

MTA Today

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MTA MEMBERS RALLY TO HELP COMMUNITIES

**EDUCATORS REACH OUT
TO STUDENTS IN
AFTERMATH OF TORNADOES**



State House ceremony celebrates great teachers

By Laura Barrett

Several MTA members and three Boston teachers were honored at this year's State House ceremony celebrating some of the state's many exceptional educators.

The ceremony on June 16 recognized teachers honored through various state and national programs, including the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year program, which the MTA helps to fund.

"We are proud of all of the honorees and proud to be part of a program to celebrate teachers who are smart, compassionate, hard-working, innovative and effective at their jobs," said MTA President Paul Toner.

Adam Gray, who teaches mathematics at Boston's Monument High School, was named the 2012 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. He succeeds Amherst teacher Floris Wilma Ortiz-Marrero, who received the award last year.



Adam Gray

Jessica Kodys, a history teacher at Stacy Middle School in Milford, was named the state's 2011 Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year.

Kodys, a resident of Mendon, creates authentic experiences for her fifth-grade history students to foster curiosity and

generate excitement in learning, according to a release issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which oversees the Teacher of the Year program. "She challenges her students to read, decipher and apply information gathered from primary documents, music and art. In class discussions students are asked to listen to their classmates and model how to respectfully disagree or challenge ideas or perceptions of the people or events being studied," the statement says.



Jessica Kodys

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This issue also includes the summer edition of the MTA Advantage

MTA's Mission Statement

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is a member-driven organization, governed by democratic principles, that accepts and supports the interdependence of professionalism and unionism. The MTA promotes the use of its members' collective power to advance their professional and economic interests. The MTA is committed to human and civil rights and advocates for quality public education in an environment in which lifelong learning and innovation flourish.

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On the cover

Christine Boseman of the Classified Staff Union at UMass Boston and Bernadette Marso of the Leominster Education Association were front and center during the MTA-led Rally for a Better Commonwealth, which was held in Boston's Copley Square on May 14 following the Annual Meeting of Delegates. A crowd of roughly 300 educators, fellow union members and supporters gathered for the event, which included a call to raise revenues to help keep Massachusetts a great place to live, work and raise a family. For coverage of the rally and the Annual Meeting, see pages 5, 6 and 7. Meanwhile, MTA members in central and western Massachusetts have been playing lead roles in helping their students and their communities in the aftermath of the tornadoes that struck the state on June 1. Springfield's Brookings School was heavily damaged, and staff and students were moved to the Boland School for the rest of the year. Stories appear on pages 10 and 11.



Photos by Christine Peterson, Meg Secatore and Paul Ryan



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Quote-Unquote

"Teachers educate and motivate students every day, preparing them for success as individual learners, responsible citizens, and leaders within their communities."

— *Comment by Governor Deval Patrick in a statement on the June 16 event honoring the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and other award winners*

New evaluation system wins approval

By Laura Barrett

All Massachusetts school districts will have to adopt new evaluation systems based on a state framework that was approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on June 28.

The new system will be phased in over three years, beginning with Level 4 schools — those designated “underperforming” by the state — in the 2011-12 school year.

“This framework incorporates many of MTA’s recommendations and, if properly implemented, will lead to better evaluations and improved teaching, learning and leadership in our schools,” said MTA President Paul Toner. “School committees and local associations are going to have to work out the details of the new systems in bargaining to make sure they are workable, fair and effective. The MTA will provide local associations with guidance and support during this process.”

The MTA played a central role in shaping the new regulations, starting with last December’s release of a report titled *Reinventing Educator Evaluation* that was produced by MTA’s Center for Education Policy and Practice.

“Our goal has always been to have a system that is transparent and fair and that helps teachers and administrators improve their practice,” said Toner. He added that the MTA’s participation was critical to making sure that multiple measures of student learning are used, not just MCAS scores; that high-stakes decisions are not made based on student learning measures alone; and that critical decisions about the new district-based evaluation systems remain in collective bargaining.

Until the new system is phased in, districts will continue operating under the existing state framework, which was mandated by the Education Reform Act of 1993. That system establishes principles of effective teaching and administration and specifies the minimum number of times teachers must be evaluated. Beyond that, however, most details are left to collective bargaining.

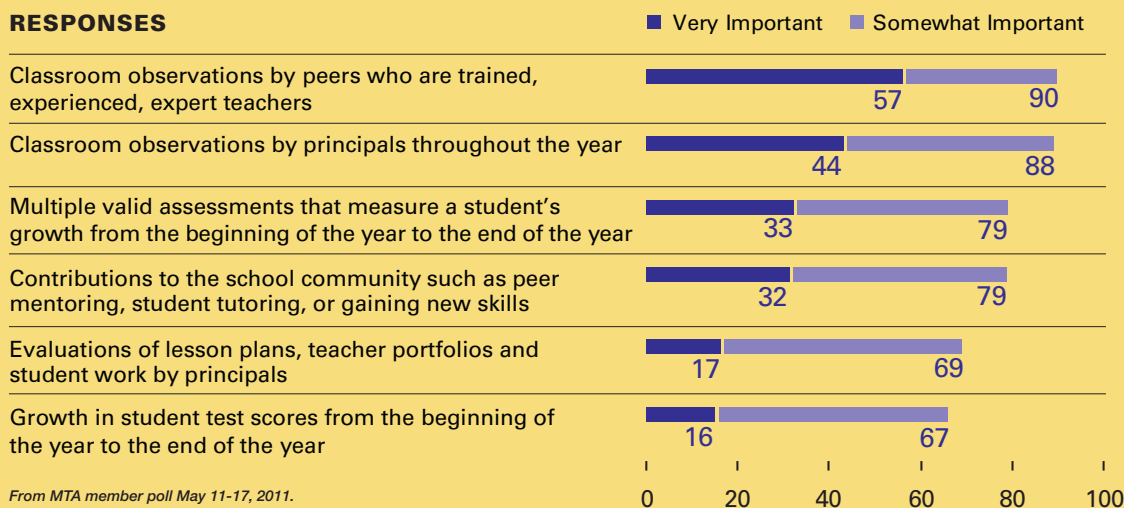
The new system establishes streamlined standards for teachers and administrators and will require the following steps:

- The educator does a self-assessment, meets with the evaluator to develop goals and an initial plan and begins implementing the plan.
- Part-way through the evaluation cycle, the evaluator conducts a formative assessment through classroom observation and examination of the educator’s work products to help guide educator practice.
- At the end of the cycle, the evaluator conducts a summative evaluation to give the educator one of four ratings: Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory.
- The evaluator compares that rating with multiple measures of student learning, growth and achievement. There must be at least two measures

Classroom Observations Seen As Most Important To Evaluations

Now, I am going to read a list of factors that are being considered by some states that plan to overhaul their teacher evaluation systems. The overhauled evaluation system would include multiple factors of teacher performance. Please tell me how important each of these factors would be in determining which teachers are effective and which ones are not – very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important at all.

RESPONSES



for each educator: either two district-based measures or one district-based assessment and one measure of trends in MCAS Student Growth Percentile Scores (for the 17 percent of teachers for whom those scores are available) or on the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment. A trend is defined as at least two years of scores; MTA will advocate that local associations bargain a three-year minimum at the local level. The educator’s impact on student growth will be deemed to be low, moderate or high.

■ An educator growth or improvement plan will be required, depending on the relationship between the rating of educator practice and the student learning measures. That plan will serve as the basis for the next cycle of evaluation.

The most serious consequences are for those rated Unsatisfactory. These educators will be put on a one-year Improvement Plan and, if they fail to improve in that year, they may be dismissed or demoted. In a May 11-17 MTA poll, 71 percent of MTA members favored this provision.

Educators with an overall rating of Needs Improvement will be placed on a Directed Growth Plan for one year or less. At the end of that period, they must be rated either Proficient or Unsatisfactory. If they are rated Unsatisfactory, the one-year Improvement Plan process is implemented.

Educators with a Proficient or Exemplary rating and new teachers will be on different plans, with the least restrictive plans for those with a high rating and a moderate or high impact on student learning.

The new regulations also require districts to collect survey data from students in grades six or higher about teacher effectiveness starting in the 2013-14 school year. That year they will also have to collect staff feedback about administrators. In the future, parent feedback may also be required.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary

Education is developing a “model” evaluation system that districts may adopt or modify. The MTA is already drafting a version of a model plan and will work closely with the DESE on the creation of the state plan.

Although more than two-thirds of the MTA members polled support using multiple measures of student growth as part of the evaluation, some have questions and concerns about what those measures will be and how they will be used.

Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester tried to allay some of their concerns.

“There’s no formulaic approach where the student learning piece trumps the evaluator’s judgment,” Chester said at a public forum in Agawam on June 7. “One question that your district will have to decide — and it’s a district-by-district decision — is what impact do we expect to see on student learning and does that differ for different students? Based on that, you’re going to have to make judgments about whether a given teacher or a given school is in fact reaching that expectation or not.”

Toner said that avoiding a formulaic use of scores has been among the MTA’s key objectives in this process.

“We were very clear that these measures should not account for a specific percentage of a teacher’s evaluation. And we were very clear that measures of student performance should not trump the evaluator’s judgment. We won both of those arguments,” he said.

“Everyone knows that teachers are not 100 percent responsible for how well their students perform,” Toner continued. “At the same time, it is common sense that teachers do have an impact on their students’ learning. How well their students are doing in school — based on multiple measures — is relevant to consider in the evaluation process.”

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Thank you for your involvement

It was wonderful seeing so many of you at the MTA Annual Meeting. We had a robust and respectful conversation on key issues, including single-payer health care, the role of standardized testing in teacher evaluations, advocating for state revenues, increasing the number of regional presidents' meetings and whether or not to organize Commonwealth charter schools. No matter where you stand, I appreciate the involvement of so many members in the association.

I also want to thank those of you who were able to stay for our Rally for a Better Commonwealth. Nearly



Paul Toner
MTA President

300 MTA members and allies attended the rally to hear speeches and show support for the MTA-sponsored legislation called "An Act to Invest in Our Communities." This bill would raise over \$1.3 billion in new income tax revenues, primarily from the wealthy.

These funds are needed more than ever as we face another year of cuts to local aid and

public higher education. I know that many of you are really feeling the squeeze at the bargaining table, in your schools and communities and on your campuses. We are urging all local associations and chapters to endorse the campaign and to ask their school committees and city and town officials to endorse it as well. More information is available on the MTA website and at www.ourcommunities.org.

Two other big issues have dominated our agenda in recent months.

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved new evaluation regulations on June 28. Districts will have to implement these over

Only through your active participation in the political process can we be successful.

the next three years, and that will entail bargaining new evaluation systems at the local level.

As described in this issue of *MTA Today*, the regulations are not perfect, but I believe they are much better due to the MTA's active involvement in the process and your advocacy.

Many administrators do an excellent job of evaluating and supporting staff. Unfortunately, many others do not. They treat evaluations as optional. They don't spend enough time meeting with staff members about their individual goals or helping them learn new skills. For those who are already doing evaluations right, the new system should not be much of a stretch. Those who aren't have a lot of work ahead of them.

One big change is that the new system will include multiple measures of student learning in a teacher's evaluation. Some have asked why the MTA agreed to this. How could we not? We devalue our role in the lives of our students if we claim that how well we teach has nothing to do with how much our students learn.

The main concern members have with this requirement is that MCAS and other test scores could be misused. We saw that risk, as well, which is why we advocated long and hard against any formulaic use of those scores or any other single measure. Fortunately, the Educator Evaluation Task Force and state education officials agreed with us. Multiple measures must be used, not just MCAS. Growth in performance must be considered, not just absolute levels. Student learning outcomes will not

count for a specific percentage of the evaluations.

At the state level, we will continue to push for requiring administrators to be trained in how to do effective evaluations. At the local level, we will work to make sure that new evaluation systems are fair and transparent.

The second big issue is municipal health insurance. As we went to press, this measure was in the House and Senate budget conference committee. We far prefer the Senate version to the House version. With your help, we have lobbied on behalf of these important principles:

- The sickest among us must be protected from exorbitant co-pays and deductibles.
- Retirees must be protected.
- Public employees and retirees must have a meaningful voice in health care changes.
- There must be a fair way to resolve disputes over changes in plan design.

Whatever the final outcome, the next step will be to make sure these changes are also implemented fairly at the local level. Again, the MTA will be there to help.

More issues are still to come. There is a good chance the Legislature will take up the governor's pension bill this summer. We may be calling on you once again to advocate for the retirement benefits of future MTA members, just as our predecessors worked to protect our benefits.

All of these efforts require broad member participation. Please heed the call when your Legislative and Political Action Team coordinator, your local president, your crisis committee chair or your MTA field representative asks you to help. We have a staff of about 150. We have 107,000 members. Only through your active participation in the political process can we be successful.

But life is not all work and no play. I hope that you all have an opportunity to enjoy time with your friends and family in the weeks ahead. Have a great summer.



Encouragement for activists

More than 200 MTA members joined MTA President Paul Toner, MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan and MTA Executive Director-Treasurer Ann Clarke as delegates to the 2011 Massachusetts Democratic State Convention, which was held on June 4 at the Tsongas Arena in Lowell. The MTA hosted a breakfast that drew numerous elected officials and candidates, including Congresswoman Niki Tsongas, who is pictured speaking to association delegates as leaders and members look on. It was easy to spot the MTA members on the convention floor because they wore their yellow MTA Activist T-shirts.

Photo by Bob Duffy

Rally caps MTA Annual Meeting

Allies join delegates in call for additional revenues to help communities

By Laura Barrett

I am a kindergarten paraprofessional working in a Massachusetts public school. After 13 years of dedicated service, I still make less than \$17,000 a year. And yet there are some people who say I am the problem — that we are the problem.”

Those words were spoken by MTA education support professional Jean Fay as she addressed a rally crowd of about 300 cheering community activists and fellow union members.

“To the health care CEO getting a million dollar severance check, to the corporations paying zero taxes, to the bank getting bailed out with taxpayers’ dollars — I am not the problem. We are not the problem,” Fay continued, drawing loud applause.

The rally took place in Boston’s Copley Square on May 14 after the MTA Annual Meeting ended at the Hynes Convention Center several blocks away. Many of the delegates stayed in the city to hear Fay — a member of the Amherst-Pelham Education Association and the MTA ESP of the Year — join other speakers in highlighting the dire fiscal situation in the state and talk about how to address it.

A key focus of the event was to show support for An Act to Invest in Our Communities, a tax reform bill filed by Representative Jim O’Day (D-West Boylston) and Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz (D-Boston). The MTA and other participants in the Campaign for Our Communities are working to educate the public and lobbying legislators on behalf of the bill, which was introduced earlier in the year.

Just nine days before the rally, hundreds of supporters of the legislation — including two busloads of MTA higher education members and students from the University of Massachusetts — spent hours in Gardner Auditorium at the State House testifying or waving “Invest in Our Communities” signs during a public hearing held by the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Revenues. So far, no action has been taken on the bill, but efforts to win passage will continue in the days ahead.

An Act to Invest in Our Communities would restore the state income tax rate from 5.3 percent to 5.95 percent while raising the personal exemption enough to hold down increases for the middle class. It would also increase the tax rate paid by investors while providing a targeted exemption for middle-class seniors.

When fully implemented, the measure would raise an estimated \$1.37 billion a year, helping to close the \$2 billion state budget deficit that is threatening public schools, public higher education, public safety, health programs, environmental protection efforts and jobs.

Low- and moderate-income taxpayers typically would either be unaffected or pay less under the plan. Middle-income families would see little change overall, with some paying more and some paying less than under the current system. Those with the



Photos by Christine Peterson and Sarah Nathan

Above left, MTA members Lois Jacobs and Zachary Galvin joined other advocates at the rally on May 14. At right, MTA President Paul Toner addresses the crowd in Copley Square.

highest incomes would pay the most. The steepest increases would affect the top 1 percent of families — those making more than \$500,000 a year.

“In state after state and in Washington, D.C., the Tea Party agenda is to push through tax breaks for the wealthy and for big corporations, then sound the alarm that the deficit is increasing,” MTA President Paul Toner declared as he stood before the sign-waving crowd in Copley Square. “This growing deficit provides them with a good excuse to take an ax to programs for the poor and the middle class.”

Harris Gruman of the Service Employees International Union, who received MTA’s President’s Award this year for leading campaigns to defeat tax-cutting ballot initiatives in 2008 and 2010, spoke of the need to increase revenues for the benefit of all.

“The generation that lived through the Depression and World War II, which is rightly referred to as ‘the Great Generation,’ understood the value of investing in their communities,” said Gruman, who is now playing a major role in advocating for the tax legislation. “That’s why they were willing to contribute the revenue to make unprecedented investments in schools, parks, roads and services that we still enjoy today.

“Since then we have lost some of that commitment and have let our revenues decline for decades,” he continued. “It’s time to step up again and invest in our communities. We did it before. We can do it again.”

Although many legislators warn that there is little appetite for raising taxes right now, the testimony and other signs of support for increasing revenues to protect services far outstripped the weak opposition presented when

Chip Ford of Citizens for Limited Taxation spoke against the bill during the hearing at the State House.

He posted the following statement on CLT’s website:

“As usual, the power behind the latest demand for tax hikes is the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), which usually argues that it’s ‘for the children.’ However, that phrase has become a joke, so now the MTA campaign raises taxes ‘for the commonwealth.’ As in, what’s ours is theirs.

“The usual chorus of ‘me-too’ unions and liberal groups have assembled in support: The Boston Teachers Union, Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, Greater Boston Labor Council, Jobs with Justice, National Association of Social Workers-Mass., blah, blah, blah. Everyone with a hand out reaching for our pockets is signing up to take more from us.”

Meanwhile, CLT and its supporters have stood by while wealthy bankers have reached for *our* pockets, taking taxpayer bailout money and then giving themselves rich bonuses while the country continues to struggle through a down economy.

“Here’s how bad it has gotten,” Toner said at the Copley Square rally. “Today, the richest 1 percent of Americans receive a quarter of all income and have 40 percent of all the wealth. In fact, they have as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent of Americans combined. This is a bigger concentration of wealth at the top than in any other modern industrialized country. It is also the biggest gap the U.S. has seen since 1929. You don’t need to be a history major to know what happened in 1929.”

More information about the Campaign for Our Communities is available at www.ourcommunities.org and www.massteacher.org/revenue.



Photos by Sarah Nathan

There were smiles all around when Human Relations Committee members posed with the 2011 winners. Pictured at left, from left to right in the back row, are Frances Cooper-Berry, who recently stepped down from the committee, HRC members George Sowpel and Sharon DeCicco and Chairman Dale Forest. In front are award winners Caroline Hunter, Ann Marie Dooley and Susan Mendoza Friedman, along with committee member Bonnie Page. In the photo at right, the crowd applauds during one of the many heartfelt moments at the MTA Human and Civil Rights Awards Banquet.

Awards recognize efforts to create ‘better world’

By Sarah Nathan

Three women who have used their passion, commitment and creativity to make a positive difference in the lives of others were honored at the recent MTA Human and Civil Rights Awards Banquet.

Hyannis dance studio owner Susan Mendoza Friedman, Harwich High School special education teacher Ann Marie Dooley and Cambridge educator and community activist Caroline Hunter were lauded by an overflow crowd of MTA leaders, members, retirees and supporters at the Sheraton Boston.

The banquet, sponsored by the MTA Human Relations Committee, was held on the evening of May 13, the first day of the Annual Meeting of Delegates. The banquet featured a performance by the Early Bird Singers, a group of fourth- through eighth-grade students from the Peabody School in Cambridge.

HRC Chairman Dale Forest set the tone early on. After welcoming the crowd, he offered a historical perspective — noting the 50th anniversary of the journey taken by the original Freedom Riders, a group of civil rights activists who bravely traveled by bus through the American South to challenge segregation and break down racial barriers.

“Tonight, we honor three individuals who have in a variety of ways worked to create a better world for all of us,” Forest said.

Since 1983, the HRC has been recognizing individuals and groups each year for taking the lead in fighting discrimination and promoting equal opportunity for women, people of color, the disabled, and those who are economically disadvantaged.

In presenting the Kathleen Roberts Creative Leadership Award to Friedman, Forest described her as “determined and dedicated to eradicating the disease of cancer from our planet.” Prompted to take action after a good friend was diagnosed with stage three ovarian cancer, Friedman established a small fundraising project, Dancing for a Cure, to raise awareness and money for cancer research. The

charity, created through her Cape Cod studio in 2006, has now raised more than \$100,000 and blossomed into an official arm of the Friends of Dana Farber Cancer Institute.

Friedman said she set out to use her own skills to make a difference. “I was neither a scientific researcher nor a professional fundraiser,” Friedman told the awards dinner audience. “I was a dancer, a teacher and a businesswoman ... I made a decision that November to embark on what I see as a lifetime commitment. What started out as a small holiday dance has become something much bigger.”

Dooley was also given the award named to honor Roberts, a former MTA president and 47-year educator whose strong commitment to service has made her a tireless advocate for public education, communities and the education profession.

“Someone once said, ‘Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen,’” Forest said. “Ann Marie Dooley personifies this form of leadership. Her unselfishness and enduring dedication to students and adults with disabilities laid a path for people to become part of a wonderful cause.”

Dooley, who teaches in a vocational program at Harwich High School serving students with special needs, spoke of the positive changes that have occurred during her 30-year career in education. In the 1970s, she worked as an attendant in an overcrowded, understaffed state facility where disabled children were given nearly no services and there was very little quality of life. Next, she said, she was hired as a special education teacher in a collaborative program where she had her own classroom in a public school, but it was in the basement and her students had no interaction with their peers in the building.

Much has changed over the years, thanks in part to Dooley, who has dedicated her career to expanding opportunities for students with special needs.

“Today, my students are an integral part of the high school,” she said. “They ride the bus, go to

elective classes with their peers, attend the junior prom and march with their class at graduation.

“We have come a long way from the back wards of Fernald,” she continued. “Special education students can now live full lives. They are respected and valued in their schools and communities.”

Dooley is proud of the progress that has been made and wants to see additional changes. She would like her students to graduate from high school and go on to college, where they could live in dorms and be part of the campus community.

The last award of the night — the Louise Gaskins Lifetime Civil Rights Award — was presented to Caroline Hunter, who, along with her late husband, Ken Williams, challenged the South African investments of their employer, Polaroid. The couple’s Cambridge-based protest quickly became a national story when Polaroid fired Hunter for her activities. By 1977, Polaroid had completely pulled out of South Africa, and the international divestment movement hastened the demise of apartheid. Nelson Mandela personally recognized the couple’s work when he came to Boston in 1993 before his election as president of South Africa.

Several years ago, the HRC recognized Gaskins, a pioneer for the involvement of women and people of color in education, the MTA and the NEA, by naming the award in her honor.

Hunter, who recently retired from her teaching job with the Cambridge Public Schools, says she is often asked by young people how she was able to hold a multinational corporation accountable.

“It was the result of coalition politics and mutual respect that galvanized other workers, students, unions and average citizens to see the plight of black South Africans as their own,” she said. “We are not free unless all are free from the oppression and suffering.

“This is the spirit we must continue to muster until Dr. Martin Luther King’s dream and the American dream are realized for all,” Hunter added.

Delegates grapple with key issues

By Meg Secatore

The banners on the walls of the Hynes Convention Center read “Making Public Schools Great for Every Student.” Delegates to the MTA’s 166th Annual Meeting reaffirmed their commitment to that goal during two days of deliberation, discussion and debate in mid-May.

“We must be doing something right here in Massachusetts,” said MTA President Paul Toner, who was leading his first Annual Meeting as the association’s top elected leader. “We are one of the most highly unionized states in the country, and we continue to be number one in student achievement!”

“Those two facts go hand-in-hand,” he continued. “We need to remind people of that every time they try to make the claim that unions hurt quality education. We have quality schools for many reasons, including a relatively well-educated population and high standards for students and teachers. We also got here because we as a profession are willing to innovate and change with the changing times.”

Toner’s remarks came on May 13 during the opening day leadership address and following the showing of an MTA-produced video, *We Are One*. The video borrowed its title from springtime union actions in Wisconsin, Ohio and many other states, including Massachusetts, and highlighted MTA member activism throughout the year.

“The accomplishments have been significant, starting with defeating Question 3 — the sales tax cut — just two years after we defeated Question 1, the initiative to eliminate the income tax,” MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan reminded the delegates. “If either of these had passed, higher co-payments for health insurance would be the least of our worries. Massive layoffs would have been inevitable.

“These ballot victories were made possible by MTA member involvement, phone-banking, e-mails, talking to co-workers and neighbors and by this body having the foresight to allocate some of our dues money to our media campaigns and organizing,” he said. “Thank you for all you did in these campaigns. But guess what? The battle for resources isn’t over.”

Offering the keynote address was NEA President Dennis Van Roekel, who logged many miles this spring visiting states where unionism and public employees are under attack.

Van Roekel punctuated his remarks with a favorite quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

“Now to me, what I immediately think about is: What does it take to get people to speak up and to act?” he continued. “Obviously the things that we deal with every single day matter. The students — from preK to graduate — they all have needs. They matter. What does it take to move people? ...

“I think it has to do with your level of satisfaction. If you like things the way they are, why would you advocate for change? Why would you



Photo by Meg Secatore

Delegates take a vote during the MTA's recent Annual Meeting at the Hynes Convention Center.

commit time, energy and resources to make things different? But if you are so dissatisfied that it just gnaws deep down in your gut, then you have to do something, and that’s what a movement is about.

“What do you care about that deeply? I hope it’s about what America will be five years from now and 10 years from now. I hope it’s about a profession — a *profession* — that doesn’t have people on the outside telling us what to do who’ve never been there and couldn’t last a day in your shoes. So when you leave this assembly, I hope you are gloriously dissatisfied!”

The NEA leader also spoke about a policy statement on educator evaluation that was approved in May by the NEA Board of Directors and will be taken up in July at the NEA Representative Assembly. “We have to take charge of our own profession,” he said. “It’s about evaluation, tenure, due process and accountability.”

Toner, during his remarks, also addressed educator evaluation, a contentious topic to which delegates would return many times during the meeting.

“In the MTA plan, approved by the Board of Directors, we support using multiple measures of student achievement — including MCAS growth scores where they are available — as part of the evaluation system,” Toner said. “It just doesn’t fly with the public for us to say that how well their students are performing in school and on the tests their children need to pass in order to graduate is completely irrelevant. But we are clear that these measures of student achievement should play a supporting, validating role rather than becoming the be-all, end-all of evaluations.”

Barry Bluestone, dean of the Northeastern University School of Social Science, Urban Affairs and Public Policy, offered some provocative ideas during the Friday issues forum. His presentation and conversation with delegates focused on what he calls “the new grand bargain, where unions play a greater role in improving service, quality and innovation in return for greater job security and public respect.”

Saturday’s business session opened with the presentation of three MTA awards. The honorees were Massachusetts AFL-CIO President Robert J. Haynes, who received the MTA Friend of Labor Award; SEIU Political Director Harris Gruman,

who received the MTA President’s Award; and U.S. Representative John F. Tierney, who received the MTA Friend of Education Award.

Seated on the stage to witness the award ceremony were representatives of other Massachusetts unions, including Tom Gosnell, president of AFT Massachusetts; Julie Pinkham, RN, executive director of the Massachusetts Nurses Association; Ed Kelly, president of the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts; Rocio Saenz, president of SEIU Local 615; Rich Rogers, executive secretary-treasurer of the Greater Boston Labor Council; Russ Davis, executive director of Jobs with Justice; and Jay Hurley, president of the Ironworkers District Council of New England.

Toner also recognized Floris Wilma Ortiz-Marrero, the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, who could not attend. He read greetings from Ortiz-Marrero, who teaches in the Amherst-Pelham district. Her colleague, Jean Fay, was also recognized — as MTA’s 2011 Education Support Professional of the Year. Fay received her award at the statewide ESP Conference in April.

A key responsibility of the Annual Meeting is the review and adoption of MTA’s annual operating budget. Delegates approved a 2011-2012 budget of \$40,865,079. A Public Relations/Organizing Campaign budget of \$2 million, which was considered separately, was also approved.

All told, annual dues plus the PR/Organizing Campaign budget will be \$471; dues for secretaries, clerks and custodians will be \$283; and dues for aides, food service personnel and other education support professionals will be \$142.

The delegates spent considerable time discussing two proposed new business items.

The first, which was approved, calls for having 28 regional presidents’ meetings a year — four in each of the seven regions, to be held in September, November, March and May — and two all presidents’ meetings, to be held in October and January. Proponents stated that they advanced the item “in order to build democracy within the association and meet the goals of the Strategic Action Plan.”

After a long debate, the delegates amended and approved a new business item on educator evaluation.

Please turn to **Delegates**/Page 17

Good Reasons to Belong to MTA/NEA Retired

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The Massachusetts Teachers Association is your organization. It gets its strength from 107,000 MTA members and from its national affiliation with the 3.2-million-member National Education Association.

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- MTA Governmental Services provides research on, and testimony for, maintaining and improving post-retirement benefits.
- MTA's Division of Governmental Services has six registered lobbyists who advocate for active educators and retired members. When MTA lobbyists speak to legislators, legislators know that they represent 107,000 members.

CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT

As a member of MTA Retired and NEA Retired, you will participate in the governance of your union. You will help elect two retired members to the MTA Board of Directors and one retired member to the MTA Executive Committee — members with full voting rights.

The MTA Retired Members Committee meets throughout the year to provide a forum for retired members to address and pursue issues of concern.

Eight MTA Retired members are elected to the MTA Retired Members Committee by the MTA Retired delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting. In addition, MTA provides some financial support for MTA Retired delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting, the annual NEA Representative Assembly, the NEA Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA Retired Regional Conference.

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Receive information of special interest to retired members through *MTA Today*, *NEA Today*, the *MTA Reporter*, *This Active Life* and other publications. Receive timely updates by e-mail on matters relating to pension and retirement from both Beacon Hill and Capitol Hill as a member of the MTA Retired e-lert system. NEA and MTA maintain websites with valuable information for retired members: www.nea.org and www.massteacher.org.



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In celebration of amity



Photo by Bob Duffy

Educators, artists and a diverse crowd of other people from around the country gathered recently in Boston to embrace their differences during the National Race Amity Conference. The four-day conference, hosted by Wheelock College's National Center for Race Amity, was attended by a number of MTA members and partially sponsored by the association. It was part of an initiative that seeks to establish the second Sunday in June as National Race Amity Day, according to organizers. MTA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee member Margaret Wong of the Massachusetts Community College Council, MTA President Paul Toner and Maryann Ziemba of the Millis Teachers Association, pictured from left to right in the foreground, were among the participants in the concluding celebration, which was held on June 12 on the Rose Kennedy Greenway.

Board approves new evaluation system

Continued from Page 3

Several BESE members made similar comments at the June 28 meeting before they voted. Education Secretary and BESE member Paul Reville said again, as he has said in the past, that student learning measures should be "informative, not determinative."

The MTA's biggest remaining concern is over the training and experience of evaluators. BESE member Harneen Chernow offered an amendment to the regulations drafted by the MTA that would have required the DESE to provide all evaluators with training in the new system and would have mandated that teacher evaluators have five years of teaching experience.

Although several board members said they agreed with the sentiment behind the amendment, it was defeated at the recommendation of Commissioner Chester, who expressed confidence in the administrator corps and said he was concerned that the amendment would slow down implementation of the new regulations.

Administrators expressed their own concerns, mainly around where they will find the time and money to develop the new district-based assessments and conduct the more thorough evaluations. Presumably, Race to the Top districts will use some of those funds to implement the new system, and the DESE plans to allocate some of its share of RTTT funding to evaluator training.

While acknowledging that the new system will be time-consuming to implement, Reville said that developing staff is a high priority and must be done. "We are saying that in the Commonwealth, the evaluation of educators is the number one priority of administrators," he said.

The new system is scheduled to be implemented in the state's 35 Level 4 schools and in a small number of selected districts in the 2011-12 school year, in Race to the Top districts in 2012-13, and in all districts in 2013-14.

For more information about the new system, please visit massteacher.org/evaluationregulations.

Conference panel still considering new state budget

Senate and House differ on health insurance changes

By Laura Barrett

MTA members lobbied, e-mailed and called their legislators this spring to press for protections for the very ill and retirees and to defend employee bargaining rights under the municipal health insurance plan included in the state budget.

The budget was still under consideration by a six-member House and Senate conference committee as of the deadline for this issue of *MTA Today*.

"MTA member involvement and the concerted efforts of all of the major employee unions in the state were essential for getting better protections in the Senate version," said MTA President Paul Toner. "We are continuing to lobby the conference committee, urging the members to follow the Senate plan as much as possible."

The MTA has been advocating that:

- The sickest among us be protected from exorbitant co-pays and deductibles.
- Retirees are offered protections.
- Public employees and retirees have a meaningful voice in plan design changes.
- There must be a fair way to resolve disputes.

Under both the House and Senate measures, municipalities would have more authority to reduce their health insurance costs to levels comparable to the state Group Insurance Commission plans. However, the bills would accomplish this goal by different means. The Senate version includes an expedited bargaining requirement, a dispute-resolution mechanism and greater protections for retirees. It also calls for a larger share of savings to go to the employees.

"We understand that health care costs are rising and are creating a big burden on municipalities, which is why we and the other unions have agreed to make changes," Toner said. "But we strongly believe that employees and retirees must have essential bargaining rights and protections from exorbitant costs."

The MTA has been advancing this position along with other members of a public employee coalition that formed to advocate on behalf of the rights and interests of municipal employees.

"As long as the Legislature is in session, we must continue our advocacy," Toner said. "We can't let down our guard just because summer is here."

Another bill that may move this summer is the governor's proposal to change pension benefits for future public employees. The MTA is advocating against major changes on the grounds that educators already pay most of the costs of their own pensions.

The MTA will provide updates about health insurance, pensions and other issues on our website, www.massteacher.org, and via presidents' mailings.

Helping in disaster's aftermath

Educators step up to meet students' needs and assist colleagues

By Meg Secatore

Mottos such as “Attitude is altitude” roll easily off the tongue of Springfield Public Schools behavioral interventionist Rhonda Hall. The June 1 tornado that hit the city may have closed her school, the Elias Brookings, but it has not dampened her spirit or the resolve of her colleagues.

That was clear from listening to Hall and prekindergarten teacher Karen Skarzynski talk at the end of their first week of classes in the Edward P. Boland Elementary School, where Brookings kindergartners, first- and second-graders and life skills students were finishing out the year. It was also apparent that to the educators, Brookings is not a building — it's a community with an attitude all its own.

“Right now their lives are turned upside down,” Hall said of her students, some of whom lost their homes and possessions in the storm. “But Brookings is the safe place and that's what we hold onto, even if we're displaced and we're separated. Brookings is still a whole, still a unit.”

Skarzynski's preschool class year ended early because of the storm. Tornado damage closed two Springfield schools, Brookings, with 333 students, and the Mary A. Dryden Veterans Memorial School, with 254 students. Brookings grade three to five students and staff were taken in by the Rebecca Johnson School, while the Dryden children relocated to the Harris School. PreK programs in each



Photo by Meg Secatore

Members of the Brookings staff got a warm welcome from their colleagues at the Edward P. Boland Elementary School. Educators are helping students recover in the areas hit by the devastating storms.

of these schools ended 12 days early to make room.

“I think one of the important things we have done for students is to let them share their stories,” said Skarzynski. “They all get to talk about, draw about, share it.

“We're supporting each other and listening to the children,” she added. “A lot of us are getting to know each other even more by supporting each other.”

Brookings is a Level 4 school, one of 35 schools designated as underperforming by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Level 4 schools are selected from among the 20 percent of schools with the lowest MCAS

scores. More than one-quarter of Brookings' students — 26.7 percent — do not speak English as a first language, and 90.6 percent live in low-income households, according to district data.

“This is a very, very poor neighborhood that was really hit hard by the tornado,” said Springfield Education Association President Tim Collins.

In addition to damage at the school, entire blocks of housing were damaged or destroyed in a community that was already struggling.

“We know that there are always going to be obstacles for them,” Hall said of her students. “Our determination is in teaching them how

to weather the storm, and they are doing a fantastic job and I love them.”

Adjustment counselor Gianna Allentuck was racing to her car to pick up more donations for displaced students and their parents, but took the time for a brief interview with *MTA Today*. “Brookings as a Level 4 did have some challenges but responding to this — from custodians to office clerks to cafeteria folks to all the administrative people — is definitely a coming together,” Allentuck said. “It's kind of our finest hour.”

“We are seeing our children grow up,” said Hall. She recalled watching one boy say to his teacher, “It's OK. Give those things to my sister because she needs them more than I do.”

“All of the things we've been trying to teach them came together in a week,” she said.

Wendy Bolling's first-grade classroom probably sustained the most damage at Brookings. She was able to enter her “home away from home” for one hour and salvage a few items, including a chair that her paraprofessional had painted for her.

“I couldn't believe that came out of the bottom of the pile unharmed,” she said. “So I cleaned it up and we're using it here at Boland.

“There are a lot of teaching supplies that are going to need to be replaced,” she continued. “Boland School has been wonderful. They've been trying to give us whatever supplies we need to teach for these last two weeks. But I'm more concerned

Continued on next page

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Website features links to tornado relief information

By Meg Secatore

Eric Warren considers himself lucky because the tornadoes that struck central and western Massachusetts on June 1 damaged only his car and not his home or workplace.

So the Springfield Technical Community College staff member did what comes naturally to a librarian. He created an online Tornado Relief Guide that is now providing much-needed news and information for students, staff and the general public.

Warren's guide — which can be found at <http://libguides.stcc.edu/tornadorelief> — includes links to local relief agencies, consumer protection advice and fundraising events. There is also a section devoted to Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and other social media projects set up to aid storm recovery.

Warren is one of scores of MTA members who are helping in their communities by grabbing saws and rakes, visiting students at shelters or raising funds to assist those who lost their homes and belongings in the storms. Many members were victims themselves.

The state's federal disaster relief filing says the storms caused three deaths and at least 300 injuries across the Commonwealth and \$24 million in public property damage in Hampden County alone.



Photo by Meg Secatore

Eric Warren, a systems coordinator at the STCC library, created a website featuring links and information to help residents in the aftermath of the tornadoes that hit the state.

About 600 homes sustained damage, with 319 considered destroyed. In addition, three public schools appear to have seen major damage: the Brookings and Dryden schools in Springfield and the Munger Hill Elementary School in nearby Westfield.

Munger Hill had extensive damage to three kindergarten classrooms, but the rest of the building was able to open the following week. Schools were closed for a full week in hard-hit Monson, which lost many homes and public buildings but did not suffer damage to schools. Schools closed for one or two days in the Palmer, Tantasqua, Union 61, Southbridge, Hampden, Wilbraham and East Longmeadow districts.

"As we became aware of the destruction caused by the tornadoes, we were not at all surprised to hear that MTA members were taking the lead in their communities," said MTA President Paul Toner. "This is a large part of what we as educators and public employees do every day — reach out to those who need help and hope and work to make our communities stronger, even when disaster strikes."

The Board of Directors of the MTA's charity, The Massachusetts Child, is taking steps to provide relief to the students and MTA members in the communities hit by the tornadoes. The Mass Child board voted on June 15 to make additional funds available to MTA locals in school districts where there was significant damage. "Outreach is already under way," said Christine Mulroney, the charity's president. "We need to iron out the details and determine how to put our resources to the best use for the students and staff in these districts."

'I think the summer is going to be a confusing time for many of our students'

Continued from previous page

with how we're going to be ready for the fall and little things, like 'Oh, I don't have a calendar anymore!'"

And her students are asking: "How come we don't have our science projects or our math workbooks?"

"That's where I see they are struggling," Bolling said. "They miss their school." And so does Bolling, who said she has been drawn to visit

the site every day since the storm hit.

The Brookings staff has been told to expect to start the 2011-12 school year in portable classrooms that will be placed on school property while renovation work is completed. That will mean another transition for students. And the vacation break is also a concern.

"I think the summer is going to be a confusing time for many of our

students," said Scott McGinley, a magnet resource teacher at Brookings. "Some of them already backslide behaviorally and academically over the summer, those who have challenges. I think seeing the familiar faces of teachers and staff has been really helpful to many of them. It's been helpful to teachers, too, to see their kids again and know that everybody is safe. But I think it's going to be hard losing

that community over the summer.

"Most of our students live in that neighborhood where the school is," he said. "They're going to be reminded every day walking past the school of this event. It's kind of hard not to see it in that neighborhood."

To see videos featuring Scott McGinley, Wendy Bolling, Rhonda Hall, Gianna Allentuck and Karen Skarzynski, visit www.youtube.com/massteacher.

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DLR says criticism doesn't constitute defamation

By Sarah Nathan

The Massachusetts Community College Council recently won an important legal victory for three former union officers at MassBay Community College who were accused of defamation for making critical statements about the administration in the press.

In a May 4 ruling, state Department of Labor Relations attorney Erica Crystal found that former MassBay Community College Provost Steven Berrien illegally threatened to sue the three MassBay officers for defamation after they criticized the administration's handling of the nursing program, which was being investigated by the state Board of Registration in Nursing at the time.

Speaking out against the administration is not defamation, according to the DLR ruling, but protected activity under Massachusetts labor law. The threats were made in letters written by an attorney hired by Berrien to the former president, vice president, and secretary after their

comments appeared in *The Boston Globe*.

"While it won't change the years of torment that these former MassBay officers had to endure, the DLR ruling is a decisive win for unionized public employees in the Commonwealth," said MCCC President Joseph LeBlanc, who is also serving as acting president of the union's MassBay Chapter. "This ruling provides a small measure of vindication for our union and its members."

The DLR found that the state Board of Higher Education, the employer for MassBay faculty and staff, "interfered with, restrained and coerced MCCC/MTA union employees in the exercise of their rights under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 150E ... by threatening a defamation lawsuit in response to the employees' filing a grievance and making statements to the media."

The ruling stems from a prohibited practice charge filed by the MCCC with the DLR alleging that the administration had violated several contract provisions and the state's collective bargaining law. One

particular charge dealt with Berrien's decision to reinstate a nursing student who had failed two courses. As part of the ruling, the DLR ordered the college to inform the college community about the violation by posting and mailing it to MCCC employees.

The issues raised in the case stem from the period when Carole Berotte Joseph was serving as MassBay president. Joseph's tenure was rife with controversy. She and her administration faced repeated criticism for

their actions after she took office in 2005. In 2007, the MCCC chapter at MassBay took a decisive no-confidence vote in Joseph. At the time, the chapter released a statement saying she caused "institutional chaos," created a "divisive and distrustful atmosphere" and jeopardized "the academic integrity and reputation of the college by fostering a hostile environment."

Joseph left the college in June for a job as president of the Bronx Community College in New York.

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MTA president joins higher education board

By Sarah Nathan

MTA President Paul Toner is the newest member of the state Board of Higher Education.

Toner, who attended his first meeting on June 7, was appointed by Governor Deval Patrick to fill the labor position on the board. The BHE defines the mission and sets policy for much of the Massachusetts system of public higher education and represents the administrations at all nine state universities and 15 community colleges.

"I am pleased to appoint Paul Toner to the Board of Higher Education and look forward to his contributions as we work to ensure that our students receive a world-class education," Patrick said. "Paul has been a vocal advocate for the students educated by his members and has been a strong partner in advancing a progressive education reform agenda."

Toner, who holds a master's degree in secondary education from UMass Boston and a law degree from Suffolk University, said he welcomed the opportunity to represent the interests of higher education union members on the board.

The 107,000-member MTA includes over 13,000 public higher ed employees. They serve as faculty and staff at the University of Massachusetts, as well as at the community colleges and state universities.

"I look forward to working with my fellow board members to continue to push the Commonwealth toward excellence for all students," Toner said. "Our 29 public campuses play a vital role in the development and support of young minds in every corner of the state. They provide a top-notch, challenging education to many Massachusetts residents who stay here, contribute to our communities and strengthen our economy."

Toner replaces Boston Building Trades President James Coyle as the board's labor representative. State statute requires that at least one member of the board come from labor.

Education Secretary Paul Reville described Toner as open-minded and willing to think outside of the box about how people can solve problems together.

"I can't think of a better colleague to work with on the labor side of the equation," Reville said at the June 7 meeting. Toner, he said, is "articulate and assertive in representing the needs and interests of his members."

"He is not willing to back down, but at the same time he is willing to look at things in different ways and recognize our common ground," Reville added.



Photo by Sarah Nathan

MTA President Paul Toner is flanked by fellow BHE members Henry Thomas, left, who represents the UMass trustees, and Lou Ricciardi, who is a state university trustee, during a meeting at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

BHE Chair Dr. Charles Desmond called Toner a "tremendous asset" to the board and noted that his background and expertise will help expand the conversation to include early education and elementary and secondary education.

"We welcome President Toner to the dialogue and look forward to working with him on the critical issues that impact our students," Desmond said.

"I'm looking forward to working with President Toner and know he will make sure that labor's voice is represented," said Dr. Richard M. Freeland, the state higher education commissioner.

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Springfield effort boosts parental involvement

By Sarah Nathan

Teachers from four Springfield elementary schools are visiting their students' parents as part of a union-district partnership that supports efforts to close the achievement gap.

The initiative seeks to elevate parental involvement and bridge the gap between school and home. The program, funded with grant money provided by the NEA Foundation and community partners, includes the Edward P. Boland Elementary School, the William N. DeBerry Elementary School, the Hiram L. Dorman Elementary School and the Sumner Avenue Elementary School.

"The whole purpose of these visits is to make the connection between home and school so that we may all work together to help each of our students succeed," said Marguerite Foster Franklin, a kindergarten teacher at Sumner. "When I visit families, I tell them, 'I'm here to help. We are here to help each other.' It's all about making a positive difference for each child."

Parent-teacher home visits have proven to be beneficial for students and their families. When parents and teachers communicate and establish trust, academic achievement follows. Franklin says she has seen significant and positive changes in parents after meeting with them.

"Our schools should be safe havens. They shouldn't produce anxiety or concerns," Franklin said. "I see myself not just as my students' teacher, but as a member of the community who is here to help, and I try to convey that when I visit a family."

The home visit project is one component of the Springfield Collaboration for Change, a five-year initiative spearheaded by the Springfield Public Schools, the Springfield Education Association and community leaders. The district-union partnership officially launched in 2010 when Springfield was awarded \$1.25 million from the NEA Foundation as part of its Closing the Achievement Gaps Initiative.

The four elementary schools selected are participating in the first phase of the initiative, and each has been awarded \$25,000 to fund the work.

The initiative is focused on improving student achievement through strengthened labor-management

'The whole purpose of these visits is to make the connection between home and school so that we may all work together to help each of our students succeed.'

— Teacher Marguerite Foster Franklin



collaboration, parental involvement and community engagement.

"We can make a difference for our students by having honest and open discussions about the challenges we face and focusing on our most pressing issues," said Springfield Education Association President Timothy Collins. "Working collaboratively, teachers, administrators, parents and community members will help improve the lives of the children in our charge and close these persistent achievement gaps."

Collins said the home visit program has been well received. He said 60 percent of the teachers surveyed were receptive to the idea and 90 percent said they were willing to conduct the visits.

The teachers conduct the visits in pairs, outside of official school hours, and they are compensated for their time.

"We know home visits go a very long way in engaging parents who otherwise, and for a myriad of reasons, would not be prone to visit their child's school to receive important regular updates on their progress," said Dr. Alan J. Ingram, the city's school superintendent. "It also strengthens the home-school relationship for parents who are already involved and engaged. It's a strong step forward in our work to close the achievement gap."

Ingram recognized Collins for his efforts to make the project a success. He called such collaboration "crucial in our work to create a culture of educational excellence."

The four elementary schools chosen by the Springfield Collaboration for Change were selected competitively, based on need and readiness, to undertake collaborative improvement

measures. Coaching teams, each composed of a retired principal and a retired teacher, are assigned to each of the schools to work with teams of educators, as well as the entire school community, to develop and implement strategies to advance academic achievement for students.

"We are pleased with the progress that Springfield has made in developing a powerful structure and plan for coaching teams to bring instructional innovations to participating schools," said Harriet Sanford, president and CEO of the NEA Foundation. "These innovations will be shared through professional learning communities in each school and adapted to include not only student performance and growth data, but teacher satisfaction data and perceptions about curriculum, instruction and leadership."

Another part of the initiative is aimed at building strong alliances between the city's public schools and community organizations. It includes aligning services offered by community

Please turn to **Partnership**/Page 18

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Top educators are honored

Continued from Page 2

"Miss Kodys' expectation for success and her ability to empower her students allow her to educate the whole child, as well as challenge all learners through the use of differentiated instruction," Stacy Principal Nancy Angelini wrote in her letter of recommendation.

The 2012 Teacher of the Year finalists were: Ryan J. King, a biology teacher at Masconomet Regional Middle School in Topsfield; William Madden-Fuoco, an AP English and humanities teacher at the Urban Science Academy in Boston; and Sarah Roberts, a third- and fourth-grade teacher at South Shore Charter Public School in Norwell.

The Teacher of the Year semifinalists were Heather A. Batchelor, a history teacher at Turners Falls High School in Montague; Kathleen D. Malone, a first-grade teacher at Lynch

Elementary School in Winchester; Karen Elizabeth McDavitt, a second-grade teacher at Joseph Osgood School in Cohasset; and Danielle M. Winn, a fourth-grade special education teacher at Arnone Elementary School in Brockton.

Also recognized were 2010 Milken Family Foundation Award winner Roni Gold, a fifth-grade teacher at Rebecca Johnson Elementary School in Springfield; and the recipients of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching: Michael Flynn, a second-grade teacher at the William E. Norris Elementary School in Southampton, and Wai Chin Ng, a fifth-grade teacher at Josiah Quincy Elementary School in Boston.



Roni Gold

Bay State teachers among Presidential Award winners

By Bob Duffy

Former Teacher of the Year Michael Flynn and Boston science teacher Wai Chin Ng were recently chosen to receive Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching.

Flynn, a second-grade teacher at the William E. Norris Elementary School in Southampton, and Ng, who teaches fifth grade at the Josiah Quincy Elementary School, each received \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation. The two traveled to Washington, D.C., in May to accept the awards.

"It was an incredible experience," said Flynn, who got to visit with President Barack Obama, Jill Biden, members of the state's congressional delegation and senior education policy officials during the trip.

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching are awarded annually to outstanding K-12 educators

from across the country. The winners are chosen by a panel of distinguished scientists, mathematicians and educators following an initial selection process at the state level. This year, 85 teachers nationwide were selected to receive the prestigious awards.



Michael Flynn

"The teachers we honor ... have demonstrated uncommon skill and devotion in the classroom, nurturing the young minds of tomorrow's science and math leaders," President Obama said in a White House press release. "America's competitiveness rests on the excellence of our citizens in technical fields, and we owe these teachers a debt of gratitude for strengthening America's prosperity."

Flynn said the trip offered "a great opportunity to work with other math and science teachers from around the country." He is working on a doctoral thesis on better ways to provide professional development to math teachers.

While in Washington, Flynn also met with U.S. Senators John Kerry and Scott Brown.

Flynn graduated from Westfield State College, now Westfield State University, in 1998, earning a degree in elementary education. He used the scholarship he received as the 2008 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year to complete a master's degree and is studying for a doctorate at Walden University in Minnesota.

Flynn is a member of the Southampton Education Association, an MTA affiliate, while Ng belongs to the Boston Teachers Union, which is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts.



Wai Chin Ng

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Simple steps for a safe summer

As we move into summer, many of us are looking forward to outdoor entertaining. But before lighting the charcoal, inviting friends to a deck party or diving into the water, follow these basic safety rules to help protect friends and family members from injury or illness.

1. Give your grill a careful review

Grills are a common source of fire accidents. Some grill fires lead to house fires if precautions and common sense aren't followed.

Before using your grill for the first time each season, do a basic hardware check. Look for small cracks in hoses and connections. These can occur through exposure to sunlight and UV rays or from temperature extremes and movement of the grill. One option is to spray soapy liquid on these components to test for leaks. Also check the tank for dings and rust and the hoses for cracks, crimps and holes.

Most grills have a drip pan that should be checked for remaining grease. A removable, disposable drip pan may be advisable. An extinguisher rated for treating grease fires should be maintained within easy access of the grill. Baking soda can also be used. While water can combat some kinds of fires, it is more likely to spread a grease fire.



Keep your grill on a level, stable base to prevent it from tipping over. Don't put the grill under low-hanging branches or within 10 feet of a structure.

Other common-sense safety tips:

- ◆ Never add starter fluid to a slow charcoal fire.
- ◆ Place charcoal ashes in a metal container and cover it with a lid.
- ◆ Use long grilling tongs and forks along with grill gloves.

- ◆ Never store propane tanks indoors or near flammable fluids.
- ◆ Keep children at least five feet away from the grill and monitor them at all times.
- ◆ If you cook with charcoal, start fires with a special metal "chimney" that is safer than fluid starters and avoids contaminating food with chemicals.

2. Handle and prepare food safely

Apply a sanitizer to food prep surfaces indoors and outside to help combat potentially dangerous bacteria that can spread from raw meats.

Also take other common-sense precautions:

- ◆ Wash your hands thoroughly after each time you handle raw meat.
- ◆ Place grilled meats only on clean plates, never on those that have held raw meats.
- ◆ Never store perishable foods in the sun. Hold these items in a cooler.
- ◆ Check internal meat temperature with a quick-read thermometer — chicken, 170°; pork and hamburgers, 160°; hot dogs 140°.
- ◆ Carefully open foil cooking packets, as food may be steaming hot.
- ◆ Keep alcoholic drinks, which are flammable, a safe distance from the grill.

3. Maintain pool safety procedures

Pool accidents or drowning can often be avoided by securing the pool area. One frightening fact is that 77 percent of child drowning victims were out of sight for less than five minutes.

Many communities require fencing at least four feet high around the entire pool.

However, children can be clever, so remove vegetation, tables, chairs and climbable toys from the fence area. Likewise, use gate latches that are self-closing, self-locking and inaccessible to small hands. If one side of the pool is close to the house,

doors leading to the pool must be locked or alarmed to alert a parent.

In the water, be aware that inflatable underarm "water wings" are active training aids and not life jackets. Filter inlets can draw children under and possibly drown them.

With a few common-sense precautions, you can enjoy grilling and pool time safely. Don't assume that friends and neighbors won't sue you should they be injured while being entertained at your home.



4. Review your home insurance policy

Since we don't always review our insurance policies as our lifestyles change, now may be a good time to discuss your current policy with a professional at Educators Insurance Agency. EIA can highlight ways you might adjust coverage limits to fit current conditions or add an umbrella policy, which provides special additional coverage that could protect you following a serious incident.

For more information about how to protect your home, condo or apartment against these and other risks, contact EIA at 888.908.6822 or by e-mail at Insurance@1EIA.com. Visit www.mtabenefits.com for additional information on EIA insurance programs and all benefits and services offered through MTAB.

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Everglades Rentals & Eco Adventures. Imagine yourself in a canoe winding through mysterious waterways in a pristine habitat rich in wildlife and natural beauty. You are taking a guided trip in Everglades National Park, the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States. Find out how you can make this happen for real by visiting www.evergladesadventures.com. Rental equipment is also available if you want to venture out on your own. MTA members get a 10 percent discount, with certain exceptions.

Manufacturers Discount Casket Outlet cuts the costs of caskets by an average of \$2,000 to \$2,500 through its volume buying and low overhead. MTA members and immediate family members receive an additional 20 percent discount. For more information on caskets, urns and related products, log on to www.manufacturersdiscountcasketoutlet.com.

Marching with pride



Photo by Andrei Joseph

Pouring rain did not stop MTA members and supporters from marching in the Boston Pride Parade on June 11. A delegation of educators — including members of the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Issues Committee — represented the association in the annual procession through downtown Boston. “The crowd reaction was unbelievable. Our presence was definitely felt,” said GLBT Issues Committee Chair Pedro Carrasquillo. “As we made our way on the parade route, we heard a lot of applause and comments along the lines of ‘Oh, look, the MTA is here!’” Pictured from left to right are MTA members Carrasquillo, Adam Snodgrass, Jennifer Stephens and Bernadette Marso.

Delegates approve evaluation item

Continued from Page 7

The final statement read: *Whereas the 2010 Annual Meeting rejected the use of standardized tests as a mandatory measure of teacher performance, MTA opposes the current BESE proposal, 603 CMR 35.00 from April 29, 2011. MTA leadership will oppose the usage of standardized tests in the dismissal of educators ...*

The amendment removed a reference to evaluation in the original proposal, which had called for “leadership to oppose the usage of standardized tests in *evaluation* and dismissal.”

Also in new business, the delegates voted to:

- Endorse Len Paolillo of the Massachusetts State College Association for re-election to the NEA Executive Committee.

- Endorse the Healthy Workplace Bill, House 2310 and Senate 916.

- Direct the MTA to educate members about anti-education and anti-worker groups. This effort is to include “identifying the players in the local and national network of anti-education and anti-worker groups including their funding sources, using existing MTA Communications vehicles and a presentation at Annual Meeting.”

A bylaw proposal that would have allowed MTA to organize Commonwealth charter schools received 50 percent support, but not the two-thirds vote necessary to change a bylaw.

Delegates approved amendments to resolutions dealing with school facilities, academic freedom, time to teach, a respectful work environment, employee assistance programs, diversity, non-discrimination practices and bullying. Two new resolutions were also approved in the area of human and civil rights. The first, Conflict Resolution, supports “the adoption and use, at all educational levels, of proven conflict-resolution strategies, materials and activities” and recognizes “the importance of students having the appropriate social skills necessary to participate in a democratic society.” The second states that the association “advocates the use of union-made products and services.”

The delegates also approved an addition to the section of the resolutions that deals with the rights of educational personnel. The new item on Contingent Faculty Protection states that “contingent faculty are valuable and, in many cases, necessary to the programs of colleges and universities. Therefore, they should be treated no differently from full-time, tenure-track, or permanent faculty for purposes of employment conditions.”

More information on the Annual Meeting is posted on the MTA website, www.massteacher.org, as are the revised resolutions. To view the “We Are One” video and other highlights, go to the association’s YouTube channel, youtube.com/massteacher. Photos are posted at flickr.com/photos/mtacommunications.



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Nominations open for three seats on MTA's CRC

A special interim election is being held for three seats on the MTA Candidate Recommendation Committee.

Vacancies have been declared in each of the following districts:

- District 2, represented by Congressman Richard Neal.
- District 3, represented by Congressman James McGovern.
- District 5, represented by Congresswoman Niki Tsongas.

The committee is responsible for the recommendation of candidates for state and federal office.

The election procedure provides that vacancies that occur in the period between regular election cycles may be filled by votes of the current committee members. The terms of the three interim members who are chosen will commence immediately upon election and end on March 14, 2014. Anyone seeking a seat must live in the district to be represented.

Eligible members interested in running for the CRC seat should contact Diane Foley of the MTA Division of Governance by calling 617.878.8217 or e-mailing dfoley@massteacher.org to request a nomination form/bio-statement grid. The form and statement of not more than 100 words must be received by July 29.

Partnership boosts parental involvement

Continued from Page 14

groups so that areas of need are met and Springfield students are given the help they need to succeed in school.

The Pioneer Valley Project first brought up the idea of a parent-teacher home visit program in Springfield in 2006. It is currently partners with the district and the SEA to manage the program.

One of the schools in the effort, the Boland, was engaged in the community in yet another way as school drew to a close this year. It was housing additional students as a result of the June 1 tornado that struck the city.

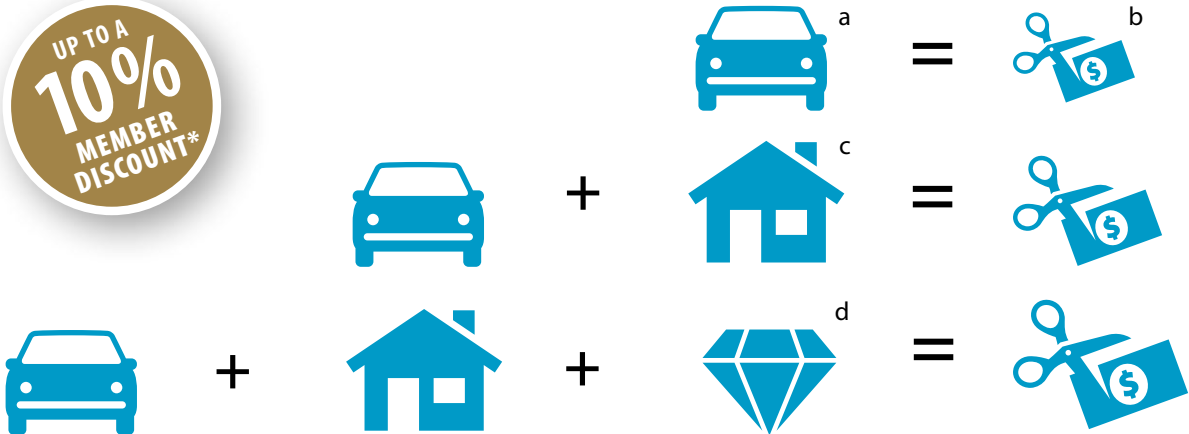
To view photos of two events announcing different aspects of the Springfield Collaboration for Change, visit flickr.com/mtacommunications. To see video footage of the initial announcement in February 2010, visit youtube.com/massteacher.



Focusing on healthy meals

A group of MTA education support professionals met with local farmers and state agriculture officials at UMass Amherst on June 16 to explore ways to expand the Farm to School Project. At-Large ESP Director Mildred Ficarra, right, and MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan, who is seated next to her, were among those participating in a round-table discussion on how healthier foods can be incorporated into meals for students. The program provides technical assistance to schools trying to establish links with farmers.

Photo by Bob Duffy



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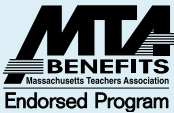
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Obituaries

Carolyn Ann Cabral, 73, of Kittery, Maine. Was an elementary school teacher in Falmouth for 35 years, retiring in 1998. May 7.

Debara A. Carlson, 66, of Cummaquid. Taught special education in Longmeadow for 32 years at the Center School, Converse Street School and Glenbrook Middle School. Also served as president of the Longmeadow Education Association. April 17.

Josephine D. Christo, 92, of Danvers. Was an elementary school teacher for 40 years in many states and taught at the Hadley School in Swampscott. March 27.

Charles F. Donovan, 92, of Agawam. Was a business teacher for 25 years at Agawam High School, retiring in 1989. March 25.

Albert Duseault, 93, of Plymouth. Was a teacher and principal at Rochester Memorial School in

Rochester and principal of Apponequet Regional High School in Lakeville. Served as president of the Plymouth County Teachers Association. May 15.

Gail Falzone, 57, of Longmeadow. Taught in Monson for over 32 years. Served as the vice president and president of the Monson Teachers Association. April 21.

Jo Ann Lysik, 67, of Paxton. Taught for 38 years in Worcester at the Chandler Elementary, Lamartine Street

and Rice Square schools, retiring in 2003. May 4.

Susan Martel, 58, of Adams. Taught in the Adams-Cheshire Regional School District for 36 years. April 28.

Patricia M. Metrano, 70, of Attleboro. Taught in the Easton schools for 30 years before retiring in 2002. March 22.

Martha L. Nickerson, 85, of Attleboro. Was a teacher and librarian for the Attleboro schools for over 40 years, retiring in 1989. Feb. 23.

Anson Olds, 55, of Sheffield. Taught music at the Undermountain Elementary School in Sheffield. May 25.

James M. Rice, 49, of Whitinsville. Was superintendent and assistant superintendent of schools in Northbridge, as well as a classroom teacher, assistant principal of Northbridge High School and principal of the W. Edward Balmer School. Also taught at King Philip Regional High School in Wrentham for several years. May 7.

Denyse E. Ruggeri, 65, of Dudley. Taught mathematics and physics at Bartlett High School in Webster and served as head of the Math Department for 38 years. May 8.

Susan I. Sheehan-Pallatino, 59, of Monson. Taught for 36 years at Hillside School and Quarry Hill Community School in Monson. May 16.

Selma A. Smith, 68, of Fall River. Taught in Fall River and New Bedford and became a school adjustment counselor for the New Bedford School Department, serving for a combined 38 years. Retired in 2004. May 18.

Gladys L. Wood, 100, of Peabody. Taught sixth grade in Winchester. April 23.



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*John Hancock "Cost of Care Survey," conducted by CareScout 2008

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ASHBURNHAM — Robert Zbikowski: second Thursday of each month (walk in), 4 to 8 p.m., Overlook Middle School library, front entrance, 10 Oakmont Dr., Ashburnham; 978.827.1425, or at home, 978.297.0123; e-mail: zibstar702@verizon.net.

AUBURN — Louise Gaskins: first and second Saturdays of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Central Office, 48 Sword St., Auburn; 508.791.2121, or at home, 978.448.5351.

BOSTON — Harold Crowley: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (by appointment only), 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., MTA,

20 Ashburton Place, Boston; 617.878.8240 or 800.392.6175, ext. 8240.

BRAINTREE — Mary Hanna: second Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Metropolitan Office, 100 Grandview Road, Braintree; 781.380.1410, or at home, 781.545.2069.

CAPE COD — Lawrence Abbruzzi: second Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Barnstable Teachers Association (BTA), 100 West Main St., Suite #7, Hyannis; 508.775.8625, or at home, 508.824.9194.

HOLYOKE — Ron Lech: third Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Western Office, 55 Bobala Road, Suite 3, Holyoke; 413.535.2415, or at home, 413.566.3039.

LYNNFIELD — Mary Parry: third and fourth Saturdays of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St.,

Note: If you or your association would like to have a retirement workshop at your school, your local president should call Harold Crowley at 800.392.6175, ext. 8240. Please be aware that the MTA does not have a record of your service, so members are advised to bring that information along to meetings.

Building B, Lynnfield; 781.246.9779, or at home, 978.372.2031; fax, 978.372.2035.

PITTSFIELD — Ward F. Johnson: second Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Berkshire Office, 188 East St., Pittsfield; 413.499.0257, or at home, 413.443.1722; e-mail: wardman33@aol.com.

RAYNHAM — Sandra Stephenson: third Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Southeast Office, 90 New State Highway (Rte. 44), Raynham; 508.822.5371, or at home, 508.747.2234; e-mail: rockowl@aol.com. Edward Nelson: fourth Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Southeast Office, 90 New State Highway (Rte. 44), Raynham; 508.822.5371, or at home, 508.853.5769.

HIGHER EDUCATION AT-LARGE — Edward McCourt, Massachusetts Bay Community College, Wellesley; 781.239.2207; e-mail: emccourt.mccc@gmail.com.

Offset repeal effort rekindled in House

The Social Security Fairness Act of 2011, which would repeal two Social Security offsets that penalize educators and other public employees in their retirement years, has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives.

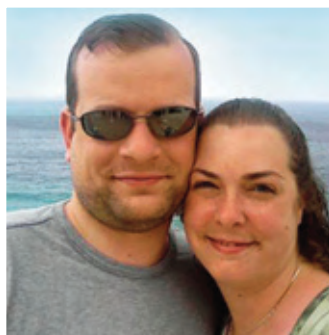
The measure, House Bill 1332, would eliminate both the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. It is intended to accomplish the same thing as legislation that died at the end of the last session of Congress.

The MTA and the NEA are strong supporters of the repeal effort and are working for the enactment of the current legislation.

The GPO reduces the spousal or survivor benefits of public employees by an amount equal to two-thirds of their public pensions. The WEP affects people who have worked in jobs in which they have earned Social Security as well as jobs in which they have not. Both affect educators and other public-sector retirees in Massachusetts and a number of other states.

Please turn to **New**/Page 22

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New bill is introduced to repeal unfair offsets

Continued from Page 21

The new repeal bill was introduced in early April by Representatives Howard McKeon (R-Calif.) and Harold Berman (D-Calif.). Legislation has not been filed in the Senate so far this session. There are currently 82 co-sponsors of H.B. 1332, including Massachusetts Representatives Michael Capuano, Barney Frank, William Keating, Stephen Lynch, John Olver, John Tierney and Niki Tsongas.

Information on the repeal effort will continue to be posted on the MTA website, www.massteacher.org, and will be sent to members of the MTA Social Security E-lert system.

To receive updates on the offset repeal effort, please send your name, complete address, MTA ID number, current or former local association affiliation information and home e-mail address to Jo Ann Fitzgerald, MTA retired members service specialist, at jf Fitzgerald@massteacher.org.

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staircase to large loft; two baths, sleeps six. Excellent location within resort, steps from indoor/outdoor pools, tennis. Nearby beaches, shopping, bike trails and more. Owned/offered by MTA member, summer weekly, off-season weeks or weekends. 413.594.4056, dr_jim_c@hotmail.com.

DEER ISLE, MAINE — Spacious country house near the sea, 1.5 acres, sleeps six. Sparkling clean, three bedrooms, two baths; stroll to beach, boat landing, conservation land. Hardwood floors, fieldstone fireplace, wi-fi, fully equipped kitchen, three decks, picnic table, grill, many extras. Dogs by arrangement. \$950-\$1,200/week. Details at www.hardyshillhouse.com. Call: 978.283.3738. E-mail: hardyshillhouse@verizon.net.

YORK/OGUNQUIT LINE, MAINE — Walking distance to Perkins Cove and Marginal Way. Two-bedroom, large living room cottage. Kitchen area, deck, parking for three cars. Sleeps four. \$900 per week in season. Call 508.865.3156 for details or e-mail ericks4858@aol.com.

WELLFLEET ROOMS FOR RENT — One or two bedrooms: \$80 a night for one room; \$150 for two rooms. Whole house available 8/12 – 8/20, \$1,200 for two bedrooms, two baths. Each room sleeps two. Call 508.349.5848 or e-mail: arakulo@comcast.net.

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Summer achievement efforts off to strong start

By Bob Duffy

The MTA's summertime effort to reward young readers and recognize great educators is rounding the bases at top speed once again.

Both the MTA Red Sox Reading Game and a companion program that pays tribute to educators who go the extra mile at their schools are bringing in entries and shining a light on student achievement. Each is sponsored by The Hanover Insurance Group Foundation.

"Studies clearly show that children who continue to read during the summer months perform better when they return to school in the fall," said MTA President Paul Toner. "Our partnership with the Red Sox and The Hanover helps us teach children that reading is both important and fun."

The excitement generated by the Sox and summertime reading was front and center at a May 10 kickoff event that featured Hanover employees reading to children in Worcester.

The kids gathered at the Boys & Girls Club had no idea that the team's wildly popular mascot, Wally the Green Monster, would be paying them a visit. When Joseph Freitas, chief financial officer of The Hanover's property and casualty business, announced that he had a surprise guest and introduced Wally, the crowd screamed with delight.

The event was held in the club's Little Fenway Room, which was funded by a grant from the Red Sox Foundation and is designed to look like Boston's world-famous ballpark. Following the reading session, Wally signed posters, game cards and baseballs.

The MTA Red Sox Reading Game, which is open to all Massachusetts students in kindergarten through eighth grade, draws about 30,000 entries each year. Each student must pledge to read nine books while on vacation — one for each position on the baseball field.

The students list the books on cards that are sent to schools around the state, which also serve as entry forms for a random drawing for tickets to a Red Sox game at Fenway Park in September. The entries include the names of the students' teachers, who are invited to the game along with the winners after their cards are chosen.



Photo by Bob Duffy

Joseph Freitas of The Hanover Insurance Group reads "Hello, Wally" to children while Wally the Green Monster acts out scenes from the book.

The campaign includes public service announcements on radio station WGBH and the New England Sports Network, as well as posters picturing catcher Jason Varitek, the longtime spokesman for the reading contest.

Varitek credits reading for a large part of his success in Major League Baseball. "Reading is huge in what I do," he said. "I have to go through different written scouting reports for every team and player we face during the season, so without the ability to read, I would not be where I am today."

His statement echoes what educators see in their classrooms every day — that reading is the foundation upon which other learning is built. Studies show that students who develop strong literacy skills are far more likely to experience success later in life.

As part of this year's effort, the MTA and The Hanover have expanded the MTA Red Sox Most Valuable Educator program.

The MVE program, which has saluted outstanding teachers and education support professionals in grades nine through 12 for the past several years, is now open to educators in all grades. In addition, the field of potential honorees has been widened to include a variety of people

who work or volunteer in public schools across the Commonwealth.

An MVE nominee can be a teacher, an education support professional, a library media specialist, a counselor, a social worker, a coach, a school nurse or anyone else who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to promote student achievement. A potential MVE can be suggested for teaching a unique lesson, managing a noteworthy after-school program, coordinating a special event or doing virtually anything else that has a positive impact on students.

Nominations should be submitted directly to the Red Sox. Each must be accompanied by an essay of 400 words or less that sets out how the nominee helps establish a positive educational climate and develop a love of learning among students. They will be judged based on the accomplishments outlined in the essays.

The educators selected as MVEs will have the chance to go out onto the field at Fenway to be greeted by the fans, while the people who send in winning essays will receive tickets to a ballgame.

The Hanover Insurance Group Foundation sponsors the reading contest and the MVE program as part of its long-running partnership with the MTA and its MTA Benefits subsidiary.

"This program fits well with our foundation's mission — to support a wide range of needs in our home communities, with a special emphasis on the issues of education and youth," said Jennifer Luisa, Hanover's assistant vice president of corporate community relations.

To enter the MTA Red Sox Reading Game, please send in one of the forms that were mailed to kindergarten-through-eighth-grade schools in May or download an entry form from the MTA's Reading Matters website, www.readingmatters.org. Contest entries must be postmarked by July 15. To nominate someone to be an MTA Red Sox Most Valuable Educator, send an essay of 400 words or less to: Most Valuable Educator, c/o Red Sox Community Relations, 4 Yawkey Way, Boston MA 02215. Be sure to include your contact information and contact information for the educator you are nominating. You can also find information and nomination forms on www.readingmatters.org. MVE nominations must be postmarked by July 31.

The MTA Advantage is a publication of MTA Benefits, a subsidiary of the Massachusetts Teachers Association

SUMMER HAS ARRIVED!

Have you booked your vacation yet?

The school year has just ended and you're ready to kick back and relax – but wait! In the midst of the busyness, you haven't had a spare moment to even think about planning a summer vacation. Last-minute reservations on the Cape will be next to impossible, not to mention overpriced, and the cost of gas alone threatens to put you over budget!

Don't despair! Great deals are still there for this summer – deals that are well within your budget. All-inclusive travel offers a great way to easily take a complete vacation and stay on budget. Imagine booking your flights, accommodations, side excursions and even meals all at once! Think cruises, all-inclusive resorts and escorted tours where you'll be served and pampered and never have to worry about what to do next or where to go.

Cruises and land vacations

During the summer, several cruises to Bermuda depart from Boston at incredible prices, saving you money on flights and gas. Plus, you can even take advantage of on-board credits, discounts for seniors and Massachusetts residents, and discounted and free shore excursions through **CruisesOnly**, an **MTA Vacation Center** partner.

If a land vacation is more your style and you have flexibility around your travel dates and destinations, check out great last-minute deals on trips to Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda, many with meals and airfare included.

"There are still great last-minute deals available. We are continually updating our inventory and pricing," said Thomas Lew of **TNT Vacations**, an MTA Vacation



Center partner. He went on to say that these last-minute deals sell out quickly and suggested that members check www.tntvacations.com/mta often to see the latest prices and destinations.

Continued on page 4

An MTA member since 2006

SARAH OPPENHEIM ~ another fan of MTA Benefits

ASSOCIATION: Newton Teachers Association

PROFESSION: Sixth-grade special education teacher, Charles E. Brown Middle School, Newton

What she likes about her job: "I help students who struggle academically by giving them strategies and techniques to deal with challenges. It is so rewarding for me to see their faces light up when they solve a problem. During the school year these students change significantly – from initially having self-doubts to ultimately feeling good about themselves. Once they reach that point, they can do anything."

How she uses MTA Benefits: "My husband, Ken, and I financed our condo through Greenpark and the MTA Mortgage Program. Our Greenpark representative stayed in close personal contact, making the mortgage process easier. In addition, we received a great interest rate and an estimated \$945 MTA discount at closing. I also get MTA discounts at stores plus free or reduced admission costs at museums."

Why members should use MTAB: "With this economy and the high cost of so many things, it is important to take advantage of savings through MTAB programs."



Education support professionals save with MTAB



Melissa Rebello,
president of the
Shrewsbury
Paraprofessional
Association

Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association highlights MTAB at meeting of members

Melissa Rebello, president of the Shrewsbury Paraprofessional Association, held a meeting in May at which representatives from MTA Benefits programs showed the members in the audience how they could save money through MTA discounts on life insurance, mortgages, car insurance and other needs.

“We want to give members as much information as possible about the advantages of

MTAB, including our ability to save an amount equal to the cost of MTA dues – and more,” Rebello said. “For example, I save hundreds of dollars a year with my discounted wireless program alone. In addition, I get free admission to many museums, discounts at retail stores and other MTA savings.”

Rebello was a driving force in organizing the Shrewsbury association three years ago.

“Twice before attempts had been made to form an ESP group, but they weren’t successful,” she said. “Our actions in 2008 resulted in a contract with the school district that mandated higher salaries, yearly step increases and other financial and personal benefits for ESPs.” Rebello reflected on some of this during her 2011 ESP Conference presentation, “Respect Begins with Us.”

Here’s what other ESPs say about their savings

Kathleen Kellogg, a member of the Amherst-Pelham Education Association, said, “I love my MetLife annuity through MTA Benefits. I put my trust in MTAB.”

Karin Forgues, a member of the Winchendon Support Personnel Association, pointed out: “It’s nice to be able to save money for my family through MTAB. I joined the heating oil program last year and received a discount of about 20 cents a gallon. I also get rental cars at the MTA discounted rate. The savings are significant.”

Dena Elder, a member of the Newton Teachers Association, uses an MTA credit card, gets MTA discounts on her wireless service and saves at museums. She said, “MTA Benefits has helped in a great way. The MTA card is quite a saving mechanism for me.”

Katherine Mahoney, a member of the Cambridge Teachers Association, regularly uses her MTA card to get a free VIP Coupon Book, a \$5 value that is worth hundreds of dollars in added savings. She said, “The coupons are great! I use them when I shop at the Wrentham Outlets and other places.”

Lynn Hope, a member of the Monson Teachers Association, noted: “It was wonderful to use my MTA card at the New England Aquarium and get in for free!”

**FENWAY
BOUND**



Laura Doherty, a member of the Woburn Teachers Association, won Red Sox tickets at the ESP Conference from Vista Financial Services, MTA’s disability and long-term care insurance provider.

MTAB PARTNERS EXHIBIT AT ESP CONFERENCE



Editor: Maryann C. Robinson
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The Tip Sheet

What to do this summer – rain or shine, night or day



WHEN IT'S A RAINY DAY

A glorious indoor courtyard – and more

Explore the flower-filled interior courtyard of a stunning 15th-century Venetian-style palace right in the heart of Boston. Set under a canopy of glass and surrounded by three stories of galleries, the central courtyard of the **Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum** reflects the beauty of the seasons. It is regularly transformed with new plants and colors in nine dramatic seasonal displays set among classic statuary, walkways and fountains. In **June and July**, large, spectacular hydrangeas in violet, deep blue and other hues create a beautiful color palette. In **August**, the courtyard offers a cool retreat from the summer heat with its lush fern greenery and the soothing sounds of cascading water. If you visit in the **fall, winter and spring**, you'll see seasonal displays of grasses, berries, chrysanthemums, holly topiaries, poinsettias, tropical palms, orchids, daffodils, citrus trees and many other luxuriant plantings. Landscape tours are available for garden clubs and other groups, allowing you to explore highlights of the collection with a garden specialist. Also see the world-class galleries, which display more than 2,500 paintings, sculptures, tapestries, pieces of furniture, manuscripts, rare books and decorative arts items. Like superb music? On Sunday afternoons, the museum hosts performances by world-renowned musicians and exciting emerging artists who perform classical masterpieces, jazz and new pieces. **MTA members receive half-price admission to the museum.** For information on the museum or to buy tickets to musical performances, visit www.gardnermuseum.org.

ON A SUNNY DAY

A cruise of the Boston Harbor Islands

Did you know that there are 34 islands in the **Boston Harbor Island National Park**? They lure visitors with attractions that range from beaches and tidal pools to plays, live bands, vintage baseball games and a Civil War fort. You can pick up information about park activities when you book a tour with **Boston's Best Cruises**. Members receive a \$3 MTA discount on a trip to the Boston Harbor Islands or any boat ride. The ride itself is remarkable, with the fresh breezes and views of the sea, islands and Boston skyline. One of your destinations is Georges Island, home of historic Fort Warren. The fort defended Boston during the Civil War and housed Confederate soldiers who, as the tale goes, were treated kindly by the Union camp commander, whose son was in a Confederate prison. A reputed ghost, the Lady in Black, is said to roam the grounds. Select a ranger-guided tour or walk the area on your own. Other islands feature beaches, entertainment and more. Visit www.bostonsbestcruises.com.



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Known as "New Hampshire's center of speed" and rated the #1 Friday night asphalt track in the Northeast by Trackside Magazine readers, the steep-banked **Lee USA Speedway** offers the NASCAR® Weekly Racing Series Pro Stocks and other excitement-packed stock car events. Spectators turn out by the thousands during the season to watch this mesmerizing sport in which drivers race in super-powered cars at exhilarating speeds. The action lasts from April through October, and you can be part of it – at a discount. For all regular events, any MTA member who purchases a ticket receives one free ticket. Visit www.leeusaspeedway.com.



10 other ideas for summer fun at a discount:

1. Atlantic Yankee Whale Watch, Gloucester, www.yankeefleet.com
2. Southwick's Zoo, Mendon, www.southwickszoo.com
3. Howe Caverns, Howes Cave, N.Y., www.howecaverns.com
4. Norman Bird Sanctuary, Middletown, R.I., www.normanbirdsanctuary.org
5. Quassy Amusement Park, Middlebury, Conn., www.quassy.com
6. Wachusett Mountain SkyRide, Princeton, www.wachusett.com
7. Boston Duck Tours, Boston, www.BostonDuckTours.com
8. Lowell Spinners Baseball, Lowell, www.lowellspinners.com
9. Community Boating, Boston, www.community-boating.org
10. Back Country Excursions, Parsonsfield, Maine, www.bikebackcountry.com

Have you booked your vacation yet?

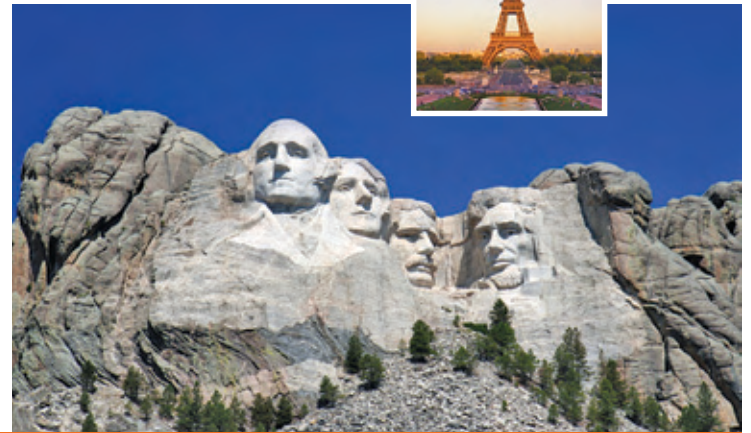
Continued from page 1

Or, if you have your heart set on exploring the world, there are even last-minute travel specials with a wide offering of itineraries and destinations around the world through the MTA Vacation Center partner **Go Ahead Tours**, a division of EF Tours. Choose from London & Paris City Stays and a Food & Wine Tour of Tuscany & Umbria or check out the New Family Tours especially designed for families with children.

REMEMBER THESE FOUR TIPS IN LOOKING FOR LAST-MINUTE TRAVEL:

1. **Flexibility** – Be open to travel according to availability.
2. **Creativity** – Keep your mind open to trying something new.
3. **Persistence** – If you don't see something the first time, keep coming back to take advantage of new offerings.
4. **MTA Vacation Center** – Find it all here, including a sign-up link for e-mails about last-minute travel deals.

So go ahead and dream about the lazy days of summer and explore the great vacation deals waiting for you at the MTA Vacation Center!



Three big winners at the MTA Annual Meeting

Delegates who attended the recent MTA Annual Meeting walked away with dozens of free items and were eligible for several sponsor raffles – and three were mega-winners of MTAB giveaways:

- **Laura Vago**, Malden Education Association, Friday Passport winner of a \$500 American Express gift card.
- **Tom Salvo**, Massachusetts Community College Council, Saturday Passport winner of a \$500 American Express gift card.
- **Katie Carey**, Barnstable Teachers Association, winner of a Flip video camera.



All program and pricing information was current at the time of publication (June 2011) and is subject to change without notice. To find out what may have changed, please call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.