



**What should we call
this newsletter?** See Page 6

MFPE.org



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MFPE EDUCATOR CONFERENCE DRAWS PRAISE AND RECOGNITION

The MFPE Educator Conference is the largest and most attended event of its kind in the northern Rocky Mountains. Its reputation for excellence is making its way around the country to people like Drey Martone. Martone is a professor in Albany, New York with a doctorate in Elementary Education. "I researched conferences and this one looked excellent," Martone said of the MFPE Educator Conference. Martone hopped on a plane and came out to Big Sky Country to take part in this year's conference.

Martone said she was excited to share her expertise and to learn from others, as well. "We recently developed a STEM unit we've been using in schools to see how we can use straw rocket to teach engineering concepts while integrating English Language Arts. I was excited to share that work with the teachers in Montana and then attend many other sessions. I went to back to back sessions both days and learned so much!"

Martone said that she plans on coming back next year, because there's nothing like the MFPE Educator Conference offered back home in New York.

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STATE EMPLOYEE PRE-BUDGET AGREEMENT REACHED, MEMBER INVOLVEMENT NEEDED

After months of negotiations, MFPE has reached a pre-budget agreement with the Governor's office regarding Montana state employees. Prior to beginning negotiations, the MFPE bargaining team sent a survey to state employees asking them to identify what issues were most important to members. After receiving an unprecedented level of input, the MFPE bargaining team focused on raises, state contributions to health insurance, holidays, overtime pay, and government accountability. The MFPE bargaining team was made up of a diverse group of public employee members, including for the first time representatives from our Montana University System classified and faculty bargaining units.

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CURTIS RE-ELECTED, SOUTHERGILL ELECTED TO MFPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



MFPE 2nd Vice President Amanda Curtis and NEA Director Glen Southergill

On Friday November 16th, the MFPE Board of Directors elected Amanda Curtis and Glen Southergill to serve out unexpired terms as MFPE's 2nd Vice President and NEA Director respectively. Curtis previously served as MFPE's NEA Director, but she resigned the position following her election as 2nd Vice President. Curtis ran unopposed while two members were nominated for the position of NEA Director: Southergill and Lynn Ogden Rider.

"It's an honor to serve my brothers and sisters as 2nd Vice President," said Curtis after her election to the MFPE Board of Directors. "I look forward to working together to build our membership, continue our services, protect our interests in the Legislature, and grow the Montana labor movement. I'm ready to get to work!"

"As NEA Director, I am honored to serve all of our members and the vital work that they do every day, when they and their families succeed, our communities and great state thrive," said Southergill. "Together, in solidarity, we will work to realize the values held dear in our Union's mission: fairness, democracy, economic opportunity, and high-quality public services."

The MFPE Board of Directors reflects MFPE's diverse membership. 1st Vice President Bill Dwyer is a classified employee at U of M Western; 2nd Vice President Amanda Curtis is a teacher in the Butte school district; Treasurer Rich Aarstad is an archivist with the Montana Historical Society; and NEA Director Glen Southergill is a faculty member at the Montana University of Technology.



PREPARING FOR THE 2019 MONTANA LEGISLATURE

Now that the elections are over, MFPE is working to inform new and continuing legislators where we stand on issues that affect our members. Our lobbying team for the 2019 Legislative Session consists of President Eric Feaver, Executive Director Erik Burke, Deputy Executive Director Quint Nyman, Political Director Lauren Caldwell, Public Policy Director Marco Ferro, Research Director Diane Fladmo, Director of Communications Bob Funk, Field Consultant Larry Nielsen, Director of Organizing Morgan Smith, and you!

The involvement of MFPE members during the legislative session is essential to our success. When members engage, elected officials listen. Throughout the session we will need you to send emails and letters and make phone calls so that the legislature knows that Montanans back our pro-public employee agenda. Here are a few ways to get engaged:

- *Join President Feaver's email list by emailing him at efeaver@mfpe.org*
- *Sign up and get involved at mfpe.org/get-involved*
- *Follow us on Facebook for important updates: facebook.com/MFPE.org*

LOOKING BACK ON THE 2018 ELECTION

It's a fact of life that every decision that affects us as public employees is a political decision. That's why MFPE has a comprehensive program to ensure our members' voices are heard in political decisions at all levels—local, state, and national. We help elect candidates who support you and the important work you do.

MFPE - A NEW YEAR

By President Eric Feaver

You know, MFPE is now four months old! Whoa. Think about that for a moment. Yet we can trace our great new union continuously back to 1882. 136 years ago, frontier foremothers and fathers cobbled together the precursor to our union and helped build this state for generations thereafter including our own. So new or not as MFPE may be we will continue to help build this state for generations to come.



MFPE President Eric Feaver

MFPE owns a special belief and mission. We believe every member, no matter what we do or where we work is a member of equal value; that all members drink from the same taxpayer well; that no vital public institutional responsibility, be it local or state government, education, law enforcement, or health care should be expended for another. We believe our public institutions and our members must work together for the common good.

MFPE is unique in the NEA and AFT families. As such we are a model for our national and sister state affiliates. "Get it together NEA and AFT. Your cultural standoff with each other serves no useful purpose. Watch us, right here in Montana. We are the future for those who work in our public institutions across our state and someday, our nation."

Oh, but there are weak kneed doubters and naysayers, including post Janus hostiles, who would kill us outright. Ignore them. Stand with us folks. Have faith. MFPE is here to stay as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow. And as we shed old skin and grow new, we will progress stronger and more resolute for our members, the work we do, and the state and communities in which we live.

A new MFPE year is upon us. Challenging . . . but it will be good.

MEMBERSHIP DOESN'T COST, MFPE MEMBERSHIP PAYS!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- High-quality statewide and local conferences and workshops on a wide variety of timely topics designed to help you in your career.
- Leadership at local, state, and national levels that promotes high standards of excellence in public education and public service.
- Publications and research to keep you informed on professional issues in your field.
- Leadership training.

SECURING PROFESSIONAL WAGES AND BENEFITS

- Professional, experienced MFPE staff to assist in collective bargaining for salaries and benefits that honor the important work you do.

PROTECTING YOU, YOUR CAREER, YOUR FAMILY

- MFPE staff help members resolve work-related problems related to contract violations, working conditions, discipline, evaluation, and termination.
- Assistance to local units in negotiating and maintaining contracts that protect members' rights, working conditions, and salaries.
- Low-cost, high-quality insurance to help you protect yourself, your family, home, and valuables.

YOUR VOICE IN ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOU

- Year-round advocacy for members in policy decisions that affect you, your job, and your retirement.

BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Year-round efforts to showcase the important, high-quality work our members do through advertising, presentations, and news articles.

OTHER MEMBER SERVICES

- Special discounts designed to save members hundreds of dollars on services such as home financing, no-fee, low-rate credit cards, financial planning assistance, low-cost car and home insurance, and much more.
- An opportunity to participate in a representative, member-driven, grassroots organization.

EXCITED TO JOIN UP



Mike Kujawa of MFPE

If you're looking for enthusiasm for our new union, you need not look any further than Butte, America. Shortly after MFPE's new membership forms went out, 100% of the Butte Teachers Union (BTU) members had signed on with our new and stronger union. Former members of MEA-MFT and MPEA are signing up with MFPE at record numbers across Montana, but the speed and intensity of the sign ups was remarkable in Butte.

We talked to Mike Kujawa of BTU to learn more about what's happening in Butte.

MFPE Today: 100% member sign up with MFPE in Butte. That's a huge deal! When did you begin signing members up with the new union?

Kujawa: My leadership team visited all the schools in August when we returned to school. Most of the forms were filled out that day and it took of a couple of weeks to track down the ones that had questions or were absent the day of the meeting. Except for a couple of teachers in the last 50 years Butte has always 100% union – it's a tradition.

MFPE Today: Why do you think everyone signed up with the new union? Is it something special about Butte or was it the message you delivered to members?

Kujawa: No brainer. Union town, union families, union protection, and everyone expects the local to do its job, they were not really concerned about the merger as long as BTU was not changed. There are only six people employed by Butte school district that are non-union--and they are not eligible to join a union--even our principals are in a union.

MFPE Today: Why do you think you succeeded in 100% member sign up?

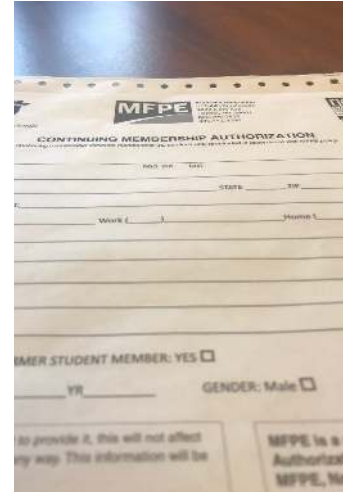
Kujawa: We never expected not to succeed. The fun part was

getting everyone to reaffirm they wanted to be in a union. Folks are proud to belong to BTU and the new MFPE.

A note about MFPE

membership: MFPE is asking all members to sign a new membership form to ensure that members are aware of our historic merger, to obtain updated member contact information, and to affirm all our members commitment to moving public services and public education forward –

together! From wages and working conditions, to professional issues that impact you daily, and your right to speak out on matters that impact your job – MFPE is Montana's most authoritative voice in advocating for you. If you haven't signed a new member form, please ask your local representative or local president for a form to sign.



MEET YOUR NEW MFPE STAFF MEMBERS

MFPE has several new faces, including Melanie Charlson, Joe Dompier, Bob Funk, Shelli Lavinder-Schwalk, and Amy Legg,

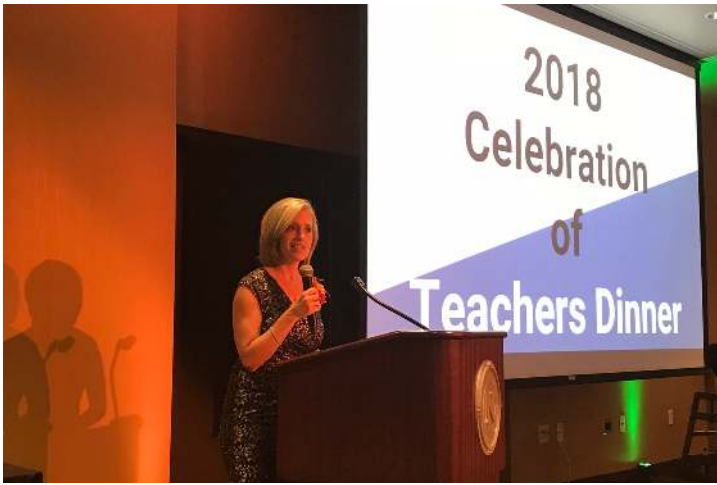
Melanie Charlson, Field Consultant | Missoula

Melanie Charlson spent 28 years as an educator with the Missoula County Public Schools, with the past seven serving as full-time release president of the Missoula Education Association. Prior to becoming an MFPE Field Consultant, Melanie served MFPE as 1st Vice President, NEA Director from 2012-2015 and as a member of AFT Program and Policy Council between 2015 – 2018. Melanie is proud of her children, Ben and Annika who are continuing the Griz tradition pursuing degrees at UM.

"I am thrilled to continue to advocate for public educators and all public employees in the role of MFPE Field Consultant. I am honored to work for such a distinctive organization," says Melanie.

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HUNDREDS GATHER TO CELEBRATE TEACHING EXCELLENCE



2018 Teacher of the Year Melissa Romano addresses the 2018 Celebration of Teachers Dinner

Following the first day of the 2018 Educator Conference, hundreds of Montana educators filled the Northern Hotel ballroom to join NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia and Senator Jon Tester in celebrating outstanding educators from across the state, including the 2018 Montana Teacher of the Year Melissa Romano of Helena and the 2019 Montana Teacher of the Year Dylan Huisken of Bonner.

“I am so grateful for this past year and the opportunity to represent our profession,” Romano said while addressing those in attendance. “It has been an honor representing Montana teachers and advocating for our students.”



U.S. Senator Jon Tester catches-up with MFPE Members and poses with Teacher of the Year recipients and alumni.



Senator Jon Tester, a former music teacher, joined in the celebration and said that “public education is the cornerstone of our democracy, and the key to building a better Montana.

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2018 ELECTION | CONTINUED

MFPE’s members drive our endorsement process and set the course for our electoral priorities. Committees of MFPE members in every corner of our state invited 286 candidates to interview and conducted a total of 121 candidate interviews. As a result, MFPE actively engaged in 38 legislative races and 44 of the candidates our members endorsed were elected to the Montana Legislature, including 12 MFPE members:

HD26 | Representative Casey Schreiner
HD28 | Representative Jacob Bachmeier
HD62 | Representative Tom Woods
HD82 | Representative Moffie Funk
HD84 | Representative Mary Ann Dunwell
HD90 | Representative Marilyn Marler
HD91 | Representative Connie Keogh
HD98 | Representative Willis Curdy
HD99 | Representative Marilyn Ryan
SD24 | Senator Mary McNally
SD38 | Senator Edith McClafferty
SD42 | Senator Jill Cohenour
SD45 | Senator Dick Barrett

In addition to legislative races, MFPE Members endorsed the 6-Mill Levy, Medicaid expansion, Senator Jon Tester, Justice Baker, and Justice Gustafson.

MFPE was instrumental in passing the 6-Mill Levy, which was approved with nearly 63% of the vote. The 6-Mill Levy provides about 10-percent of the state’s appropriation to higher education and helps support approximately 40,000 in-state students. Thousands of our members depended on the 6-Mill Levy passing.

Unfortunately, I-185, which would have funded Medicaid Expansion failed due to an onslaught of attacks ads funded by Big Tobacco Companies. Now the issue must be addressed by the Montana Legislature when it convenes in Helena next month.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR | CONT.

and thousands of public school teachers like them across the state, who do important work every day to give our kids a brighter future.”



NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia

NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia thanked the several awardees for their level of commitment to Montana. Eskelsen Garcia also reminded MFPE members that they are “fighting for the whole child, the whole family, the whole community.” It’s a commitment that is exemplified by Montana educators everyday.

STATE EMPLOYEE PRE-BUDGET AGREEMENT | CONTINUED

Once bargaining began, MFPE maintained and protected current state health insurance contributions for state employees. This means that member contributions, copay amounts, deductibles, coinsurance levels, and maximum out of pocket levels will remain the same for the next two years.

Second, the Governor’s office and MFPE agreed to bargain at the local agency level the ability to flex the Columbus Day holiday and give more than eight hours of holiday pay to those employees who are mandated to work more than the regular eight-hour shift.

Third, MFPE bargained two memoranda of understanding with the Governor that have already been signed and are in full force. One of the memoranda deals with potential closing or reduction of the State Health Clinics. Should the Governor’s office determine there is a need to reduce the number of clinics, the administration would be required to bargain that decision and its ramifications.

The second memorandum gives authority to the union to present membership information at new employee orientations in all state agencies.

MFPE negotiators also made a deal with the governor to include in his 2021 budget a state and university employee base pay increase of \$1,040 (\$.50 per hour per year) and a per diem increase of \$2.50 per meal. The first per diem increase in 26 years!

Under Montana law, the Montana legislature must adopt pay plan deal we have made with the governor. So MFPE staff and members are hard at work trying to ensure a smooth passage next year. Our primary goal is to see the legislature pass the deal we have made with the governor before the end of February.

Here are a few of ways you can help make sure the Montana Legislature sticks to the deal struck between MFPE and the Governor:

- Visit mfpe.org/get-involved and email your legislator
- Complete the MFPE Pay Plan Action Survey: <http://bit.ly/MFPEAction>

CONTEST:

NAME THIS NEWSLETTER



You may have noticed that the MFPE newsletter doesn't have a name! Will you help us fix that?

MFPE has launched a contest to find the best name for our new unions' newsletter. **The person who submits the winning name will receive \$100 and an MFPE fleece.**

Submit your ideas online:

mfpe.org/nameit



This contest ends at 5pm on January 18th.



EDUCATOR CONFERENCE | CONT.



President Eric Feaver addresses attendees at this year's MFPE Educator Conference

"I was very impressed to see the teachers across your state given those two days for focused professional development. The conference was so well developed there was clearly something for everyone!"

"I have pages of notes from the sessions! I loved learning about new technologies teachers are applying and seeing the way they are using them with their students. I also went to a very informative session on formative assessment and learned about many strategies I can model with my students. And I loved the sessions about exploring students' thinking and providing different ways for them to show their understanding. The presenters were all so enthusiastic about their content and their passion for working with their students was very clear!"

Over 2,500 educators from every corner of Montana attended this year's conference which featured over 500 training sessions and keynotes from 18 participating curriculum groups and a variety of other organizations and individuals.

The one-of-a-kind Educator Conference is put on by our union, MFPE. Next year's conference will be held on October 17th and 18th in Belgrade.

2019 Educator Conference will be held in Belgrade on October 17th and 18th

MFPE SOUTH CENTRAL/EAST REGIONAL TRAINING COMING TO BILLINGS

MFPE's regional training for South Central and East Montana will take place on February 23, 2019 at the Northern Hotel. Billings Regional Training is intended for members in Billings/Bozeman and surrounding areas, as well as Eastern Montana. If you would like to attend the training from outside of these areas please request permission prior to registering from MFPE Executive Director Erik Burke at eburke@mfpe.org.



Field Consultant Brian Ehli shares a laugh with attendees at a recent regional training

Sessions offered at this regional training will include Bargaining Basics And Budget Analysis; MFPE Treasurer Training; Unions 101: A Guide for Understanding Unions, Why We Exist, and What We Do; Member Rights and the Grievance Process; MFPE Local Leader Training; Advanced Bargaining; Work Shouldn't Hurt: Safety Issues in the School Setting; and Growing Your Local Union.

To register please go to mfpe.org/billingstraining2019

Future regional trainings are planned for Kalispell from May 10th to 11th, 2019 and Great Falls during the Fall of 2019.



Field Consultant Don Jones, left, leads a session on member rights; Director of Organizing Morgan Smith and Field Consultant Megan Casey, right, lead a session on member organizing.

NEW STAFF | CONTINUED

Joe Dompier, Field Consultant | Billings

Joe was born and raised in Billings, MT. He is a veteran of the United States Army and has served our communities in Law Enforcement and Corrections. As a union member, Joe worked in local leadership as President of the Montana Women's Prison and Probation and Parole. He has worked with our union on a number of committees including restructure and an AFT Professionalism Task Force. He has a son that is 8 years old and the joy in his life.

Bob Funk, Director of Communications | Headquarters

Bob has spent over a decade working on campaigns and for organizations focused on issues most important to MFPE's members, including funding of public schools and services, collective bargaining, labor relations, and healthcare. Prior to joining MFPE, Bob served as the Communications Director for the Montana AFL-CIO. Bob is a third-generation union member and the fifth generation of his family to call Montana home. He and his wife, Julie, live with their two dogs in Helena. They are expecting their first child in January.

Shelli Lavinder-Schwalk, Field Consultant | Great Falls

Shelli Lavinder-Schwalk is a third-generation educator with 25 years of experience in the classroom. With her Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education and a Master of Education, Shelli taught high school science including biology, chemistry, and a course in forensic science, that she developed. After her time in the classroom, she served members as the full-time release president of the Great Falls Education Association. When Shelli isn't working, she enjoys time with her family, time in the beauty of the Montana wilderness and time working in her yard. Shelli is excited to continue serving members; focused on you, so you can focus on your job.

Amy Legg, Administrative Assistant | Great Falls

Amy Legg comes to MFPE with over twenty years of experience in office management. "I am excited to join the great team that is MFPE! Thank you to everyone that has helped me get started," says Amy. Amy has two sons, one in his third year at University of Montana – Western and one in his first year at Montana State in Bozeman. Amy also loves photography and is a member of the Great Falls Camera Club.