

# The Word

MAY  
2008



## A Message From Our President **Beth Ludeman**

### What a Ride!

Serving as president of the West Allis-West Milwaukee Education Association has been the experience of a lifetime. And of course, I could never have done it on my own, without the support of many people within the association who have served alongside me. There have been healthy debates and passionate arguments about the many issues we have faced over the years; no one ever said this was easy. But that’s what union work has always been: a collective struggle to achieve for the benefit of the whole. There’s no room for selfish motives because too much is at stake.

I wish you could have been there on Friday night, May 9<sup>th</sup>. It was our spring party, traditionally held each May to honor those members who are “graduating” to retirement. The dinner was terrific, prepared by Jeanne Ricci and her crew, who volunteer their time to cook and serve for whoever shows up. The libations were refreshing, and the conversation lively. A special part of the evening was, and always is, the program,

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because each honoree offers up favorite memories from their career in West Allis schools. There's laughter, and crying, and all the other emotions that a profession in public education calls up. Three of this year's retirees in particular are significant to me, because I have had the honor of working alongside them as they have served our local membership, and in a variety of capacities. Laurel Key has been a Building Rep, our Political Action Chair, and our President during her tenure of leadership. Barb Costanzo has worked as both a Building Rep and as Secondary Professional Rights & Responsibilities Chair as she helped other members learn the value of our association. And Linda Weaver's contributions to our union have been as Building Rep, Membership Chair, West Suburban Council President, and WEAC Director, representing the voice of our membership directly to our state organization. Whether you are aware of it or not, these three advocates have worked tirelessly to benefit you. While you may never have even met any of them, the time and commitment they have given to our local has made us the strong, solid support network that we are.

So, now what? What happens when all of those in current positions of leadership move on to other horizons? Who will serve on the bargaining team once Greg Wall, Jeff Sikich, Cathi Probst, Chad Lehman, and Eden Klug retire or decide to step down? How will we maintain our current hard-fought benefits and salary schedule? I know many of you out there will step up, but what will it take? A crisis? Maybe. Only you know for sure. All I know is that if you don't think you have enough time to contribute now, just imagine if you had to bargain all we now have in our contract on your own. By yourself.

And while some of you may challenge the assertion I make about our strength, I know of what I speak. In my discussions with other local presidents and with other representatives state- and nationwide, the WA-WMEA continues to be formidable. But that can't continue without the resolution and commitment of members to engage in action on behalf of our union. In fact, our most divisive administrators are counting on your disengagement. See, it makes their jobs so much easier that way.

As I pursue different interests in other areas of our union and resign my positions within our local, I thank each and every one of you for what you have contributed to my time in office. I am grateful for the support of the vast majority of members, but am equally indebted to the challenges and obstacles that were presented me, particularly as negotiations chair and president. Those problems and trials helped me grow, personally and professionally, and will continue to be the most provocative teachers I have had. For that, I cannot be anything less than forever grateful.

All the best, Beth Ludeman

## Protect Yourself



## PR&R

The increase in the use of technology in our schools and society needs to be recognized and noted as teachers. Please remember that you are using school equipment and network when at school, and that there is a policy of appropriate use for students and staff. Use caution with district email and remember that messages to all staff and all teachers are received by administrators. The district does have a filter for online access. There have been times that this filter has not been operating correctly. We are accountable for what students are doing when they are with us. We cannot assume that the filter will prevent people from accessing inappropriate websites. Technology allows us to do projects and presentations with our students, but with these opportunities comes a responsibility to make sure students are safe. Planned, structured activities can help with this. Also to be safe, searches should be done with previewed websites that are linked on a school site or with sites that are designed for kids to access information safely. Please see your Building Rep and IMC director or PR & R representative with questions or concerns.

To read and/or review the Acceptable Use Policies on the district website in the technology section, click on

[Acceptable Use Policies and Rules.](http://www.wawm.k12.wi.us/District%20Information/Technology/index.htm)

<http://www.wawm.k12.wi.us/District%20Information/Technology/index.htm>

### The Buck Stop

**Greg Wall**

WAWMEA Proud Member since  
1976

**Treasurer**

Thanks for all your support over the last few years. It has been fun to serve as your treasurer and work with some great people. Good Luck to all and have a great summer. And remember: Work alone-change one, work together-change many.

*PR&R Continued.....*

*Traveling teachers*

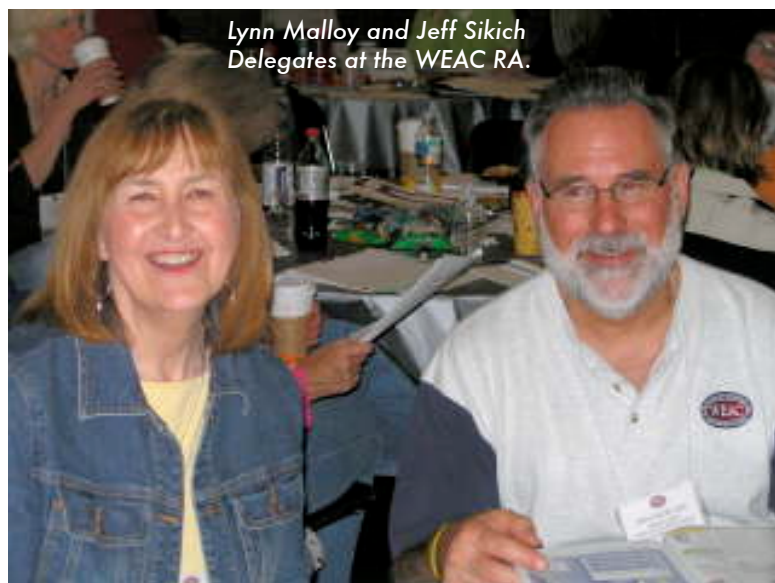
*If you currently travel between buildings, or have traveled in the past, please send Peggy Oberbeck or Nancy Nienhuis your exact schedule with class times, prep time and any duties you have been assigned.*

*Department Meeting Schedule*

Meetings will be after school next year. There will be discussion at Labor Management to establish new guidelines and an explanation of changes from the administration.

*Use of district email*

There are issues that have emerged for some members of the Association due to the restructuring process. We are asking that you follow the communication model and personally discuss your concerns with your Head Building Rep, PR&R or the appropriate administrator. Please refrain from using the district email during the school day to express your disappointment or excitement. Some of your thoughts may be misunderstood by other members or the administration.



Lynn Malloy and Jeff Sikich  
Delegates at the WEAC RA.

## From PR&R

### Restructuring

Kristen Guertner, Human Resources director, has indicated that if someone wanted a transfer and did not get it or would still like to be considered for a different school then they should email her. If it is about a team placement at FLW or WMMS those decisions were made by the administrative team at each school. She also provided the process used for the placement of teachers for the 08-09 school year.

Teachers at Intermediate schools were asked what they wanted to teach and with whom. The principal, assistant principal and instructional principal (plus academic dean at FLW) developed their teams with that information and what they wanted to see and sent them to Kristen Guertner. The Directors provided input to teams for balance etc. (Very few changes were made here). Some changes were made because of need in the Reading program and Pupil Services. Kristen Guertner took that staffing and our high school needs and worked to move as many high school licensed people into the high school as we could without affecting current high school staff members. She gave elementary schools their staffing numbers and informed the schools that needed to excess teachers if they had no voluntary transfers. Then she staffed intermediate schools with voluntary transfers. Then she staffed elementary schools with Lincoln teachers then with involuntary/excess transfers and finally with voluntary transfers.

## Important Dates

May 14th - WAWMEA  
Representative Assembly -  
4:00 p.m. Brookfield UEP  
Office

May 21st - WSC Represent-  
ative Assembly - 4:30 p.m.  
Brookfield UEP Office

May 26th - WAWM Board  
of Education Meeting 7:00  
p.m. ADM BLD - Pershing

June 4th - WAWMEA Exec  
Board 4:00

June 5th - WSC Social -  
Maxie's Southern Comfort -  
6732 W. Fairview - 4:30  
p.m.

June 9th - WAWM Board  
of Education Meeting 7:00  
p.m. ADM BLD - Wilson

July 1st - 6th - NEA RA -  
Washinton D.C.

July 18th - Relay for Life  
6:00 p.m. Hale HS

July 21st - Understanding  
the Wisconsin Retirement  
System - 10:00-11:00 a.m.  
UEP

July 21st - Retirement Sav-  
ings: The Keys to Success -  
2:00-3:00 p.m. UEP

July 27th - 30th - WEAC  
Summer Academy  
Milwaukee

## Are You Expecting a Baby?

Pregnancy, childbirth, and caring for a newborn are exciting but daunting experiences. To answer your questions and complement your physician's care, our district offers a Maternity Education Program through the WEA Trust, called Club Mom.

When you participate in Club Mom, an obstetrical nurse with experience caring for pregnant women and newborn babies is available to answer your questions.

When you enroll in Club Mom, you will be asked to complete the first maternity health assessment that will help determine if your pregnancy is high risk. Based on your personal and family history, eating habits, and other conditions, a nurse will determine potential problems with your pregnancy; identified early, they can be more successfully treated.

Based on your individual needs, a nurse will coordinate with you a scheduled number of phone appointments. A nurse may also contact you two to four weeks after the birth of your baby.

*It's time to start planning for the annual American Cancer Society Relay for Life. The West Allis-West Milwaukee Education Association once again plans to organize a team which will walk in memory of Mark Jones, former Central Science Teacher. A commemorative plaque in his honor has been hung at the Administration Building.*



*Last year's Relay for Life was a huge success, raising millions of dollars for cancer awareness and treatment. The WA-WMEA Team raised nearly \$2000. With the local 2008 Relay for Life quickly approaching, we hope you'll help us build a strong foundation for another great year.*

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The Relay for Life is held on the track at Hale High School, located 11601 W. Lincoln Avenue. It begins at 6pm on Friday, July 18 and continues throughout the night and into the next morning. We are looking for teachers who are willing to sign up for a one-hour shift anytime beginning at 6pm until 10am on Saturday morning. Team members are invited to walk alone, bring family or friends to walk along with them, or even set up a tent and camp overnight if so inclined.

This year, plan to join the fun and raise some funds to fight cancer! If you are unable to be part of the team, please plan to pledge a donation. It is one more way to make a difference. Contact Lynn Herbst at 604-3700 ext 2220 or email [herbl@wawm.k12.wi.us](mailto:herbl@wawm.k12.wi.us) for more information or to sign up.

The Maternity Education Program also provides educational materials. You will receive a packet of information including, "Your Pregnancy and Birth," a comprehensive guide to pregnancy and newborn care, written by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

If you enroll during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy and complete the Club Mom program, you will also receive a \$50 savings bond in your baby's name after his or her birth.

For quick registration, you can enroll online, 24 hours a day, at [weatrust.com](http://weatrust.com). Click on "Maternity education program" under the Online Enrollment section.

You may also enroll by calling (800) 279-4000, Extension 8821, during regular business hours.

# Help or Hurt? Where Do You Stand on Public Education Issues?

Critical decisions await all of us this summer: workshop and seminar choices, vacation locations, home improvement projects. Politically speaking, though, our options could not draw a sharper contrast. Those of us who have been elected to represent the locals of West Suburban Council are once again charged with collecting contributions to the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, our national political action fund. The Fund helps elect federal office holders who believe that every school should be a great public school and are willing to support legislation to make that happen. If, this fall, we elect the right people, we can ensure that we get the help we need. Elected officials, like it or not, make decisions that help or hurt educators, and the students we serve, every day. They exert control over our classrooms and play a role in everything from how we teach to what we get paid. That's why we're lucky to have the NEA Fund for Children & Public Education as our voice to help elect people who support public education and value educators. Consider these choices:

## **More paperwork – or less?**

Federal regulations now bury us in paperwork and give us less

time for students. Elected officials who support public education can work to streamline processes and let us teach.

## **Excessive standardized tests – or meaningful assessments that actually measure what students are learning?**

The overemphasis on standardized testing under the federal government's No Child Left Behind Act often punishes good schools and unfairly labels students as failures. With elected friends of public education influencing policy decisions, we could have various assessments that work for our schools, students and educators.

## **One-size-fits-all funding - or funding based on local school needs?**

The so-called "65% Solution" is gaining strength nationally. Every school in the country would be under the same spending formula, which could result in outsourcing the jobs of thousands of support professionals and slash spending on student services and programs. Policymakers who understand the real needs of our students will push for responsible spending that makes sense for our schools.

## **Cutting Social Security benefits - or keeping Social Security safe for when we need it?**

The Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision are federal laws that take away some or all of the Social

Security benefits earned by hundreds of thousands of educators. Some elected officials want to privatize Social Security and put the funds in the stock market. We should not have to trade guaranteed retirement benefits that we've earned for the unpredictability of the stock market. Elected officials who respect our profession will fight to keep our Social Security secure.

By giving to the NEA Fund instead of directly to a candidate, the candidate knows it is from educators and their supporters. We can also give in larger amounts than most educators can alone by pooling all the donations together. By law, only voluntary contributions, never dues dollars, can be given to federal candidates. So please help by contributing a generous donation when approached over the next few weeks by your local leaders. We've been hurting long enough. You'll never know where your influence ends!

**NEA Fund for  
Children and  
Public Education**

**Make a  
Contribution!**