



News & Views

◆ Billings Education Association ◆ 510 North 29th Street ◆ Billings, MT 59101 ◆ 1-406-248-9812 ◆

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Governor Schweitzer to attend BEA event

Bill Kennedy ran a valiant campaign for *Secretary of State* and the *BEA* commends him for his hard work and willingness to serve. Though he will not be moving to Helena this term, we would like to thank Bill as he continues to represent us as *Yellowstone County Commissioner*. Come to the reception at the *BEA* office on Thursday, December 9, from 5-7 p.m., meet Governor Schweitzer, thank Bill Kennedy, enjoy roast pig and fixings, and help Bill retire his campaign debt.

Welcome NEW

MEA-MFT Administrative Assistant

Pat Johnson moved to Billings this month to fill Cathy Marshall's position. She is now the *MEA-MFT South Central Field Office Administrative Assistant* working with Steve Henry and Scott T. McCulloch.

Pat comes from Missoula where she was the *Administrative Assistant* at the *MEA-MFT Northwest Field Office*.

Pat is no stranger to the Billings area. She grew up on a small farm between Columbus and Absarokee and graduated from Laurel High School. She had planned to return to Billings upon retirement but accelerated those plans when the Billings position became available.

In 1979, Pat began her career working part time for the *Great Falls Education Association*. In August, 1981, she began working in the Missoula *MEA* office. From the beginning, Pat has been involved with the staff union and has held every office and served on many committees of the *Montana Staff Organization*. Pat received *NSO's* first-ever associate staff scholarship to attend the *Harvard Trade Union Program* for 10 weeks in 1993.

Pat says, "I'm so glad I moved to Billings. Allan, Shauna, Steve and Scott have been so helpful about answering all my questions. I absolutely admire my colleagues and all of the members that are connected with this organization. I've 'heard it all' in my time on the job in the Missoula Field Office and never cease to be amazed at the dedication of our members to stand up for their rights. I miss Missoula, but very much look forward to get to know the members here."



Pre-Retirement Workshop Scheduled

M*EA-MFT* will present their annual pre-retirement workshop in Billings on January 11. Don't miss this opportunity to learn about *TRS* benefits and procedures and have your questions answered by *TRS* staff.

Information on school finance reform, the *PRO & K12 Statewide Health Insurance Program (SHIP)*, *Social Security benefits*, *NEA Long Term Care and Member Benefit programs*, *NEA*

A+ Auto/Home Insurance, basics of pre-retirement

financial planning, and the *Retired MEA-MFT* program will also be presented.

The workshop takes place at the *BEA* office and at the Lincoln Center from 4:10 p.m. to 8 p.m. Hors d'oeuvres and refreshment will be provided by *Retired MEA-MFT*. Mark the date, January 11, on your calendar and plan to attend.

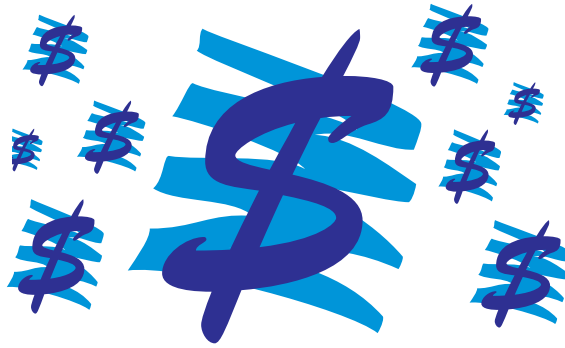


Retirement Reminder

If a teacher plans to retire soon, he or she should be aware of these *Severance Notification* deadlines. Staff must submit a notification by the following dates to receive the listed percentage of benefits.

- ☐ Before March 1 105%
- ☐ After March 1 100%
- ☐ After April 1 95%
- ☐ After Last day of School 90%





Allan Audet
BEA President

Insurance — A Concern

The *Insurance Committee* has had a challenging few months managing the *Insurance Plan*. As determined by *Gallagher Benefit Services*, the expenditures far exceeded the revenue during June and July and left the reserve levels below the recommended levels. The *Insurance Committee* must now generate \$300,000 to \$500,000 in new revenue to maintain a safe reserve level. A complete document should be in place by January 1, 2005. The following premises must be considered.

Raising premiums or reducing benefits are methods to generate revenue for the *Plan*. Neither of these options is appealing but tough choices must be made to ensure the health of the *Plan*.

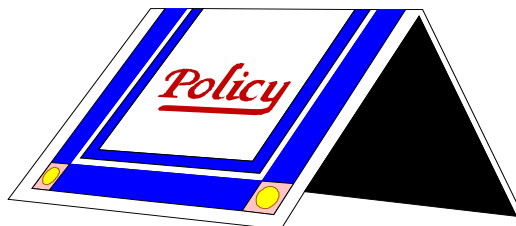
Medical costs and services are on the rise and it is becoming ever more difficult to determine the new rate increases from year to year. Nationwide discussions demonstrate the need for large pools to help regulate the two-digit increases health plans face. Billings has an opportunity to become part of a statewide pool of educational employees this legislative session in the form of a *K-12 State Health Insurance Plan (SHIP)*. The *SHIP* plan has been developed by several educational groups such as: *Montana Quality Education Coalition, Montana K-12 Renewal Commission, Legislative Interim Committee on Educational Local Government, MTSBA, SAM, MREA, Small School Alliance, AA Schools, Governor Brian Schweitzer* and many others. This plan has been devised to meet the diverse needs across the state of Montana. This is in stark contrast to *HB 302* which was introduced during the last legislative session and lacked support of many of the above mentioned groups and, more importantly, the \$200 *Per Eligible Active Employee Per Month (PEAEPM)* funding.

Key Components of proposed K-12 SHIP:

- ✦ Support an enrollment of 12,000 to 17,000 participants.
- ✦ Devise a plan that lowers administration costs.
- ✦ Offer greater access to affordable health care for more school employees.
- ✦ Propose more flexibility for employees on plan enrollment choices.
- ✦ Increase negotiating capabilities with health care providers.
- ✦ Lower premiums while maintaining benefit levels comparable to the current plan.
- ✦ Reduce the need to negotiate plan changes or rate increases.
- ✦ Authorize a sum of \$200 paid *PEAEPM* by the State to offset local contributions, freeing up revenue to be used for services and salaries. (In Billings, this equates to 4 to 4.8 million dollars.)
- ✦ Maintain retiree participation while offering wider and more affordable options.

Actuarial comparisons have been completed to compare all AA District plans to the proposed plan language of the *K-12 SHIP*. The results were reported on a rating scale, 1.00 being the standard. The comparison for Billings fell at the 0.901 level which was third among AA schools. This *K-12 SHIP* plan would be a tremendous benefit for *District 2* employees, but, with any bill introduced into the *Legislature*, it will be subject to amendments. It is

imperative to monitor the bill to ensure the benefits, funding, and key components remain intact to serve the needs of *District 2* employees.





Teachers praise Education Support Specialists on NESP Day

ESPs are great! On November 17, *National Education Support Professionals Day*, education support professionals were recognized for their contributions to the school district. *Billings School District 2* school bus drivers, cafeteria workers, teachers' aides and other education support professionals positively impact our school communities, keep our children safe and healthy, and help them achieve success in learning. *District 2* teachers are benefactors of the wonderful job our *ESPs* do every day. These are the letters of thanks and praises we received from them.

LESLIE OWEN is very valuable to me and the children at *Rimrock Early Childhood Center*. It is wonderful to have someone you can count on in your classroom and help keep things running smoothly. Leslie, you are appreciated! (From *Lorri Gregor*)

A great big Thank You and Kudos to **TRUDY TENNANT**, a teaching professional at *Central Heights Elementary*. She is instrumental in providing educational opportunities for children every day. Many thanks for all you do. (From *Lon Drollinger*)

For the past seven years, **KATHY CARRILLO** has been my assistant at the *North Park Head Start*. When she was first assigned to preschool, she was reluctant. Was she ever wrong! The children love her and she does an incredible job. I couldn't do it without her. (From *Debbie Dolezal*)

MARGIE FRANKLIN brings experience and knowledge to the classroom at *Rimrock Early Childhood Center* and she is very helpful. The staff and the children love her. She has been a wonderful addition to my classroom with her flexibility and knowledge. We love you Margie! (From *Lorri Gregor*)

CARLA FETTIG works with special education preschool students at *Rimrock Early Childhood Center*. She cares for our kids and always goes the extra mile to make school a pleasant learning environment. Thank you Carla for all that you do! (From *Kristen Mavencamp*)

DEANNE CUMMINS and **SUE ABFALDER**, support staff at *Rimrock Early Childhood Center*, help students become successful. Every success, great or small, would not be possible without the help of the dedicated staff. They are truly "special." (From *Cheri Dale*)



One of the *West High Academy's* greatest assets is **MAUREEN CICERO**. As the school secretary, she also runs the in-school detention, acts as the school nurse, monitors the halls, greets parents, manages the academy school store and booster club concessions, and (it's true) she even paints and puts up ceiling panels. We, at the *Academy*, are blessed with such a wonderful person on our staff. (From *Marcia Hafner*)

SUSAN KING works with special education preschool students at *Rimrock Early Childhood Center*. Susan is truly instrumental in the progress that our children make. Thank you Susan—you are truly one of a kind! (From *Kristen Mavencamp*)

SHERIDEE WALKER brightens each day for over 500 people at *Big Sky*. We flock to her in droves, with anxious concerns and complicated questions. She knows just what to do or say to each person who seeks her help in her calm and pleasant way. Thank you, Sheridee. (From *Joan Smith*)



SHERRY ABRAHAMS has worked at *Skyview High School* in the Basic Skills / Independent Living classroom for almost nine years. She is an irreplaceable co-worker and friend. Thank you so much for your never ending help and support. (From *Gay Christianson*)

GERRY BUTTMAN, an Extra Special ESP at *Bitterroot School*, is enthusiastic and has high expectations for everyone. She gives 110% every day and our school is blessed to have her. We love her sense of humor and her words of encouragement. Thank you Gerry! (From *Chris Morales*)



Send questions about the Master Agreement to Allan Audet at audetbea@aol.com. Questions will be selected for each month's article.

Know Your Master Agreement

Service Credit and Sick Leave Credit

Teachers retiring this year, or planning to retire soon, may be considering their service credit. Even if retirement is in the distant future, educators should know about their service credit.

According to the *Master Agreement* for each year of service prior to June 30, 1986, a teacher has earned \$100. For each full year of service after July 1, 1986, a teacher accumulates 2¹/₂ days of credit to be paid upon leaving at the teacher's highest daily rate of pay. This daily rate of pay does not include pay for extracurricular activities, extended employment and other additional compensation. Service credit will be paid upon termination of services to any teacher with at least 10 years of service, but not more than 35 years of service.

Upon leaving the District's employ, a teacher will receive a cash payment for their unused sick leave. Sick leave days are paid out at 1/4 of their value at the teacher's current daily rate, not including additional compensation for extracurricular activities, extended employment, or other extra compensation.

Increased service credit and sick leave credit is available if teachers give early notification to the District of their intent to retire or resign. Notify the District before March 1 to receive 105% of the total. Notify the District after April 1 and lose up to 10% of the service and sick leave credit.

Make the most of your retirement pay. Come to the Retirement Workshop on January 11 to find out more!

To estimate your service credit & sick leave credit:

Years of Service:

Before 6/30/1986 _____ x \$100 = _____

After 7/1/1986 _____ x 2¹/₂ days x (daily rate of highest salary) = _____

Total Service Credit = _____

Accumulated Sick Leave Days _____ x (current daily rate x .25) = _____

Total Sick Leave Credit _____

To read the language in the *Master Agreement* on these two topics, see *Article VII - Compensation, Section 17 and 18* and *Article VIII - Leaves of Absence, Section 13*.





Class Provides Immediate Techniques

For the third time since its inception, the professional development class, *Foundations of Effective Teaching I*, will be offered to educators.

The class begins on January 31 and will meet on Mondays from 4:30-6:30 p.m. through April 4. Previous graduates report they were able to implement the techniques and theories they learned immediately—with wonderful results.

Registration begins December 13 at the Lincoln Center *Community Education* in Room 107. Completion of this course earns two step-up credits, one college/graduate credit, and 20 OPI units. The cost is \$110 plus a \$5 printing fee. An extra fee will be applied for college credit.

For more information contact the instructors, Juline Kosmicki and Tania Klein at 255-3882 or *Community Education* at 247-3700.



It's about giving back.

Thanks from Montana Shares

Montana Shares, a partnership of 40 Montana-based nonprofit groups devoted to improving the quality of life in communities throughout the state, wishes to thank the *Billings Public Schools District* employees for their generous support this fall.

Donations to *Montana Shares* were 21% greater than last year's generous support. Special thanks to the *BEA* and their representatives. (www.montanashares.org)

Help MPTF Earn 4% for Education

By signing up your Albertson's card, *Montana Professional Teaching Foundation* and its programs (MPTF), will earn up to 4% of your *Preferred Savings Card* eligible purchases. The only card you need is your *Albertson's* card. The MPTF <http://www.mea-mft.org/mpmf.html> has been approved to participate in the *Albertson's Community Partners* program.

Sign up your Albertson's card today! Either email your card number to Cathy Warner at cwarner@mea-mft.org or register on-line at www.albertsons.com. (Click on *In the Community* and then *Community Partner's*™ logo).

Programs sponsored by the *Montana Professional Teaching Foundation* include *Montana Teacher of the Year*, *National Board Certification* scholarships and assistance, *Educator Forum*, and the *Karen Cox Memorial Grant Program* (classroom supplies grants for teachers). Thank you for your support!



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www.beabillings.org

November / December CALENDAR

December 1	<i>Ink Cartridges to BEA for Recycling</i>
December 8	<i>BEA Board of Directors</i>
December 9	<i>Bill Kennedy Party</i>
December 21	<i>Representative Council</i>
Dec. 23 - Jan. 2	<i>Winter Break</i>
December 25	<i>Christmas Day</i>
January 11	<i>MEA-MFT Retirement Workshop</i>



Six Teachers to earn ER&D Certification

Six *BEA* members will attend *AFT's Educational Research and Dissemination Winter Institute* this January. The *Winter Institute* is the second half of the training the teachers attended last summer. Upon completion, they will be certified to teach professional development classes to teachers in *Billings*. Watch for these professional development classes to be offered this summer and fall.

The following teachers will be certified to teach these classes:

Kathy Rumph & Julie Seedhouse—*Managing Anti-Social Behavior*
Barb Fettig & Linda Bayne—*Reading Comprehension*
Linda Auch & Teri Porisch—*Thinking Math I*

Get a Piece of the Pie



About 30 years ago, a national program, *Partners in Education (PIE)* was developed to encourage partnerships between schools and businesses. *Billings* became the first Montana city to establish a *PIE* program in 2003. Executive Director Nancy Hines heads the program but it is administered by the *Billings Education Foundation* with operational support from *School District 2*.

Billings businesses can partner with schools in many ways. They can:

- Adopt a school, classroom or program
- Assist with a school event
- Offer financial or fundraising support
- Volunteer employees for special projects
- Recognize students or teachers

Partners in Education develops partnerships with area schools. Students interact with experienced business people who use the latest information and technologies in their fields. Internships and job shadowing provide "real world" situations, exposing K-12 level students to fields they may not have explored as a career option.

PIE programs also foster responsible citizenship. For example, a partnership between *Deaconess Billings Clinic* and *McKinley School* pairs *DBC* volunteers with students learning to read. In return, *McKinley* students read to elderly patients in the hospital. Students profit from the attention and tutoring; *Deaconess Billings Clinic* benefits by offering a warm, caring environment for its patients; and the community builds partnerships among generations. In short, everybody wins!

For more information, please contact: Nancy Hines, *Executive Director*, at nancy@billingspie.org or Web: www.billingspie.org, 245-4133 or Cell 670-5790.