

# HARPER FACULTY ~ UNITY NEWSLETTER

Number 3 Cook County College Teachers Union ~ AFT Local 1600

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## Useful Links:

[www.harperfaculty.org](http://www.harperfaculty.org)  
[www.il.aft.org/local1600/](http://www.il.aft.org/local1600/)  
<http://www.dpeaflcio.org/index.cfm>

## STRIKE AUTHORIZATION VOTE

### Harper Faculty Vote for Strike Authorization

**On Thursday September 21st and Friday September 22nd Harper College's faculty voted on the question of empowering the Faculty Negotiations Team to set a strike date, and to go out on strike on the date set by the negotiations team. 92% of all full-time Harper faculty participated in the balloting. Of the 199 total ballots cast 190 Harper Faculty voted "YES" authorizing a strike. 9 Harper Faculty voted "NO."**

**95% of voting faculty support authorizing a strike. This sends a powerful message from faculty to Harper's administration. Faculty disapproval of the Administration's current contract proposals is both deep and wide. The Faculty Negotiations Team is expected to announce the strike date later this week.**

The Unity Committee would like to remind everybody that the faculty will be doing informational picketing at the board meeting on Tuesday, September 26. Please meet in the lobby of W building at 6:15, wear a red shirt and bring friends and family. The Unity Committee will have signs there for you.

# HARPER WORKS BECAUSE WE WORK

American Federation of Teachers Local 1600

## **Stress Management and Self-Care** By Caryn Levington

Many of us may find ourselves wondering...Are we heading for a strike? If so, how can I minimize my level of stress at such a stressful time and best prepare myself? The answer through unity and support, through strength, and through self-care. In other words: we need to be proactive in taking care of ourselves, and of one another. Research has indicated that whether or not stress has a positive (eu-stress) or negative (dis-stress) impact upon us has to do with:

### ***Your attitude towards stress and your overall outlook on life.***

If you value being the kind of person who stands up to do the right thing, your attitude will be an asset rather than a detriment. Keep this time period in perspective. Sometimes the periods in life that are unavoidably difficult are necessary in order to reach those periods of peace, strength, resolve, and health that we all seek.

### ***The quality of your life and health.***

Make sure you continue to put those pieces of your life in place that give you a sense of personal comfort, support, and most importantly, meaning. These can be simple things: reading, exercise, being with friends...or complex, wonderful things...like playing with your children.

### ***Your ability to manage stressful events.***

This is an important one. If you do not manage stress well, now is the time to develop that skill. Some ways to do this includes reading a good book on stress management, taking a yoga class, exercising, meditating, talking to a counselor, etc...

### ***The quality of social supports in your life.***

In fact, this is the one component of stress management that tends to have the greatest impact on us and on the quality of our health...so count on your friends and family...communicate with whomever you trust and can open up to, and ask yourself how you can give your colleagues support while they do the same for you.

### ***The way in which you care for yourself.***

People who look to others to take care of them tend to be generally unhappier and report greater levels of stress. People who are more proactive and have good self-care skills report feeling better about life in general, have more positive relationships, a more satisfying career, and a better quality of health.

The stress of the unknown circumstances we face in the fall is unavoidable. What we do know, however, is that allowing ourselves to be treated in this climate of disrespect, the lack of professionalism, and downright bullying behavior will always lead to experiences of stress. Through our collective determination and wisdom as highly educated individuals, we are choosing a better path, and one that will lead to a healthier future.

**"THE REAL ISSUE HERE IS POWER AND CONTROL"**

— Phil Burdick, Harper Administration spokesperson, in the Chicago Tribune, August 2nd 2006.

## **From an Untenured Faculty During the Last Strike**

By Geri Kale-Smith

During the strike in October 2002 I was an untenured faculty member. I was hired full-time in January 2001 so I had only been on the job for about 1 1/2 years. I currently am and was at that time the only full-time faculty member in my department. I am also the Chair and Coordinator of five separate programs and was deeply involved in the process of learning my job and trying to improve the programs. I did not know a lot of people at that time and I definitely felt very isolated being the only full-time faculty in my department and also not really being near any other untenured faculty. That summer I remember thinking about what would happen to my programs and my classes if we went on strike. I had three adjunct faculty members at that time who were new to their jobs also and I was worried about them. The week before we actually went on strike I was at a 5-day convention in Oregon and I remember that I had to check back everyday to see what was going on because I wasn't sure what I would be walking into when I returned. I remember very clearly that this constant worry about what was going on back at Harper during those five days definitely spoiled the convention for me. I had never been in a union before, had no family or friends who were in unions, and knew absolutely nothing about unions.

My feelings at that time included:

- \* **anger that we were put in that situation**
- \* **fear for my programs**
- \* **fear for my job**
- \* **fear of reprisal from administration**
- \* **fear of walking a picket line and having people see me**

I actually contemplating not showing up to walk the picket line. The first day ( 6:00a.m.!) I showed up very reluctantly and by the end of my shift was debating whether to return the next day. What if I didn't show up? Would anyone even miss me or know that I was not there? What would happen if I didn't show up the next day or ever again- would I be ostracized and hated by others? Here's what happened:

- \* I chose to stay on the picket line to the bitter end and actually ended up enjoying it (except for the mornings that it was really cold!)
- \* I got to meet a ton of people that I might not have gotten to know any other way- when you are walking a picket line with someone for four hours you get to know them and become friends!
- \* We had a constant supply of food and beverages from well-wishers and from staff back in the college. Many of them came over during the day to bring us food and to give us encouragement.
- \* When the strike was over and I returned to work everything was back to normal and I felt no animosity or feelings of ill will from our students or the administration.
- \* And, most importantly, the contract we eventually got was much better than the one on offer from the administration before we went on strike.

## **A message from your Faculty Health and Welfare Subcommittee**

According to our fearless leader Perry Buckley, as of 9/22/06, the Union is reviewing the legality of Harper canceling our insurance. A full report on health care issues will be made to our membership once legal counsel has responded to Perry, and our team is here to keep everyone apprised of this, and other issues impacting faculty health and welfare.

However, regardless of whatever bungling and irresponsible decisions our administration may make in the next few weeks, our first message to you all is take care of yourselves and take care of one another by acting preventively. As the probability of our going on strike increases, there are many things we encourage every faculty member to do NOW to protect your physical and psychological health. For example:

Place orders for any medications you need or might need in the foreseeable future. (this goes for any family members who might be on your Harper plan).

If you anticipate needing to see your doctor(s) – go to appointments NOW.

Build up your immune system by taking Vitamin C.

Eat nutritious meals; get plenty of rest, engaging in stress reduction activities.

Get a flu shot early October.

If we arrive at the point where you have received your assignments for picketing, notify your Strike Captain of any pressing health issues. Captains should treat all such information with the utmost confidentiality, and can consult with our subcommittee for information about possible alternate assignments or accommodations.

We are working on the possibility of acquiring first aid kits for the strike lines, and will inform you if we are able to fund this initiative. However, faculty need to be proactive and responsible for health care needs, so, for instance, make sure you bring needed medications, water, etc., when you are walking the picket lines.

Some resources for free care exist in our community. For example, Workplace solutions for psychiatric assistance (1-800-EAP-5071), requesting medication samples from your doctor(s), contacting us if you have special needs so that we can share community resources with you.

Remember, we are all in this together, here to support and help one another through this time. A truism in health care is that it is generally better to go through a little discomfort (like going on strike), then to submit to years of pain (accepting the administration's current offer). Call us if you would like a confidential consultation about health care issues, and we will do our best to locate resources for you.

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