

# AFSCME LOCAL 1668

Volume1 Issue1

January 2012

## President's Report

Happy New Year Local 1668! I hope you all had a great Holiday break! With the new year comes many things on the horizon.

First, as I'm sure most of you know, we will be headed to the bargaining table before you know it. Your bargaining team has begun preparations already, but it's not too late to help. You have a team of brothers and sisters that will be representing you at the table, but the real team is all of us. Each and every one of us can help with negotiations. There are many things we can do. We can provide assistance to our reps by gathering information and doing research for them. We can show our solidarity and AFSCME pride by wearing our union clothes on Wednesdays. And we can continue to demonstrate our professionalism and dedication to make WMU happen. We are all in this together, so let's all step it up a notch this year and be even better at all the things we already do well every day!

Next, there is something very exciting for our Local this year. **On April 2, AFSCME Local 1668 will be 50 years old! Mark your calendars for April 14 and come out and recognize this milestone with your union family. We will be having a celebration dinner at the Bernhard Center with great food, (prepared by our awesome catering folks), music, memories, and most importantly, fun! For fifty years,**

our local has been making the lives of WMU students better. We have had an influence in almost every aspect of their time at Western. We work where they eat, sleep, play and learn, and have done so for half a century! Each and every one of us, as well as those that came before us, have made a difference at WMU. We all have played a part in making Western what it is today. That is something to be very proud of, and we should all give ourselves a pat on the back for a job well done! Stay tuned for more information on the dinner, as well as more things in the works to celebrate who we are... AFSCME!

Now for the bad news: The attack on unions and the middle class in this state continues on full strength. Our state union, Council 25, continues to defend us on a daily basis. **It was Council 25 that filed the lawsuit regarding the 3% the state has been withholding from any of our members who are in the MPSERS retirement plan, resulting in the state employees getting that money returned to them, with interest. Unfortunately, none of our members will be seeing this money, yet.** The wonderful state government that we have now has decided to take their chances in the courts with this issue when it comes to state employees like us. They simply refuse to admit defeat. **It is important for us all to know, however,**

**that it is not over yet.** Your union continues to fight this issue, as well as the many others, just as hard as ever. It is not a done deal, we just have to wait to let the legal process play itself out, for now.

This is just the latest example of why we need to come alive, AFSCME! We need to get active in our national, state, and local politics. If we, and those like us, don't stand up and be heard, we can expect for the attacks to continue until we are defeated. We can't just sit idly by while our way of life, jobs and freedoms are systematically eliminated. We are the People. This is our country and our state, and we can take it back. We can make a difference by stepping up to the plate and doing what needs to be done. The easiest way to do this is to get registered to vote and to cast an educated ballot in November. And we need to get our friends, family, neighbors, and anyone else who shares our frame of mind to join us in the fight. There are more and more ways for folks like us to make a difference. There are many organized events that we can take part in to show that the middle class will not go down without a fight! Contact the union office if you have had enough and want to help defend the American way of life!

In solidarity,  
Dennis

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*BLUE COLLAR doesn't mean ignorance  
Anymore than  
WHITE COLLAR means intelligence*

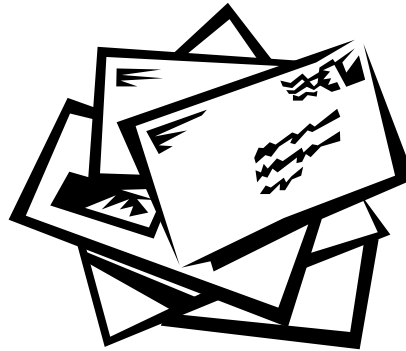
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# Vice President's Report

Welcome back everyone:

I hope everyone had a wonderful time off, I know I did. But now we're back and it's time to get things going. The Bargaining team has been called to order for intent purposes of trying to get the negotiations under way early this year. Our great state who is looking out for everyone's best interest (yeah right) has made a law indicating if negotiation go over the deadline of the contract everyone will have to pay 100% of their premium. Right now we just pay 25% and if you look at your check stub you can see how much it is now. So the bargaining team will strive to get things done ASAP.

### T-Shirts



*All articles are due 2nd Friday of the Month*

T-Shirts are still available and going into negotiations this would be a great time to show your bargaining representative your support by wearing your t-shirt on Wednesdays. If you don't have one just get a hold of

your divisional and they can point you in the right direction. Or, you could come to the Union hall and we have plenty of t-shirts out here. Someone is out here Four days a week. (Especially every first Thursday of the month at 4 pm).

### Articles/Letters

All articles/letters are due 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month, however, you can call me anytime to see if I have room or time to put in your article and or letter. You can call the hall and leave a message I will get it .

In solidarity,

Val Armstrong VP

## Grievance Up-Dates/Committee Up-Dates

### Grievance Up-dates

There are no new grievances to date.

**Old Grievances-** there were three termination grievances and a LTD grievance closed. Including two cases that have been held in abeyance for a long time.

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### Committee Up-dates

Liaison Team- is getting ready to start up for 2012, for more information please read the Chief stewards Report.

Valley Two-Mark Robinson gave appreciation to the local for the money and support for the students' party they held

before the kids left for the Holidays.

Burnham-the Meijer gift cards and toys for the children of the Sieta kids was greatly appreciated.

It has been brought to my attention that there are some people who would like to start a **Labor Relations Committee**. According to the locals constitution the Vice President's is responsible for labor relations. However this would be a local committee not a department so I am asking for feedback **from all departments**. If anyone it interested in joining this committee please give me a call at the union hall.

Leave a message on the machine.

Thank you to all of the women in Valley 1 Dining that knitted all of the hats and scarves, and a thank you to all of our members who brought in gifts for the children of Seita Scholars?

Thanks again

Bryan Sutton

# Chief Stewards Report

Happy New Year to you all. Hope things are going good for you so far. We are entering in to a big year for us at AFSMCE Local 1668. We are going to begin negotiation next month. We are starting early this with hopes of completing negotiations prior to our contract expiration date of August 12, 2012. Public Act 54 which passed this year and signed into law last July by the Governor, puts some restraints on wages increases and benefits if we have not ratified our contract by that date. Please be sure to give your bargaining representatives any input you may have by filling out the surveys and jotting down a note for them. We will be putting together our agenda in the next few weeks so it is important to get that information to them as soon as possible, if you haven't already done so.

Prior to Negotiations, we will be having training on IBB, Interest Based Bargaining. We are hopeful to get many of the stewards into this training as well. This training will be held in early February. I am not sure I can get everyone within the Steward structure released to attend, but will do my best to make that happen, for as many as possible.

We are celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Local Union this year. We will be having a Celebration at the Bernhard Center on April 14, 2012 at 6pm till midnight. You are one guest are invited to attend. You should be receiving Invitation with RSVP cards in the mail within the next month. Please be sure to RSVP by the deadline as we must place are order ahead of time.

More to come on this event and other information surrounding our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, in the next few issues of this newsletter. The AFSCME International Union is also celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary so this is a big year for us all.

We are also gearing up the Liaison

Team for Summer Dining. This is the team that sets up the summer work opportunities for our members in Dining Services who would otherwise be laid off. We are guaranteed 30 summer positions, other than those at the Bernhard Center. They are assigned to work in the Landscape, Custodial, Maintenance Services and the Kitchen Cleaning crew. The team is comprised of two Management Representatives and two Union Representatives. Mark Robinson and I are the two Union Reps.

We had two grievance answers last week. The first dealt with FMLA usage and the tracking of it, by BASIC, the University's third party administrator. They have been tracking and logging the FMLA usage by the individual employees. We had at least one member who had been charged FMLA for days off. They were being charged 8 hours a day, even though they were only scheduled to work 7 hours. They were also charged 8 hours when they were leaving early, using FMLA or reporting to work late. We were awarded that grievance and the University has acknowledged that they are ultimately responsible for the work of the third party administrators.

The second was a grievance dealing with Worker's Compensation, a denial of these benefits and the administration of these benefits in regards to the third party administrators. The employee, cannot be awarded, "Work Comp" through the grievance process, however, the University is making the employee whole in regards to lost pay, FMLA and other benefits based on the third medical opinion, which is covered by our contract.

Still looking to see if there is an interest in participation I a wild game dinner, fund raiser. This would be a Kalamazoo Area Labor Event. The money raised would go to the Kalamazoo Service Project fund, which would be used

in our community. Last year, you may remember, we used the fund to pack food boxes and school supplies for area homeless children, in Kalamazoo. We need donations of "Wild Game" such as Smoked Salmon, Venison Chili, Venison Summer Sausage, Smoked Duck.... You get the idea. Maybe a donation of a Roasting pan size dish to pass, with some sort of "Wild Game" in it. (Though we would need other dishes to pass as well.) Then we need to know that people would be willing to attend this fundraising event. IF this is something you might find yourself willing to participate in, please let me know soon. We are trying to put this thing together and we just need to know if there is an interest. There will be many items to auction off and to bid on as well. The one I went to in Muskegon is an annual event, and they raise thousands of dollars for their Community Service Organization.

In Solidarity,  
Kathi Babbitt

Dear Local 1668

The Michigan Constitution specifically protects the right of the people to call for a referendum on bills passed by the Legislature. When sufficient signatures are filed, a law is halted and placed on the ballot in the next General Election for the people to decide. Over 160,000 signatures have been gathered to call for this vote on PA 4, Michigan's dictatorial Emergency Manager Law, more than enough to meet the minimum number necessary.

But at the end of last year, the Michigan State Senate passed SB 865 expanding that law. Many believe it will be amended in the House to re-enact the emergency manager law effectively nullifying your vote even before you cast it. Go online to this address [action.afscme.org/c/346/p/dia/action/public/](http://action.afscme.org/c/346/p/dia/action/public/) to tell your State Representative that you want the right to vote on this critical legislation. Tell them to listen to their constituents' voice in November.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> annual John Seita Scholars holiday dinner

Brothers and Sisters,

Tuesday December 20<sup>th</sup> we hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual John Seita Scholars holiday dinner, and once again it was a great success. Amazingly, we had a great cache of volunteers again this year who need to be recognized, so here goes. We first and foremost want to thank Norma Lockway and Shalah Bryant for their immeasurable trust in all of us allowing us to host this event at Valley 1 dining. Thanks to Kim LaViolette for helping shop and deliver all of the food and decorations. Thanks to Diane Briggs for zipping in for a couple of hours and getting everything going in a good direction. Thanks to Jan Prange who, even though retired, came and worked all day. Thanks to Kathi Babbitt, the turkey aficionado (they were, as usual, amazing)! Thanks to Becky and Jeff Winkle, you are a great team and made some wonderful

desserts, your dedication is heartfelt.

Thanks to Doug Gray and Mike Brown, no matter what is going on in Local 1668, you guys are always there to lend a hand. Thanks to John Boss, you are one of the greatest guys and you carve a heck of a turkey my friend. Thanks to Sherry Sandlin, you used your amazing talent and made the dining room festive for all of our guests. Thanks to Rob Kelly, you are always ready and willing to help and you truly are the king of pots and pans! Thanks to Audi Conner, Willie Mitchell, and Sharon McKenzie, you guys came near the end of the day and helped so much with the hardest part of any event, the clean up!! Thanks to Bryan Sutton, for being an incredible liaison, you really made it all work. Also thanks Bryan and Dennis Moore for always being the most gracious hosts, you made every guest feel comfort-

able and welcome and you kept the party rolling! One more, a huge thank you to our Dining Services Director, Judy Gipper, who put on her apron, stepped into the kitchen with us and spent her afternoon helping prepare an amazing meal (something she does not often get the chance to do). We hope you enjoyed this time with us. Also, we want to note that without Judy's willingness to let us use the kitchen and all its resources at Valley 1, Afscme Local 1668 would not be able to host this event for the John Seita Scholars and all their support staff. We are so grateful for her support!

I am honored to be part of such an incredible group of people.

In solidarity,  
Carolyn Wiley