CONTEMPLATIONS

Everyone seems normal until you get to know them.

Being happy doesn’t mean everything’s perfect, it just means you decided to see beyond the imperfections and be happy anyway.

When you make a mistake, make amends immediately. It’s easier to eat crow while it’s still warm.

Real friends are those who, when you make a fool of yourself, don’t feel you’ve done a permanent job.

You don’t have to attend every argument you’re invited to.

COMPUTER HELP NEEDED

USA purchased a new computer for Jane, the Office Manager last year. The old computer, a Pentium 133, is used by Jim Kierstead, the Membership Secretary, and by student workers. The computer has very few files on it but it’s still very slow and very frustrating. We’d love to get a donation of newer computer but if that won’t work, we’d love to get some help speeding this one up. Please contact Jane in the office at 545-0165 and let us know if you can help.

PEOPLESOF Software QUESTIONS

At this point we’ve all had Peoplesoft rear it’s ugly head in our faces in some way, shape or form. The general consensus from members is that it’s a cumbersome not-bright program. More steps are involved for tasks that were once easy. Business centers are popping up here and there around campus for reasons that haven’t yet made any sense. New releases are coming and retraining will be happening - why didn’t they just wait? We all may understand the need for a better, more productive system but this is ridiculous. Why are Peoplesoft consultants training people? How much do these make as consultants per hour? Wouldn’t it be possible to use UMass employees to do training as they’ve done in the past for new programs? How much is Peoplesoft going to cost the University on a yearly basis? Were there bonuses given to management because of this program? Were end-users (the ones who actually use the program) given any compensation? Why are some Peoplesoft-trained employees at higher grades than others that do the same job? These questions and more are bouncing around in people’s heads everywhere. Maybe if we keep asking, we might get answers.

RETIREES WHO WORK AND STATE LAW

FYI...retirees cannot work more than 960 hours in any calendar year, per state law. For a normal year, this would average to about 18 hours per week. But, this year, we’re talking 28 weeks, which averages out to about 34 hours per week. Also, per state law, retirees cannot earn (including the pension) more than $5,000 above what they earned before they retired. For example, someone earning $30,000 retiring with an 80% pension ($24,000) could only earn up to $11,000.

As for employment status at UMass, post-retirees would be hourly Departmental Assistants or Clerical Assistants, and would NOT belong to ANY union.

CAREER GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

At long last, we’d like to announce the new Career Growth and Development website, dedicated to thinking about yourself and your career. Find links to personality tests on the web, worksheets to guide you into finding out what you really want to do, tips on starting a business, and much more. Advice from other members will be the final piece to the website. Check it out and send in your advice. Although we will soon be adding a link to the USA website, the direct URL is: www.umass.edu/usa/careergrowth

As everyone who surfs the webs knows, websites change, sometimes for the better, and sometimes they disappear. The websites found were the pick of the litter at the time. If you know of any sites, please feel free to give us feedback.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Since the last newsgram we’ve said Farewell to Lisa Persons who stepped down as grievance officer for USA and congratulations to Irene Dzioba who was elected to replace her. Irene brings many years of experience and contract knowledge to the position and we’re lucky to have her on board.

Welcome to Kevin Hamelin, new steward for the Physical Plant. Check the website for information on how to contact him and also for any other changes to the list of stewards. If you’re interested in being a steward, please contact the office! We need volunteers!
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

You've all heard by now that, thanks to our Governor, we're getting another cut in our budget. The total cut to the UMass system was $6 million - ours is $3 million. Where is this cut going to come from? We can't survive more cuts! Swift has also cut the ELC (our insurer) by $8.8 million and this means a hike in co-pays again and possibly an increase in our premium. The last hike in co-pays was bad enough and without raises it's just not nice to raise our health insurance premiums. These cuts will officially make health care expensive, especially for those in the lower grades. To top this off, Swift has appointed people for the Board of Trustees that do not live in Western Massachusetts. What kind of message does this send to us?

If you haven't made it yet to any of the events that have been planned with the other unions on campus, please try to come to one! We need your help! The events have been well attended by all unions. The show of solidarity is promising and tells President Bulger that we are serious! He has dismissed the talk of budget cuts as "scare talk" and that, as we all know, is ridiculous. Massachusetts is ranked 49th in the nation for funding of public higher education although our leadership says this is normal and is a growing trend. This is also ridiculous. Would you want your son or daughter to come here? Would you recommend UMass to friends and family? There are 70,000 alumni from UMass Amherst working and paying taxes to the state.

We really are all in this together. Don't believe it when you hear them tell you that if we get our contract funded that the money will come from our budget. By telling us this, they are, in a sense, holding us hostage. We bargained in good faith and deserve to have our contracts funded. Do your part to help! The USA website has information on what you can do to help! It's as simple as making a phone call to your legislator. Find out if they plan to support public higher education in Massachusetts. They are all our elected officials and the feedback is crucial. Phone numbers, faxes, and email addresses are available on the USA website. It only takes a few minutes.

A LITTLE LABOR HISTORY......

The United States has a very long and bloody history of labor struggles. In the 1890s there were about one thousand strikes a year. By 1904 there were four thousand strikes a year. Lawyers and military force, again and again, took the side of the rich business owners.

The internet is filled with scary stories of these labor struggles. The Ludlow Massacre in southern Colorado in April 1914 is one of many coal mining strike tales. The Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire on March 25, 1911 is another that might be familiar. Read about Mother Jones and her march on Washington to protest child labor and how Roosevelt wouldn't talk to her. The Haymarket Riot (which began as a fight for 8-hour work days) and the Homestead strike in 1892 were also a prominent turning points in labor history.

World War I was a distraction and from there the media and government set out to make unions look bad. They were successful. In 1948, 31.8% of the workforce was unionized with 34.7% of those in the private sector and 12.1% in the public sector. In 2001, only 13.5% of the workforce was unionized, with 9% in the private sector and 37.4% in the public sector.

Check out www.laborresearch.org for stories on current strikes and union-busting activities across the country.
WANTED: CREATIVE MEMBERS WITH SEWING SKILLS

USA would love to have a banner to bring to events and functions to give more definition to our local. Let them know we're there! Materials will be provided by USA - we just need your skills and some of your precious time. Call Jane at 5-0165 in the USA Office if you can help.

NEA NEWS AND NOTES

Once again this past July, NEA members set Association policy through its annual Representative Assembly (RA) held in Dallas, Texas. The "RA" is the highest decision-making body for the Association. With over 9,000 delegates, the RA is also the world's largest democratic deliberative body. Delegates that were elected at the state and local levels debated and voted on vital issues that impact American public education and set policy for the 2.8 million NEA members.

Some of the highlights - This year we honored U.S. Senator James Jeffords of Vermont as the recipient of NEA's Friend of Education Award for working tirelessly to protect and secure funding for public education from Pre-K through Higher Education.

Other major events included the elections of our NEA President, Reg Weaver, NEA Vice President, Dennis Van Roekel, NEA Secretary-Treasurer, Lily Eskelsen, Executive Committee members, Marsha Smith, and Mike Billirakis, and five new NEA ESP Directors - Ray Heideman of Wisconsin, Annie Hutchinson of Georgia, Sharon Scott of Louisiana, Sarah Horton of Alabama and USA's own Rosemary Riley.

USA Member-at-large Dora Ramos attended the conference in Texas in July. These were her thoughts/observations:

I was elected as an Alternate Delegate for the NEA/RA convention in Dallas. I wanted to give everyone in our union a little bit of insight on what my experience was.

First I want to add that I was able to attend the Women and Minorities Conference, also held in Dallas before the NEA/RA Convention. The Women and Minorities conference pretty much set the stage for what I was about to experience. Not only did I get to meet wonderful people from all over this great country, but also was able to absorb all the valuable information that was offered to me by the presenters of every class I took. I have to say that no one left a more lasting impression on me than the last speaker, Dr. Bertice Berry. She has such a great gift of being able to reach people with her humor and "real" self. I had to go out and buy her book.

When I first entered the assembly floor for the NEA/RA conference, I was blown away to say the least. Just to see that many people there for the same goals was amazing. There's nothing like being there at the right time. I was not only able to welcome the new NEA President, Reg Weaver, but also listen to debates from candidates that were running. And not to mention, getting first hand experience campaigning by helping Rosemary Riley get re-elected to NEA/ESP Member-At-Large.

I had first hand experience on how important this conference is. On how the policies get voted on and debates that go along with it. The valid points that are made for or against them. As a member and a mother, it gave me great pleasure to participate in a very important forum.

I want to thank everyone who voted for me.

MTA NEWS AND NOTES

Joyce Allen-Davis, our Parliamentarian attended the MTA meeting (May, 2002) for the first time. These are her remarks/observations:

My experience with the MTA Annual meeting this past spring is the single most important factor in my understanding of how our union dollars are spent. Massachusetts Teachers, ESPs and USA staff are a powerful body of people. The work we do is vital to the future of our children and seeing the cuts and blatant disrespect for our profession first-hand enraged me. I was proud to represent USA and voted in a way that I thought was in line with what my district would want.

The floor of the annual meeting is both overwhelming and welcoming, there are rows and rows of tables and thousands of members about getting the business at hand done. I felt as if I was part of the team and that my vote actually counted. The detail and debate that went into the approval of the budget was amazing to watch and to participate in. Campaigns were clean, fair and fun and we did a good job electing Cathy Boudreau as president and Anne Wass as vice president and think our politicians have a lot to learn from our members. John Kerry delivered a powerful speech assuring us of his support during this down period. Thad Dabrowski, Frank Olbris, Dora Ramos and I visited the State Capital and spoke to several legislators asking for their support for our contracts as well.

I came away feeling empowered and encourage anyone who has not attended an annual meeting to do so.
Blueberry-Lemon Cream Cheese Pound Cake

Preheat oven to 350. Beat first 3 ingredients at medium speed of a mixer until well-blended. Add eggs and egg white, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Lightly spoon flour into dry measuring cups, level with knife. Combine 2 1/2 cups flour and blueberries in a bowl and toss well. Combine remaining flour, 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda, and 1/2 tsp. salt. Add flour mixture to sugar mixture alternately with yogurt, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Fold in blueberry mixture and extracts; pour cake batter into a 10-inch tube pan coated with cooking spray. Bake at 350 for 1 hour and 10 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool cake in pan 10 minutes; remove from pan. Combine powdered sugar and lemon juice in small bowl; drizzle over warm cake. Cut with serrated knife.

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