

## ORGANIZING REPORT

2009 MSEA Delegate Assembly  
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Welcome all to the Delegate Assembly! As the Director of Organizing, I have been very busy over the past year and am excited about the direction that MSEA is taking in regard to organizing and political action. I started working for MSEA in mid-March of 2008, so my report for last year was a little different than it will be this year. Much has happened for MSEA and it has been very exciting.

### NEW ORGANIZING

In May of 2008, we organized the paraprofessionals from the Blooming Prairie School District. I would like to personally welcome them to the MSEA family and am thoroughly impressed by this group of women. They ratified their contract this winter and were happy to see gains in their contract, even though their school district has faced some serious financial difficulties over the past few years.

This fall, I talked with paraprofessionals from St. Peter who are currently part of an independent association. They chose not to join MSEA, as the dues were an issue for quite a few people, but it brings me to a topic that I can't stress enough—talk *UP* MSEA. The St. Peter para's had heard about us from a member and that is how we were called. We need YOU, our members, talking to school personnel in other school districts. Nothing sends a better message to prospective members than a ringing endorsement from a current member! Also, please let me know if you have people talking to you about wanting a union in their unit – I am happy to travel anywhere to meet with people.

In January and February, I worked on, with the aide of the office staff, the creation of a database that housed the names of all unorganized school employees across the state of Minnesota. With an estimated 10,000 unorganized school employees across the state, I wanted to make sure that MSEA's name was out in front. I sent a letter to these employees, giving information about MSEA and the benefits and services that we provide to our members. We are starting to hear back from school employees across the state and anticipate that when the budget is finalized, we will hear much more.

In March, I created an organizing committee that is made up of members who will assist me in new organizing campaigns. The six current members, Dorothy Stobaugh, Rochester; Angie Lien, Willmar; Hank Wessel, Alexandria; Jeff Erickson, Bemidji; Tami Michaelson, Centennial and Bernice Bautch, Centennial received training on March 7<sup>th</sup> to learn about PELRA, organizing do's and don'ts and why organizing is important. The training was a huge success and I know that all six are excited to get started! If you are interested in helping organize new members, please let me know. The more the merrier!

### INTERNAL ORGANIZING

Over the summer, I worked on putting together an internal organizing plan for MSEA that would help train local units on the benefit of converting fair share fee-payers to full members. It also focused on talking to new hires and giving them information and education on the union, their contract and working at the school. So far, we have definitely seen the hard work of local stewards and building reps paying off, with one of the highest fair share conversion rates in years – congratulations to all of you! Strong units = strong contracts!

In October and November, we held our fall training “Multiple Hats,” which focused on internal organizing. It was a great success and I was so happy to see people really interested in how to make internal organizing more fun and more interesting. There were a lot of great ideas from participants that I have taken back with me and will use in additional trainings. I encourage any member to join us at a training that interests you – they provide an opportunity to network with other members, as well as gain a new perspective on how to solve an old problem.

### **POLITICAL ACTION**

In January 2009, I was appointed the Political Action Coordinator for MSEA and helped to coordinate the Day on the Hill with AFSCME Council 65. I am also working on updating the legislative part of the MSEA website, so that our members can remain informed about legislative issues that affect them. The office staff and I are working on updating our database so that we can make the information we send out relevant from district to district. As the Political Action Coordinator, I will keep updated on legislation at the Capitol that affects classified school employees. Many issues, including pay freezes, shared services, and health care, are directly related to our members and I will keep you informed on how the legislation will affect you.