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CT news

The voice of the Clerical-Technical Union of Michigan State University

February 2014



January 20, 2014—CTU President Deb Bittner, Vice President Kim Smith, Union Representative Linda Blodgett and Director Walt Peebles joined members of the community, students and other university employees in the Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative March on campus.

CTU says MLK legacy is more than a day

We were represented by CTU members at several of the January 20 events commemorating the birth of Martin Luther King Jr.

The first was the 29th Annual Celebration Luncheon in Lansing. Former MSU student Ernest Green was the keynote speaker. In 1957 Green and eight other black students were the first to integrate Central High School in Little Rock Arkansas following the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court *Brown v. the Board*

of Education decision, which declared segregation illegal. He later became a successful student and activist at MSU.

CTs were part of many of this year's MLK activities on campus. We were there for the Community Partners Fair as both volunteers and attendees. Some of us joined in the Commemorative March, and many of us enjoyed the fellowship of the Community Dinner.

Because our union's commitment to

Commitment continued on p. 4

Members meet

In January, the Clerical-Technical Union held the first of four annual meetings required by the CTU constitution. Despite the bitter cold, 43 CTs turned out in East Lansing, Grand Rapids and Detroit.

Because we did not reach our quorum of 50 members, we were unable to conduct any official union business.

Those in attendance, however, were able to get an update on our finances and other union news as well as provide feedback to help the Executive Board make decisions in several areas.

President Deb Bittner presented information about CTU's participation in Project 60/50 and the "What's Your 110? Challenge."

Bittner asked members for input on how we can celebrate CTU's 40th anniversary this year. It was decided that

Meeting continued on p. 7



January 28—CTU Members from the East Lansing campus, Grand Rapids and Detroit attended the January Membership Meeting.

CTnews

The voice of the Clerical-Technical Union
of Michigan State University

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

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independent
since 1974!

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Editorial Policy:

The CT News is the voice of our union. It is our vehicle for communicating, on a regular basis, the issues that confront us as workers. Through this newsletter we explain union policies, show how dues are spent, and explain the views and actions of the elected leadership for evaluation by the members.

The CT News is the voice of the membership. We welcome articles from members and stories about members.

While contributions are welcome, they should be constructive and contribute positively to the welfare of our union.

We will accept no attacks on any union leader or member. We will accept thoughtful discussion of all related issues in the letters section, and reserve the right to reply to those that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of the union and its policies.

Direct ideas, letters, questions and comments to Cherylee Finney.

CTclassifieds

For sale:

▼ **Pasture raised freezer beef:** quarter, half or whole. Raised with no hormones, steroids, antibiotics and lots of space to range/graze resulting in happy, flavorful cows. For more information, email meadrebe@gmail.com or call 517-490-3902. Check us out at www.facebook.com/rockyoakfarms.

For rent:

Suite or individual office: 2990 East Lake Lansing Road in East Lansing. Will work to meet your specifications. Contact the CTU, 517-355-1903.

Free:

▼ **CTU Conference Room:** Available free to members (with deposit). For non-members, \$25/hour plus deposit. For questions, reservations, etc., contact the CTU office at 355-1903.

▼ **Advertise** to your colleagues in the CT News. Contact Cherylee Finney at Cheryl@ctumsu.org. The CT News accepts ads from CTU members on items for sale and/or services provided by CTU members and/or their household family members.



"The person who stole my identity found out I have a non-union job and gave it back to me!"

MEBS vision plan ends

With little notice, the employee paid vision insurance plan offered through the Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU was discontinued as of February 1.

The company that administered the

vision plan, Michigan Employee Benefits Services (MEBS), said that it is going out of business and will no longer offer benefit products. The announcement came as a surprise to the CLO.

CTU is working to minimize the impact of the MEBS decision on subscribers. Our union worked with the University to stop payroll deduction for those on the plan and reimburse anyone who had payments improperly deducted after MEBS ended the plan.

After we talked with MEBS, they did extend their reimbursement time frame to include all claims received in their office by February 28, 2014.

Because of the action by MEBS, MSU decided to allow enrollment in its VSP Vision Care plan until February 28. Anyone who missed this deadline can enroll during regular open enrollment in the fall.

Information about these changes was emailed to members and placed on our website and Facebook page.

Membership Meetings

Meetings for the rest of 2014 will be held in 252 Erickson Hall on Tuesday, April 29; Thursday, July 17; and Wednesday, October 29. Meetings begin at 5:20, but doors open at 5, so come early to socialize. Membership meetings are for making decisions about the Union, asking questions and receiving updates about Union activities.

Executive Board Meetings

1st & 3rd Tuesdays at 5:15

CTU Office

Members welcome!

Forty years of success

President Deb Bittner

Finally, some good news.

First, all CTs will receive a 2% general increase on April 1, 2014. I know it is only February but with all the snow and cold, I thought we could use some “green” news!

This will be CTU’s last increase under the 2010-2013 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiated by MSU management and the Coalition of Labor Organizations. Raises over the next four years will be determined by a formula that offsets raises with increases in health care costs. The lower the increase in health care, the higher our wages.

Second, most of us received a lump sum payment in January—what I refer to as the “healthcare wellness stipend.” This

disbursement of money resulted from health care “savings” during the previous four years. Under the 2010-13 MOU, we agreed to keep increases in health care costs below 50%. If we went over, members would pay the difference. If costs went up less than 5%, the difference would be put aside. In the subsequent 2014-17 MOU, members ratified an agreement that disbursed those savings to anyone on the payroll as of January 1, 2014—thus the lump sum payment.

Third, there is another lump sum payment coming. The January disbursement was for the first three years of the four-year MOU. A payout for the last year will go to those on the payroll as of January 1, 2015, as per the ratified agreement. We don’t know at this time how much that payment will be.

Combine these pieces of good news with the fact that we still have the option of fully-funded, high-quality health care, and it’s clear that we are doing something right. [Carolyn Suddeth]

Judging from emails and phone calls on this subject, there was some confusion about the disbursement. That’s not surprising considering that your union received breaking information right up until the last days before the money showed up in our paychecks.

The biggest complication was due to a lawsuit filed by a recent retiree of one of the other unions who believed that he should be included in the payment. The lawsuit meant that, on the advice of legal counsel, the affected unions were unable to publicize some aspects of the situation. CTU shared what we could while pursuing the outcome that would be most beneficial to our members.

As a result of the suit, the university made a partial payment to those of us on the payroll as of January 1 and set aside the portion that might be awarded to retirees. Depending on the result of



the court action, that money could be disbursed to members in the future.

While we understand their frustration and have some sympathy for those who left MSU employment before January—and a few former members have contacted me—the CTU is committed to making sure that the agreement is enforced as ratified on August 13, 2013.

I have also heard from CTs who would prefer wage increases to lump sum payments. While I like getting a fistful of cash as much as anyone (even with the crushing supplemental tax), I agree that wage increases are preferable. Unlike lump sum payments, every raise builds on the last one.

This experience taught me that some members may have a misunderstanding about the nature of negotiations. In true bargaining, neither unions nor management dictate the outcome. In this case, for example, we didn’t say to management, “We know you have some of our money and you must return it to us in a specified manner.” Instead, we got the university to agree that it was our money and then we talked over many different strategies to make sure members benefited from the savings. We worked hard to get the very best outcome for our members that we could. What we secured was a negotiated agreement that benefited both sides.

In a political environment where workers are targeted to bear the brunt of economic and health care fiascos we did not cause, I think our little union is doing quite well. This union—which truly is every member working together—fights hard to make sure CTs are protected and recognized and compensated for the work we do. I’m not saying we

Success continued on p. 5

**Closing the wage gap
between men and women
WOULD CUT THE
POVERTY RATE IN**

1/2 for working
women
and their
families

THE SHRIVER REPORT
SOURCE: A WOMAN'S NATION PUSHES BACK FROM THE BRINK

This statistic is only one of the many facts discussed in *A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink*. Go to ShriverReport.org to download your free copy today!

March is Women's History Month. We are lucky in this area to have the Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame in Lansing. For information about events, exhibits, location and hours of operation, visit <http://www.michiganwomenshalloffame.org/>.



October 25, 2013—Members of GEU rally for back wages outside the MSU Administration Building.

GEU wins back pay

On the eve before their grievance claiming back pay went to arbitration, the Graduate Employees Union received a settlement from MSU that granted everything they were claiming.

“This story has captured nationwide interest and is being reported coast to coast as an example of what can happen when employees stand together,” read the announcement in GEU’s newsletter. “The only reason that this story is a success is because of our strong, engaged membership.”

MSU agreed to pay wages owed from Summer term 2013—over \$120,000 in total—as well as future wages negotiated under the contract.



“Good news—we created an app that allows you to go on vacation without actually leaving the office!”

Sometimes you gotta laugh

Looking for Back Pay

The union member had been waiting months for his grievance to be resolved—he’d worked overtime for 15 straight weeks but hadn’t been paid for it. Management had stalled the grievance procedure as long as it could, but, finally, the case was going before an arbitrator. On the morning the case was to be heard, however, the worker’s supervisor called in sick. The case was postponed.

The worker, already really mad that things were taking so long, became absolutely enraged when he picked up the evening newspaper and found a smiling

photo of the “sick” supervisor on the front page: He’d come in second in a big golf tournament on the very day he was supposed to be too ill to attend the arbitration hearing.

Newspaper in hand, the worker and his union steward march into the company’s offices to demand an explanation.

The company’s vice-president for Human Resources looks at the newspaper, scratches his chin, then says: “Wow. He probably would have come in first place if he hadn’t been sick.”



Commitment

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the ideals of Martin Luther King Jr. cannot be confined to just one day a year, we are developing several ways to help keep us involved year round.

For a start, over the next year, our union is joining MSU’s year-long discussion about fairness, equality and civil rights. Known as Project 60/50, this is a commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* and the 50th anniversary of the passage and sign-

ing into law of the Civil Rights Act.

As part of our participation in Project 60/50, CTU will provide information and opportunities to assist each of us in getting involved in improving our world. [Pamela Lamond]

CTU President Deb Bittner’s column this month (page 3) details our involvement in the 110 Challenge, a program that allows us to find volunteer opportunities as well as discuss and record our involvement.

Quote: A community is democratic only when the humblest and weakest person can enjoy the highest civil, economic, and social rights that the biggest and most powerful possess.

—A. Philip Randolph



Success continued from p. 3

should rest on our laurels, just that once in a while we can pat ourselves on the back for our successes.

I also want to remind everyone of the opportunity for CTs to participate in “Project 60/50: What’s Your 110?”

This year is CTU’s 40th anniversary. Since 1974 our union has been committed to democracy, diversity, and social justice. We have proven our commitment to these ideals as an organization and as individual members, both within the union and through our work in our communities.

The 110 Challenge helps us find volunteer opportunities and keep track of some of the many ways we give back to our communities. We can log the volunteer work we do on an individual basis—shoveling the sidewalk for an elderly neighbor, for example—or with our churches, non-profits and other community organizations. Volunteer work that we are already doing also qualifies. And, by providing an example, we will encourage others, especially students, to get involved.

Follow the instructions on this page or go to the CTU website—www.ctumsu.org—and click on the tab 60/50+40 for information and links that will help you take part in the 110 Challenge.

Thank you, sincerely, for all of the work you do.

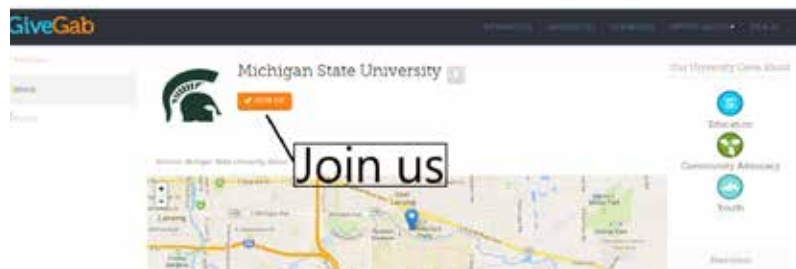


Take the “110 Challenge”

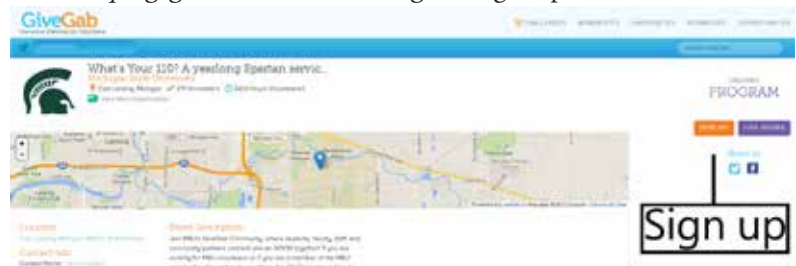
The yearlong Spartan service challenge

MSU’s Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement launched the 110 Challenge. They are utilizing GiveGab, “the online social network for volunteers,” to coordinate the challenge. Sign up using the following instructions.

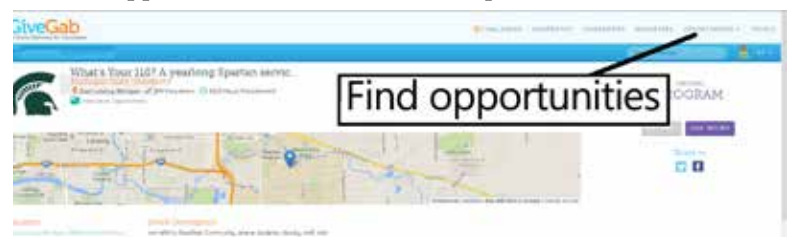
1. Go to <http://gvgb.co/msuspartans>.
2. Click the orange “Join Us” button.



3. Create a Profile.
4. Click “Join Us” (again) and choose status.
5. Go to <http://gvgb.co/MSU110challenge> to Sign Up.



6. Click “Sign Up Without A Task.”
7. Click on opportunities to find volunteer options.



8. Volunteer and track your volunteer hours—these may be hours that are through the MSU promoted agencies AND may include hours that you do on your own. Track them all!



Board actions

October through December 2013

The following CTU Executive Board discussions took place October through December 2013. All expenditure decisions are included, but the list does not represent meetings in their entirety. CTs can receive copies of complete minutes through the mail or email by contacting the CTU office at 355-1903.

October 1

Renewed subscription to “Motivational Manager” for \$139/year.

Agreed to purchase a \$60 discounted ticket for the CTU president to attend the Mid-Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame 30th Annual Dinner.

Received report on “For Adults Only,” a workshop that could result in union training of benefit to the health of the membership and organization.

October 11 (email vote)

Agreed to purchase 1,000 union-made bumper stickers for \$.19 each.

October 15

Renewed subscription to the Lansing State Journal for \$359.61 per year.

Donated \$50 to Central Lake Schools Band at the request of a member to assist students with purchasing uniforms.

Discussed special conference on outsourcing of CTU work.

Received presentation on right to work by attendees of Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA) meeting.

Cancelled November 5 Executive Board meeting so members would be free to participate in the voting process.

Discussed Health4U’s request to have CTs participate in a survey and pilot program promoting simple, healthy meals.

Because of the inconvenience to CTU staff, decided the Union Hall will not be rented on holidays.

November 19

Agreed to transfer \$25,000 from Operating Savings to Operating Checking.

Agreed to send president and two contract administrators to the Labor Arbitration Institute in Chicago conference at a cost of \$375 per person plus lodging, meals and lowest cost transportation.

Decided to place a \$75 ad in the program of the Greater Lansing Area Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday Commission.

Declined to donate \$250 to the Ingham County Animal Control/Shelter’s Second Annual “Home for the Holidays” adoption event. Donated \$100 instead.

Donated \$100 to the Old Newsboys “Spoof Journal,” which provides boots and shoes to school children.

Declined to renew membership in the Society for Human Resource Management at a cost of \$165 per year.

Donated \$100 to the WKAR Radio Reading Service.

Received report on meeting with MSU Human Resources to discuss planned classification study.

Cancelled the December 3 Executive Board meeting.

Constituted the Executive Board Committees. [Angel Loveall]

Set the dates of the 2014 Membership Meetings for January 29, April 29, July 17, and October 29.

Discussed MSU’s decision to discontinue bulk mailing services and its impact on CTU mailings.

December 17

Agreed to purchase new copier for up to \$9,000. (The old one cannot be fixed.)

Decided to purchase up to 10 tickets at \$35 each for the Greater Lansing MLK Luncheon being held in Lansing.

Donated \$100 and an auction item worth up to \$50 for the MSU Community Choral Society fundraiser.

Agreed to spend \$500 to purchase pledge cards as part of MSU’s “Project 60/50: What’s Your 110?” year-long service project.

Donated \$100 to the MSU Theater Department fundraiser for student theater and the summer circle program.

Agreed to purchase up to five tickets, at a cost of \$45 each, to the Links Program scholarship fundraiser.

Donated \$200 to City of Lansing Human Resources Community Services.

Announced that CTU Solidarity lunches will begin again in the near future and continue through spring.

Meeting continued from p. 1

we will expand our annual picnic into a larger celebration. Treasurer Jan Wallace discussed our current finances and said that CTU's Finance Committee will be meeting in February to continue preparing the 2014 budget. The budget, along with the 2013 audit, will be presented at the April meeting.

Members also voted to support donations to three organizations: \$1,000 to the MSU Student Food Bank, \$1,000 to the Greater Lansing Food Bank and \$500 for the MSU Safe Place Race for the Place 5k run. The lack of a quorum meant this vote was not official. It was

taken in order to provide direction to the Executive Board.

Further discussion included the University's plan to conduct a classification study and an article in MSU's *Source* that seemed to encourage employees to snitch on their coworkers. Director Willie Paulsen said she is collecting donations because of the huge demand on community service organizations as a result of the economy and this year's weather.

Door prizes went to Pamela Brock and Jan Wallace (\$50 each), Penni Vandecar and Sandye Hattinger (CTU jackets), and Wendi Winston (a CTU goody bag).



Patti Vandecar tries on the CTU jacket she won at the Membership Meeting.

Is it "courageous" to snitch on a coworker?

The union has received several reports on an item in the January *Source*, MSU's human resources newsletter. The lead article on page 2, "Your 2014 Spartan Resolution: Resolve to Exemplify Spartan Courage in the Workplace," urges employees to show courage at work, including the courage to "tell."

An example given of when workplace courage might be necessary is if a colleague (also a personal friend) is taking unapproved breaks and leaving others to pick up the load.

According to CTU Contract Administrator John Klusinske, however, monitoring and reporting on coworkers is

always a bad idea.

"Some of the messiest situations we work with are in offices where the supervisor has encouraged employees to tattle on one another," said Klusinske. "It can cause a unit to malfunction."

To be fair, the *Source* article does *not* direct individuals to participate in a campaign of backbiting and tattling. It sets forth a series of ethical dilemmas for which one might need courage and provides contact information for workers facing those kinds of issues.

So would it be a good idea to contact Human Resources if confronted with such issues in the workplace?

"The best thing a member can do in such cases is to contact the union first, not the employer," Klusinske said.

"What sometimes looks like an ethical issue might actually be contractual, ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] or FMLA [Family Medical Leave Act] and confidential," he said.

"First and foremost, the union is solely on the side of the employees and will provide them with the best support, resources and information in any given workplace situation," he said.

"And remember," he added, "your conversations with your union are always confidential." [Paula Papay]

CTcomments

Thank you to everyone who provided items for the "Sock It" to the cold weather collection for those in need.

The coats, scarves, hats, socks, gloves and other clothing that you donated will be greatly appreciated!

This is an annual event, which I anticipate will start earlier in the fall of 2014 prior to the winter weather setting in.

—Willie Paulsen, CTU member

URdistricts

The following members have petitioned for appointment to UR positions. They will be appointed if no other CTs from those districts express an interest in the positions before March 11.

▼ **District 20** (Eppley, North Business Complex, Owen, Shaw): **Sierra VanDenHeuvel**.

▼ **District 15** (Nisbet, Manly Miles, Spartan Village Community Center, University Printing): **Rosie Garcia**.

The following members have been reap-

pointed to UR positions.

▼ **District 1** (Administration Building, Floors B, 1), **April Moore** can be contacted at 432-3956 or mooreap@msu.edu.

▼ **District 9** (Life Sciences): Contact **Stephen Stofflet** at 884-0409 or stofflet1@msu.edu.

▼ **District 14** (Instructional Media Center, Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture, Audiology and Speech Sciences, Public Safety): **Linda Blodgett** can be contacted at 432-0589 or blodgett@msu.edu.



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2990 E. LAKE LANSING ROAD
EAST LANSING, MI 48823-6219

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CTcalendar

March 4 and 18. Executive Board meetings, C-T Union Hall, 5:15 pm. Members welcome.

March 11. Knife skills. A Kitchen Skills Drills presentation by Health4U. Community Kitchen, McDonel Hall, 12:10–12:50 p.m. Bring your lunch. Information and registration at http://health4u.msu.edu/classes/kitchen_skill_drill.html.

March 14. “‘The Moralistic God and the Factory System’: Uncovering Religion in a 1950s Automobile Factory.” Matthew Pehl, History Department, Augustana College. Presented by Labor Education Programs, 12:15–1:30 p.m., MSU Museum Auditorium.

March 17. “The Chicago Couriers Union, 2003–2010; A Case Study in Solidarity Unionism.” Colin Bossen, Harvard University. Presented by Labor Education Programs, 12:15–1:30 p.m., MSU Museum Auditorium.

March 18–23. The Gershwins’ *Porgy and Bess*. Winner of the 2012 Tony Award for best revival of a musical. A Project 60/50 presentation by the Wharton Center. Tickets start at \$39.50 and go up to \$77.50. For show times and other information, go to <http://www.whartoncenter.com/events>.

March 22. “Cries for Freedom: A depiction of modern day slavery in the USA.” A dance and theater show about the underground criminal world of sex trafficking in Michigan. Wharton Center, 7:30 p.m. FREE (donations accepted for a rescue shelter). Information and tickets at <http://www.whartoncenter.com/events>.

March 22. Twenty-first Dia de la Mujer conference. Sponsored by the Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions. Saturday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Kellogg Center, \$25. See <http://ddlm.ocat.msu.edu/> for details.

Help with taxes

Just getting around to filing your taxes and can’t find your W-2s? Copies are available through the EBS portal under “Payroll.”

Need assistance?

VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) offers free tax help for low- to moderate-income people.

To qualify, individuals who want help with filing taxes must make under \$50,000. However, there is no income cap for individuals 55 or older.

This nation-wide program is available at many local sites, including MSU.

If you would like to register for a general tax preparation appointment please call 2-1-1 or 866-561-2500 (toll free).

VITA is sponsored by various organizations and is staffed by volunteers who have received training.

Some locations offer free electronic filing. [Shawn Rayon]