CTU News

Volume XXXV, Issue 4  Organized and Independent since 1974!  April 2008

CTU applauds GEU success

Executive Board passes resolution in support of GEU bargaining

April 22, 2008—After 13 hours of bargaining on Monday night and into Tuesday morning, GEU informed us that they had reached a tentative agreement with MSU as of 6 a.m.

The agreement averted a walk-out by teaching assistants (TAs) planned for that day.

The GEU bargaining team determined that “this is the best contract we can achieve at this time” and said on their website that they would be recommending it to the membership for ratification.

The team won a three-year agreement that includes wage

GEU continued on p. 7

Benefits Open Enrollment deadline: May 12

MSU Benefits Open Enrollment for the 2008-2009 plan year started April 21 and will run through Monday, May 12.

You must participate in Open Enrollment if you are making any changes in your coverage, such as adding or removing a dependent, switching health or dental care plans, or changing life insurance options. You must also participate if you wish to continue coverage for a spouse.

You do not need to go through Open Enrollment if you are not making changes and not covering a spouse.

PHP remains the lowest cost plan. Full-time employees will not have a premium deducted from their paychecks for the PHP option. Those choosing Community Blue will pay the difference between the two plans. See the table on this page for a breakdown of the employee’s contribution for the various options. [Jamie Lynn Pfeffer]

Please note that the spouses of MSU employees who have access to health care coverage through their own employers must purchase that coverage if it costs the spouse $800 or less per year. This is an increase from last year’s amount of $750.

Benefits continued on page 4

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2007-08 Employee Monthly Health Plan Contributions
Employee contributions are pre-tax through payroll deduction. Both plans continue to include CVS/Caremark prescription drug coverage.

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Community Blue PPO

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For sale:

◆ Piano and bench: Good condition. $550. 517-614-5795.

◆ “Must see” sharp country ranch on 1 3/4 acres park like setting: Ovid area, close to town and schools. 3 bedrooms/2 full baths. Built in 1974, completely updated, painted and all new floors. New 12x24 family room with scenic view. Finished walkout basement to attached 2-car garage. Great price at $132,900. 9681 Kinley Road, Ovid. 989-834-2870 or 989-277-2865.

◆ Beautiful AKC Labrador Retriever puppies: 9 puppies born February 29. Available end of April. Mother: Registered AKC chocolate, incredible family/house pet. Father: Red Fox Pointer, registered AKC yellow, well-known hunting dog. Pups will have claws removed, worming, and first set of shots. Call or email for more information, 517-623-0408 or 517-749-2019, sinnaeve@yahoo.com. We are taking deposits! First come, first choice!

◆ Community-wide yard sale: May 3, rain or shine. 16430 Park Lake Road (Oak Island) 9–5. Books of all sorts including hunting and fishing, woman’s/junior clothing, infant girl clothing, record albums including rare or hard to find and much more. Everything must go. Lot 25.

◆ Antique washstand: Oak with towel bar across the back, 3 drawers and a door, good condition, $200. Two wing chairs: Brown and tan striped, mint condition, asking $125 each. Call Sue at 517-881-8218 or email sunnlee@hotmail.com.

◆ 1993 Chevy Suburban: 1500 1/2 ton, 2 wheel drive, 165,000 miles, black exterior, gray interior, third seat, reese hitch, a little rust, running boards, everything works, $3,500/bo.

◆ 1992 Wells cargo enclosed trailer: 16’ x 7’, model CW162, black exterior, white interior, tandem axle, 12v dome lights, roof vents, side window, insulated roof & side walls, 110v plugs, work bench, extra wide side door, $3,500/bo. 1986 Fiero: Black exterior, gray interior, 2.8 L, v6, 2000 miles on rebuilt motor, 22–25 mpg, about 31,000 miles, new shocks, new struts, new alternator, new heater core, new locks, replaced nose (needs paint), also replaced radio, needs new headliner, front ball joints need to be replaced (I have new ones that go with the car), $3,500/bo. Email Northstarracing@hotmail.com or call 862-9854 after 5 pm.

For rent:
◆ Private airplane hanger (Capital City Airport): Rare opportunity for secured storage at Capital City Airport, 850 sq. ft. to 2550 sq. ft. available, concrete floors, electric hookup, 24 hour security. Ideal for cars, boat, jetskies, snowmobiles or travel trailer. Empty

Classifieds continued on next page
Solidarity!

by Deb Bittner

It seems, lately, that no one likes the unions. [Patricia Downing]

A recent Lansing State Journal article reported that “solidarity is shaky” for local strikers and referred to comments and blogs that were less than supportive of the unions. Newspaper editorial pages frequently point to unions as the reason for our economic woes. We’ve also seen a recent attempt to undermine Michigan’s unions through right-to-work (for less) initiatives.

The general consensus seems to be that when resources are scarce, people lose their sense of solidarity with other workers and just begin to think of their own immediate needs. They’re saying either, “If I don’t have it, neither should you,” or “Work quietly and be grateful for what you have.”

Right here, on campus, we saw a vocal group of individuals try to paint the MSU employees who teach one-third of the classes as ungrateful, shortsighted, greedy students working to undermine the university. What was the teaching assistants’ crime? They work hard and wanted their work recognized and compensated via their contract.

The barrage of anti-union sentiment (which, I believe, is often encouraged by a press that feeds on controversy) could almost make you forget that polls show a strong majority of the public approves of unions and a majority of workers say they would join a union if they could.

My fear is that a strong but vocal and often well-funded minority will convince people suffering from the economic downturn to blame unions (or each other) for the problems.

The majority of CTU members have never believed that we could be successful without the support and solidarity of other unions and the community. We know that a strong labor movement—on campus, in the community, and at state and local levels—is a big part of our own strength here at MSU.

The CTU is fortunate to have a good working relationship with our employer at this time. Whether we agree or disagree with them on particular issues, both sides respect the labor relations process and work toward mutually satisfying working conditions.

The CTU Executive Board decided to offer moral support to GEU because we saw them as employees entitled to a fair bargaining process. The University was dragging its feet in negotiations—a tactic we have faced in past years—and we believed our standing up for GEU could have a positive effect.

We support GEU, and other unions, because it is the right thing to do, but it is also in our own best interest. Raising the floor benefits everyone. We do not want TAs so cowed that they will take on our duties in order to keep their jobs. Also, we may need to call on them for support in the future. The University has made several comments that warn us they will be targeting our health care insurance in the next round of negotiations. We don’t want TAs to say, “Well, they have better health care than I do, so why should I care?” No, if we are under attack, we want GEU—and other members of the community, including the labor community—writing letters, joining our rallies, contacting the administration and legislators, etc. We’ve learned over the years that we need each other.

The historical sacrifices of union members are responsible for the middle-class way of life in America. Because of unions we have the eight-hour day, child labor laws, weekends, breaks, laws on workplace health and safety, the minimum wage and social security. All of these victories benefitted society as a whole and not just the individuals in a specific union.

Now, the American way of life that was ushered in by the unions is under attack.

It is important, as we look for answers to our economic problems that we not allow unions to become the scapegoat.

I mean, really, how low can we go? Do we really want the life-styles of workers in China or other parts of Asia? Blaming unions is too simplistic. Rather than joining in the race to the

Classifieds

continued from previous page

the clutter from your garage. Big enough to share with friend and split the rent. Please call 517-290-5632.

Services:


FREE: Advertise to your colleagues in the CT News. Contact Cheryllee Finney at ctnews@msu.edu. The CT News accepts ads from CTs on items for sale and/or services provided by CTs and/or their household family members.

Solidarity continued on p. 5
Coalition resolves co-pay snafu

The Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU, the group that negotiates and monitors our health care contract, has resolved an issue of which most members were probably unaware.

The Physicians Health Plan (PHP) inaccurately charged several MSU union members a $100 co-pay for using the emergency room during the period of July 1, 2007, through March 6, 2008. [Cherylyn Mitchell]

According to our health care contract, emergency room co-pays are waived when a member presents the signs and symptoms of a serious medical condition, was in an accident or was admitted to the hospital.

When contacting PHP brought no resolution, some members contacted their unions and one person contacted Wayne Cass, Chairperson of the Coalition, directly.

Together, MSU Staff Benefits and the Coalition raised the status of the issue and insisted on an immediate resolution and an audit to identify all MSU employees who were overcharged even if they hadn’t made a complaint or asked for a refund.

As a result, PHP sent letters to 375 members affected by the error. Anyone who was incorrectly charged the co-pay should have received reimbursement from the provider (not PHP). PHP reports that the problem has been fixed and will not happen again.

The Coalition thanks MSU Staff Benefits and PHP for working with us to get the issue resolved.

If you believe you should have been reimbursed for emergency room treatment but were not, or if you think you were inappropriately charged for any medical treatment, contact your union. We will work through the Coalition to get answers and resolve the problem.

New Assistant VP

We welcome Mr. Brent Bowditch as the new Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, effective September 1, 2008.

Bowditch hails from Purdue University where he is currently the assistant director of Human Resource Services – Staff Benefits and WorkLife Programs. He replaces Pam Beemer who left MSU last year to become associate vice president for human resources and chief human resources officer at Northwestern University.

Vision Care open enrollment

The employee paid vision care program is not renewed through Human Resources Open Enrollment. Although we are able to utilize payroll deduction, the vision plan is offered by the Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU and administered through Michigan Employee Benefit Services.

Vision Care Open Enrollment for a July 1, 2008, effective date runs through the end of May. New members can enroll online at www.mebs.com/oes. The login is 001080, and the password is RUG2OPAL.

For problems or questions, call 1-800-968-6327, press 0, and ask for the billing department.

Benefits continued from p. 1

Another change is in our life insurance carrier. Prudential is the new plan administrator for both the employer-paid life insurance (a year’s salary up to $50,000) and the optional employee-paid accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) insurance.

Employer-paid life insurance will remain the same, but there will be advantages to the supplemental AD&D insurances we are able to purchase during Open Enrollment.

The transition to Prudential will be automatic for anyone already enrolled, and because of the new plan’s more competitive rates, will usually result in more coverage at similar or lower rates than before.

Detailed information about the changes in the life insurance plan, as well as a breakdown of all Open Enrollment options can be found in the MSU Human Resources' newsletter, Source, available on-line at www.hr.msu.edu/hrsite/HRNews/Source. It includes additional contribution information for part-time employees hired before July 1, 1998, and for those with family continuation or sponsored dependent riders. It also provides a review of the benefits offered by the health and dental care plans.

Participate in online open enrollment by visiting www.hr.msu.edu and logging in to the eHR System with your MSU Net ID and password. From the eHR menu, select “Benefits Enrollments and Information” and then “Benefits Enrollment/Changes” and follow the Open Enrollment prompts.

Direct questions or problems associated with enrolling to the Benefits office at benefitsinfo@hr.msu.edu or 353-4434.
Plastic garden pot recycling

Unions to the rescue: 16th Annual National Association of Letter Carriers’ Food Drive, May 10, 2008

By Willie Paulsen, Executive Board Secretary

Every day thousands of letter carriers deliver their routes, but on the second Saturday in May, they also pick up donated canned goods placed next to mail boxes by their customers.

Last year, throughout the United States, letter carriers collected over 71 million pounds of food. In Lansing, over 51,000 pounds of food were collected for the American Red Cross Regional Distribution Center.

By May, the Christmas donations have been depleted and the pantries are in dire need of food. During the school year, 65% of the Lansing school children receive free or reduced meals, but with the school year coming to a close, many parents look to the food bank to help provide balanced meals. For more information, visit http://www.nalc.org/community/fooddrive/.

Along with donating nonperishable food items we can show our solidarity by assisting our union brothers and sisters. (Postal workers are organized under the National Association of Letter Carriers.) Talk with your letter carrier regarding the food collection and offer a hand. The donated items must be picked up by the end of the day, so it would be very helpful if you could meet with the carrier at various stops on their route to transport the donations to the collection center.

If you are not available on May 10, perhaps you could schedule others in your area to help them out.

Solidarity continued from p. 3

The Office of Recycling and Waste Management is partnering on this project. For more information, visit hrt.msu.edu/recycleplasticpots/.

The food drive makes for a very long and physically demanding day for most of the carriers. Because their vehicles fill up quickly as they pick up food and add it to the mail load, they have to take time out to drive to the center to unload in order to be able to finish their route as well as collect the remaining food donations.

Volunteers are needed! Contact Dr. Art Cameron at cameron@msu.edu or phone 517-355-5191, ext. 1338.

New bottom, we need an economy where workers share in the growth, raising the standards that benefit everyone and insuring a prosperous economy and vibrant communities. This is what unions can provide us.
Who has the best boss on campus?

Does your supervisor understand your need for work/life balance and support flexible schedules in your unit?

Do you want to honor her or him for sensitivity to the work/life needs of the employees in your department?

You have until June 2 to get your nomination completed!

To be eligible for nomination, your supervisor should
▼ Understand work/life balance;
▼ Allow flexible schedules;
▼ Treat everyone with dignity, respect and integrity;
▼ Promote teamwork while supporting individuals’ well being;
▼ Humanize the work environment and treat employees as people first;
▼ Have a positive leadership style which empowers others;
▼ Be familiar with University work/life policies and procedures;
▼ Show sensitivity to individual needs;
▼ Be familiar with the MSU Family Resource Center services and other campus support programs.

The nomination packet can be found on the web site of the Family Resource Center (www.frc.msu.edu/awards) along with detailed information. Questions? Contact FRC at 432-3745.

CT’s family needs help

On Christmas morning 2005, CT Marcia Paterna’s son-in-law, 32-year-old Ted Courter, was in a devastating automobile accident that left him a quadriplegic.

As a result, Ted and Julie Courter and their children were forced to leave their comfortable old farmhouse for an apartment that is accessible but hardly suitable for a young, active family of six.

Neighbors, family and friends have pooled their time, energy and resources toward the goal of providing the Courter’s with a comfortable, barrier-free home. The project is called the “DeWitt Community Build.”

“I have seen how generous CTs are in the community,” said Paterna, an assistant in the MSU Library. “I wanted to let people know about this situation and how they might be able to help.”

There are several ways to assist.

A spaghetti dinner benefit will be held on Monday, May 12, at St. Judes Church (801 N. Bridge St.) in DeWitt. The cost is $10 for adults and $5 for children. A $30 family meal deal is available for parents with two or more children. There are no advance tickets—just come!

Donations are being accepted for a silent auction and bake sale that will be held at the dinner. To donate, contact Kelly Grimm at 669-9765 or kellygrimm@comcast.net.

If you can’t attend the dinner but would like to make a donation, send a check made payable to the DeWitt Area Community Fund (DACF) with “DeWitt Community Build (DCB)” written on the memo line, to:

DeWitt Community Build
Attn. Karie Kusnier, Treasurer
13980 Schavey Road
DeWitt, MI 48820

Donations for the DeWitt Community Build are tax deductible. For more information about taxes, donations and other aspects of the project, visit www.leaguelineup.com/courter.

UR district news

District 29 (Olin Health Center, Berkey): Renee McLaurnine has petitioned to be appointed Union Representative. If no other CTs from the district express an interest in the position before May 14, she will be appointed.

District 31 (North and South Kedzie Hall, Bessey Hall, Computer Center): Tina Drewyor has submitted a petition for the UR position. Because Betty Walther is interested in retaining the position, a May 14 runoff election has been arranged for the members of District 31.

We have ten districts without a UR. Interested in becoming a UR? Know of a coworker who would make a great UR? For more information, contact URCC Chairperson Colleen Drake (432-6123 x162 or drakec@msu.edu) or Vice President Nancy Gray (353-8632 or grayn@msu.edu).
GEU

continued from p. 1
in large part to increases for three years (3%, 2.75% and 2.5%) and significant improvements in their health insurance benefits. They also kept their parking privileges and made other gains.

In thanking the community for its support through a very difficult set of negotiations, GEU specifically included the Clerical-Technical Union.

Recognizing the importance of showing our solidarity with other campus unions, the CTU Executive Board took several steps, including the passage of a resolution which President Deb Bittner presented to the Board of Trustees during their April 18 meeting. (See the President’s Corner on page 3 for a discussion of the importance of union solidarity.) [Heather Johnson]

We also informed the University that if GEU walked out, we would refuse to cross the picket lines to attend meetings scheduled on campus and offered the alternative of meeting at the CTU offices.

CTs all over campus expressed their support to the TAs in their areas, and GEU bargaining team members said they were grateful for our participation at rallies and demonstrations and for our messages of support.

Have you received your Contract?
All CTs should have received a copy of the April 1, 2007–March 31, 2011, Agreement between MSU and the Clerical-Technical Union. If you have not received your copy, call the CTU office at 355-1903.

The Contract is also available through a link on the CTU website at www.msu.edu/user/ctumsu/contract.htm.

New CTU strike committee?
October heralds the twentieth anniversary of our very successful two-week strike of 1988, the most recent job action taken on the MSU campus.

Any members interested in organizing an event to commemorate those days should contact the CTU office at 355-1903 or ctustaff@msu.edu. If enough members are interested we will form a planning committee.

Resolution in support of the Graduate Employees Union

On April 17, 2008, the CTU Executive Board passed the following resolution in support of the Graduate Employees Union in its efforts to secure a contract with Michigan State University:

WHEREAS, the success of MSU and its employees depends upon an atmosphere of mutual respect and problem solving in the MSU community; and

WHEREAS, collective bargaining is the way employees have of insuring their voice in the workplace; and

WHEREAS, the CTU recognizes the contributions of the members of GEU as employees of the University; and

WHEREAS, CTU is committed to building solidarity between the labor unions that represent MSU employees; and

WHEREAS, all MSU employees, including those in GEU, deserve to be fairly compensated for their contributions to their employer; and

WHEREAS, bargaining began in October 2007, and if approached with an urgency by the University equal to that of the GEU members, would have resulted in a fair and completed contract long ago;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Clerical-Technical Union of Michigan State University calls on the University to bargain in good faith with the representatives of GEU; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that CTU supports the actions of the unions at MSU to oppose all MSU labor practices that are unjust, exploitive and divide the MSU community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that CTU will encourage its members to support the GEU in demanding to be treated fairly.
Calendar

May 6. CTU Executive Board meeting, C-T Union Hall. Members welcome.
May 9. Second Annual Dream Girl benefit gala for the Women’s Center of Greater Lansing. Held at the home of Dr. Arshad Abbasi, 3573 Autumnwood Lane, Lansing. Donation: $100. RSVP by May 2 to 517-372-9163. Tickets also available at the door.
May 10. CTU Game Night, 7–11 pm, C-T Union Hall. This is an adults-only evening. No alcohol.
May 10. Annual National Association of Letter Carriers’ Food Drive (see p. 5).
May 12. Benefits Open Enrollment deadline (see p. 1).
May 15. Submission deadline for items to go in the June CT News.
May 16. Deadline to nominate a CT for the 2008 Gliozzo CT Recognition Award. Nomination form and directions are in the HR News section of the MSU Human Resources web site (www.hr.msu.edu). Contact Jackie Mussell (884-0114 or musselfj@hr.msu.edu).
May 20. CTU Executive Board meeting, C-T Union Hall. All members welcome. [Karin Klettke]
May 30. Vision Care Open Enrollment deadline (see p. 4).
May 31. Recycle your plastic garden materials, 8 am–5 pm, MSU Parking Lot #46 (see p. 5).

Spring cleaning
The Mildred B. Erickson Yard Sale is just the tool you need in clearing out your basement, garage and attic for Spring.

Now until August 1, the MSU Union Building Sales Office (517-355-3464) is accepting kitchen and household items that students can use in their rooms or apartments. Donated items must be able to be carried—nothing too large or heavy.

The items will be sold at the MSU Union Building on Tuesday, August 26, 8 a.m.–5 p.m., with all proceeds going to the Mildred B. Erickson Scholarship Fund for nontraditional students.

April raises
Check your paycheck. All CTs should have received a 2.75% raise in April. The increase is the result of the agreement negotiated by the Coalition of Labor Organizations that tied increases in the cost of health care to wages.

By Willie Paulsen, Executive Board Secretary

If you can possibly attend, don’t miss the Seventieth Annual America-at-Work AFL-CIO Union-Industries Show that takes place at Cobo Hall in Detroit, May 16–18. There is no entrance fee.

Having participated in this show for the last couple years, I guarantee it will amaze, amuse, entertain, educate and impress you. Hundreds of exciting exhibits and hands-on demonstrations celebrate America’s union workers and the work they do. There are vendors, drawing giveaways (including cars and a Harley motorcycle) and presentations by union workers. The largest collection ever of union-made-in-the-USA products and services under one roof, the show stretches across an area the size of three football fields.

BUY UNION • BUY AMERICAN