



## HOPE FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

# Affordable Care Act helps uninsured part-time workers

**L**isa Agcaoili paces nervously as she waits to speak with a Covered California counselor in a West Los Angeles College cafeteria. Thousands of people have come to a Health and Enrollment Fair for solid information about their options under the Affordable Care Act.

Agcaoili hasn't had insurance in the more than 20 years she has worked for the Lawndale Elementary School District. The part-time instructional assistant works fewer than 30 hours a week and isn't eligible for district health plans. She is over 50 and suffers migraines daily.

"If I had medical coverage," she said, "I would have gone to the doctor by now to see why I have headaches every day."

In 2012, she made just under \$21,500, including after-school activities and other earnings, and is raising two grandchildren that she claims as dependents on her tax return.

The ACA stresses "shared responsibility" for extending coverage as broadly as possible. Federal and state agencies, employers, insurers and



BOB RIHA, JR

Lisa Agcaoili applied for insurance through Covered California only to learn she qualifies for Medi-Cal, which has expanded eligibility under the Affordable Care Act.

the uninsured all have a role to play. Agcaoili's responsibility is to enroll in a health plan or pay a non-coverage penalty that increases from \$95 in 2014 to \$325 in 2015 and \$695 in 2016.

to see what's going to happen," Agcaoili said, "but no matter what subsidy I get, it would be an expense that I'm not paying now. Like many Americans, I'm already struggling to pay my

**"The school district has so many of our members working at 28 and even 29.5 hours a week to avoid offering them medical benefits. We used to think of Medi-Cal as welfare, but it's insurance that we didn't have access to before."**

—Carl Williams, President, Lawndale Federation

The penalty is the ACA stick and the carrot is federal subsidies to ease the cost of care for low-income individuals and households. Subsidies will vary according to family size, household income and zip code.

"I'm on pins and needles

existing bills."

At the enrollment fair, Agcaoili got unexpected news: She is eligible for Medicaid – known as Medi-Cal in California – which would mean coverage with no premiums, deductibles or co-payments. Agcaoili can

begin receiving medical care on January 1, plus dental and vision benefits in May.

While news media focused on problems with the federal ACA website, hundreds of thousands of uninsured Americans were registering for Medicaid. New rules expanded eligibility to adults without children and those with incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level (\$15,857 for an individual or \$32,500 for a family of four).

The federal government will finance the expansion for the first three years, then taper off to 90 percent. California and 24 other states accepted the offer. During the first six weeks of open enrollment, more than four times as many people signed up for Medicaid coverage than for private plans. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that Medicaid will cover 9 million new people next year, compared to 7 million people with new private plans.

The news is especially good for Agcaoili and 208 other part-timers among the 335 school staff represented by the Lawndale Federation of Classified Employees. "The school district has so many of our members working at 28 and even 29.5 hours a week to avoid offering them medical benefits," said Lawndale Federation President Carl Williams. "We used to think of Medi-Cal as welfare, but it's insurance that we didn't have access to before."



**COVERED CALIFORNIA**

» Learn more about your options and enroll for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act on the state-sanctioned website [coveredca.com](http://coveredca.com).



## STAFF SERVE AND PROTECT

# Preventing violence on campus and preparing for disaster

**NOTHING INSPIRES** fear like the thought of a gunman on a rampage. There have been 115 “active shooter” incidents reported across the United States since July 2012 causing the tragic loss of 85 lives and hundreds of injuries.

Several of the deadliest incidents have been on campus. In June, a heavily armed gunman killed three people in the neighborhood surrounding Santa Monica College, then claimed three more victims on

campus, including a custodian and his daughter.

“That hit home,” said El Camino College Police Officer Ericka Solorzano. “It put us on high alert.” El Camino police studied the Santa Monica incident and adjusted their active shooter training. They have also cut sexual assaults and property crimes by providing cadets to accompany students and visitors around the clock instead of only from 5 to 10 p.m.

The state Education Code



Community Service Officer Brian Hill, right, mentors Robert Galda, campus cadet.

## Law & Order ECC

The 19 newest members of AFT Local 6142 are responsible for a broad range of services, from being campus escorts and fingerprinting applicants to battery jumps and unlocking doors for faculty and staff. The police officers at El Camino College in Torrance have brought down crime rates and train regularly to respond to violent incidents and natural disasters.

Ericka Solorzano, who is secretary of the Police Officers Association, said eventually there will be just one union. She added that officers appreciate belonging to a larger labor family in the AFT-affiliated El Camino Classified Employees as they begin negotiations in the coming year. “There’s safety in numbers.”



Ericka Solorzano

requires every school and community college to have a comprehensive safety plan covering a broad range of emergencies, including earthquakes, fires and violent incidents.

The code also directs districts to inform teachers which students have violent histories. Some administrators, however, hide behind confidentiality or the narrow wording of the law to avoid telling classified staff which kids have exhibited behavior that would be grounds for suspension or expulsion.

Robert Chacanaca, president of the Santa Cruz Council of Classified Employees, said the “spirit of the law is to inform anyone — staff or faculty — on a need-to-know basis about a violent kid they are dealing with in their class.”

## On the Web

### Run, Hide, Fight: Surviving an Active Shooter Event

Take six minutes to watch this video on how to react to a violent incident in the workplace.

Go to [goo.gl/HKnTtG](http://goo.gl/HKnTtG)



# Unions partner with community allies, old and new

**CLASSIFIED ARE WELL OUT IN FRONT** of the AFL-CIO’s new resolve to ramp up its partnering with community allies. Members are linking arms in efforts that especially resonate during the holidays.

## Every child deserves Shoes that Fit

The College Staff Guild in Los Angeles is working with Shoes That Fit to help kids start their day on the right foot. The non-profit is dedicated to providing new shoes to needy children so they can attend school in comfort and with dignity.

“Wearing the wrong size shoe is painful, totally distracts from the learning process, and is so demoralizing,” said Guild Vice President Dorothy Bates. The local adopted two schools near each college and the union office. Bates and others are gathering pledges from members willing to purchase new shoes for children.



## Crafty classified create college tradition

In Lancaster, the holiday season kicks off when the Antelope Valley College Federation of Classified Employees hosts its annual Super Craft Fair. The tradition began 15 years ago when two retired members organized the first fair. Now scores of classified help out.

This year, more than 100 vendors hawked handmade crafts. Many of the artisans are staff members and students. With monies earned, the local set up the Classified Union Scholarship Fund that has benefited more than 50 students.



## Giving kids their First Book

In the last two years, Local 1475 has given away about 5,000 books and backpacks filled with school supplies at back-to-school festivals through the AFT’s First Book program ([firstbook.org](http://firstbook.org)).

“We let students pick the book they want. The looks on their faces when they realize they get to keep the books are wonderful,” said Ruben Siguenza, president of the L.A.-based local representing early educators at five Head Start agencies.

“Teaching a child the value of a book, encouraging them to read at an early age, planting that seed, means they will do better throughout their school years,” said Siguenza.



#### LocalAction

»**Menifee Council of Classified Employees** negotiated five bereavement leave days for members, matching the number district teachers have.

»**Tuolumne County Council of Classified Employees** won a 3.15 percent increase in compensation for classified employees in the county office.

»**United Educators of San Francisco** published a booklet, *Paraprofessionals and their Union*, detailing the history of district paras and their union.

»**Coast Federation of Classified Employees** successfully lobbied district trustees to win back all five furlough days instituted in 2012.

»**Mendocino County Federation of School Employees** won a 5 percent salary increase for classified employees in the county office.

#### Berkeley cooking and gardening program seeks funding

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT** saved an innovative cooking and gardening program that faced closure last spring, but only leftovers remain after the Berkeley Unified School District cut two-thirds of the budget.

“Even the chickens in the garden were given away because no one was left to tend them.”

“Even the chickens in the garden were given away because no one was left to tend them,” said Daria Wrubel of the Berkeley Council of Classified Employees. Wrubel taught



Daria Wrubel hopes to see the popular Berkeley program restored to full funding.

gardening to 450 students at Thousand Oaks Elementary before she and more than half the classified staff were cut.

“Out of a district with 9,000 students, we had 1,000 families contact the school board in support of the program,” she said. “We just don’t know where the rest of the money is going to

come from.”

Even though the program has expanded to all 18 Berkeley schools, only 13 of 29 classified staff remain, and most have had hours reduced or work at several schools to make up for lost time.

The board approved \$600,000 in bridge funding over two years, a third of the previous \$1.8 million budget. Supporters plan to raise an additional \$600,000.

The district also authorized \$50,000 for a fundraising consultant and hired a supervisor with fundraising experience. Supporters are examining similar programs around the country for ways to save money.

#### MEMBERSHIP DOUBLES

#### Palomar staff forge alliance with faculty, see major gains

**THE PALOMAR** College Council of Classified Employees and campus administrators in San Marcos settled a contract and memorandum of understanding that moved the staff forward by three major steps.

1) The 385 unit members received a \$2,000 lump sum salary increase and 0.72 percent, plus a 3 percent raise that faculty also received. 2) This first contract replaced a 25-year-old employee handbook. 3) The local won binding arbitration for grievances.

The outcome was a 180-degree turn from April, when

administrators came to the bargaining table demanding a 10 percent salary cut and a cap on benefits. It also wanted a reclassification study that would have lowered salaries for 87 percent of classifieds.

In his case, said local President Aaron Holmes, the study described only one of 13 functions he performs as an alternate media specialist. “As it is,” he said, “my position is probably about five grades below every



Aaron Holmes

other college in California. Their study would have dropped me another five grades.”

The local gathered strength through a recruitment campaign and by making non-members pay a fair share fee. Membership more than doubled. The classified also began to confer closely with faculty, who were also in negotiations.

“I sit on the faculty negotiating team as an advisor and they do the same on our team,” Holmes said. “That avoids doublespeak. Getting 90 percent of the people on campus together made us much stronger.”

#### ClassifiedCalendar

**Committees** of the CFT meet **January 11** at L.A. Valley College.

**Leadership Conference** for local union presidents, treasurers, and staff will be held **February 6-7** at the Marriott City Center in Oakland.

**Convention** is **March 21-23** at the Manhattan Beach Marriott. Consider running as a delegate from your local union. The deadline to submit resolutions for Convention is **February 7**. The **Council of Classified Employees** will meet Friday night, **March 21**.

**AFT's Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel Conference** will be **April 10-13** in Buena Vista, Florida.

**Lobby Days** in the State Capitol on **April 28-29** provide union members an opportunity to talk with legislators.

## Classified Conference salutes four heroes



**NOTHING BETTER** illustrates the theme of this fall's Classified Conference, "Celebrating Our Role in Quality Public Education," than the classifieds who go above and beyond the call of duty.

The honorees were selected because they are positive role models for workers and students and committed advocates for education. Hats off to 2013 Members of the Year, shown top to bottom:

### Denise Albright

Pasadena City College ISSU-CFT

### Roderick Carraway

Berkeley Council of Classified Employees

### Deana Frederick

Turlock Classified AFT

### Mary Lavalais

United Educators of San Francisco



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## New booklet! *Know Your Rights: A guide to workplace laws for classified employees and paraprofessionals in California*

>Download the booklet and find more resources at [cft.org](http://cft.org)>Your Work>Classified>Resources.

# Classified Insider

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## 2014 brings new professional opportunities

AS 2013 WINDS to a close and we look back on the year, there are many reasons for classified employees to be thankful. After years of cuts, more resources are flowing into schools and colleges, thanks to our efforts to pass Prop. 30. K-12 education will see a more equitable funding formula and a new law requires more consideration of classified staff in district professional development plans.

Our union's goal of every child receiving a high-quality education is within reach, but we need to take the initiative. How can we make the most of these opportunities for change? By addressing them at the bargaining table, in shared governance committees, and in our communities.

Under the state's new **Local Control Funding Formula**, all districts, county offices, and charter schools must have a **Local Control Accountability Plan** that

describes how they intend to meet annual goals for students. The Education Code lays out eight priorities, from providing sufficient materials to implementing the new Common Core standards.

As these local education agencies draw up their LCAPs, their governing boards must consult with staff, faculty, principals, and local unions. Students and parents are also important stakeholders. We must be vigilant at every step in this process, from demanding that positions cut during lean years be restored, to mobilizing our community allies for the public hearings required before plan adoption.

The big news in staff development is **Senate Bill 590**. Though some locals have negotiated training hours for paras and classified, most have not. When SB 590 becomes law January 1, school districts will be required to consider staff in their professional development plans. And, yes, we need to take the initiative. Our work can make 2014 a turning point in public education.



By Paula A. Phillips  
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California Federation  
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AFT, AFL-CIO  
A Union of Professionals

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