



Giving back
UR Karen Spitz donated her prize back to the community, p. 4.



CTU meetings
Participation is growing! Attend meetings (next one in April) and add your voice, p. 5.



Plan now for bad weather
Familiarize yourself with MSU policies and get ready, p. 6.



CT news

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

Spring 2022

President's corner

2021 was an uphill climb

We succeeded by working together

President Deb Bittner

Happy 2022! After this past year, I'm glad to have turned the page to a new year! We often seemed to just be slogging through in 2021. The year and the work seemed insurmountable at times, so we just kept putting one foot in front of the other. There was barely time to recover from one problem and reorganize for the next issue, let alone celebrate any wins. The problems kept on coming!

But when I had an opportunity to actually look back over 2021, I was pleased to see that we did have some great accomplishments. [Vanessa Rengstorf]

A four-year health care agreement

First and foremost is the winning of a health care agree-

President continued on p. 3



October 27, 2021, Zoom—President Deb Bittner, Treasurer Tracy Rich, Directors Carmen Elliott, Jan Wallace, and Andrea Parker, and Audit Committee Member Sarah Carapellucci are sworn in by Vice President Rosie Garcia.

Two membership meetings

October 27, 2021

Attendees of the October Membership Meeting unanimously affirmed the return of candidates to their previously held offices. A formal election was not necessary because all of the candidates ran unopposed. Vice President Rosie Garcia administered the oath of office.

Members next voted to transfer \$90,000 from the contingency fund to operations in order to cover expenses due to health care negotiations, Covid-19 related bargaining,

Membership Meetings continued on p. 4

CT news

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

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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.

Unions are not a
spectator sport.

Unions require
player participation.

You're not in the game
if you're sitting on the
sidelines.



CTclassifieds

Free

▼ **File cabinet.** Large, green, with five drawers. Purchased from MSU salvage in the 1990s, so quite used. Good working condition. FREE for pickup. Call 517-331-4442.

Services:

▼ **The Employee Assistance Program** is a negotiated counseling benefit

for employees and their families. Our contract provides released time for up to four sessions a year. Additional sessions will require the use of sick time. Go to eap.msu.edu/about for more information.

▼ **MSU Benefits Plus** is a customized program that provides exclusive employee rates on a variety of programs, including auto, home, critical illness, legal, long-term care, pet, and vision insurance. Premiums for these specially negotiated plans can be paid through payroll deduction, making it safe, easy, and convenient for your budget. To participate in some of these programs, you will need to wait until Open Enrollment.

The site also lists discounts on items and services offered by companies to MSU employees. Visit msubenefitsplus.com to sign up for access.

▼ **Skills assessment software:** Make an appointment with your union (517-355-1903) to access the same skills assessment software used by HR to evaluate skills. Free.

▼ **CTU Conference Room:** Now available free to members (with deposit). For non-members, \$25/hour plus deposit. Contact the CTU office at 517-355-1903 for questions, reservations, etc.

▼ **Advertise** to your colleagues in the *CT News*. Send the ad copy to Cheryl@ctumsu.org. See the guidelines at www.ctumsu.org/news/ct-classifieds.

Membership Meetings

The remaining Membership Meetings in 2022 are scheduled for Thursday, April 28, Tuesday, July 12, and Wednesday, October 26. Meetings start at 5:20 p.m. but the socializing starts at 5. We anticipate all meetings to be available via Zoom. Membership Meetings are for making decisions about the Union, asking questions and receiving updates about union activities.

Executive Board Meetings

Board meetings are regularly held twice a month on first and third Tuesdays, but changes in dates, times and locations may occur. Call about attending.

Members welcome!

President *continued from page 1*

ment that ensures a premium-free insurance option, protects our benefits, and increases our paychecks. We also kept the Joint Health Care Committee, a crucial part of our health care agreement and a crucial partnership with MSU. The JHCC requires that both management and the unions in the agreement work together to manage health care costs and maintain quality. It is the tool that gives us the flexibility to improve our health-care and our incomes.

Negotiating this contract, primarily over Zoom, was brutal and long. In fact, health care discussions dominated the whole year! Actual face-to-face interaction is very important in bargaining for both sides of the table. Not being able to really participate in person with each other was tedious at best, but in the end, we were able to put aside our differences and negotiate another health care Memorandum of Understanding. Team CTU worked hard and helped negotiate the best agreement possible.

(A side note: Some of the unions who were in our joint negotiations decided to pursue individual union paths toward obtaining a health care agreement. We sincerely wish them the best.)

I am proud of our CTU members, who painstakingly worked through the language of this complicated agreement and voted overwhelmingly to accept it. We also thank our team and the unions in the Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU who participated in arriving at a tentative agreement. We owe special thanks to CLO Chairperson Joe Garza, who was the chief negotiator on behalf of labor. [Yaquelin Vargas]

We could only have done this by working together, and we did it!

So many new faces

Unions and management often face each other across the table as adversaries—it's built into the system. Management tends to see workers as a financial drain on the budget. Unions, on the other hand, advocate for our members and

emphasize the value we add to the institution.

The CTU recognizes that we cannot succeed unless MSU succeeds. To that end, we have always looked for ways to support, engage and contribute to the university community. Part of making for a stronger university and community means making sure that workers are appropriately recognized and compensated.

Our advocacy includes making sure that everyone—both management and union workers—understands and respects the collective bargaining process and our union contracts. Over the decades, CTU made a lot of headway in helping foster an environment of mutual respect and trust.

It is glaringly obvious that there has been a major turnover of MSU's administration in the past couple years, which means we have ramped up our efforts to build relationships and trust with the University leadership and administrators. The unions have had many conversations with the new MSU leaders, including President Stanley.

One of those conversations became a very productive discussion with Executive Vice President Melissa Woo and Employee Relations Director Rick Fanning a few months back. The unions



Maintaining solidarity takes a little more work these days, but we are all finding ways to stay involved.



described employee morale: fear for the future, doubts about the employer's concern for employees' welfare, questions about the veracity of MSU's financial claims, dissatisfaction with murky communications, etc. While we understand the challenges the administration faces, we believe that consultation and collaboration with the unions is imperative to our mutual success. The meeting was important to both sides, and I believe it will help keep dialogue open in the future. CTU will continue to seek opportunities for such discussion.

And then...

I'm not saying there's a direct link between our outreach to the administration and subsequent events, but we heard a few weeks later that the university was considering a reduction in its cut to retirement benefits. Labor had negotiated a 5% cut over 24 months, but after receiving updated financial projections, the university offered to reduce the cut to 18 months for us too. The CTU readily agreed.

Also, we were very pleased to accept the three additional paid days off in December and the \$1,500 Employee Recognition Bonus. Thank you to the university for showing appreciation to MSU workers and recognizing us in these ways.

This year also saw the CTU work very hard—and succeed—in growing our internal solidarity. We have had great

Solidarity *continued on p. 5*

Membership Meetings continued from p. 1

and other projects. Before approving the transfer, members discussed the nature of the expenses and anticipated increases due to inflation and other pressures. Treasurer Tracy Rich presented a report on the union's finances.

President Deb Bittner reported on our recently approved health care contract. She reminded the members that we will receive our previously negotiated 2% general increase as of April 1, 2022.

Attendees also discussed MSU's vaccine mandate. Contract Administrator Greg Harris talked about the process and urged members to contact the union if they need assistance.

Harris also addressed the call for volunteers that went out soliciting workers to supplement staffing in the dining

halls. CTs who work in Residential and Hospitality Services, cannot "volunteer" to work without pay. Harris said that RHS CTs who participate will be compensated at their normal rate and will receive overtime pay for combined hours over 40 in a workweek. *Non-RHS CTs* can be true "volunteers."

Contract Administrator Sean Temple gave a presentation on MSU's inclement weather policy.

Bittner reminded attendees of CTU's Gerri Olsen Educational Loan Program. The loan covers tuition for CTU members, and members are responsible for paying back the loan. Participants usually pay back the loan when they receive reimbursement from the university.

January 25, 2022

Treasurer Rich gave the financial report at the January meeting. She said the Finance Committee expects to present the 2022 budget at the April 25 meeting. Bittner added that our 2021 audit will also be presented at the April meeting. Bittner noted that the \$90,000 transfer that we approved at the January Membership Meeting has already been recouped in our Contingency Fund.

Members unanimously authorized a donation of \$250 to the MSU Student Food Bank. Rich said that food insecurity is one of the top problems for university students.

"You can't study if you're hungry or if

you are worried about where your next meal is coming from."

Members approved a \$1,000 donation to the Tri-County Office on Aging, with 50% going to the general fund and the rest to the Meals on Wheels program. Several members offered testimonials on the importance of Meals on Wheels to their families! [Tina Andrews]

"When we went on strike in 1988, the community rallied around us," said Bittner, "so we think it shows strength and responsibility to rally for the community."

Bittner discussed our new health care contract. Because each union has its own concerns and culture, she said, a couple of the other campus unions decided to try negotiating individual contracts. For CTU, however, a premium-free health care option with a good opportunity for raises is crucial. Nor are we interested in a high-deductible plan. Preserving the Joint Health Care Committee (JHCC) was also an important win, she said, because it allows participating unions and the university to continue to have an impact on the quality and cost of health care as well as annual raises.

We did agree to a temporary reduction in our retirement contribution, she said, but we preserved our health care and wage structure for four more years.

The five unions that ratified the Health Care Memorandum of Understanding and remain in the JHCC are

January Meeting *continued on next page*



Membership Meeting prize winners

October 27

- ▼ Michelle Volker, \$100 Quorum Prize
- ▼ Rita Jenkins, \$50
- ▼ Dar Swiler, Fall Prize of Lodge "Rosie the Riveter" skillet, CTU apron, etc.
- ▼ Janet Hershberger, Fall "Mini" Prize of Lodge mini-skillet, CTU apron, etc.
- ▼ Andrea McCulloh, CTU Umbrella
- ▼ Mary Pease, CTU Blanket

January 25

- ▼ Michelle Jenkins, \$100 Quorum Prize
- ▼ Karen Spitz, \$50
- ▼ Simone Jennings, CTU blanket
- ▼ Kate Fandrick, CTU vest
- ▼ Judy Redding, CTU cooler
- ▼ Rebecca Ives, CTU cooler

CT gives back

Karen Spitz believes that the Tri-County Office on Aging is a valuable community resource, so much so that she donated her \$50 door prize to TCOA. Spitz won the prize at the January 26 Membership Meeting.

"In the past, when my mom had challenges," she said, "we went to the Tri-County Office on Aging. I was pleased with their information and sup-

port in helping us decide how to proceed. They treated my family with such kindness."

Spitz is a Union Representative in District 18 (Kellogg Center, Brody Complex, and 1855 Place).



UR Karen Spitz

January Meeting

continued from previous page

CTU, APSA, APA, AFSCME 1585, and IATSE.

Bittner reminded CTs of the upcoming \$1,500 appreciation bonuses (which will have been received by the time this newsletter is distributed). *And*, she added, we will receive our 2% general increases in April. Bittner urged anyone experiencing problems with either of these to contact the union.

Contract Administrator Greg Harris gave an update on vaccine mandates. He directed CTs to MSU's Together We Will site (msu.edu/together-we-will/directives.html). Because there are many variables and evolving policies involved in the process, CTs should contact the CTU if they find the guidance confusing, they don't find the information they are seeking, or the mandate is causing them trouble in their jobs.

Contract Administrator Sean Temple discussed remote work. Whether a CT is able to work at home can depend on



many factors, Temple said, and there cannot be a one-size-fits-all policy. For example, tasks involved in a public-facing clinical job are probably more difficult to accomplish remotely than those

of an academic support position.

Temple also described some of the considerations and pitfalls of remote work and said it is best to discuss your options with the union.

Solidarity *continued from p. 3*

turnouts for Membership Meetings, members are contacting their union with questions, concerns, and constructive ideas. Our union has shown the resilience and strength needed to survive, and in some ways flourish, during the pandemic.

And now . . .

During the past year, we discovered a few areas where we need some training and skill building.

In discussing our retirement benefits, we learned that many members want to learn more about investment and retirement options. We used to offer these programs to members, and we will confer with our accounting and investment experts about resuming them.

We also became aware of the need for more education on the laws and rules that govern labor relations and bargaining. Developing this knowledge base is import-

ant for an informed membership and to develop our "next generation" of leaders.

We will continue working around the pandemic to establish relationships with the many new leaders on campus. I repeat, our success as employees is intertwined with the success of MSU, and we need to draw strength from our mutual interests.

Solidarity

Speaking of the pandemic, it seems that every time we begin to anticipate a move back toward normal—or at least a "new normal"—there's another variant or CDC announcement or university procedure. It's hard to keep up.

Be assured that CTU members are supporting each other through our union, even when we disagree with each other over an issue or approach. Every member has a voice in this union, and our democratic process determines our approach and results in action.

Sometimes our interests may seem to be in conflict, but the CTU has fought for the safety, security, respect, and contractual rights of every member over the past two years, just as we did for the previous 46. And we will continue to do so. That is solidarity.

Our success depends on member participation, and there are so many ways to help make our union work for all of us. Hear a rumor? Report it to your union, where we can discover the truth and deal with problems as they arise. Have an idea? Send it along. As always, your union needs your input.

And it's always encouraging to receive words of support and appreciation.

So, I want you to know how much **you** are appreciated. This year's successes could not have happened without you, and our future success depends on you. [Mark Williams]

Finally, here's hoping for a great 2022!



Are you ready for inclement weather?

Since it is the policy of the university to remain open at all times, what happens in emergency situations, like when winter weather makes traveling to work dangerous or impossible? Contract Administrator Sean Temple addressed just these circumstances at the October 27 Membership Meeting.

According to MSU policy, he said, the university won't close, but emergency situations, including weather, may cause it to implement the Modified Operations Policy and Procedure.

Preparation

Whether or not the university moves to modified operations, Temple said, CTs should have a plan in place to deal with extreme weather issues.

First, he said, review your unit's communications' policies. What is the reporting structure for informing your unit that you will be late or absent? Does your unit have your updated contact information? Is there a communications procedure in place in case the regular reporting procedure is disrupted?

"The university is open most times during harsh weather," Temple said, and "your job is important, so communication is vital."

Sometimes you may be able to make arrangements to alter your workday or work remotely instead of using accrued time, Temple said. But that is at the discretion of the supervisor. He advised employees to use discretion and caution when it comes to health and safety.

you are in contact with your supervisor about how to proceed.

Only the university can call for modified operations, not the individual units. It is likely that modified operations will require most employees, those deemed "non-critical," to remain at home with

pay. Non-critical employees should not report to the work site or work remotely, and they may be disciplined for doing so.

Others, who have been deemed "critical," Temple said, will be required to report to campus or (with supervisor approval) work remotely and will receive compensatory time to be used at a later date.

Critical employees who are unable to make it to work must inform their unit through the established reporting structure.

Critical employees unable to report to work will be required to use vacation, personal, or comp time accruals. However, for health and safety reasons, Temple said, this may be the best choice.

Those on hybrid schedules must also have a conversation with the supervisor about when they might be required to report to the work site under modified operations.

Since conditions can vary greatly

Operations continued on next page

It's not just about the weather

"Moving to modified operations means there is an official temporary suspension or delay of some or all designated university operations and events due to severe weather, major utility failure, or other unusual circumstances which may endanger students and/or employees or are otherwise unsuitable for the continuation of normal operations."

—Modified Operations Policy and Procedure

hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/university-wide/modified-operations.html

Using your vacation, personal, or comp accruals may be the best option. Again, communication is key.

"Use caution," he added. "Your health and safety are important." Call your unit if problems arise, he said.

Modified operations

Employees are expected to report to work unless the university specifically announces otherwise. If the university moves to modified operations, make sure

Operations

continued from previous page

across the state, modified operations will be specific to the campus involved.

The Business Continuity Plan

Every unit is required, annually, to file a Business Continuity Plan that lays out how it will fulfill its essential functions under modified operations. Temple urged CTs to ask to review the plan every year to make sure their information is updated. At the very least, CTs should ask their supervisors if they are listed as critical or non-critical. Be aware, he added, that a unit can reassess its needs and may change your critical/non-critical status, possibly *during* a modified operations event.

Stay calm.

Some situations may be unique. Temple suggested that CTs communicate with their supervisors to make sure everyone is aware of expectations and circumstances. But sometimes the information seems murky or just plain wrong. That's when you need to contact your union.

Temple encouraged CTs to contact



the union with questions and concerns regarding the modified operations policy or any other workplace issue. Call your UR or contact the main office at 517-355-1903.

MLK report

For the second year, Martin Luther King Jr. commemorative events were largely on line. But circumstances could not stop community members from gathering to discuss equality, justice, and inclusion—we just found alternate ways to participate. We even attended the annual march on Zoom.

MSU's week-long commemoration focused on "Where Do We Go from Here—Chaos or Community?" View one of the events, Dr. Tamura Lomax's "We Don't Need a Hero. We Need Accountable Community Workers," at www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EV_MNt-BJws&ab_channel=msuinclusion.

Local television stations broadcast Lansing's annual Day of Celebration, which featured four members of the Little Rock Nine. The panelists spoke

about their experiences integrating an Arkansas high school in 1957. It was hosted by the Martin Luther King Commission of Mid-Michigan. View the discussion at mlkmidmichigan.com/day-of-celebration.

Just ask!

To promote safety and assist in compliance with the MSU mask mandate, the university is providing department and unit leaders with KN95 masks to distribute to any employee who wants one. Your supervisor should have a mask available for you. If this has not occurred, ask your supervisor. Your union is also committed to a safe and

First e-board meeting of 2022

At its first meeting in 2022, January 17, the CTU executive board selected the board members who will serve on its internal committees for the next year.

Finance

Tracy Rich, Chairperson
Carmen Elliott
Michelle Jenkins
Andrea Parker
Kristen Rule

Grievance, Appeal and Trial

Rosie Garcia, Chairperson
Janet Hershberger
Lois Sieftring
Steve Stofflet
Jan Wallace

Personnel

Deb Bittner, Chairperson
Rosie Garcia
Tracy Rich
Carmen Elliott

The Board also selected the dates for Membership Meetings in 2022. The first was held January 25. The remaining meetings will be held: Thursday, April 28, Tuesday, July 12, and Wednesday, October 26

Election Day 2022 will be Tuesday, October 25.



healthy workplace. Contact us if you have had difficulty getting your mask.



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

CTcalendar:

First and third Tuesdays. The CTU executive board meets regularly on first and third Tuesdays. Members are welcome. Contact the CTU office for a schedule and a link to attend.

February 22. Storytelling as Activism Speakers Series “Queerly Centered Stories: LGBTQIA+ Writing Center Leadership, Twenty-First Century Activism, and Disciplinary Sustainability” with Dr. Travis Webster. 1-2:30 p.m. via Zoom. Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) provides a calendar with links to registration and information at inclusion.msu.edu/events/. [Katie Shelton]

February 22. In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The Pogroms of 1918-1921 and the Onset of the Holocaust, presented by author Dr. Jeffrey

Veidlinger. 5:30-7 p.m. in the JMC Library, Case Hall.

February 23. Good Form Walking/ Good Form Running Clinic. T.J. Hall will present this live Zoom class from 11-11:50 a.m. To register, visit the Health4U events calendar available at health4u.msu.edu/courses.

March 2—March 23. Four Wednesday sessions. Breaking Free from the Monkey Mind. Guided by Health4U Emotional Wellness Consultant Lisa Laughman, participants will review key concepts from the book, “Don’t Feed the Monkey Mind: How to Stop the Cycle of Anxiety, Worry, and Fear,” by Jennifer Shannon, LMFT. To register, visit the Health4U events calendar available at health4u.msu.edu/courses.

March 3. ‘Save the Circus’: Worker Strikes, Circusgoers, and the Mid-Twentieth Century Decline of the Big Top,” Andrea Ringer of Tennessee State University. 12:15-1:30 p.m. via Zoom. Contact John Beck at beckj@msu.edu for a link to attend via Zoom.

April 1. Storytelling as Activism Speakers Series “The Responsibility of Privilege: A Critical Race Counterstory Conversation for Allies and Accomplices” with Dr. Aja Martinez. See February 22 for a link to the IDI calendar.

April 4 kicks off a week-long celebration honoring the legacy of two of the most prominent U.S. labor leaders and civil rights activists, César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta. See February 22 for a link to the IDI calendar.