



CFT reaches out and “gets organized”

This is the inaugural issue of your quarterly newsletter – *Get Organized!* – and it will chronicle all of our efforts to do the important work of organizing workers and building the CFT. We hope you find the articles inspiring and encourage you to share your organizing stories with us for publication in *Get Organized!*

Today, our CFT member unions face many challenges. To thrive we must work smart and continue to pull together local, state and national resources to protect union membership and help lead a real educational reform effort that focuses on public educa-



Executive Board members Ruth Molina, Giselle Mora, Arleen Rivera, Sharon Bruce, Mirian Saldana, Jeanette Mora, Marietta Calva and Debbie Uribe fill out the local organizing capacity survey for Early Childhood Federation of Teachers Local 1475.

tion and students who attend public schools.

This can happen through a campaign initiative that aligns our political and organizing goals and resources and works

in concert with other CFT departments and staff, local union leaders and the union’s committees and councils. Planning and implementing external and internal organizing

campaigns that build power by increasing membership and solidifying existing locals will expand the political and organizing capacity of the CFT.

We are working with staff and leaders to develop strategic plans for their local unions that enhance their internal political capacity to win local elections, support statewide campaigns, organize new union members and do the external community organizing that helps support their agenda. We’ve helped several locals increase COPE funds, and last November we worked with the Oxnard Federation of Teachers and School Employees and

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OXNARD FEDERATION TAKES ACTION



IN MARCH the Oxnard Camarillo Unified High School District moved to layoff 19 teachers with some not receiving notices until days after the legally required March 15 date. The district’s legal counsel went so far as to advise the Human Resources Department not to talk with the teachers, some of whom are tenured.

So on March 23, the Oxnard Federation of Teachers and School Employees (OFTSE) rallied and over 65 teachers—representing all the District high schools—attended the school board meeting to protest the layoffs.

They set up nineteen empty chairs with the name of the school and department representing the laid off teachers and for over two hours teachers, parents and students spoke before the board.

Continuing to protest the layoffs, the OFTSE is executing an on-going letter and phone call campaign.

CFT team attends AFT Legislative Conference

Today, across the country, unions are facing unprecedented challenges and state legislative sessions are proving to be some of the toughest in memory. Budget cuts are deeper than ever, pensions are being attacked, calls for privatization of public services and a variety of other anti-union initiatives are being advanced aimed at curtailing our collective bargaining rights.

We will be stronger and more effective in meeting these challenges by organizing a united response. To help with that effort, the AFT invited state teams to attend the annual AFT Winter Legislative Conference, January 7-9, 2011 at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington DC.

The team representing the CFT consisted of:



Richard Trumpka, AFL-CIO President, and Randi Weingarten, AFT President, speak to the AFT Legislative Conference participants.

Mary Alice Callahan, CFT Senior Vice President; Josh Pechthalt, CFT Vice president; Jim Araby, CFT Political Field Director; Jeff Freitas, CFT Legislative Representative; Fred Glass, CFT Communications Director; and Sandra Weese, CFT Organizing Director.

The conference focused on policy responses and ideas, legislative campaign planning, grassroots lobbying, communication, member mobilization and community engagement strategies. Our CFT team began the process of making a comprehensive strategic plan for our

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union. That process has continued back in California through ongoing E-Board discussions focused on how to more effectively engage and mobilize our members in the challenges and opportunities we face.

REACHING OUT TO LOCALS



LEADERS FROM CFT LOCALS (2119, 2071, 2216, 4044, 4434, 4434-1, 6185, and UC Santa Barbara) along with Mike Terman, CFT Field Representative, Sandra Weese, CFT Organizing Director and Jeffrey Boxer, CFT Attorney participated in the Ventura Area Council meeting on March 23 in Oxnard.



FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ, President of Pajaro Valley Federation of Teachers invited **Sandra Weese**, CFT Organizing Director, and **Pat Lerman**, CFT Field Representative, to participate in the local's executive board retreat intended to facilitate the development of a strategic political and organizing plan for their local.

Organizing San Francisco early childhood teachers and parents, together!

Early this year Governor Brown proposed budget cuts to child care that could have resulted in a loss of 37,500 subsidized child care slots statewide. That would leave almost 40,000 children without child care, and as many as 1,000 of those children are in San Francisco.

But, early care and education teachers, directors, staff and parents are fighting back in San Francisco. In a joint project of the AFT, NEA, CFT and UESF, organizers have begun to mobilize to fight budget cuts that hurt children and families, and those who work in child care and early education programs.

Together, ECE teachers and parents believe they can protect and win high quality child care and early education programs for all San Francisco children.

The San Francisco ECE project is also collaborating with the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) which has organized around community issues including education all over San Francisco.

The project has already visited over 100 centers in San Francisco. They have also had 3 meetings with over 60 parents and ECE providers where the group decided on top priorities



Dennis Kelly, President of the United Educators of San Francisco, addresses early childhood teachers and parents at the San Francisco Early Childhood Education Project's first meeting.

and made a plan to have their voices heard by local and state legislators. San Francisco has several ECE advocacy groups but none

that have the combined power of parents of young children and their teachers working together!

Berkeley teachers and classified rally in support of public education

On March 2, students, parents and community members gathered on the steps of the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) office in support of public education. The rally was organized by the Berkeley Federation of Teachers and the Berkeley Council of Classified Employees, the heart and soul of public education in Berkeley. Despite steady rain, over a hundred rallied to support funding for all public education, from preschool to community

college.

There were several speakers including the BUSD Superintendent, Bill Huyett. However the most exciting speakers were the ten Berkeley student speakers representing 3rd grade all the way through Adult School and Berkeley City College. Each speaker focused on the central message of the rally—fund education! Put the tax extensions on the ballot! Let the people's voice be heard! Invest in our future!



Despite the rain, Berkeley families, teachers and students came out to protest cuts to public education.

Newport-Mesa members building bridges

Newport-Mesa Federation of Teachers members, fresh off their November school board elections, are continuing to advance the union's agenda by working with key allies and constituents of organizations that believe in public education. After surveying union members on what organizations they have connections with, union leadership decided they would partner with Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE). The primary goals of CLUE-CA are to build the capacity of the founding groups by providing mutual support and sharing resources; creating effective state-wide collaboration on public policy and corporate campaigns; providing hands-on technical assistance, training and capacity-building to emerging interfaith worker justice groups throughout California; and seeding new



Newport-Mesa Federation of Teachers leaders and members, Jeff Qualey, Kimberly Claytor, Sarah Auwater, CFT Field Representative Frank Oppedisano, CFT Political Field Director Jim Araby, and other union representatives and clergy members, participate in the Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice coalition in Orange County.

interfaith worker justice groups in strategically important communities.

American Federation of Teachers members who are associated with churches, laity from churches and faith leaders have been meeting monthly to develop shared strategies around support for public education, teachers, and paraprofessionals and school related personnel in

the Newport-Mesa Unified school district. They plan on organizing together for the upcoming special election and aim to build a long-term strategy to pull influential religious leaders, labor union members, and community leaders together to work jointly on helping turn around the public's perception of educators and the public school system.

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the Newport-Mesa Federation of Teachers to build community coalitions and win school board seats.

We have started surveying locals to assess their current capacities, interests and needs. So far we have received and are in the process of evaluating surveys from 46 locals around the state. An initial general review of results indicates that locals are very interested in hav-

ing more support from the state organization. Many local leaders have made similar requests like having a stewards training manual, union administrative policies and best practice contract language. Going forward we will use these survey results to better understand our current capacity enabling us to strategically target new organizing opportunities.

Our ultimate goal with this integrated campaign initiative is to recruit, train, organize and mobilize a foundation of diverse leaders and activists. Educating members and actively supporting our local unions as they raise their community profiles will help put the CFT in the best possible position to face today's challenges and take advantage of all our opportunities. Let's get organized!

The California Federation of Teachers is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. The CFT represents faculty and classified workers in public and private schools and colleges, from early childhood through higher education. The CFT is committed to raising the standards of the profession and to securing the conditions essential to provide the best service to California's students.

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