



## Workplace organizing Facing new threat, members recommit to their unions

For years, the conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court threatened to clip unions' wings if the right case came before the bench. Classified AFT locals across California have been preparing for the decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* by asking agency fee payers to become full members, and recruiting at new employee orientations. The membership



MATTHEW HARDY

An organizing blitz at Antelope Valley College helped double classified membership.

armed with donuts at 5 a.m. or pizzas at 5 p.m. Gonzalez's favorite approach was sitting down at someone's desk and sharing a bag of popcorn with them, a tactic she calls a "pop-in."

A mass retirement cut through the San Diego County campus four years ago. Palomar College is now hiring, and the union hosts lunch at every new employee orientation.

The efforts have shown results. Six years ago, fewer than 60 percent of 356 employees were union members. Today, membership is at 85 percent and a goal of 90 percent is within reach.

### Lawndale Federation

President Carl Williams has made recruitment in the elementary district a priority for years, and the CFT recently recognized AFT Local 4529 for a 14 percent increase in membership, which now stands at 70 percent.

Williams said access to new employees at orientation sessions and a new AFT electronic sign-up form have kicked the ongoing campaign into overdrive. "We're getting to people as soon as they are hired. We're signing up people every day."

The local invites non-members to general meetings so they can see how the union works and what members think and want. Many join so they can vote on issues and contracts.

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site features members wearing union t-shirts on Blue Fridays; the newsletter, renamed *Unite*, is emailed regularly; and the union's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds are kept fresh.

**Palomar Council** President Anel Gonzalez also took office last July, after six years on the negotiating team and serving as grievance officer for AFT Local 4522. "People tend to be complacent when nothing threatens them," she said. "But now we're doing the work that needs to be done."

One of the first things Gonzalez and executive council members did was spend two long days crossing campus to meet people where they work. The team held meetings at all hours,

tive council identified fee payers and and crisscrossed the Golden West, Orange Coast and Coastline campuses to recruit them.

The local also reopened the contract and negotiated 30 minutes at each new employee orientation session to promote the benefits of union membership, as mandated under the labor-sponsored Assembly Bill 119.

Membership now stands at 84.5 percent, Marten said.

"We have some very enthusiastic young people with great ideas who want to get involved. New employees mean new vigor. It's pretty exciting."

Local 4794 also invested in its communications network, which recently won five CFT awards: An updated web-



Connie Marten



Assisting in organizing, Lawndale Federation leader Carl Williams reviews new member sign-ups with Antelope Valley President Pam Ford.

drives have meant an influx of new enthusiasm and a renewed sense of union pride.

**Coast Federation** President Connie Marten was elected leader of AFT Local 4794 in July 2017 after serving nine years as vice president and six years as chief negotiator.

Knowing the local needed to strengthen its membership base, Marten and the execu-

## Common sense gun control

# A school security guard lives with the loss of his son

**A.J. FRAZIER** is a familiar face around San Francisco's Lowell High School. Frazier has helped guard the campus for the last 15 years, after patrolling Mission High for 15 years.

Few people knew about the pain the outgoing ex-Marine carried inside — until he shared it at a recent rally in Santa Ana's Centennial Park responding to the deadly shooting at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High.

"No one should ever have to go to the police department to identify their child," Frazier told 5,000 students, teachers and supporters at the March for Our Lives rally. "I never knew the man my son was meant to be."

Frazier recounted how his 12-year-old son Keith was sitting in a parked car with his stepbrother, then 17, in front of their home about a dozen years ago. Gunfire riddled the vehicle and both youths were shot, but



A.J. Frazier spoke about the pain of losing his 12-year-old son to gun violence.

the child was hit seven times in the head and died.

"It took me awhile to make any sense of the incident," he recalled later. "I had murder in

strength. My job is to help as many students as I can."

The veteran supports what he called "obvious" gun control measures, including more

**"These are kids. Treat them with respect and they will show respect to others"**

— A.J. Frazier, Security Guard, United Educators of San Francisco

my mind, but I needed to keep my composure. Being back at work with the kids gave me

extensive background checks on gun buyers, and is warming to the idea of raising the

minimum age to buy a gun from 18 to a more mature 20-something.

Frazier is a member of United Educators of San Francisco, and currently serves as sergeant-at-arms. Fellow executive board member Anabel Ibañez said she could see how Frazier's words moved people at the rally, including delegates to CFT Convention.

"A.J. really understands what gun violence has done to our schools and communities, and I hope that talking about this terrible experience was empowering for him," Ibañez said.

Frazier — who does not carry a gun at work — said violence is not common on campus, although neighborhood gang conflicts and mental health issues can spark dramatic situations.

"These are kids," he said. "Treat them with respect and they will show respect to others."

## Compton campus police choose AFT as their union

**GENERATIONS OF COMPTON** rappers have created an indelible portrait of their city's mean streets. Life in this Los Angeles suburb isn't easy.

Jermaine Ford and the 17 members of the Compton Unified School District police are a "thin blue line" sworn to keep the 36 schools and additional dozen district facilities safe. Their job hasn't gotten any easier, either.

The force once had twice as many personnel, and salaries have barely moved for those who remain. The state of California recognizes Compton as a post-certified police department, but it had 36 officers before a new chief began budget cuts about six years ago. Management has been so unresponsive that officers have worked eight years without a contract.

Compton officers recently voted unanimously to affiliate with the AFT/CFT, and Ford expects to speak with a stronger voice when he returns to the bargaining table as head of the Federation's

newest California local.

Pay raises are the local's top priority. Additional proposals include amending the insurance for patrol cars to cover accidents while officers are on duty, not just responding to an emergency.

The new local looks forward to negotiating a strong new contract.



Jermaine Ford, left, with fellow police officers on the Compton force.

## San Francisco mayor names Paraeducator of the Year

### THE MAYOR

of San Francisco recently recognized 10 public school educators for their dedication and professionalism. Honorees were selected based on their ability to promote innovative learning, accountability, and equity and access in the classroom and school site.

The 2018 awards included the mayor's first-ever Paraeducator of the Year. Mary Lavalais attended City College and earned a bachelor's degree in social work and a graduate degree



BOB RIHA JR

Mary Lavalais

in marriage, family, and child counseling at San Francisco State University. The native San Franciscan

began working in early childhood development in 1970 and joined the unified district as a student advisor in 1986. Lavalais has been at the S.F. Community School since 2000 and represents instructional aides on the executive board of her union, United Educators of San Francisco.

## Classified Conference October 19-21 in the Bay Area

AT OUR ANNUAL conference, you can catch up on current issues, gear up for the General Election, attend workshops on professional topics, network with your colleagues and have some fun. This year's event will be held October 19-21 at The Westin San Francisco Airport in Millbrae.

Scholarships are available to members from small locals and to members from locals who are attending the conference for the first time. Learn more about the scholarships online, where you can also register to attend the conference.



We hope to see you in Millbrae!  
» Learn more at [cft.org/your-work/classified/conference](http://cft.org/your-work/classified/conference).

## Antelope Valley local awards scholarships in CFT field rep's name

### THE ANTELOPE VALLEY

Federation awarded six scholarships at a May 18 event sponsored by the college foundation.

High school seniors Star Collins and Amanda Martinez each received \$500 from the Karen Curtis Scholarship, which the AFT Local 4683 created to



Feliz Vasquez

honor one of the union's driving forces, CFT Field Representative Karen Curtis. Curtis died in 2016, a year after retiring. Her sister Leslie, also a union rep, and who originally encouraged "K.C." to become a union activist, presented this year's awards.

"K.C. did most of our early training, negotiated our first contract...all of that," said President Pamela Ford. "She was so inspirational for us."

Local 4683 awarded another of its \$500 scholarships to member Felix Vasquez, a



COURTESY LOCAL 4683

Local President Pam Ford, left, Leslie Curtis, center, and student recipients Star Collins and Amanda Martinez.

clerical assistant who is seeking a degree in small business management. Vasquez was a journeyman mason for 15 years and member of the Cement Masons Union. His dad was a member for 25 years.

"It was through my dad that I was introduced to all the benefits unions can offer their members," Vasquez said. "I believe unions give representation to any member who needs it so that they can keep working, unaffected and unafraid."

### FRAMED ON INSTAGRAM!

According to Danielle Short, classified vice president for San Diego's AFT Guild, the local was looking for ways to make campus tabling more dynamic and encourage more conversation with members.

A brainstorming session led to the idea of a giant photo frame. Campus printing services helped create the frame and printed it. "We used it for our tabling," Short said. "And then we just ran with it for other events and outreach. It definitely breaks the ice — and it's a lot of fun."  
» Find the local on Instagram at [@aftguild1931](https://www.instagram.com/aftguild1931).



DANIELLE SHORT

**FINAL  
PRINT  
ISSUE!**

**FIND  
US  
ONLINE**

**Anticipating financial** pressure from the *Janus v. AFSCME* ruling, the CFT will end print newsletters and switch to online publication only. Sign up now to receive *Classified Insider* by email. Keep getting the union news! And remember to follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

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# Classified Insider

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## Organizing

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“Non-members know we negotiate the contract that brings us all better working conditions and salaries.”

Williams also led efforts to organize part-time personnel who care for students before and after class, and on playgrounds. “Noon duties” are mainly Latinas and are often the lowest paid staff on campus.

A new law that expands classified service to include “noon duties” went into effect in January, and the local is holding meetings to inform employees of their new rights.

“Noon duties don’t need to pass probation before joining the union,” Williams said. “Why should they wait to vote on a contract?”

### Antelope Valley

**Federation** President Pamela Ford said the *Janus* case created an urgency among AFT Local 4683 members to get active. “Now members constantly come by my office and ask what they can do, how they can help.”

In its current organizing campaign, Antelope Valley has more than doubled its ranks on campus and is aiming for

80 percent membership.

Ford credited the growth spurt to a team of CFT organizers that “set up a table in front of the bookstore and went around campus with our officers to convince members to join.”

Local 4683 is currently negotiating salary, benefits, and union access to new employees during orientation.



On “Blue Fridays” members of the Coast Federation wear their union shirts.

COURTESY LOCAL 4794

California Federation  
of Teachers   
AFT, AFL-CIO  
A Union of Professionals

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