



Delegates at 2016 MEA-MFT rep. assembly

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MEA-MFTtoday

A publication for members of MEA-MFT

'WE are the power of this union!'

"Fired up, ready to go."

"Feeling inspired and honored."

"What an experience!"

That's how some delegates described the 2016 MEA-MFT representative assembly (RA), held April 1-2 in Helena.

This year's RA was one of the biggest ever, with around 340 delegates gathering from all across Montana. It also had the biggest group of first-time delegates in recent history.

"We're developing a deep bench of heavy-hitters," noted board member Amanda Curtis of Butte,

MEA-MFT's NEA director.

MEA-MFT's local affiliates elect delegates to attend RA each year to represent their fellow local members and conduct the business of our union. It's democracy in action. Here are some highlights of RA 2016:

Mission: Delegates voted to replace MEA-MFT's lengthy mission statement with a single sentence: "MEA-MFT is a union of professionals advocating for our members, the communities we serve, and the people of Montana."

Business: Delegates debated and passed dues and a budget for MEA-MFT. They also voted to explore merging with the Montana Public Employees Association.

Board restructure: After a spirited debate and roll call vote, delegates voted to restructure MEA-MFT's districts and board of directors. (Details on pages 2 and 11.)

Elections: Delegates re-elected Eric Feaver as president and Melanie Charlson as vice president. Amanda Curtis continues as NEA director.

With Rich Aarstad stepping down as secretary-treasurer, delegates elected Kevin Bock to replace him.

They also re-elected Matt Bell as director-at-large and elected Ashley Johnson as state delegate to the NEA representative assembly in July. Student delegates elected McKenzie Bradley to represent them



Ashley Johnson of Butte explains how to use the representative assembly Twitter hashtag (#MTra16) on Facebook.

at the NEA RA.

Once the new board and district restructure passed, delegates caucused in their new districts to nominate and elect a new slate of district chairs and vice chairs. District chairs, along with state officers and the director-at-large, make up MEA-MFT's board of directors.

Celebrations & calls to action:

RA delegates honored the 2016 Members of the Year (page 3) and celebrated the demise of the notorious *Friedrichs* lawsuit that would have crippled public employee unions nationwide.

Read more about RA throughout this issue. 🗨️



Meet our Members of the Year and Hall of Fame inductees!

pp. 3 & 6

Our Point of View

BY ERIC FEAVER
MEA-MFT PRESIDENT



Rebuilding for now and down the road

Blowing up the board

Early in April, 340 MEA-MFT member/leaders from bargaining units all over Montana gathered together in Helena for our annual representative assembly and blew up the board of directors.

It was a dramatic moment in our evolving union history, the most dramatic moment since the former Montana Education Association and Montana Federation of Teachers merged 16 years ago and became MEA-MFT.

When we merged, we married two different boards of directors.

That worked. Appropriate for the moment. But as our merged union grew, the board grew, and, perhaps unexpectedly, as it grew larger it became less interactive. More directors did not mean more individual voice, more engagement, more ownership in our union, what we do and why.

Further, as our board grew larger, so did its costs.

Over the last several years, MEA-MFT has done what good governments do – worked to live within our means. We know our members are not overcompensated for what they do. And like taxes, dues matter. In

this context, we have reduced staff, staff costs, and office overhead. We have cut back the number of delegates we send to conventions of our two national affiliates. We have stopped killing thousands of trees and embraced electronic means of communication and information sharing. We are doing what it takes to devote our members' dues dollars to quality programs and services, from professional development to organizing to collective bargaining to leadership training to legislative lobbying to days in court defending member rights and core values. We must prove again and again that MEA-MFT is worth every dues penny our members pay.

So, now we have a board of 22: 17 districts, one director at large, and four officers, down from a board of 34 with more directors sure to come if our representative assembly had not blown the old board up.

Along with our officers our entire new board is elected at and accountable to our representative assembly. This is huge. With one unavoidable exception, large local affiliates, be they in one community or statewide, will no longer decide all by themselves who will serve on our board of directors.

Yes, for sure, leaders on our new board of directors will face intended and unintended challenges exploring ways to best represent our mem-

bers and local affiliates. But leaner, meaner, and more focused, our new board will confidently learn how to keep MEA-MFT at the forefront of the Montana labor movement and a bright, shining star among state affiliates in NEA and AFT.

MPEA merger?

But blowing up the board was not the only big event at our April representative assembly.

By unanimous vote, delegates adopted New Business Item #2:

At the direction of the president, over the next year, MEA-MFT shall explore piecemeal or full merger opportunities with the Montana Public Employees Association (MPEA). The president shall report outcomes to the 2017 MEA-MFT RA.

This is the first time ever an MEA-MFT governing body has directly declared support for launching merger discussions with MPEA.

MEA-MFT and MPEA have worked together for years bargaining the state employee pay plan, defending public employee defined benefit retirement, opposing so-called "right-to-work," and growing the AFL-CIO. All good.

For years we have adhered to one memorandum of understanding after another pledging interest in each other's well-being and suggesting if not promising that an MEA-MFT/MPEA merger would be a good thing, if and when, for our two unions, the AFL-CIO, and the Montana labor movement.

We shall now see if that time is all "if" or just a matter of "when."

If "when" is to come, yet another dramatic moment in the evolving history of our GREAT union.

And whereas blowing up our old board of directors had to be done regardless, our new board is far better constituted to contemplate the possibility of an MPEA merger. ●



Eric Feaver presents representatives of the Montana Federation of Historical Society Workers with their Public Employee Members of the Year plaque. For the first time, the honor went to an entire local.

Celebrating our Members of the Year

Every year, MEA-MFT honors several members who are champions at their jobs and in their local unions. We celebrated the 2016 Members of the Year April 1, honoring the following awardees:

Sue Stewart, Education Support Professional of the Year: "Super Sue" is what they call her at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB). For 25 years, paraeducator and media clerk Sue Stewart has devoted her life to helping students with visual impairments live independent, happy lives.

A typical day could find Stewart helping a five-year-old learn beginning braille, teaching kids to swim, showing students how to navigate with a white cane, and job-coaching a high school student.

That's just for starters. After hours, Stewart coaches goalball, sponsors Cane Club, and co-directs the

school's Visually Impaired Performers and the statewide Games for the Visually Impaired.

Stewart is one of just five people in Montana certified as a braille transcriptionist, translating documents into braille. As MSDB's media clerk, she helps educators across Montana get materials for students with visual impairments.

"Ask her to take care of something and you never have to think about it again," said MSDB retired teacher Pam Boespflug, introducing Stewart at the celebration. "Ask her to do something really difficult that she has never done before and she replies, 'No problem.'"

Montana Federation of Historical Society Workers, Public Employee Members of the Year: They're a small local, about 30 members, but they're mighty. And if life is all about showing up, then MEA-MFT members at the Montana Historical Society (MHS) are living large.

Case in point: During the last two legislative sessions, MHS members took the lead in fighting for the state employee pay plan.



"Super Sue" Stewart, ESP of the Year, center, with MSDB friends.



Phil Condon, Faculty Member of the Year, speaks at the celebration.

Day after day, week after week, they gave up their lunch hour to stand in the halls of the legislature, talking to legislators and holding signs in support of the pay plan, House Bill 13. They did it for all state
(Continued on p. 12)

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Faces and voices at rep. assembly '16

MEA-MFT's annual representative assembly (RA) is part family reunion, part business, and all member-driven. Here are just a few of the comments from delegates and others at RA 2016:

Alice Robertson, student delegate from the University of Montana: "We feel very welcomed and valued, and I think we have a strong future at MEA-MFT." (This year's RA had one of largest student delegations ever.)

Melissa Romano, MEA-MFT member and candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction: "I am a Montanan, a mother, a proud union member, and a teacher. In fact, I am still teaching full time through the end of the year while I continue campaigning."

Erik Burke, MEA-MFT executive director: "This is one of the biggest RAs ever, following one of our



Erin Nevers of Clinton rings delegates into session. Marita Combs photo

biggest Educators' Conferences ever. We have gained strength through our diversity. We have some incredible heroes in this room."

Rich Aarstad, outgoing secretary-treasurer of MEA-MFT: "Stepping up is a good thing."

#Mtra16

In a flurry of social media activity, dozens of RA delegates posted and tweeted at #Mtra16 during RA. Here are some samples:

Erin M. Farrell: "Feeling inspired and honored to take part in this important work!"

Luci McCausland: "Proud to be representing Bozeman at the annual MEA-MFT rep. assembly."

Sara Hull: "Saying YES and doing the work that matters with my @MEA_MFT brothers and sisters!"

Michael Touchette: "2 candidates for Superintendent of Public Instruction. 1 endorsed by MEA-MFT. This

is a no-brainer."

Tara Hirsch: "When President Feaver calls on you, say YES!"

Alice Robertson: "I just swore my soul away to Membership Man under threat of alien abduction!"

Lisa Pickens: "Fired up and ready to go."

Anne Keith: "WE are the power of this Union!"

Ashley Winchell: "What an experience!"

Megan Simons: "I'm heading home from Helena where I was proud to serve as a delegate for the MEA-MFT representative assembly. As a classified employee and newly appointed treasurer for my local, I was impressed to see the camaraderie and solidarity that was demonstrated and projected by all."

Rita Wells: "The future of Montana, its schools, and its jobs depends on MEA-MFT. Support it – start by having a voice locally." 🗣️



Helena Education Association delegates applaud Governor Steve Bullock.



RA delegates give a standing ovation to Melissa Romano, candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction. Marita Combs photo



Melissa Romano, candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction, addresses delegates.



Butte Teachers Union delegates.



State employee delegates, with Federation of Probation and Parole members front & center.



MEA-MFT student delegates.



Federation of Montana State Prison Employees delegates.

MEA-MFT HALL OF FAME!

Sick leave, retirement benefits, a voice on the job – we take them for granted sometimes.

But rights like these didn't come free, and they sure weren't bestowed on us by management. They were hard won by MEA-MFT's trailblazers and pioneers.

MEA-MFT celebrated three of these pioneers March 31, inducting them into the MEA-MFT Hall of Fame.

Patty Myers of Great Falls said her union activism began when the Great Falls school district tried to close the neighborhood school in Black Eagle.

"I didn't know a second-year, non-tenured teacher wasn't supposed to get involved in school affairs," she recalled. So she spoke up at a town meeting and was "hooked."

Myers went on to union leadership roles at the local, state, and national levels. Along the way, she was named Montana Teacher of the Year and chaired the Montana Board of Public Education.

She helped lead the charge when the Montana Education Associa-

"My union & yours, MEA-MFT, has taken the lead in fighting for working families, children, the middle class, and everything that makes Montana our home."

NANCY KEENAN



Patty Myers and Joe Brookshier celebrate at the Hall of Fame event March 31.

tion became MEA-MFT, "the largest public employee group in Montana, working for Montana's people and the middle class," she said.

Joe Brookshier of Billings has been an MEA-MFT member for 55 years, starting as a junior in college. He has been a leader in the union all of those years.

"Joe has a passion for the union and for the profession," said Garth Cox, introducing Brookshier at the celebration. After serving eight years on the MEA-MFT board as an active member, he was the driving force that got MEA-MFT Retired going and strong. "Joe always has membership forms with him," Cox said.

"It's humbling to find yourself the third best teacher in the family," Brookshier quipped, referring to his wife and daughter, both teachers.

Anaconda native **Nancy Keenan** served three terms as Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction, where she earned fame as a powerful advocate for better funding, higher standards, and technology in Montana's schools.

"Two core values have informed my life: education and the union



Nancy Keenan speaks to the Hall of Fame celebration crowd via video.

movement," Keenan said. "My dad was a boilermaker at the smelter, and my mom was a union clerk. I got my first union card when I was 16, working at the state hospital. I worked my way through college shoveling ore at the smelter. When I returned to Anaconda to teach, I became a member of the old Anaconda Teachers Union, AFL-CIO."

Keenan continued, "I am proud that my union and yours, MEA-MFT, has taken the lead in fighting for working families, children, the middle class, and everything that makes Montana our home."



Quantum leaps for GEO members

They're on a roll, the graduate employees at Montana State University.

Six years ago, they voted to form a local union and affiliate with MEA-MFT. Their union, the Graduate Employees Organization (GEO), started off with 40 members.

Today, thanks to a team of GEO leaders and with help from MEA-MFT, membership has grown to more than 600.

GEO consists of teaching assistants and research assistants. Teaching assistants work as tutors, graders, lab instructors, and teachers of record. Nellie Ciesielski, a teaching assistant in the math department and GEO president, estimates that

graduate employees lead at least 500 courses at MSU.

Research assistants work alongside MSU's top professors on projects that bring in around 100 million research dollars each year to the university. They also write grants, mentor undergraduate research, volunteer with research fairs, and act as emissaries for MSU research by presenting at conferences around the U.S. and the world.

Yet for many years, MSU considered graduate employees to be just students, not employees.

Compensation was often low and widely disparate between different departments. Some graduate employees were paid less than the minimum wage. Many had no benefits and no grievance procedures if they had problems with their employers.

Plus, graduate employees often felt their contributions were going unnoticed by the university.

These factors drove graduate employees to form GEO. Their first

contract, completed in 2014, was a crucial first step in giving them a voice in their working conditions and beginning to address compensation inequities.

The local has made steady progress since then. "GEO has increased membership, organized department stewards and a steward council, put together a communications plan, organized socials, and inspired members to get involved," said MEA-MFT Field Consultant Tammy Pilcher.

GEO recently bargained its second contract, including a \$130 "stipend augmentation" over the next three years.

It's a small but important step in the right direction. Right now, with their modest paychecks and the high cost of housing in Bozeman, graduate employees can easily spend half their stipend on rent, with little left over for fees, health care, and food, Ciesielski said.

There's a lot of work ahead. GEO members are on the case. 🗨️

GEO delegates participate in the higher ed caucus at the 2016 MEA-MFT rep. assembly. From left: GEO members Anna Zelaya, Hannah Schweitzer, Nellie Ciesielski, Mike Coryell, Jim Junker, Eric Dunham; along with Francisco Saldivar, instructor at MSU Billings City College.

Marita Combs photo





MEA-MFT members speak out for Melissa Romano

Writing letters to the editor. Calling fellow members. Sending a check. Hosting or attending a fundraiser. Talking to friends, family & fellow members. Voting.

These are a few of the ways MEA-MFT members are stepping up to support fellow MEA-MFT member and award-winning Helena teacher Melissa Romano for Superintendent of Public Instruction.

"Elections affect my life, my family, and the lives of the children I teach. That's why I'm supporting Melissa Romano," said MEA-MFT member Rachel Schillreff of Billings.

"I was excited that we called fellow members about Melissa from the floor of MEA-MFT RA this spring, and I'm looking forward to doing more calls this summer. I've found our members want to hear from their union about which candidates stand up for our values."

MEA-MFT Political Director Terry Minow said phone calls are an effective

way to get the word out about good candidates.

"That's why we have the ambitious goal of calling every MEA-MFT member, all 18,000 of them, by the end of summer to ask their support for Melissa Romano," she said. "Melissa is a great candidate, but she's never run for office before, so a lot of Montanans don't know her. Our members are trusted messengers in their communities. When MEA-MFT members speak, people listen."

Inspired to help? Contact Terry Minow at 406.442.4250 or tminow@mea-mft.org.

Phone ringing? Take the call! If your caller ID shows MEA-MFT is calling, please take the call. The person on the other end of the line is most likely a fellow member, a volunteer calling in support of Melissa Romano for Superintendent of Public Instruction.

MEA-MFT volunteers are friendly, quick, and to the point. They ask if



Melissa Romano for Superintendent of Public Instruction

- ✓ Award-winning teacher.
- ✓ One of us: MEA-MFT member.
- ✓ Devoted to our students, quality education, public schools.

you know Melissa Romano is running, if you support her, and if you have time to help her get elected. If she is coming to your town, they'll tell you about that, too.

Make their day, say YES, and thank them for calling! ☎

Calling for Melissa: MEA-MFT delegates called nearly 2,000 fellow members from the floor of rep. assembly in April, encouraging them to vote for Melissa Romano. That's just the beginning. You can help!



Why Steve Bullock deserves your support and your vote

MEA-MFT strongly recommends Governor Steve Bullock for re-election. Under his leadership over the last four years, Montana has seen:

- Unprecedented state investments in public education.
- Saving and funding the TRS and PERS pension plans.
- Two consecutive state employee pay plan increases.
- Significant pay increases for front line correctional and probation and parole officers.
- Medicaid Expansion to provide health care for working low-income Montanans.
- Major efforts to provide state funding for early childhood education and an infrastructure bill good for all Montana. He has not given up on either of these agenda items.
- Absolutely necessary vetoes of two public school privatization bills and a number of tax-cutting proposals that would devastate funding for public services and education.

In addition, Bullock is the only governor in America to side with the public unions of America by writing an amicus on our behalf in *Friedrichs v. CTA*, the right-wing-funded court case that sought to cripple public employee unions.

In contrast to Bullock's record of achievement, his opponent, Greg Gianforte, does not support issues important to MEA-MFT members.

Gianforte famously said that retirement is not "biblical," pointing out that Moses was still working at the age of 600 and implying that Montanans don't need to retire.



MEA-MFT rep. assembly delegates show their support for Gov. Steve Bullock.



Gov. Bullock addresses rep. assembly.

Gianforte sued to block public access to public land. He supports schemes to turn federal land over to the state that will lead to selling off public land Montanans rely on for fishing, hunting, and recreating.

Gianforte funds the Montana Family Foundation, the group leading the push for privatization of Montana's public schools.

MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver said, "We believe if Greg Gianforte is elected, we will soon look like Wis-

consin. For sure, we will not enjoy a governor dedicated to quality public education, state employees, and organized labor like Steve Bullock is."

The choice is very clear: A vote for Steve Bullock is a vote for a leader who is on our side, a governor who will work for quality public education and quality public services for all Montanans. 🗳️

Candidate endorsements

The following candidates for statewide office have been interviewed, and their records and public statements have been carefully reviewed. MEA-MFT proudly presents the endorsed statewide candidates:

- Governor:** Steve Bullock
Superintendent of Public Instruction: Melissa Romano
U.S. Congress: Denise Juneau
Attorney General: Tim Fox
State Auditor: Jesse Laslovich
Secretary of State: Monica Lindeen
Supreme Court Chief Justice: Mike McGrath
Supreme Court Justice: Dirk Sandefur and Jim Shea

SB 410: what next?

Public schools are the people's schools. They are governed by "we the people." They give all children a chance to succeed. They form the foundation of our democracy. Privatizing schools would seriously erode our democracy.

That's why MEA-MFT has always opposed efforts to divert public taxpayer funds to private, sectarian schools. We had won this battle every legislative session for decades, against all odds.

But the 2015 Montana legislature passed Senate Bill 410, a bill giving tax credits to those who contribute

to "scholarship" organizations that give money to private schools and to public school innovations. And the battle has moved to a new front.

SB 410 says the state must adhere to the Montana constitution. Montana's constitution specifically prohibits the state from making direct or indirect appropriations (payments) of public funds to support sectarian (religious) schools. It's all about protecting the separation of church and state.

So when the Montana Department of Revenue (DOR), the agency charged with implementing SB 410, drew up the rules for SB 410, it correctly ruled that the bill cannot apply to religious schools.

That's when out-of-state right-

wing organizations moved in. Two groups with ties to the billionaire Koch brothers of Kansas-based Koch Industries have been working to overturn the DOR's ruling.

The Virginia-based Institute for Justice is representing three Montana women who sued DOR in Flathead County district court. All three send their children to Stillwater Christian School in Kalispell.

The California-based Pacific Legal Foundation is representing a Missoula family who sued DOR in federal district court. The family's son attends Valley Christian School in Missoula.

This spring, a Flathead County district court judge found in favor of the

Continued on p. 11



The poster features a large white golf ball on a tee, set against a blue sky with clouds. The golf ball has a red apple logo with the text "Montana Professional Teaching Foundation" around it. Below the ball is a green golf course with a hole. The text on the poster includes the event name, date, location, and a list of fundraising programs.

**MONTANA PROFESSIONAL
TEACHING FOUNDATION**

12th Annual

GOLF CLASSIC

July 28, 2016
Fairmont Hot Springs Resort, Anaconda

Fundraiser for the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation's programs:

- Montana Teacher of the Year
- Karen Cox Memorial Grants
- National Board Certification
- Presidential Awards for Math & Science
- Jim McGarvey Scholarships

**CONTESTS
RAFFLES
PRIZES
BUFFET**

Register online: bit.ly/1LVAQIC
Or email Cathy Novak:
cnovak@mea-mft.org

More info: Cathy Novak, 447.1479, cnovak@mea-mft.org

New MEA-MFT board structure

The 2016 MEA-MFT representative assembly voted to adopt the following new structure for the MEA-MFT board of directors. Board members were elected at representative assembly by local delegates.

Nine geographic preK-12 districts including all certified teachers and Head Start employees:

DIST.#	COUNTIES	CHAIR
1	Flathead, Lincoln, Lake, Sanders	Gene Marcille , Columbia Falls
2	Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli, Granite	Janice Muller , Hamilton
3	Lewis and Clark, Powell, Deer Lodge, Silver Bow, Jefferson, Beaverhead	Jeff Cowee , Helena
4	Broadwater, Madison, Meagher, Gallatin, Park, Wheatland, Sw. Grass	Kathy Rutherford , Bozeman
5	Cascade, Pondera, Judith Basin, Teton, Glacier, Toole	Shelli Lavinder-Schwalk , Gt. Falls
6	Liberty, Hill, Chouteau, Fergus, Petroleum, Blaine, Phillips	Wendy Plumage-Maratita , Harlem
7	Valley, McCone, Daniels, Sheridan, Prairie, Roosevelt, Richland, Dawson, Wibaux	Laurie Enebo , Glasgow
8	Carter, Fallon, Custer, Powder River, Rosebud, Treasure, Big Horn, Garfield	Jesse Barnhart , Broadus
9	Yellowstone, Stillwater, Musselshell, Golden Valley, Carbon	Rita Wells , Billings

Eight statewide districts:

DIST.#	MEMBER GROUP	CHAIR
10	PreK-higher education classifieds	Scott Proctor , Billings
11	Coalition of University Faculty	Glen Southergill , Butte
12	Dept. of Revenue	Valerie Clague , Helena
13	Public Health & Human Services (MT Fed. of Health Care Employees, MT Developmental Center, MT Veterans Home, Warm Springs, Fed. of Licensed Addiction Counselors, Butte Fed. of LPNs, DPHHS)	Julianna Crowley , Missoula
14	Dept. of Corrections (Probation & Parole, State Prison, Riverside, Pine Hills, Women's Prison)	Tom Fulton , Miles City
15	Miscellaneous state employees (MT Historical Society; MT School for the Deaf & Blind; Youth Challenge; Fish, Wildlife & Parks)	Rich Aarstad , East Helena
16	City/county employees	Josh Racki , Great Falls
17	MEA-MFT Retired	Ron Kimmert , Bozeman

One director-at-large:

Matt Bell, Missoula

Four state officers:

President	Eric Feaver , Helena
Vice President	Melanie Charlson , Missoula
Secretary-Treasurer	Kevin Bock , Helena
NEA Director	Amanda Curtis , Butte

SB 410

From p. 10

religious school parents. (*Espinoza v. Montana Dept. of Revenue*)

"We believe the judge's decision is in error, incomplete, and immediately appealable," said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver.

"The State of Montana will appeal. The state knows the Department of Revenue's rules are in concert with SB 410 and the Montana constitution. But better yet, the Montana Quality Education Coalition (MQEC) has agreed to defend our constitution."

MQEC, a broad-based coalition of groups that support public schools, including MEA-MFT, the Montana School Boards Association, School Administrators of Montana, and others, is the group that successfully litigated for adequate school funding in 2003.

"MQEC has engaged legal counsel and filed for intervenor status in *Espinoza*," Feaver said. "Montana's entire education community is ready to defend public schools and the state constitution."

At issue is whether a tax credit is an appropriation (payment) of money. "We believe under our constitution, the answer is yes," Feaver said. "It's public money that otherwise would have gone into Montana's general fund. If you take that money out of the general fund, you take it away from public schools and other public services."

The amount of money in question may seem minor now: Under SB 410, the total tax credit program is capped at \$3 million for the first year, and an individual donation to "scholarship" organizations is limited to \$150.

But the group that backed SB 410, the Montana Family Foundation, has

Continued on p. 12

MEA-MFT Members of the Year

(From p. 3)

employees. "Without their efforts, state employees wouldn't have seen a pay raise last session," said MEA-MFT Field Consultant Larry Nielsen. "They showed how to organize, be effective, and have fun with it."

Christy Eckerle, president of the MHS local, accepted the award at the celebration.

"We are all so different in age, in experience, in political views," she said, "Republican, Democrat, and yes, there are even some creationists among us. I thank you for allowing our differences to make us strong. I thank God, who is the architect of justice and compassion, the ideals that we stand for in our union."

Phil Condon, Faculty Member of the Year: Phil Condon teaches environmental and nature writing at the University of Montana, where he directs the Environmental Studies department. He is also a former brick worker and member of the Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen union. Before that, he worked in a packing house in Omaha as a member of the meat packers union.

"It was dangerous work," Condon said. "I learned the union steward was the one you talked to if something seemed unsafe."

In his current local union, the University Faculty Association, Condon has "served non-stop on the UFA board," said Dave Shively, outgo-



Montana Federation of Historical Society Workers, Phil Condon, and Sue Stewart are honored as MEA-MFT's 2016 Members of the Year.

ing president of UFA, introducing Condon at the Members of the Year celebration.

Condon has served as acting president, leading his local through a difficult time of transition, and chief negotiator and vice president for UFA. One of his main interests is collaboration between blue collar workers and conservationists.

"The right wing tries to divide us," he said. "But we really can have good jobs, good pay, and a good, clean, healthy environment."

Congratulations to all our MEA-MFT Members of the Year! 🗣️

SB 410

From p. 11
already said it will try to increase the donation limit to \$300 or more in the 2017 legislative session.

Feaver pointed to Arizona, which created the first such tax credit 18 years ago. "Arizona's tax credit started with an estimated impact of \$4.5 million each year," he said. "Now it tops \$200 million annually."

"The same could happen in Montana. If we can't kill this beast, it'll just grow. SB 410 is a clear danger to funding not just for public schools but all state services." 🗣️