

# NEWS & VIEWS



## 'Corps of Learning'

### MEA-MFT Educators' Conference slated



The 2005 MEA-MFT Educators' Conference will be held in Missoula on October 20 and 21. Conference books listing all courses and workshops plus information on registering, lodging, and other events are available in the schools. More conference books are available at the BEA office.

Deadline for pre-registration is October 8. Registration after October 8 or at the door in Missoula is more costly. Register by mail or on-line by going to: [www.mea-mft.org/edconf05.htm](http://www.mea-mft.org/edconf05.htm). Attendees should make lodging reservations as soon as possible. A list of hotels and bed & breakfast inns in the Missoula area is in the conference book and on the MEA-MFT website.

Recertification renewal units can be earned at the MEA-MFT Educators' Conference. Close attention should be paid to the procedures explained in the conference book to document renewal units.

School District 2 teachers can also earn credits for salary lane changes, one quarter credit can be earned for 10 sessions completed. This is the only time credits can be earned on a calendared work day unless discretionary leave is used.

## Important Dates

**September 30**

Montana Educator Forum

**October 1**

**Deadline:** Verification of credit hours earned due to Human Services for salary lane changes

**October 8**

MEA-MFT Educators' Conf. Pre-Registration Deadline

**October 20 - 21**

MEA-MFT Educators' Conference: Missoula

**November 8**

3rd Annual BEA Blood Drive

**November 16**

MEA-MFT Pre-Retirement Workshop

Win pizza

You Can Be a Hero!



Donating blood saves lives! It's as simple as that! A donor must be at least 17 years of age, weigh at least 110 pounds and be in good health. The process only takes an hour. The *United Blood Services* Bloodmobile will be at

Lincoln Center parking lot on Tuesday, November 8 from 12 noon to 5:30 p.m. for the *3rd Annual BEA Blood Drive*. Walk-ins are welcome but it's best to make an appointment. Call Shauna at 248-9812 or go to [www.bloodhero.com](http://www.bloodhero.com) to set up an appointment time.

When donating, let the UBS interviewer know where you teach or work. The school with the most donors will win a Pizza Party! So be a HERO, call and make an appointment today!

be your  
own hero

## Pre-Retirement Workshop invites BEA & BCEA Members

Plan Today,  
Retire Tomorrow



Representatives from TRS (Teachers Retirement System), Social Security Administration, NEA A+ Auto/Home Insurance, NEA Valuebuilder, NEA Long Term Care, PERS (Public Employees Retirement System), and MEA-MFT will speak at the Pre-Retirement Workshop in

Billings on Wednesday, November 16.

Educators should plan to attend this workshop to hear the latest word on retirement issues and learn about TRS & PERS benefits and procedures. Get the information you need to plan your Golden Years!

The workshop begins at the Lincoln Center in the School Board Room at 4:10 p.m. and ends at 8 p.m. Refreshments will be provided by the Retired MEA-MFT.



BILLINGS  
EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION



## MQEC ANNOUNCES PROPOSAL 'MONTANA'S PROMISE'



**R**ecently the Board of the Montana Quality Education

*Coalition released of the specifics of the 'Montana's Promise' plan that would*

*bring the state into compliance with its constitutional responsibilities and the Court's order in Columbia Falls v. State.*

*The Quality Schools Committee has two remaining meetings to design a remedy to the state's constitutional deficiencies in the way it funds its system of K-12 public schools in Montana. The Montana Quality Education Coalition has offered several suggestions on how the state could accomplish its obligations by the October 1 deadline. The specifics of the 'Montana's Promise' program outlined below represent the immediate steps MQEC believes necessary to allow the state to come into compliance with the Court's order in Columbia Falls Elementary v. State.*

**1. The funding distribution formula must be enhanced through a gradual, stable process to ensure against unnecessary disruption in the education of our children. The Court has recognized the right of the state to phase in any remedy over time. The initial phases of any remedy must focus on meeting the needs unmet by our current formula, and should involve enhancements and revisions as follows.**

- a. Continued applicability of 3-year averaging of ANB to ensure predictability in funding levels. Also, CPI-U should be applied to all new formula elements.
- b. Health Insurance must be addressed as part of the remedy to address the Court's order regarding salaries and benefits of educators.
- c. A new formula element should be added and fully funded by the state to provide \$4,000 in funding on the basis of each certified professional in the public schools. A quality educator has a greater impact than any other factor on student achievement and the formula must recognize this educationally- relevant factor.
- d. The current basic entitlement should be modified to better reflect the costs of operating quality schools. Corrections are necessary as follows:
  - i. The elementary entitlement should be increased to \$40,000 and will be provided on the basis of every 400 pupils enrolled in the district;
  - ii. The high school entitlement should be adjusted by inflation per (a) above, and will be provided on the basis of every 400 pupils enrolled in the district.
- e. The elementary per-ANB entitlement should be increased to narrow the irrational disparity in funding for elementary and high school programs. A good first step would be to increase the elementary per ANB entitlement by \$500 to better reflect the increasing parity in costs between elementary and high school systems.
- f. The state should commit funding to address various achievement gaps and special populations:
  - i. Funding for all-day kindergarten
  - ii. Special weights for particular populations:
    1. 1.25 weight each for free and reduced lunch eligible children, limited English proficient children and gifted and talented children
    2. 1.90 weight for special education children qualified under DEA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
  - iii. Repeal of the restriction on access to the retirement levy to fund retirement obligations of employees paid with federal funds to ensure that federal funds are used to combat the achievement gap.
- g. The state should commit \$100 per ANB with a minimum of \$1,000 per district to assist school districts in implementing Indian Education for All.

**T**he Interim School Funding Committee is currently discussing School Funding and trying to develop a bipartisan plan. Educational groups across the state have also met on numerous occasions to discuss the topic. The Montana Quality Education Coalition, (MQEC), Montana School Board Association, (MTSBA), MEA-MFT and others agree the necessity of addressing the funding situation. This information addresses the funding lawsuit as filed by MQEC.

**2. The state should revisit recommendations from the Public Schools Renewal Commission regarding tax reform that could help the state in addressing the funding of its share of the basic system of quality schools.**

**3. The state should address the costs of facilities. We believe that the issue of deferred maintenance of facilities, however, must be immediately addressed. We suggest the use of some of the "one time" money from the projected surplus to help address deferred maintenance in our public schools.**

**4. The State should appropriate the funds to pay the judgment for attorneys' fees and costs as ordered by the Court.**

## NEA Representative Assembly Report

This July a delegation of *BEA* members attended *NEA* Representative Assembly in Los Angeles, California. We asked Julie Seedhouse and Karen Tanner, both first time participants, to share their thoughts on their experience.



**2005 BEA Delegation to NEA RA:** From left to right: Joan Sleeth, Julie Seedhouse, Allan Audet, Diane Welhaven, Jeff Greenfield, and Karen Tanner

### RA in LA

by Julie Seedhouse

My first experience as a delegate to RA was incredible!

Visiting the Staples Center with over 9,000 delegates was both exhilarating and humbling. It was exhilarating because of the energy and the enthusiasm of the delegates, and it was humbling to be in the presence of so many educators with such a passionate commitment to education.

The highlight of the trip, by far, was the march to Schwarzenegger's office in protest of his reprehensible treatment of the teachers and the education system in California. I also thoroughly enjoyed the Montana Caucus each morning for the good company and lively debate of the issues to be presented that day.

All in all, it was amazing to be a part of something so big, and it reaffirmed for me that we are doing things right in Billings and in Montana!

### 'BE the change you wish to see in the world'

by Karen Tanner

Gandhi said, "BE the change you wish to see in the world." "How?" you ask?

An energized, vitalized state of mind can be achieved through the collaborative efforts of our National Education Association. Do you want to see discrimination of race and gender decrease? Do you want to see reading levels increase nationwide? Do you want insurance rates, retirement benefits and social security to be attainable? Do you want evolution to remain a taught theory? Do you want a gay student to feel safe in our schools?

Then we, as teachers, must BE activists for positive change. We can affect change by becoming involved in our union at any level.

The National Education Association's Representative Assembly is the highest decision-making body with over 2.7 million NEA members. RA (*Representatives Assembly*) is also the world's largest democratic, deliberate body with over 9,000 delegates, representing the fifty states, (visit the website-[nea.org](http://nea.org)). I was privileged to represent the Billings Education Association last summer and spend a week with this group in Los Angeles.

RA delegates debate the vital issues that impact American public education, plus set Association policy and activities for the years ahead. The RA adopts the strategic plan and budget, resolutions, the legislative program, and other policies of the Association. There are no workshops associated with the Assembly, as we basically educate ourselves through committees on the issues, in order to make informed voting decisions during RA.

As part of Montana's delegation, we voted on numerous resolutions concerning key issues in education:

*Accountability and Testing, National Board Certification, No Child Left Behind Act, Quality Schools and Safety, Social Security.*

I had several eye openers at RA, first being the state of affairs of public education. Many states are severely struggling with the above issues, treading to stay above water. By becoming more active within our union and then using the strength we have in numbers, I believe affords us more power to enact positive changes.

### Direct from Pioneer Park . . . fun but wet Saturday Live!

The largest school carnival in the region, *Saturday Live*, returned with exciting games, healthy foods, and great entertainment despite rainy and chilly weather. Lower attendance was evident but Anne Cole, executive director of the Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools, reported that schools raised about \$30,000. Since the total is less than half of what schools made in the past, Cole suggested that people might consider making a financial donation to a local school.

If you want to help support education, consider a financial donation to your favorite school. Write your check and mail it to the school of your choice.



*BEA* is one of many loyal sponsors of *Saturday Live*. The *BEA* president and members assisted the Education Foundation assembling tents, setting-up tables and garbage containers, delivering supplies, and assisting with many other last-minute tasks. Teachers, students, parents, principals, secretaries, aides, and sponsors also work to make *Saturday Live* a success year after year.

The *BEA* would like to thank the members who assisted in set-up and tear-down: Curt Prchal, Mark Schmaltz, Jeff Greenfield, Charlie Bokum, and former *BEA* member Dan DeBar.



**Joel Sand**, a junior at West High, drew the logo for the 2005 event.



CALENDAR

- Sept. 30 Montana Educator Forum
- Oct. 12 Board of Directors
- Oct. 18 Representative Council
- Oct. 20-21 MEA-MFT Educators' Conference
- Nov. 8 BEA Blood Drive
- Nov. 16 MEA-MFT Pre-Retirement Workshop

2 Montana teachers honored



Teachers from Great Falls and Bozeman have recently been named state teachers of the year. Ryan Faulk, who teaches at Chief Joseph Elementary School, was named the *Montana Teacher of the Year* by Phi Delta Kappa International and received a \$10,000 educational grant. He is one of 51 finalists for the *National Teacher of the Year* award to be announced in November.

In Bozeman, music teacher Debi Biegel was named the Montana Teacher of the Year by the *Montana Professional Teacher Foundation*. The award is sponsored by the Montana teacher's union, *MEA-MFT*.



Biegel teaches seven band classes at five elementary schools, along with general music classes at Hawthorne School. Biegel, who has been teaching music for 28 years, will speak at teachers' conventions and forums and will be honored by President Bush at the White House in April along with the other state winners.

Teachers ask the Secretary



A new feature of the U.S. Department of Education's web site called *Teachers ask the Secretary* is available at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or <http://www.ed.gov/teachersask>

This page will help teachers learn about a wide range of subjects: teacher quality, professional development, state academic standards and more. The program also promises to share best practices and success stories under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. This is the latest in a series of interactive resources for teachers, including the popular *eLearning* online courses, searchable online database and electronic Teacher Updates.

Know Your Master Agreement

Each year the school calendar offers two days in October as *PIR* (Pupil Instruction Related) days so teachers may attend the *MEA-MFT* Educators' Conference. The scheduling of these two days is in accordance to state law, **MCA 20-1-304**, and **SD2/BEA Master Agreement, Article VII, Section 11, Subd. 1**. These two days are not paid days off, they are not vacation days, and they are not holidays.



*PIR* days are one of the "black-out" days in SD2, which means the use of discretionary leave for personal business on these days must be approved by the District after establishing a critical need.

If a teacher is absent on a duty day, 1/187 of their basic contract salary will be deducted from their paycheck. Absence on a duty day, without leave, could also result in disciplinary action.

BEA Member = Bennies



Many services, programs, and discounts are available with membership in the *BEA*. This column will focus on one or two benefits in each issue of the *News & Views*. Check out these web sites for more info on member benefits:

**Bennies** [www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com) or [www.aft.org/aftplus](http://www.aft.org/aftplus) or [www.mea-mft.org/neambaftplus.htm](http://www.mea-mft.org/neambaftplus.htm)

NEA Home Financing Program with Wells Fargo

Buying a new home, thinking of refinancing the one you have, looking into a reverse mortgage or home equity loan? Wells Fargo Home Mortgage offers *NEA* members competitive rates and fees, exceptional service, and quick approval decisions through the *NEA* Home Financing Program.

*NEA* members purchasing a new home or refinancing through the *NEA Home Financing Program* should also ask about the *NEA* Getaway vacation package, a complimentary 3-day/2-night hotel stay at one of over 300 locations and the *Community Sharing Program*, a \$150 contribution to the public school, non-profit organization or 501(c)(3) qualified charity of your choice.

Teachers can buy a home for half its purchase price through the *Teacher Next Door Program*, a government program for *HUD*-acquired homes. The teacher must purchase a home in the same school district/jurisdiction where employed and must reside in the home as the sole residence for at least 3 years. After the 3-year period, the teacher may sell the property and keep any profits. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is a participating lender in the *Teacher Next Door* Program.

For more information contact Jill Young, Home Mortgage Consultant, at 655-6129 or [jill.p.young@wellsfargo.com](mailto:jill.p.young@wellsfargo.com).

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