



Education Association of St. Lucie LOCAL 3616

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The VOICE

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Upcoming Events

October 7: Last day to file appeal of Final Evaluation Summary Scores

October 7: Pro-Tech meeting at EASL office

October 9: Holiday for All

October 11: End of 1st Nine Weeks

October 14: Teacher Workday

October 31: Early Release—Faculty Council Choice

My Union Story

**Maureen Sinnott,
Member Support Specialist**

At the age of 30 I realized that I hated working in corporate America (in my case, Contracts, Copyrights and Permissions for various book publishers) and wanted to do what I had set out to do all along – teach. And so, I went and got my Master’s degree in Education and started teaching in the New York City school system.

As every teacher can attest – NOTHING prepares you for being a teacher except actually being a teacher in the classroom. And as every teacher can attest – the first-year teaching is rarely, if ever, all rainbows and unicorns! My first-year teaching was about as awful as you can get. Some highlights: teaching 4 different subjects (English 1, ESOL 1, Business Law, English 1 Repeater – 19 boys aged 17 through 19 who had failed English 1 three, four and five times); teaching those subjects in 5 different classrooms back to back in a four-story building; having no place of my own – I carried so much teacher “stuff” with me, I probably should have hired a Sherpa to help me! Honestly, I could go on and on!

What I didn’t realize was the school was violating the teacher contract in so many ways and on so many levels. But no one at THAT school stepped up or stepped in. Needless to say, I was less than successful and was not reappointed.

I was then sent to another high school to work for a woman whose nickname was the Terminator. For some reason, I had slipped through the cracks and made it past my 90 days so now the school system had to build a file against me in order to fire me. And the Terminator was the expert in this. I knew of her reputation and was resigned to the fact that maybe I wasn’t cut out to be a teacher.

On my first day at the new school, I just hap-

pened to start chatting with three veteran teachers in my department. Unbeknownst to me, they were all union reps for that school. Or should I say, FIERCE union reps for that school. After hearing my story of how the teacher contract was not only violated but trounced on, they marched into the Terminators office and advocated for me. How could anyone – even a veteran teacher – be successful in that kind of environment?

Luckily for me, the Terminator decided to look at me not as someone who needed to be gotten rid of, but perhaps as someone who might need to be given a chance to succeed.

And succeed I did. I was smart enough to know that these three women were a force of nature, both as teachers and as union advocates. I spent every spare moment with them – learning. Learning what it meant to be a successful teacher as well as a strong union advocate. Most importantly, I learned the contract. So, any time something didn’t “feel” right or was downright wrong, I knew to advocate for myself.

A few years later, a student threw me across the classroom. My principal (who, a few months later, was taken out in handcuffs – a story for another time) wanted to write a letter of reprimand for my file because I tried to break up a fight (I wasn’t breaking up a fight, I was stopping the student from strangling a girl – again, a story for another time), but I knew enough about the contract to stand up for myself and tell him that he was not following protocol for writing a letter of reprimand. He had failed to investigate what had actually happened. In the end, I prevailed because I knew my rights under the teacher contract. And most importantly, I advocated for myself.

My Union Story . . . continued from page 1

When I moved to Port St. Lucie in 2004, I was surprised to find out that I didn't have to join the union because Florida is a right to work state. I never hesitated – I joined the St. Lucie CTA/CU at New Teacher Orientation. Luckily for me, I have only ever had to make use of the resources of the CTA/CU twice in all these years – both fairly minor instances – but I knew that the union was there to support me.

I then became a union rep (which then became called a Worksite Leader), both at my first school (Forest Grove) and my next school (Treasure Coast). I attended Worksite Leader meetings and I learned how to advocate and support the members at my school. Then I became a member of the Executive Board because I was interested in learning about the inner workings of the union.

When the position of Member Support Specialist became available due to the retirement of Karen Lyman, I knew I was ready to apply for the position. Not because I was tired of teaching, but because I knew it was my turn to support and advocate for those teachers who were struggling in their classrooms.

I left the classroom in 2016 to become the new Member Support Specialist. And so, after 27 years in education, my union story has come full circle. I am privileged to be the person that members can turn to when they need someone to work with them in their classrooms.

Hopefully, 27 years from now, someone will be writing their union story and will remember me as fondly as I remember my union sisters.

Focus On CU with CU VP Sandy Rohn

On September 20th, the Education Association presented the annual CU conference just for Support Staff. The theme this year was "You Too Are a Leader". Sessions offered included *True Colors*, *Dare to Lead*, and *How Can We Help YOU?* A continental breakfast and lunch were provided compliments of the Education Association. The conference was well-attended and a huge success. Attendees all agreed that the conference was fun, informative and the food was great!!

The union was able to negotiate with the district to settle the compensation agreement in June. Increases are 3½ per cent plus a step for a total close to 6 percent. This almost 6 per cent increase is the highest we have gotten in years. Furthermore, the district is paying more towards your insurance premiums. All support staff are a priority for your Union.

Membership counts in so many ways: we bargain for your salary, contract language, provide free professional development and are there to give you vital information, advice and to always protect your rights.

If you know someone who is not a member, encourage them to join you in your professional organization.

Remember, we are stronger together—Sandy.

Your Contract... Clarified with CTA Vice President Rebecca Petrie

As the deadline approaches for teachers to submit appeals to their Final Evaluation Summary Scores, there are a few things we want you to keep in mind.

First and foremost, if you feel a mistake has been made, file an appeal.

The appeals process is the only process that is in place to correct errors.

State the reason you feel there was an error made. Remember, appeals need to be made regarding **errors** in the process itself, *not in the fairness of the calculation or score*. The appeals committee is made up of representatives of both the district and the union.

Second, and this is the hardest thing to say and to hear, the system is not fair. Legislators did not have "fair" in mind when they pushed the system onto school districts and teachers.

There is no way to make the system fair. The union and the district work every year to try to address issues, but we also have to be careful that a fix "here" doesn't create a new problem "there."

Third, because the system *is* flawed, the district and union agreed to reduce the weight of the Student Performance Measure (SPM) to the legal minimum of 33%. We also negotiate the Pay For Performance to be

minimal so that teachers see minimal pay impact from a year where the odds *were* in their favor to a year when the odds *were not* in their favor.

Component	% of Overall
IPS/DPP	67%
SPM	33%

Should you wish to appeal your final score, you must submit the appeals form **no later than Monday, October 7, 2019**. Directions have been sent out via email and you can also access the necessary form on the district website.

Win a Carnival Liberty Cruise for (2) to the Bahamas

Raffle to benefit St. Lucie County Special Olympics

*Sail Away Aboard
The Carnival Liberty
5-Day/4-Night Cruise*

**Raffle
Tickets
\$10**

**Raffle Drawing
to be held
December 14th**

Palm Beach-Treasure Coast AFL-CIO's

**2019 Special Olympics
Christmas Party**

Saturday, December 14th @ NOON

**St. Lucie Draft House & Sports Bar
6630 S. U.S. Hwy 1
Port Saint Lucie, FL 34952**



To purchase tickets, please contact our office at
(772) 464-6430 or email us at
Info@stluciateachers.com



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Sandy Rohn, Vice-President CU: FPC
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Lashawn Floyd, CU Secretary: NPT
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AIG Savings Matters

Footing the bill for retirement

How much will you need to retire the way you want?

The answer depends on your future goals. Figuring out how much you need to save starts with figuring out your future lifestyle. Knowing what you're saving for could help keep you focused.

Check out the Education Center on AIG.com for more useful information and tips to help you plan and achieve the future you want.

Your Future is Calling. Meet It with Confidence.

CLICK AIG.com

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AIG Retirement Services

Each year FEA-Retired gives \$100.00 grants to active educators for projects that will add to efficient and effective teaching and enhance student learning.

Last year two of our SLC Teachers received the grant.

If you are interested, please be sure to complete the grant application, attach a summary of your proposal, and return it to the Education Association office no later than November 14, 2019.

Once we receive your application, we will verify membership and submit it to our Retiree Chapter for processing.

To obtain a grant application, please call the office.

EASL Annual CU Conference: *You Too Are a Leader*



Sandy Rohn, CU Vice President, manning the registration desk.

Rebecca Petrie, CTA Vice President, takes a selfie with CU member, Sal DeCarlo.



Lashawn Floyd, CU Secretary, talks to attendees during the General Session.

Lucy Bravo, Organizing and Communications Specialist, preparing to facilitate the *True Colors* session.



David Freeland, CTA/CU President, working with a group during the Getting to Know You activity.