



NEWS & VIEWS

School Trustee/Mill Levy Election—May 3



Three seats on the Billings Public School Board are up for election this May. Board Members for Trustee District #1, Trustee District #2 and one High School District will be elected. The single member trustee districts require representatives to live in the districts

they will represent. At press time, the following candidates have filed:

- ★ **DAWN ACHTEN** - Trustee District 1
- ★ **SANDY MOSSMAN** - Trustee District 2
- ★ **JOEL GUTHALS** - High School District B

The BEA Political Action Committee will interview candidates and make recommendations.

The School Board voted to run a high school and an elementary mill levy at their March 21 meeting. The School Board will meet March 28 to determine the amount.

Candidates to be Selected

BEA members will elect three BEA Board of Directors positions and 10 delegate to MEA-MFT Representative Assembly at the Annual Election on April 19, 2005. The candidates appearing on the ballots will be selected at the Nominating Meeting on Thursday, March 29, at 4:30 p.m. Members interested in running for Elementary Director, Middle School Director, Director-at-Large or MEA-MFT Representative Assembly delegate should attend this meeting or submit a self-nomination form by March 31. At press time the following candidates have filed: **Juline Kosmicki** for *Elementary Director* and **Julie Seedhouse** for *Director-at-Large*. For more information or to receive a self-nomination form, contact Shauna at 248-9812.

BEA Members to Helena

Nineteen BEA members will be in Helena from April 1 - 2 to represent the *Billings Education Association* at the 2005 *MEA-MFT Representative Assembly (RA)*. *MEA-MFT RA* is the annual state meeting attended by elected delegates from affiliated locals across Montana. Delegates debate and vote on dues, budget, amendments to the *MEA-MFT Constitution* and develop the organization's direction and priorities. BEA President Allan Audet and 1st Vice President Jeff Greenfield will also attend *MEA-MFT RA* as state delegates.



Just a Reminder

March 29
BEA Nominating Meeting: BEA office at 4:30 p.m.
All BEA members welcome!

March 31
BEA Board/MEA-MFT RA Delegate Candidacy forms due.

April 4
Registration Deadline to Vote in May School Election

April 14
Attend *Identify Theft Prevention Workshop*: BEA Office 4:30 p.m.
All BEA & BCEA members and their guests are welcome.

April 18
Last Day To Buy Banquet Tickets

April 19
BEA Annual Election: Vote at Your School!

April 26
Educator Appreciation Awards Banquet: Holiday Inn at 5:30 p.m.

May 3
School Trustee / Mill Levy Election: VOTE!



Buy Educator Banquet tickets NOW!

The 20th Annual Educator Appreciation Awards Banquet is slated for Tuesday, April 26, 2005, at the Billings Holiday Inn Grand Montana. The banquet is held each year to honor those who have been selected to receive BEA Awards, Golden Apple Awards, Education Foundation's grants and scholarships, and to recognize Billings Public Schools retirees and 25-year employees. The banquet, which begins at 5:30 p.m., will be a fast-paced, fun-filled evening with comedic entertainment from Venture Theatre's *Funky Bunch Improv Troupe*, a video tribute to the honorees, door prizes and always inspiring words from exceptional educators. Tickets are \$15 per person and will be available at the BEA office from April 5 to April 18 or contact a BEA Building Representative to pre-order tickets before April 15.

BEA Delegates attend MEA-MFT RA

- Linda Branae, Burlington
- Lon Drollinger, Central Heights
- Pat Evans, West High
- Barb Fettig, Skyview High
- Deb Fischer, Career Center
- Barbara Forrester-Frank, Ponderosa
- Blake Forseth, Arrowhead
- Marcia Hafner, West Academy
- Madeline Jensen, Castle Rock



- Mike Joyce, Adult Ed
- Pat Joyce, Pupil Services
- Pat Lowthian, Arrowhead
- Gloria Morgan, West High
- Steve Murphy, West High
- Julie Seedhouse, Skyview
- Sandi Shawhan, Ponderosa
- Eileen Sheehy, West High
- Joan Sleeth, McKinley
- Mark Verlanic, West High



What does this mean?



With spring comes change: the same seems to be true for education.



Whether it is insurance, District budgets, or the ever-changing events of our Legislature, there has not been a dull moment in recent days. To write an article on any one given topic seems fruitless, even though there are a multitude of happenings occurring daily.



Allan Audet
BEA President



Recent Insurance issues:

In November, the school district self funded insurance plan was found to be short on revenue. Plan changes and District contribution's were negotiated to address revenue shortfalls.

Changes were implemented on January 1, 2005.

At the February Insurance Committee meeting, Gallagher Benefit Services provided projected rate increases, ranging from 20-28% for 2005-2006. These increases equated to \$960,000 more than what is currently negotiated.

What does this mean?

As history has shown, when the plan does not have a fully funded option, many employees will opt out of the plan— thus causing the rates to be recalculated to potentially even higher premiums.

Options for our Association?

The BEA does have a re-opener clause in the Master Agreement which allows the Association to open the contract to negotiate increased contributions from the District. The main factor that will drive these negotiations is the District budget. The School Board has a critical decision ahead. Do they run a mill levy or not? If the latter is the decision, the Board must make several educational decisions that could impact teachers, students, and parents.



Is Insurance Plan At Risk?

Without increased funding from the District, the insurance plan could face double digit increases for years to come and benefits could be under attack. The saving grace, *HB 124 K-12 SHIP*, would provide stability to rate increases, due to the large number of plan participants. At the same time, the bill would provide much needed relief to the District's General Fund without the need for local mill increases.

District Budget Concerns:

To date the Legislature has not addressed the adequacy of funding for public schools. There are proposals that dump more money into a funding system that has been found unconstitutional and will be deemed a short term fix at best. The key bill making its way through the legislature is *SB 177*. This bill will do little to right the funding problems of School District #2. Without factoring in the increases needed for insurance and future contractual obligations, current budgetary projections show District #2 will still be short approximately \$1.3 million. Factor in what is needed to adequately fund the insurance plan and the figure jumps to \$2.25 million.



Other options :

Current funding of the basic entitlement provides \$21,000 per elementary district and \$220,000 per high school district. In the elementary district this equates to \$1,000 per elementary building and \$44,000 per high school, not considering the freshman academies. Each building should receive the basic entitlement—not each district. If these figures are applied to ANB counts, the larger districts, such as ours, are far behind the smaller districts on overall funding levels.



The Montana Quality Education Coalition (MQEC) suggests funding levels must be \$300 per FY2006 and \$200 FY2007 over the biennium to simply address immediate needs while a new funding formula is being developed. The courts have ordered that a new funding formula must be developed by October of 2005. If the legislature does not develop a new formula during this session, a special session could be likely.

K-12 SHIP HB 124 would provide \$4 to \$4.5 million relief to the District General Fund.

School Board Elections:

When the election of three new trustees takes place on May 3, 2005, they will have the opportunity to help determine how education is delivered in the District and how the employee groups will fit into that equation.

Those who are in the greatest position to create change have an opportunity before them; let's hope that they have the right goals in mind. As Norm Coleman, Minnesota senator says, "It is easy to criticize, particularly in a political season. But to lead is something altogether different. The leader must live in the real world of the price that might be paid for the goal that has been set."



Transfers ???

Know Your Master Agreement

A transfer is an employment change to a different assignment; a change in grade level, subject area or building. Transfers can be voluntary or involuntary.



"MS. BYRD, I'M GOING TO NEED A MORE SPECIFIC ADDRESS THAN JUST ICEBURG."

Teachers who desire a transfer must file a written statement to the Superintendent by April 1. If a request for transfer is not granted, the District must, at the teacher's request, meet with the teacher and furnish a written explanation.

If the District initiates a transfer, a teacher may request a meeting and written explanation for the transfer. A teacher who is transferred to another building after the beginning of the school year will have two paid days to relocate and the District will assist in moving the teacher's materials and supplies to the new location.



The District should provide written notification to continuing teachers of their class subject assignments and room assignments for the following school year by July 1.

See the *Master Agreement Article IX-Assignments, Transfers and Vacancies* for complete contract language.

Will James Middle School Conquers All



The BEA has 23 heroes in its midst. That is how many blood donors participated in the 2nd Annual BEA Blood Drive.

The staff at Will James led the effort with eight donors

and the entire staff was rewarded with a free lunch provided by **Pizza Hut** on March 17.

United Blood Services and the BEA thank all the heroes for "Giving the Gift of Life."



The ultimate goal of the educational system is to shift to the individual the burden of pursuing his education.

John W. Gardner

Grand Prize Winner —

April Thomas-DeJongh
Eagle Cliffs Elementary



Raffle raises over \$6000 for Scholarship Fund



Last month's raffle culminated on February 28 with the final weekly drawing and the Grand Prize drawing. The money raised from raffle ticket sales added up to \$4,348 plus \$2,275 was received in donations to the scholarship fund. A total of \$6,623

has been added to the *BEA Karen Cox Scholarship Fund*. The BEA considers this fundraising effort a huge success and thanks everyone who purchased a ticket, Building Representatives, BEA Board members, & Phil Cox who sold the tickets, local businesses who contributed prizes, and those who made cash donations to the fund. This raffle has given a tremendous boost to the scholarship fund.



Nineteen scholarship applications were submitted this month to be considered by the Scholarship Committee. The recipients of this year's *BEA Karen Cox Scholarships* will be announced in April.

Week #4 Raffle Winners

- 1st Place **Kim Kolstad, Sandstone**
- 2nd Place **Inger Tognetti, Broadwater**
- 3rd Place **Lu Iberra**
- 4th Place **Pat Schindele**



Thanks, Thanks, Thanks!

The BEA Awards Committee extends its thanks to members who

BEA Awards Committee

- Diane Welhaven, Riverside, Chair
- Rondel Smith, Senior
- Sue Bach, West
- Pat Joyce, Pupil Services
- Kris Keup, Senior

submitted nominations for *Teacher of the Year*, *Teacher in the Community*, *Friend of Education*, *Exemplary Administrator*, and *Exemplary Associate*. The committee will meet to review the



nominations and will announce their selections soon. Those selected will be honored at the *Educator Appreciation Awards Banquet* on April 26, 2005. Tickets for the banquet will go on sale in early April!

April Fair Housing Month



The Billings Community Housing Resource Board (CHRB) has available a Speaker's Bureau, education materials, and a short video dealing with Fair Housing, other housing and independent living questions that may face the student population.

Patterned after Chapter 6 in the *Street Law* curriculum, the CHRB's award winning materials and program are available for use and appearances with just a few weeks notice. Contact the CHRB at 256-9355 or via email at chrb@mcn.net.

April is Fair Housing Month. Consider joining the fight for equal rights in housing by scheduling a CHRB presentation.

Identity Theft Presentation

Identity Theft



Learn how to protect yourself and your family from becoming victims of identity theft. Find out how to safeguard your hard-earned reputation. Attend a free 45-minute interactive workshop on April 14 at the BEA office at 4:30 p.m. Pam Wilson from NEA Member Benefits will give the presentation which is sponsored by the Billings Education Association (BEA) and the Billings Classified Education Association (BCEA). Members of the BEA, BCEA and their guests are welcome to attend. Contact Pam Wilson, 1-800-360-1296 or pwilson@neamb.com, with questions.

Information

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ABT Creative Writing Workshop for Teachers

The Alberta Bair Theater Education Department will present a creative writing workshop for English teachers of grades 7-12 on Wednesday, April 6, 4-7 p.m. at Lewis & Clark Middle School. The cost is \$25, which includes a ticket to Comedy Pet Theatre on April 19 at the ABT.

Danell Jones, a local writer, editor, and visiting instructor at Rocky Mountain College, will demonstrate inventive exercises to help students of all learning abilities tap into their creative imaginations and become better writers.

OPI and/or MSU-B credit can be earned. For more information and to register call Bess Fredlund at the ABT Education Dept. 256-8915, ext. 204.



Math Workshop Scheduled

MCTM has a class designed to improve number sense instruction in grades K-6. Emphasis will be placed on the need for building number sense to help students become flexible, fluent thinkers. Participants will be broken into 2 grade level

bands, (K-2 and 3-6). Topics include computation, geometry and measurement.

Participants will pay a fee of \$400 for MCTM members or a fee of \$425 for non-members. Registrations are due April 1, 2005 with your non-refundable \$100 deposit. Balance must be paid by check or

PO by May 1. If a minimum of 25 participants do not register, the \$100 deposit will be refunded. (The cost is \$300 MCTM member or \$325 nonmember if you will not be staying at the Montana Learning Center.)

Added Benefits:

- * On-site meals and lodging for four days and nights included.
- * Packet of ideas to use with students.
- * Renewal Units through OPI.
- * Credits will be available through the University of Montana.
- * A great time at Canyon Ferry Lake!

Presenters: Nina Miller & Angel Greenley, K-6 Math Coaches

When: July 5 - 8th, 2005 (Tuesday-Friday)

Where: The Montana Learning Center at Canyon Ferry Lake

What: Four days of quality in-service on number sense instruction



March / April CALENDAR



March 29	BEA Nominating Meeting
March 31	BEA Board & MEA-MFT RA Delegate Candidacy Forms Due
April 1 & 2	MEA-MFT Representative Assembly
April 3	Daylight Savings – Set Clocks Ahead!
April 4	Registration Deadline to Vote in May School Election
April 5-18	Awards Banquet Ticket Sales
April 13	BEA Board of Directors
April 14	Identity Theft Prevention Workshop
April 19	Representative Council/ BEA Annual Election
April 26	Educator Appreciation Awards Banquet
May 3	School Trustee/Mill Levy Election

— Classifieds —

Whitmer's Masonry Service

Brick & Natural Stone home repairs and new planters, mailboxes, veneers, and small retaining walls. Sorry, I do not do flat work. Call JERRY @ 256-6066 for a free estimate.

For Sale: 1990 Cadillac Sedan de Ville

Always received its regularly scheduled maintenance. Runs well. However, some of the electrical amenities are no longer functioning (i.e., such as power door locks). Dark blue. \$1,200. Call Joan Smith at 652-2572.

NEED your house interior repainted?

Call for that exterior job too!

Big or Small—Dave Barnett & Mike Cantrell can do the job!

Call 656-7767 or 628-7122.

For Sale: 1985 Ford F 150 4x4

123,000 Miles One owner, excellent shape, runs great: \$2800. Call 652-7858

Retirement Notification Deadlines

Teachers planning to retire this year should keep in mind the following Severance Notification deadlines. Staff must submit a notification by the following dates to receive the listed percentage of benefits.

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

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