

# The 1148er

The official newsletter of the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers

## FROM THE PRESIDENT:

I hope this message, and the spring weather we are getting to enjoy, finds you well! Needless to say it has been a busy winter time for our union and so I am welcoming a little calm at the union office, even if it is just a little bit!

As most of you know, we held elections last week for union-wide officer and negotiator positions and this evoked some interesting conversations that I was privy to about voter turnout. One of note was between two veteran members who were frustrated that while in this past election we had 57% voter turnout, there were 74% of our members that turned out to vote on our contract.

What I found interesting was that in this particular conversation both members were frustrated but for different reasons. One perspective centered around how if there was such a high number of people voting no on the contract ratification, why weren't there more people either running, or at the very least voting for the open positions that are directly involved in delivering a good contract to us? On the flip side, the other member was also frustrated about turnout, but was energized that we had new members stepping up to run for positions that hadn't in the past. She recognized that the culture of participation and involvement was changing, albeit not at the speed that either of them would like.

I share those sentiments, and I've been thinking about them quite a bit as you might imagine. I keep getting back to, how do we keep building that **stronger together** I'm so fond of talking about and asking us to work towards?

One of the things I have been pressing our building reps to do is hold semi-annual site meetings. They need not be long, and need not be formal; just getting people together to talk about ways we can improve our contract and our working conditions on a regular basis, away from management, is how we truly build capacity. Another idea is for veteran teachers to connect regularly with our newer members. I have been reflecting back when I was a new hire right out of college, and how I knew that union membership was important, but I didn't fully understand why. It took some of the veteran union members in my building to hammer that home for me, and I am eternally grateful for their mentorship then, and now.

As such I ask our veteran union members that if you haven't reached out to a newer member already about the importance of our union, please do so. Also take some time to follow up with a non-union member about the importance of standing with us. In this newsletter you will read more about some great opportunities for us to help others better understand the importance of unionism. I hope you will join me there, and so many of your Local 1148 siblings, sisters, and brothers to continue the conversation!

In solidarity,

*Brian McCarthy*



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## ELECTION UPDATE

On April 8 and 9th, WSPFT members voted in our local's vice presidential election as well as in our negotiator election. If you did not see the results in the email that was sent out on 4/8, you can take a look at them [here](#).

Beginning on July 1, our officer team will include Brian McCarthy (TR) as president, Lora Messer-Nilles (FH) as vice-president, Laura Scott (TR) as Treasurer, and Beth Rabe (Mo/IPC) as Secretary. Our negotiator team will be made up of Matthew Beniak (PK), Anne Bolsem (PK), Phil Hayes (FH), and Kristy Otte (H). Our union is grateful for all of these people for being able to step up to serve our members, as well as those that ran unsuccessfully for a position. We hope to see them run again in the future, and would encourage others to think about doing the same!

We would also like to thank the Election Committee (Athena Gause, Chair, TR, Amanda Mahlstedt, FH, Sarah O'Malia, FH, and Tom Raymond, FH) for their work in coordinating the election and certifying the results.

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Please join us on Thursday May 23rd at [FoodSmith](#) beginning at 4:00 for our General Membership Meeting!

We will honor our retirees, outgoing officers/negotiators, and conduct any relevant business, along with having a lot of time to smile and laugh together! If you have any new business you want added to the agenda reach out to your Building Rep or [email Brian](#), otherwise, we look forward to another packed house on the 23rd!

### UNION MEMBERSHIP AFTER RETIREMENT

Thinking of retiring in the next few years? Education Minnesota offers membership for retirees. You may be eligible for a membership at no cost to you!

Have a [look here](#) to see if you are eligible and the benefits of staying an EdMn member.



**A STRONGER  
TOGETHER**

*Since 1951*

**EARLY CAREER  
(5 YEARS OR LESS)  
HAPPY HOUR**

See flyer on the next page for details on this event!

ARE YOU IN YOUR FIRST 5 YEARS  
WITH ISD 197?  
JOIN US FOR:

# WSPFT EARLY CAREER HAPPY HOUR

Complimentary appetizers and a  
chance to connect with colleagues,  
union officers, and building  
representatives

**THURSDAY, APRIL 25**  
**3:45-5:15 PM**  
**AT 5-8 CLUB**  
**1741 S ROBERT ST**  
**WEST ST PAUL, MN 55118**

# WSPFT SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

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In March, the Executive Board was pleased to award 22 scholarships to graduating Seniors that are the children of WSPFT Members.

## We offer our congratulations and best wishes to the following recipients:

- Nara Anderson (daughter of John, G)
- Kayla Bartol (daughter of Catherine, Me)
- Kaitlyn Cudo (daughter of JoAnn, PK)
- Austin Deegan (son of Jessica, H)
- Amelia Dirksen (daughter of Kristin, H)
- Natalie Dirksen (daughter of Kristin, H)
- Theodore Dobbins (son of Sara Birkeland, Mo)
- LaRae Dodson (daughter of Shannon, S)
- Isabella Garibay (daughter of Faith, PK)
- Brandon Hanson (son of Rob, TR)
- Madeleine Hendricks (daughter of Abigail, G)
- Emmi Holtz (daughter of Jonathan, Me)
- Max Jenness (son of Harry, H)
- Emily Oppenheim (daughter of Jeffrey, PK)
- Gabrielle Pasquerella (daughter of Maria, G)
- Jack Rossum (son of Jennifer, Mo)
- Antonio St. Fleur (son of Jenna, FH)
- Karson Thissen (son of Dawn, PK)
- Tahmei Tulia (daughter of Megan, S)
- Garrett Waterson (son of Jennifer, ELC)
- Hanna Wilsey (daughter of Heather, G)
- Nolan Zellmer (son of Kim, ATTPS)

As we are with all our students, we are SO proud of them and look forward to the great things they will accomplish!

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## JEWISH EDUCATORS

The next event for the Education Minnesota Jewish Affinity Group will be a post-Passover pizza party taking place Tuesday, May 7. The celebration will run from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Vegetarian Kosher Restaurant in St. Louis Park. Education Minnesota will provide soft drinks, salad, ice cream and all the pizza you can eat to help commemorate both the history of Jewish culture and its continued liberation as a community. This new safe space for our Jewish colleagues continues to grow, so please spread the word and encourage fellow Jewish Education Minnesota members to fill out [this interest form](#). [Find more information on the pizza party here](#) and [RSVP here](#).

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## EDUCATION MINNESOTA AFFINITY GROUPS

You may not be aware, but EdMn has established affinity groups for BIPOC educators. If you are interested in finding out more information on racial justice resources, or how to get involved, click [here](#), and/or reach out to [Brian](#).



## WSPFT AT THE CAPITOL

Our union advocacy goes beyond the bargaining table! During the current legislative session, a number of our members have been at the capitol in St. Paul working in a variety of capacities to advance the issues that are important to our students and our educators in our community and around the state. As president, Brian McCarthy serves on Education Minnesota's Legislative Action Committee which shapes our [legislative agenda](#). On February 29th he spent a day with that team lobbying legislators on the importance of those three pillars - professional salaries, pension restoration, and reliable/affordable insurance for all. Later that day he joined nearly fifteen other WSPFT members and close to 1,000 EdMn members to rally for better pensions. Additionally, Kim Zellmer (ATPPS) testified in front of the Senate Finance Committee in support of SF3473 which would give tax credits to educators and Suzanne Temple-Gumm (TR) not only testified on [HF3681](#), which would expand child care subsidies for working families, but was also featured on [WCCO](#) to continue her advocacy!

We are grateful for their efforts and those that have stepped up in the past to do similar work for WSPFT and for Education Minnesota! If this sounds like work you would like to be involved in down the road, connect with your Building Reps or with [Brian](#)!

## SEIU SUPPORT: WEAR PURPLE ON WEDNESDAYS!

The Service Workers International Union Local #284 represents the District's Child Nutrition Workers, Transportation Workers, and Paraprofessionals. On Wednesday's during their negotiations SEIU members wear purple to show their solidarity with one another across Minnesota and they have invited us to do the same until they get the contracts they deserve!

### SOCIAL MEDIA



@wspft1148



@wspft1148



@wspft



<http://wspft.mn.aft.org>

### MEMBER RECOGNITION

Know of a member who is doing extraordinary things that deserves a shout out? [Email Brian](#) and we will look to get them into the next e1148er and on our social media feeds!

## EDMN REPRESENTATIVE CONVENTION

This weekend Education Minnesota will hold its annual Representative Convention in Bloomington. Approximately 600 elected delegates from all of the Locals around the state will convene to set EdMn's annual agenda, elect governing board members, hear from national leaders from both the AFT and NEA, and build solidarity with members from across Minnesota. Delegation size is determined by the number of members each Local has. WSPFT will send five delegates, and they are they are Jodie Darwitz (FH), Brian McCarthy, (TR), Lora Messer-Nilles (FH), Matthew Olson (G), and Courtney Scott (S). We are so grateful that they volunteered to do this meaningful work on behalf of all of us. If you would like to represent us at the 2025 Representative Convention, we are ALWAYS looking to get more people involved. Just [email Brian!](#)

### 403(B) INFORMATION

We are closely approaching our 403(b) enrollment period. For those that are interested, Josh Nokes from Corebridge will again be offering phone and virtual appointments regarding our district's 403(b) retirement plan. Meetings will be made available for you to ask questions about the plan, to enroll in the plan or to review your existing accounts. An email will be sent later this month with links to schedule a time to talk with Josh. Please make sure to monitor your emails in the coming weeks.

#### Important Information to know:

1. To start your contributions in September, you must complete a Salary Reduction Agreement by 5/15/24.
2. If you are eligible for the match for the 1st time, you must complete a Salary Reduction Agreement by 5/15/24 to indicate you are eligible for the match for 2024-2025.
3. If you are eligible for an increase in your match, please confirm you are contributing enough to ensure you will see your increased match for 2024-2025. This may require you to complete a new Salary Reduction Agreement.

### FUTURE 1148ER ISSUES

Have ideas for future issues or want to help in the production of the e1148er?

We'd love to [hear](#) from you!

## KNOW A POTENTIAL MEMBER? KEEP READING!

A heads up that Education Minnesota is again participating in the Early Enrollment program, which opened April 1. This program allows potential members to be eligible for early enrollment in our union. Early Enrollment gives participants access to an array of member benefits from [Education Minnesota](#), [NEA](#) and [AFT](#) between April 1 and Aug. 31, all at no cost!

Potential members joining through Early Enrollment must complete the [pledge form](#). If potential members use [JoinNow](#) (after April 1) to sign up for Early Enrollment, they must click the appropriate box to indicate Early Enrollment sign-up. If they don't do the pledge form and click the box, EdMN will begin assessing prorated dues for this membership year.

## PEOPLE TO KNOW

### OFFICERS:

- Brian McCarthy (TR), President
- Lora Messer-Nilles (FHMS), VP
- Hayley DeMers (FH/H/TR), Treasurer
- Michelle Smith (ELC), Secretary
- Phil Hayes (FHMS), Past President
- Kim Zellmer, ATPPS

### NEGOTIATORS:

- Anne Bolsem (PK)
- Jodie Darwitz (FH)
- Kristy Otte (H)
- Ryan Pagenkopf (TR)

### BUILDING REPS:

- Anna Banti (MO)
- Matthew Beniak (PK)
- Katie Carter (TR)
- Margaret Citta (TR)
- Kristina Cooper (H)
- Angela Penttila (H)
- JoAnn Cudo (PK)
- Erik Kluznik (TR)
- Julia Linehan (GEMS)
- Patrick McCormick (FH)
- Mary Nelson (S)
- Shari Niemczyk (MO)
- Samantha Schiltz (ME)
- Michelle Smith (ELC)
- Anna Thul (ME)
- Lori Thomas (S)

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

Just a reminder that Executive Board meetings are open to all Local 1148 members. For a complete list of meeting times/dates, you can always refer to our [website](#)! If you would like to attend you can reach out to any EB member who can provide more information. All are welcome!

## CONTACT INFO UPDATES

Do you have a NEW address? Do you have a NEW last name? Do you have a NEW building assignment/FTE? Please contact Hayley Demers, our Treasurer, at [wspft1148treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:wspft1148treasurer@gmail.com) with any and all changes to keep our records up to date, and our lines of communication with you uninterrupted.