



School and college staff are partners in student success Classified conference hears how co-workers educate, mentor kids

FOR ESMERALDA GRUBBS, success starts when a Local 1475 member takes a preschool boy or girl by the hand and begins to build a foundation for lifelong learning.

Grubbs works with the Early Childhood Federation, a Los Angeles County local representing preschool workers, from faculty and teaching assistants to custodians and kitchen staff. Challenges can be daunting, especially in low-income communities. In October, a drive-by shooting threatened a Head Start program in a Watts housing project.

“It’s a once-in-a-blue-moon happening,” Grubbs said, “but the faculty and staff all knew what to do. Everyone went into lockdown mode. Everyone had a role in making sure the kids were safe.” Later, Local 1475 members addressed ways to improve security in contract negotiations.

“Classified employees have a vested interest in our students’ success,” said Grubbs. “More often than not, we live in the neighborhoods where we work. These are our kids and our neighbors’ kids.”

Carl Williams, a senior custodian with Lawndale’s K-8 school district and leader of the Lawndale Federation of Classified Employees, said, “We used to take a back seat to teachers, but now we stand shoulder to shoulder with them. We realize

that having a certificate — or not — doesn’t determine how much you can contribute to student success.”

Williams recently mentored an eighth-grade student

College are also “committed to helping students one by one, but it’s a different relationship than in elementary or high school.”



After a long day of inspiration and learning, attendees at the 2012 CCE Conference donned cowboy hats and kicked up their heels at a hoe-down.

one period a day for most of a school year. They worked on homework and reviewed the student’s daily progress report.

“I committed to his success, even through high school, and he still calls to update me. If every classified employee

Apart from tougher academic demands, there are financial barriers and myriad choices the students never had to make in high school. And counseling they could count on before has often been cut for budget reasons, said Ramon, member of



Carl Williams



Diana Ramon

connected with one student, that’s all it would take.”

Diana Ramon said staff at Orange County’s Coastline



Angelenos Luz Nuñez, left, and Marian Murray, attend a satisfying workshop.

SHARON BEALS

the Coast Federation of Classified Employees.

In July 2011, the Coast district created Guide U Mentors, in which an unpaid volunteer commits to help one student until they graduate. Ramon said volunteers alert students about changes in financial aid and new scholarship opportunities, and answer their questions by email within 24 hours.

“And who do you think most of the volunteers are?” asked Ramon. “Classified employees! There must be at least 25 of us in the program, and word is spreading. Each semester the program grows.”

CLASSIFIED CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- A panel discussion at the conference held October 26-28 addressed the theme: *Partners in Student Success*.
- Keynote speaker Jim Beall, former assemblyman just elected to the Senate, spoke to stopping the “pipeline to prison.” Beall wants to see money spent on redemption rather than imprisonment and “community college is where that redemption begins.”
- Attendees honored the **100th anniversary of the Bread and Roses Strike**. For fun, everyone geared up for a Western hoe-down.

Classified rise to the challenge of passing Prop. 30

Threat of more furlough days spurs community outreach and response



The Oxnard Federation mobilized in a "Walk for Education," which helped elect their AFT colleague Steve Hall, center in blue shirt, to the district school board.

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES had a lot to lose if voters rejected Prop. 30 on November 6. Staff swung into action across California, racking up victories in state and local campaigns that will go a long way toward saving public education.

Gilroy paraprofessionals in AFT Local 1921, for example, resisted pressure to take 10 furlough days until the need was clear, even though district teachers represented by CTA and classified employees represented by CSEA had agreed beforehand to give up the days.

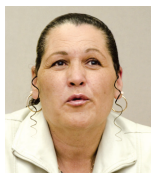
"We were in the middle of negotiations," said Arcelia O'Connor, president of the Gilroy Federation, "but we didn't want to make any decision on furloughs until after the vote."

Federation members phone-banked at the CFT office in Gilroy and the Central Labor Council in San Jose. O'Connor and other union leaders signed a letter sent to every district employee about the importance of passing Prop. 30.

Thanks to Prop. 30, the

Gilroy school year has been extended two weeks and the days the other employees lost have been reinstated.

The long shadow of furloughs was also on the minds of 1,500 paraprofessionals represented by United Educators of San Francisco. "Our paras have always been politically active, but there was a little extra motivation this time because those days were at stake," said Carolyn Samoa, UESF Vice President for Paraprofessionals.



Carolyn Samoa

San Francisco paras were saddled with four furlough days during the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years. That was cut to 1.5 days this school year and next, but if voters had rejected Prop. 30, that would have increased to 6.5 furlough days in 2013-14 and 10 days in the 2014-15 school year.

"That's a lot for paras who are only averaging about

\$25,000 a year," Samoa said.

With the help of a CFT grant, Samoa said the union's political director and two teachers visited all district school sites – nearly 120 – to mobilize

1273 member Linda Torres, a paraeducator in the district, helped mobilize and organize for four hours per day.

"But our biggest impact," Gibbs added, "was working with

"Our paras have always been politically active, but there was a little extra motivation this time because those days were at stake."

— Carolyn Samoa, UESF Vice President for Paraprofessionals

members and build political coalitions.

The election also marked a highpoint for Oxnard's Federation of Teachers and School Employees, representing more than 400 classified staff members at seven high schools and the district office.

In the last school board race, Classified Vice President Mike Gibbs said, "We were still taking baby steps. We interviewed candidates but didn't support anyone. This time we also held a public forum and Steve Hall (president of the Ventura County Federation of College Teachers) won hands down."

Classified employees mobilized members on their campuses, walked precincts and worked phone banks, and thanks to a CFT grant, Local

other AFT locals, the League of Women Voters, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and other allies. We all stood together. If it had been



Elementary para Josie Harrington phone banks in San Francisco.

just us, we wouldn't have had the same impact."

Oxnard has the most furlough days of any district in Ventura County, Gibbs said, "but our board is basically pretending that Prop. 30 didn't pass. They claim we're still running a deficit. We brought in a financial expert to show the discrepancy in their figures, but they are ignoring us."

Newly elected board member Hall has opened communication with the Federation and his support, Gibbs said, will be critical in ongoing contract negotiations.



Gilroy's Cheryl Chagoya, left, and Arti O'Connor work on their contract.

New law! Pension changes for CalPERS members start January 1

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES

with questions about the new Public Employees' Pension Reform Act of 2013 may find answers on the Frequently Asked Questions page of the CalPERS website. Here are some answers to common questions.



- The new law requires that new employees of public schools and community colleges contribute at least 50 percent of the total normal cost or the same contribution rate as "similarly situated" employees, whichever is higher.

- When it comes to buying additional service credit, a member must have five years of credited CalPERS service and CalPERS must receive his or her application by the December 31 deadline.

- The provision that allows a CalPERS member to convert sick leave to service credit does not change, but sick leave payouts will not count toward pensionable compensation for new members.

- The new law doesn't change how public employers treat special compensation for current employees, but it does define pensionable compensation for new members differently from compensation earnable, which applies to current employees.

➤ Find the *Frequently Asked Questions* at goo.gl/Whwmo. See how districts determine the "50 percent of the total normal cost" for current and new members by downloading the pdf from the CalPERS site at goo.gl/8NRCm.

'Tis the season ... to strike!



STEVE WEINGARTEN

ON BLACK FRIDAY, members joined Walmart strikers in a historic daylong walkout that shook the world's largest retailer just as the holiday shopping season was beginning. Seen picketing in front of the store in Paramount, wearing blue t-shirts, are CFT Council of Classified Employees President Velma Butler, also president of the AFT College Staff Guild, with her grandson Isaiah and husband Calvin Louissaint.

Gilroy paras win email time, domestic partner coverage

THE GILROY Federation of Teachers and Paraprofessionals is breaking new ground in negotiations covering about 120 paraprofessionals in the Gilroy Unified School District. President Arcelia O'Connor said previous contracts had not addressed emails and granted only limited rights

for domestic partners. "But now we have time to check district communications online," O'Connor said, "and we have added domestic partners to members of the immediate family for items like family illness and bereavement."

O'Connor added that the

bargaining committee — which also includes Treasurer Anna-Maria Daulton, Secretary Cheryl Chagoya and Federation member Maria Sorensen — still has a lot of work to finish negotiations, and that the agreements are only tentative until members ratify a complete contract.

Be a delegate to CFT Convention March 15–17

PLAN NOW if you want to be a delegate to the CFT Convention, with the theme "Building Education That Works: Educators, Students, Community." It will be held March 15–17 in Sacramento. The Convention is open to all

CFT members, but only elected delegates can vote. It is the Federation's highest body, where delegates shape union positions on issues affecting members and elect CFT officers. Contact your local union now if you want to run as a

delegate. There will be workshops for classified employees and paras, plus there's time for fun, with receptions and networking.

➤ **Important date:** The deadline to submit resolutions for Convention is **February 1**.

ClassifiedCalendar

Legislative Reception for leaders and members to meet the new California Legislature in the State Capitol is **January 28**.

Leadership Conference for local union presidents, treasurers, and staff will be held **February 7-8** at the Marriott City Center in Oakland.

Convention is **March 15-17** at the Sheraton Grand Sacramento (See story at left). The **Council of Classified Employees** will meet Friday evening, **March 15**.

AFT's Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRP) Conference will be held **March 21-24** at the Minneapolis Hilton.

Lobby Days in the State Capitol on **April 8-9** provide union members an opportunity to talk with their legislators.

Yes to union-made! Find products made by union workers

AMERICAN RIGHTS at Work launched an online guide to union-made products earlier this year after a poll showed Americans are eager to support workers, but 82 percent said they don't know which products are union-made. Use these sites and your purchasing power to support good American jobs.

American Rights at Work
goo.gl/BJ2Cv

AFL-CIO Union Label Department
unionlabel.org

Labor 411: Making it Easy to Buy Union
labor411.org

UAW: Cars and appliances
uaw.org/content/uaw-made-page

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No to Walmart!

Learn how the corporate mega-store hurts employees, communities and the economy

OUR Walmart (Organization United for Respect at Walmart) forrespect.org

UFCW: Making Change at Walmart makingchangeatwalmart.org/factsheet/

Fast Company: The Walmart You Don't Know goo.gl/Z9wD2

16 Facts About Walmart That Will Blow Your Mind goo.gl/HkZiz



Classified Insider

UNION NEWS FOR THE CLASSIFIED SERVICE

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When workers stand together, we can win!

I SPENT THE DAY after Thanksgiving with family and friends at Walmart. We weren't in front of the largest — and richest — retailer in the world for Black Friday sales. We were there to support employees standing up for what every worker wants: dignity and respect on the job.

By **Velma J. Butler**
President,
CFT Council
of Classified
Employees

Walmart's formula for "success" is no secret. They offer cheap prices by paying suppliers around the world like dirt, paying their

1.4 million employees like dirt, and driving smaller competitors out of business. If other "big box" stores try to play by the same rules, it touches off a race to the bottom that spreads the pain.


Are the people who shop at Walmart aware of what they're doing? They may get a cheaper TV, but they're making the Walton family even richer and pushing their neighbors deeper into poverty. This is not

the future we want for our children.

For some working Californians, especially in rural areas, Walmart may be the only option for discount shopping. But with a little planning and internet access, we can all find great bargains online. This issue of *Classified Insider* provides several websites (listed above) that offer union-made products and services you can be proud to purchase.

The only way working families can advance is by standing together and standing up. The clerical dockworkers in San Pedro and Long Beach did and broke through two and a half years of management stalling. Eight days on a picket line is no one's idea of a good time, but now those ILWU members — and future members — can look forward with hope.

Walmart workers are finally standing up and every union member should stand with them. They can count on me and I hope we can count on you. Stand with us!

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

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