for **April 10-13** in Florida.

## OCTOBER 18-20 Why attend the CFT Classified Conference?

HERE ARE TWO good reasons. *One*, the CCE will recognize worker excellence under the conference theme, "Celebrating Our Role in Quality Public Education."

*Two*, there will be many learning and networking opportunities.

Workshop topics include Advocating for your Profession, Safety in the Schools, Work

Shouldn't Hurt, Community Organizing, and Harmony in the Workplace.

The conference will be held **October 18-20** at the Hilton Orange County in Costa Mesa.

>Learn more at [cft.org/YourWork](http://cft.org/YourWork)>Classified.



California Federation of Teachers  
Council of Classified Employees  
1330 Broadway, Suite 1601  
Oakland, CA 94612

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## Check out expanded classified section on the new CFT website!

>Find coverage of classified issues and workplace resources in the expanded classified section under **Your Work**.

>Share stories on **Facebook** and **Twitter** and by email. >Turn the pages of *Classified Insider* online.

**Union Social:** Like **CFT** on Facebook and if you tweet, follow us on Twitter. [cft.org](http://cft.org) [f CFT](https://www.facebook.com/CFT) [@CAFedofTeachers](https://twitter.com/CAFedofTeachers)

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## Our work contributes to quality of education

**EVERY CFT MEMBER** can play a role in the CFT's campaign for quality public education, which will identify problems that are holding back our schools and colleges and set goals to move California forward.

A quality public education starts with adequate funding to maintain staffing levels and professional development. That's a tall order in times of budget cuts, but with the passage of Prop. 30, fair funding will be within reach if Sacramento shows some political courage.

For five years, administrators have responded to budget shortfalls by cutting classified employees. They don't see a down side because, in their minds, teachers are the direct link to students. But as staffs shrink, more of the work we do is pushed onto remaining staff members, onto teachers, or goes undone. The result is that student learning suffers.

Maintenance is a prime example. Administrators tell custodians to spot-mop nightly, but only full-mop once a week. Meanwhile, teachers are told to stack chairs at night, but aren't told about the change in mopping. The result is resentment between educators and lowered standards of cleanliness.

Staff cuts in school offices are another example. Assigning parent-volunteers to help with filing can create legal problems by exposing confidential information about student medications or eligibility for free lunches based on financial need.

Make no mistake: Our society's growing economic gap is at the heart of declining student achievement in schools with a higher percentage of low-income students. Poor kids miss opportunities for educational enrichment every day. Fair funding can reverse that trend and give all students the quality education they deserve!

*What do you think? Email me your thoughts at [bcepaulap@gmail.com](mailto:bcepaulap@gmail.com).*



By Paula A. Phillips  
President,  
CFT Council  
of Classified  
Employees

California Federation  
of Teachers   
AFT, AFL-CIO  
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.

**President** Joshua Pechthalt  
**Secretary Treasurer** Jeffery M. Freitas

**Council of Classified Employees**  
**President** Paula A. Phillips, Berkeley Council of Classified Employees

**Northern Vice President** Janet Eberhardt  
United Educators of San Francisco

**Southern Vice President** Carl Williams, Lawndale  
Federation of Classified Employees

**Secretary** Tina Solórzano Fletcher, AFT Guild, San Diego  
and Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community Colleges

**Publications Director** Jane Hundertmark  
**Reporter** Steve Weingarten

**Design** Kajun Design, Graphic Artists Guild

**Direct correspondence to:**  
*Classified Insider* 1330 Broadway, Suite 1601  
Oakland, California 94612  
Telephone 510-523-5238 Fax 510-523-5262  
Email [jhundertmark@cft.org](mailto:jhundertmark@cft.org)

[www.cft.org](http://www.cft.org)

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