

## Hennepin County works because we do

By Lynn Stetler,  
president Local 2822

How many of you remember this theme used in a contract campaign a few years ago? It was a great theme then and it is still appropriate today. I'd like to suggest that the county works today because we are working harder. We're working harder because there are fewer front line workers still doing the work – and in most cases, more work than we've ever done, despite new work efficiencies at most or our work sites.

Front line workers are seeing longer lines and we're serving more customers and patrons in Hennepin County. Just ask those workers at the libraries where there are regular lines to use the computers, reserve and check out materials and for information inquiries. Just ask those workers at the Service Centers where the wait times are

often an hour or longer to get licenses and passports. Just ask those workers in Human Services Public Health Department, where clients file in and out all day waiting with increased demands for child support, food stamps, etc. Ask those workers at MHP, and the Jail. Demand is up while front line workers there to do this work have been reduced.

We'd like to hear your stories about how you do this work in this new environment. What's happening at your work sites? How have things changed? What are the new demands you face? Send us your stories to [Mmafscme2822@aol.com](mailto:Mmafscme2822@aol.com). We would like to share these stories with the Commissioners so they can learn firsthand about the increased demands for county services. As we get ready to begin contract negotiations later this summer, these stories will help us frame our

negotiations, in addition to a survey going out to all AFSCME members asking for cost saving ideas and how you can help during negotiations.

One final comment or caution—I was talking with a co-worker about the importance of taking their appropriate breaks during the work day in a light-hearted way. I hear from people all the time who say they are just too busy—or it's too hard to get the work done if they stop for a break. My response is this—when unions were being organized and workers were fighting for the 40 hour work week and time off for lunches and breaks, people died or were injured fighting for that right. Our contracts reflect that hard fought right. That may sound pretty strong but it's no joke—it's the truth. The county works because we do—we work hard and we do good work. Take good care.

July						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

### July Membership Meeting

Wednesday, July 1  
7:00 p.m.  
Southdale Library

### August Membership Meeting

Wednesday, August 5  
7:00 p.m.  
Central Library

For our members who are physically challenged, please let us know if special accommodations are needed.



Visit Local  
2822 website

<http://www.afscme2822.org>

## Your personal e-mail address, again

In the last newsletter the address to send your personal e-mail was typed incorrectly. It should be sent to:  
[Mmafscme2822@aol.com](mailto:Mmafscme2822@aol.com).

The Executive Board's reason for requesting your personal e-mail: There may be

occasions when the negotiating team needs to contact as many members as possible in a very short time, when it would take too long to get a *Table Talk* out. And there may be issues that would not be good to send through county e-mail.

"You have to love a nation that celebrates its independence every July 4, not with a parade of guns, tanks, and soldiers who file by the White House in a show of strength and muscle, but with family picnics where kids throw Frisbees, the potato salad gets iffy, and the flies die from happiness. You may think you have overeaten, but it is patriotism."



-Erma Bombeck

## Special Leave Without Pay: give it a try

John Christensen, a Service Center Representative at the Government Center, decided to dive in and took the entire month of May off as Special Leave Without Pay. John's theory was that he would rather take the leave in May when he could work in his gardens, his passion, than wait to be furloughed in November, when gardening isn't as much fun.

In a perfect world, employees wouldn't be furloughed or wouldn't be asked to take leave without pay. But we are a long way away from that perfect world. When the county told the union that there would have to be furloughs, the union pleaded that the employees be given a chance to **voluntarily** take leave without pay. That way those who could afford to take time, might be willing to do so for the good of the rest of the employees who could not afford to lose time. Many high level county personnel felt this would not work. Fortunately the union prevailed and the employees are being given the opportunity to show our commitment to each other.

On June 12, 2009, County Administrator Richard Johnson sent an e-mail to all employees stating how the **voluntary SLWOP** was going so far. He stated, "We received 3,355 pledges to use a total of 90,372 hours between July

and December 2009. The hours represent an estimated budget savings of \$2.6 million and a major commitment by those employees."

He went on to say, "The committed hours, combined with 23,625 hours of SLWOP already used this year, are anticipated to save \$3.4 million in 2009 budget dollars. This is a great step forward in realizing the goal of a \$4.5 million saving in this area. But as you can see, we still have a \$1.1 million gap between used/committed hours and the budget savings goal."

As stated in the "Table Talk" from the Union in early June, employees, **WHO CAN AFFORD TO**, are strongly encouraged to pitch in and take some SLWOP so that a furlough situation can be averted. There are still 4,000 employees who haven't committed to taking some time. Another commitment form will be sent out by the Administrator. One hour a week from July through December might be doable for some; that would be 24 hours.

Here's how special leave without pay works:

1. Employees may request special leave in increments of one hour up to 160 hours a year.

2. Vacation, PTO and sick leave benefits will continue to accrue.
3. Seniority and stability pay eligibility will also continue to accrue.
4. The employer will continue to pay its contribution to health and/or basic life insurance.

Pension benefits will also be protected and the county will pay the employer contribution to PERA once the employee contribution is paid.

Directors, managers and supervisors have been encouraged to be flexible and grant requests for special leave. If you have problems being granted this time off, contact a union steward.

### A poem

By Matt Marincel,  
Father of Steve Marincel,  
AFSCME Field Rep for Local 2822

How much better the world would be  
if we gave instead of got  
Most of our troubles would disappear  
if charity we sought

Consider the world's unfortunate  
whose luck is always ill  
who don't even have the  
minimum  
while we over-fill

Help someone in their luckless hour  
it's sure to make them smile  
Tomorrow someone else for you  
will walk that extra mile



## Vacation Donation request

Janelle Stienback, who works at the Brookdale Service Center, just gave birth to a baby boy. She has used all her sick time and vacation time and is in need of Vacation Donations. Times are tough for so many of our employees, and Janelle had her hours cut to the minimum in the last months of her pregnancy. She will appreciate any help she can get.

The way to make vacation donations is very simple and only takes a few minutes. On the Hennepin County Intranet site, click Employee Services, Forms,

Human Resources Forms, under Vacation Donation Authorization click see interactive version, click Vacation Waiver Donation and Authorization form, enter your I-Notes sign on, fill out form. When you click "Select Recipient" enter the name. Sign and submit.

The details of how Vacation Donations work are listed at the end.

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## Progressive dues

From letter from Council 5 President Mike Buesing and Executive Director Eliot Seide to Local Presidents

Delegates to the 2006 AFSCME International Convention passed a resolution requiring that all councils adopt a progressive dues structure by 2011. If we don't have a progressive structure in place by 2011, dues will be 2 percent of gross pay. To comply with this mandate, we have convened a special committee to draft a progressive dues proposal for consideration by Council 5 and our locals.

**The committee's ultimate goal is find a dues formula that's fair and based on a person's ability to pay. The formula should also yield sufficient revenue to sustain Council 5 and our 127 locals so we can grow and have the resources to build power and respond to crisis.**

Progressive dues would replace our

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## Stay healthy

In the February 2009 issue of "A New Voice" we listed several suggestions on how to save on your health care expenses. The next thing we need to do to also save money and to keep premiums down is to stay healthy.

This is often the topic of conversation at the Labor/Management Health Care Committee. Medical conditions that are not treated early become extremely expensive. High blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, stress, and smoking are just a few of the conditions that become extremely costly if not held in check. The cover of the June 22, 2009 issue of "Time" magazine stated: **"It's All About Prevention. The first step toward containing health-care costs is to avoid getting sick."**

**Hennepin Healthworks** is available to employees with suggestions on how to

current structure, in which most members pay a flat, monthly amount. Instead, payments would vary and be tied more directly to an individual's level of pay. The new structure also would apply to fee payers. It could be based on a percentage of gross pay, a percentage of hourly pay, or pay ranges.

It's way too early to speculate on how the change could affect individuals and individual locals. Monthly dues currently range from \$35.10 to \$62.18, depending on the local. Nearly all members will end up paying a different amount than they're paying today.

**That's why there will be plenty of opportunities for members to have their say.**

Members of our Progressive Dues Committee have been working hard for months to project budgets and crunch numbers with different scenarios to find out how different ideas might work in the real world. It's a tough task and we

stay healthy and even has as a wellness coach; her name is Abigail Mathison and she can help you develop a personal wellness plan to help you meet your health goals.

She will help you create a Personal Action Plan and provide specific resource materials to your needs such as:

- Weight loss management
- Stress Management
- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol

On the Hennepin County Intranet home page, click on "Health and Safety" and then on "Healthworks." There are many resources available. In this time of extreme stress on our jobs, we need to find ways to cope and to get through these times and to stay well.

thank the 13 committee members for their effort.

**The time line for the progressive dues is as follows:**

### **October 2009**

Workshops at Council 5 Convention in Duluth on initial Proposal

### **Early 2010**

Proposal revised, based on delegates' input, and sent to Council 5 Executive Board

### **Spring 2010**

Field hearings around the state

### **Spring 2010**

Further revisions, if necessary, based on input from hearings

### **May or June 2010**

Special Convention to vote on progressive dues

## Just what exactly is a union steward?

By Marilyn Bell

Every once in a while, someone asks me what being a union steward entails. Here's what it means to me. While it's always important for me to accompany coworkers to investigatory hearings, there's much more. I help you understand what your rights are in conjunction with our contract. I am available to answer your questions and may suggest ways for you to address problems you encounter in the workplace. The more problems we can solve, the more empowered you become. Most importantly, I am a communicator who works with you to make positive changes in the workplace.

Do you have other questions about my role or if you are interested in becoming a steward, contact me at: [mbell@hclib.org](mailto:mbell@hclib.org). I'll be happy to give you information about what opportunities are available, as well as other work that needs to be done by our local.

## New to Hennepin County?

If you haven't been approached by a union representative yet, please fill out this form and send to our membership secretary.

To sign up as a full union member or for Delta Dental Insurance, or to get answers to questions about AFSCME and membership benefits, please fill out this coupon and send to:

**Dirk Schot**  
**East Lake Library**  
**Mail Code 760**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

Work Location \_\_\_\_\_

Mailcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I want to sign up as a full member.

I want to sign up for Delta Dental.



Help us remember your co-workers with a card. Let us know to send a sympathy card, get well or congratulations. We will send a card, hand-made by E-board member Lynn Stetler.

Contact Heather Clark, our Good and Welfare Coordinator at :952-847-8523 or by e-mail: [hclark@hclib.org](mailto:hclark@hclib.org). The request should include the name of the member, the reason for the request and home address, if possible."



With Delta Access, you can find out about your Delta coverage without even opening your mouth.

Delta Access  
 651-406-5900 or 1-800-862-6042.

Always refer to your group number 538.

Council 5 Contact person:  
 Cindy Pince, 651-287-0564

**A New Voice deadline is July 1.** Articles will be accepted up to and including the day of the monthly Membership Meeting for inclusion in the following month's newsletter. Send your written contributions to Molly Malecki.



Editor: Molly Malecki

Circulation & distribution:  
 Annette Tiedens

## Local 2822 Officers

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## Steward's List

Steward	Phone and e-mail	Department and location
Theresa Smith Co-chief Steward	612-596-0826 Cell: 763-267-2077 <i>theresa.smith@co.hennepin.mn.us</i>	Human Services & Public Health Health Services Bldg
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