Unions Win Healthcare Battle

Yes, that’s right, congratulations to the teachers and staff who work with the children in our schools everyday. While you rarely get the credit, we know that the successes AACPS have seen are due to your hard work and dedication.

An overwhelming majority of our schools showed a marked increase in student achievement. Anne Arundel County students performed better than the statewide average in reading and math on the MSA.

Special congratulations to the faculty and staff of Georgetown East Elementary, Harman Elementary and Park Elementary. These three schools earned their way off the School Improvement list this year.

Special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) students also showed improvements with thirty-eight percent of students in grade 8 passing the math test, up 20 percent. Eighth grade special education students showed an 8.5 percent increase in scores.

Countywide scores on the SAT increased, higher than the state and national levels, on both the verbal and math sections.

The curriculum, the books and the emphasis on reading and math have contributed to the success we have seen. But, I must end like I began. It is thanks to the teachers and staffs who made it possible. Thank you!

Congrats to the TEACHERS!

Between six hundred and a thousand Board of Education employees came out to show their dissatisfaction with the Superintendent’s recommendation to change the healthcare provider. TAAAC, AEL (Association for Education Leaders), SAAAAC (Secretaries and Assistants Association of AACo.), and AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Local 1693) joined forces to combat the blatant disregard of their collective bargaining agreements.

The Superintendent’s new recommendation was to negotiate with CareFirst Blue Cross/Blue Shield to continue service for another year. (1321)
Did TAAAC turn away from “know and certain healthcare savings?”

On September 15 during a public meeting of the Board of Education, one member of the Board spoke on the proposed change in healthcare carriers, and indicated his disgust with TAAAC leadership, alleging that we turned away known and certain healthcare savings that could have been used to raise teachers’ salaries. His comments raised two immediate questions in my mind as your chief negotiator.

The first is rhetorical: If these savings were really to be used to raise teachers’ salaries, then why did the Superintendent and the Board refuse all offers to return to the bargaining table to negotiate raises with the $1.4 million in anticipated FY05 savings? If life teaches us anything, it’s that we must base our decisions on what people [and organizations] do, and not on what they say. Saying that healthcare savings will be put on the teacher salary scale may be an appreciable gesture, but refusing to return to the bargaining table and actually do so indicated quite a different intent.

The second question is factual in nature: Will the proposed change in carriers actually bring known and certain healthcare savings. Read on, and you’ll find that the existence of any overall healthcare savings is neither known or certain. Read on, and you will see that foreseeable increases in claims expenses from the promised coverage of out-of-network services will threaten to reduce or eliminate any potential overall healthcare savings.

There are two primary factors in the AACPS healthcare cost equation. They are claims expenses [the actual payments to practitioners] and administrative costs. The contract bid by UnitedHealthcare [UHC] was for administrative costs only, so the $15 million in anticipated 5-year savings does not take into account any resultant changes in claims costs over the next five years. The school system pays the selected carrier to administer its plan and to provide a network of doctors, but the AACPS pays the actual claims expenses. So, the Superintendent’s promise means that the AACPS would cover any additional costs to employees who choose to stay with their physicians, even when those physicians are not UHC participants. So, if any of your doctors do not now participate in UHC and decide not to join UHC, you could continue to see them anyway for no more than your current $15 copay. To fulfill Dr. Smith’s promise, the AACPS would then absorb the additional cost [claim expense] of your being treated out-of-network for the next five years. (4773)

The promise, made as a surprise gesture in his September 9 letter, does some very bad things. With absolute certainty, two things would drive up the cost of claims to a significant but unknown degree. The greater claims expenses would effectively offset or eliminate completely any overall healthcare savings that might have otherwise resulted from the lower administrative costs bid by UHC.

The AACPS would have to cover the higher cost for every service to every impacted employee who continues to see his/her non-participating physician. Not only would the AACPS be liable for the new and higher out-of-network expenses based upon the current rates of non-participating physicians, but those same physicians would have unfettered freedom to set new and higher prices for services rendered. (Continued on page 9)
After a recommendation for termination, a ten-month removal from the classroom and an exhaustive appeal, a TAAAC member received a ruling from a Board of Education appointed hearing examiner that he should be returned to the classroom. In spite of the Superintendent’s zeal to recommend termination, the hearing examiner recognized Dr. Smith’s failure to prove that this case warranted the maximum level of disciplinary action. Without competent and expert representation from TAAAC and MSTA, this teacher (and a half-dozen others this year) would have been vulnerable to the Superintendent’s wrath in seeking termination for offenses that do not rise to that level.

This is not a unique case. Of the seven recommendations for termination, five were settled before they reached hearing. A Board appointed hearing examiner heard two cases and the verdict was the same in both cases; return the teacher to the classroom. One case also resulted in no disciplinary action taken against the teacher. Anne Arundel County had more teachers recommended for termination by the Superintendent last year than any other county in Maryland!

One thing is clear; Dr. Smith has difficulty interpreting the contract (e.g. Healthcare provider and the word “concurrency”), and he also fails to understand the meaning of the provisions for termination of educators in COMAR. Case history and the COMAR provisions themselves dictate the parameters and circumstances under which a teacher can be terminated. Dr. Smith’s ignorance of laws and contractual language has frustrated and incensed many TAAAC members, but the significant emotional and mental trauma he has inflicted upon teachers recommended for termination (through his negligent actions) is immeasurable.

TAAAC will continue to be vigilant in applying its extensive case and grievance history, competent legal counsel and countless man-hours to the protection of its members when they are faced with the very real possibility of termination, warranted or not. It is important to understand that utilization of MSTA legal counsel through the appeal process is an extremely important benefit available to TAAAC members only. You must be a TAAAC member at the time of the alleged incident to be entitled to the TAAAC-assisted, free of charge legal appeal process. Joining TAAAC, after the accusation is made, provides no such benefit.

Make no mistake, frivolous and unfounded allegations against any Unit I employee can, and have, been used as a basis for a recommendation for termination. TAAAC has been successful in prevailing over every teacher termination hearing this past year. Every teacher recommended for termination last year never expected those charges to be filed, or their careers to suddenly be put at risk. Don’t be caught without this invaluable benefit in place before the unexpected occurs.

TAAAC recognizes its responsibility to adhere to and abide with the statutes of the law and contractual provisions concerning termination of teachers. Now, if we could only convince the Superintendent that he shares the same responsibility.

Are YOU Registered to Vote?
Call the TAAAC office for more information.

Two Petitions are Coming Your Way
1. Great Public Schools
2. Workforce Housing
Please sign
Welcome New Members

Robert B. Cameron  
Angela E. Carbone  
Samantha S. Carew-Zyree  
Nicole M. Carlson  
Rafael Ceja  
Stacey J. Chambers  
Kristy N. Chapple  
Barbara L. Chearney  
Meijiao S. Chen  
Gregory A. Christy  
Susan Chung  
Michele A. Churchill  
Brittany C. Clark  
Richard C. Clarke  
Heidi A. Clyborne  
Alicia M. Clift  
Michelle L. Colariec  
Mark L. Comly  
Amanda D. Contreras  
Audrey E. Coppersmith  
Patricia D. Cording  
Rosa M. Cordua  
Kristi L. Corey  
Meghan K. Creedon  
Constance F. Creveling  
Angela Cross  
Donnamaria Culbreth  
Jamie L. Culligan  
Kai N. Cunningham  
Lydia C. Cunningham  
Marcus A. D’arcangelis  
Charla J. Danforth  
Jacquelyn Davis  
Jennifer E. Davis  
Andrea L. Day-Swan  
Julie A. Dell’Aquilo  
Lele Demestithas  
Hanne L. Denney  
Jennifer Denny  
Maija L. Denson  
Kristi L. Dixon  
Mary L. Dobish  
Nicole M. Doepkens  
Laurel R. Doerfer  
Maria Dolan Barnes  
Jennifer N. Donnelly  
Beth A. Doolittle  
Stacy L. Doucette  
Henry N. Downs, Jr.  
Tammy L. Dronberger  
Nancy L. Drury  
Danielle I. Drzymala  
Kimberly A. Dufour  
Joan M. Duryee  
Kathleen G. Easterling  
Jennifer A. Eaton  
Amy R. Eddy  
Ernestine L. Edler  
Amanda J. Ellington  
Tamba N. Elliott  
Amanda K. Ellison  
Brian D. Ellison  
Laurie B. Ely  
Amanda M. Embury  
Ella S. Emerson  
Valerie E. English  
Mary E. Everett  
Victoria H. Fabinski  
Denise R. Faidley  
Donna M. Fava  
Christine G. Federroll  
Amy E. Fee  
Marlo A. Fellner  
Thomas K. Ferguson  
Stephanie A. Feuerherd  
Kimberly D. Flanagan  
Joanne M. Francis  
Mary E. Frank  
Michael L. Freitag  
Jennifer M. Fritz  
Theresa E. Fromm  
Veronica L. Ganzman  
Joanne M. Gardner  
Alisa B. Garrett  
Stephanie R. Gelabert  
Erin K. Geoghegan  
Lesa M. Ghrist  
Elizabeth S. Gillette  
Lindsay H. Glenn  
Susan A. Goodrich  
Lisa M. Graham  
Darryl W. Green  
Mary M. Green  
Pendeza S. Green

Luann Abraham  
Elizabeth R. Abrams  
Michael L. Adams  
James C. Agnew  
Emily J. Ahlstrom  
Amy M. Ale  
Travis J. Alexander  
Raquel Alvara  
Traci H. Anderson  
John J. Appelt  
Ty’nisha D. Armstrong  
Renee J. Austin  
Aubrey G. Baden, III  
Wendy S. Badwak  
Kim K. Baicar  
Miranda L. Baillie  
Janet L. Bane  
Dru G. Barisich  
Carolyn M. Barnett  
Michael T. Barnhart  
Gregory H. Baron  
Alyssa R. Bartha  
Keri E. Batcher  
Jennifer Bauer  
Laura L. Becksvoort  
Susan M. Beers  
Heather M. Behegan  
Mollie R. Belcher  
Patricia A. Bell  
Colleen R. Benda  
Anita F. Bennett  
Kristen R. Bennett  
Wendie G. Beser  
Tara C. Bittner  
Teresa L. Blount  
Jonathan P. Boehmer  
Matthew G. Braxton  
Kristin R. Breen  
Cynthia A. Breese  
Gayle Ann Bremer  
Susan C. Brisson  
Sheila M. Brooks  
Theresa M. Brown  
Christine E. Buck  
Denise A. Calabrese  
Beatrice M. Callis  
Margaret E. Calvert
Some people seem to sail through the “sea of life” on calm waters. A few gentle waves may sway the boat just bit, but the slight rocking motion is barely noticeable as they cruise on with an almost even keel. I am in awe of these people.

Others seem to navigate their lives through hurricanes, gale force winds, and typhoons. They encounter a tempest of problems, and each time they reach peaceful and tranquil port, some force pushes them back into the stormy waters. I am in the boat with these people.

This marks the 30th year that my family has been a part of the education system of Anne Arundel County. My three daughters graduated from Anne Arundel County Public Schools. During my many years, I have taught a variety of subjects for the school system. But no one has worked harder in our family, or been more dedicated to his school, than my husband, Rick. In addition to being a successful teacher, he has coached a range of sports including tennis, soccer, volleyball, and wrestling. He has always gone above and beyond the call of duty. He worked tirelessly with the ESOL students, by volunteering to teach their classes and serve as a mentor to them. I was aware of the many unpaid hours he gave to the school, the equipment he bought for students who didn’t have the money, and most of all his commitment, enthusiasm and devotion for his job. He was contentedly approaching the end of his teaching career with a sense of satisfaction about the job he had done.

In the wake of a tumultuous year at his high school, a year that divided the staff and created a storm of controversy, he indirectly became a part of a heartbreaking situation. Glancing briefly out of a second story window, and trying to lend a hand, resulted in an investigation of his own actions. When called to the Board of Education for a pre-disciplinary hearing, he was not worried because he had confidence that the truth would quickly end the investigation. Mike Carrington, from TAAAC went with him as an advisor, and for support. As a family, we waited calmly for the outcome of the hearing.

It was several weeks later, on a Friday evening, that a courier came to our door with a certified letter from the Superintendent. The letter terminated Rick from his teaching position. It was inconceivable. We were stunned. Our emotions ran from shock and disbelief to anger and despair. So many things ran through our minds. Our health insurance was now gone, as it was provided through Rick’s employment. I had a retina that was bleeding from cataract surgery, and a hole in my cheek from the piece of bone cut from my skull just the day before. My emotions were so overwhelming, and in spite of my attempts to remain strong and brave, I broke down, and I sobbed inconsolably. “How could this injustice have happened? How could a person who had given so much, for so many years, be treated this way? What would happen to us?”

Even though it was a Friday evening, we called TAAAC, hoping that someone might be there. We left a message on the answering machine. As luck would have it, our President, Sheila Finlayson, was working late, and within a few minutes she returned our call. She was supportive and compassionate, and at the same time very professional. She told us “TAAAC was there for us,” and immediately began working on our situation. MSTA was contacted, and a lawyer was on the phone discussing the case early that same evening. By Monday morning, an appeal had been filed, both Rick’s pay and health insurance were reinstated, and meetings with MSTA lawyers and TAAAC had occurred.

The case has dragged on for months. At each level, TAAAC and MSTA have won our case, and each time it has been decided in our favor. But each victory has been bittersweet. As we celebrate a favorable decision, and think that it is “finally over,” a courier arrives at the door with new charges, or the same charge, recycled. It seems implausible to everyone involved, that the charges are revisited and reinvented by the Superintendent.

(Continued on page 6)
With each turn in the road, TAAAC and MSTA take on the challenge to win our case again, and yet again, and to give advice, encouragement, and support along the way.

It is a very painful process to go through. Being wrongly accused of something, and treated unfairly, or being a target in a disturbing situation, wears you down. Our family has been held captive for many months. Our lives have been on hold. We have been on an emotional roller coaster, rejoicing at each favorable decision, only to plummet downward with each new charge. We were trapped in a limbo of uncertainty. Finally, on the last Friday of the summer break, Rick was given a teaching assignment for the following Monday, and had a new placement for the first teacher workday.

It is difficult to start over at a new assignment during your 30th year, but the teachers and other staff members at the new assignment have made Rick feel welcome at the school. Staff members from his former assignment, and from my current school, call often to offer encouragement, and we are grateful that Anne Arundel County has so many supportive people who we consider our true friends.

As individuals heard about the situation, and as the case dragged on and on, people often asked us, “What is TAAAC doing about it?” We heard this question so many times that I wanted to let people know just how much TAAAC and MSTA have done for us. From the first informal questions, through every meeting and formal hearing, TAAAC and MSTA were there, giving legal counsel and representing us in the most professional and proficient manner. With every appeal and charge, TAAAC and MSTA were there, defending us and working to challenge injustices. When couriers arrived at our door with those “distasteful” letters, TAAAC and MSTA were just a phone call away to address our concerns and dispute the charges. When we needed legal help, answers, expert representation, and compassionate support, TAAAC and MSTA were there. Through the most difficult months of our professional careers, TAAAC and MSTA were there for us.

Maybe you are one of those people who sails through the “sea of life” on calm waters. Maybe you never “rock the boat,” and maybe you will be able to deal with any “waves” that come your way. We have not been so fortunate. We never expected to sail into such a violent whirlwind, but sometimes hurricanes come up the East Coast, from the Carolinas and hit Maryland with devastating force. We had hoped for smooth sailing, but it was not to be.

Through the years, we have encountered both calm seas, as well as stormy waters in Anne Arundel County. During the tranquil times, TAAAC was there, negotiating our contracts and striving to improve our working conditions. During the stormy times TAAAC was there, providing legal help and assistance. I have not always agreed with TAAAC’s positions, but then, I have not always agreed with my husband, either. Of one thing I am sure, I cannot survive in education without the association.

One person told me that she wasn’t sure she if she should join TAAAC because “it was a lot of money,” and she wasn’t sure it she “could afford it.” Based on what happened to us, I can honestly say, we cannot afford to be without TAAAC and MSTA. As we sail into another uncertain year, we are hopeful we will encounter still waters. But if the “going gets rough” we know that both TAAAC and MSTA will there.

by Donna King
inspired by my husband, Rick King
(Rick no longer puts things in writing)

Special Thanks to:
Mike Carrington, TAAAC
Sheila Finlayson, TAAAC
Kristy Anderson, MSTA
Fight for Great Public Schools

In 2002, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, renamed “No Child Left Behind Act” (NCLB), was signed into law, mandating high stakes testing, forcing public school employees to teach to a test and wasting money on paperwork and bureaucracy instead of giving children what they really need: quality public school employees, smaller classes, safe schools and up-to-date materials and facilities in preparation for college and jobs of the future. The law failed to provide adequate funding to help students and schools improve.

To make matter worse, the administration’s budget calls for cuts in education across the board for the next five years – as well as cuts in children’s health care, nutrition programs, college grants and loans, and pre-school funding – impacting children’s health and their education in the classroom, and the daily lives of dedicated school employees.

Education, along with other domestic issues, is receiving little attention this election year due to international unrest. That puts the future of our nation at risk in ways America cannot afford.

The goal is ambitious: great public schools for every child. That goal can be accomplished but it will take everyone’s effort to make it happen. (5591)

Wednesday, September 22 was a beginning. Tens of thousands of teachers, parents, students, and others who are close to the classroom or care about education participated in nearly 4,000 “house parties” nationwide in a non-partisan, grassroots effort to elevate the issue of public education in the current policy debate.

Party participants pledged to sign petitions calling for increases in federal funding, call their members of Congress asking them to fully fund education and register to vote.

Petitions are available in every school so that we can do our share to send the message that education is a priority and must be fully funded.

Article taken from NEA Great Public Schools publication
Members Out and About…

The campaign season is upon us. While TAAAC does not use dues money to contribute to political campaigns, we do purchase tickets for the fundraisers of candidates using voluntary PAC donations. The TAAAC leadership and members have attended several fundraisers in the last month.

On a Friday in September Executive Director Bill Jones, Board members Ron Russell, Donzella Parker Bert, Carol Petrosky and Susie Jablinski, and members Anne Russell and Lou Czachor attended Senator Ed DeGrange, Sr.’s (R), District 32, Bull and Oyster Roast fundraiser.

On Sunday, September 19th, President Finlayson and Secretary Treasurer Kathy Naeseth attended John Leopold’s (R), District 31, fundraiser. While Delegate Leopold has not officially announced, it is a good deduction that he will be pursuing the seat of County Executive.

Natalie Brown, a one-time activist in TAAAC, has now moved to Carroll County because of the lack of affordable housing in Anne Arundel County, especially on a teacher’s salary. Natalie was a key speaker at the Work Force Housing Summit at the Baltimore Hyatt on September 21st and was also the guest speaker at 1st Baptist Church in Eastport earlier in the month, sharing our message of the need for work force housing in Anne Arundel County.

On September 22, when house parties were held all over the country, President Sheila M. Finlayson took the message to the Greater Odenton Improvement Association. While technical difficult made it impossible to share the video message, she did have an opportunity to put education on the table as an issue for the upcoming election. It happened to have been candidate night at the Association meeting.

Secretary Treasurer Kathy Naeseth held her house party at the regular meeting of the Democratic Party in District 30. A larger audience allowed her to spread the message to many more community leaders who, we hope, will continue to disseminate the information.

President Finlayson joined the MSTA leadership at the Maryland Democratic Party Annual Awards Dinner. Keynote speaker was John Sweeney, President AFL-CIO. Honorees included the Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, Belkis Leong-Hong and the Honorable Rev. Dr. Kerry A. Hill. (9022)

On the first day of autumn, the President, and member Cheryl Menke, joined with other Annapolis citizens in a Get-Out-The-Vote Rally at the Fleet Reserve. The event proved to be a huge success.

Busy month, and it’s only September!

The following schools are out of touch because there is NO Rep:

- Riva Road
- Brock Bridge Elementary
- Central Elementary
- Deale Elementary
- Germantown Elementary
- Hilltop Elementary
- Lake Shore Elementary
- Marley Elementary
- Mills-Parole Elementary
- Oakwood Elementary
- Richard Henry Lee Elementary
- Riviera Beach Elementary
- Severna Park Elementary
- Shipley’s Choice Elementary
- South Shore Elementary
- Bates Middle School
- George Fox Middle
- Marley Middle
- Meade Middle
- Meade Senior
- North County Senior
- Severna Park Senior
- Arlington Echo
- Infants and Toddlers Program
- J. Albert Adams Academy
- Marley Glen Special
- Mary E. Moss Academy
- Phoenix Annapolis
- Staff Development – Carver

Don’t be kept in the dark. Please call the office with the name of your Rep or Team of Reps so that your faculty can receive information and be aware of the issues at hand.
They would be unbound by the discounted rates negotiated by the carrier, whether it’s UHC or CareFirst. The promise constitutes a virtual blank check to doctors who treat AACPS employees who choose not to accept UHC.

At the same time in which UHC would be making a good faith effort to recruit physicians who treat AACPS employees into their network, the promise to hold employees harmless removes all incentives for current non-participating physicians to join UHC. By joining the network, they would have to accept the payment at the discounted rate paid by UHC as they do now with CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield. Now, by refusing to join, those same physicians can keep their current AACPS patients, thumb their noses at UHC and charge whatever rate they please, at the expense of the school system. The necessary expansion of the UHC network will have been stifled badly through no fault of theirs, prolonging the payment of higher claims costs.

Finally, and less directly related to claims expenses, is that the employee continuing with out-of-network treatment would suffer certain inconveniences. After all, it is quite unlikely that every non-participating doctor treating AACPS employees would voluntarily agree to accept only the $15 copay, bill the AACPS for the balance, and then wait for payment. Much more likely is that the AACPS employee would have to pay the fee for service in its entirety, apply to the AACPS for reimbursement, then hope that the reimbursement comes in a timely manner and in the correct amount. As the old but accurate adage warns us, “the devil’s in the details.”

Will the debated change in Preferred Provider Network bring known and certain healthcare savings? The answer is a resounding “NO.” Until there is a clear explanation of how the Superintendent’s hold harmless promise will be administered, and until an objective estimate of its impact on claims expenses is made, there is no way to tell. Those who so confidently tout healthcare savings as known and certain either see only half of the equation, or share the same very valuable crystal ball.

Stay tuned, updates will continue.

You may have won $10.00! Have you spotted the last four digits of your phone number?
Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County
2521 Riva Road, Suite L7 • Annapolis, MD 21401
410/841-6022, 410/224-5530 or 501/261-8309 • Fax 410/841-8117
2004-2005 ENROLLMENT FORM

New! Fast! Easy! Sign up online! Pay by credit card! Visit www.mstanea.org FREE! Dues-TAB insurance! See attached registration.

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Check your salary level for dues computation:
☐ Over $32,104 ☐ $16,052 - $32,104 ☐ Below $16,052

Check one:
☐ Full-time ☐ Part-time ☐ 10ths

Method of payments:
☐ Payroll deduction (See below, sign and date.) ☐ Cash / Check ☐ 10 Month ☐ 12 Month

Payroll Deduction Authorization

I authorize the Board of Education to deduct from my salary bi-weekly payments for membership dues as indicated hereon. I understand that such deductions shall continue from year to year for the dues set annually unless I rescind such authorization in writing to TAAAC over my original signature in accordance with local by-laws between August 15 and September 1.

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Dues payments are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Dues payments (or a portion) may be deducted as a miscellaneous itemized deduction. Annual membership dues to the NEA includes $4.55 for NEA Today, $2.50 for NEA-Retired and/or $17.00 for the Higher Education publications. The NEA publication(s) received by members are based on membership category. Annual membership dues to the MSTAA includes $8.10 for the MSTAA Action Line.

PLEASE RETURN WHITE, CANARY AND PINK COPIES TO YOUR LOCAL • RETAIN THE GOLD COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS

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