

OCSEA

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PUBLIC EMPLOYEE QUARTERLY AFSCME LOCAL 11/AFL-CIO
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MEMBERS IN ACTION!

PERSEVERANCE



DETERMINATION



INNOVATION



HARD WORK



STAFF THE FRONT LINES

THE TIME IS NOW!

As public service workers, OCSEA members like you keep our communities running and take pride in the essential work you do. But chronic understaffing is making your job harder than ever. To ensure our communities are safe, healthy, and strong, we must staff the front lines.

A FSCME's Staff the Front Lines bus tour, which kicked off in July, has been sounding the alarm this summer about the urgent public service staffing crisis with a call to action to recruit passionate people into public service jobs. In all, AFSCME's green bus logged more than 7,800 miles, stopped in 17 cities, and attracted more than 2,000 job seekers to hiring fairs in cities nationwide. But it was the faces and voices of public employee union members that made every stop so resounding. One of those stops was Columbus, during the OCSEA Biennial Convention. Ohio AFSCME members, including hundreds of OCSEA activists, hit the street with signs, shirts and stories about the crisis right here at home.

OCSEA union corrections activist **Brian Miller** talked about the crisis that prison employees are facing every day across Ohio, with nearly 1,800

vacancies that endanger not only workers but our communities. But he also talked about what his union brothers and sisters at Marion Correctional are doing to recruit Ohioans to these important jobs.

"Yes, we have tough jobs. There's no doubt about it," Brian said before the crowd of nearly 500 in downtown Columbus. "But we also take a lot of pride in our work, keeping inmates and our communities safe and helping inmates on their rehabilitation journey. These are positions with a purpose," he said about the importance of his public work.

Brian and his union team at Marion Correctional Chapter 5110 have been personally out in their community over the last several months trying to raise awareness about jobs in Corrections. "Me and some of my colleagues have been setting up booths at county fairs and festivals all over central

and northwest Ohio to talk to people first-hand about the importance of these jobs. 'Come join us in Corrections,' is my message. 'Let's keep our communities safe together,' I tell them," said Brian.

Gregg White, an OCSEA activist with Ohio Department of Health Chapter 2560, knows

the value of his state agency as the world contended with the COVID virus. The agency was in the news nearly every day for two years for their efforts to fight the virus and keep our communities safe. But though the spotlight has dimmed, the work doesn't stop. Gregg is not even sure the community realizes all the agency



Brian Miller speaks at the Staff the Front Lines Rally in August about the need to promote public work.



Gregg White, left, with President of Chap. 2560 Fred Jones, wants everyone to know the value of public workers.



AFSCME members, including OCSEA members, rally for Ohio to Staff the Front Lines and invest in the public workforce.

and public employees do to keep our communities safe.

“There are vacancies, but they are not being filled,” said Gregg who is concerned about the lack of investment in public workers in his agency. “Wages, respect. These are all things that need to be looked at when staffing the front lines,” said Gregg, who works in the regulatory side of the agency to support licensing of hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies as well as hospice, ambulatory and dialysis centers to name just a few.

“Without us, without public employees, there is no city, no country, no world. Without us there is no ‘they,’” said Gregg.

The AFSCME Staff the Front Lines bus tour was part of AFSCME’s larger and on-going Staff the Front Lines initiative, a comprehensive effort with hiring events, legislative advocacy, extensive partnership building, outreach to underrepresented communities and a robust digital marketing strategy. AFSCME and OCSEA will continue to fight this crisis.

“We all deserve to live in thriving communities with clean drinking water, safe roads, strong public schools and good health care,” said AFSCME President **Lee Saunders**. “But right now, our nurses, school bus drivers, 911 dispatchers, corrections officers and other public service workers are on the front lines of a staffing crisis that is threatening their ability to do their jobs.”

TOLEDO ACTIVIST KNOWS VALUE OF FUNDING FRONT LINES

For **Robin Staples**, a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) at the Northwest Ohio Psychiatric Hospital, it’s the little things that make her public job so valuable. “It’s the feeling of making a difference,” says Robin, who has been licensed as an LPN for 20 years and with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services for 15 years.

Recently, to celebrate fall, Robin’s patients built a tree and leaves out of paper bags and construction paper. She said, “They used the leaves to jot down small, incremental weekly goals, and as they meet those goals, the leaves ‘fall off’ the tree, and they add more goals.” It’s these small achievements through a patient’s recovery that mean the most, she says. A recent therapeutic outing to help at the St. Paul Catholic Church rummage sale is another milestone that sticks out for her. These outings can be critical on the path to recovery. “They learn skills about community and service to others, and we’re there right along with them,” she said.

But these special moments with patients—and the validation that public service is more than “just a job”—are at risk when we don’t staff the front lines, says Robin. Understaffing and staffing by mandation risk patient recovery and put staff in harm’s way, she says.

“Staff are working two to three days in a row with no cap on the number of 16 hours in a row.

We’re just worn out,” said Robin. “People need to be able to rest, recover and reset,” which is good for patients and staff, she says.

As an LPN, Robin is one of the first faces patients see. She helps guide their initial plan for recovery, from medication dissemination to group therapy to hygiene management.

“We’re all family, and we do what we have to do to help each other out. But it doesn’t have to be like this,” said Robin.

As president and steward of Anthony Wayne Chapter 4810, she works with her union sisters and brothers to come up with solutions to keep staff from being burnt out. These solutions include ways to reduce shift hours to keep staff alert, keeping on management to post positions in a timely manner and



Robin Staples, LPN,
NW Psychiatric Hospital

offer new hires the incentives they are promised.

“We can staff the front lines. We can invest in public workers who invest in providing care for those in need,” she said. □



Ohio Dept. of MHAS LPN Robin Staples says the value of her work comes from helping patients through recovery. This “goal” tree is one example of how they pursue every day victories.

STORIES IN ACTION:



Melissa Yank, BWC Chapter 2535

Melissa Yank's union story starts when she was just five years old. That's when her mom got divorced and went in search of a job to feed her three children, including Melissa, her sister and her brother.

Melissa remembers hard times back then. "I can remember in those early days, we sometimes had to skip a meal, even. The jobs my mom got sometimes couldn't even put food on the table," she explained.

But all that changed when her mom went to work for the Bureau of Workers Compensation. "Once my mom got a job with the State, all that changed," she said. "I remember there was a girl at my school who didn't have a coat, whose family couldn't afford a coat. I was able to give her mine because I knew we were now able to afford to buy me a new one," said Melissa, happily.

Once Melissa graduated high school, her Mom encouraged her to apply for a job with BWC, too. She applied and came to work for BWC back in 1990 as a Clerk 3. "That job changed my life. While it wasn't the highest paid job, now I was able to get a house, get married and raise my children," she said. "And it was all because of the union," she said.

Later, Melissa utilized OCSEA Workforce Development funds—now called the Union Education Trust—to get a bachelor's degree in information technology.

Now, Melissa has a high-level job as a quality control IT software specialist for BWC's large-scale IT systems. She's seen her children grow, has sent them to college, afforded her family health care, all because of her union job, she explains.

She's also gone a long way in her union. While Melissa has been involved in her union for many years, these days she's the chapter president of one of OCSEA's largest chapters, BWC Chapter 2535, and this year, she got elected to OCSEA's Statewide Board of Directors. □



Casey Marcum, Butler-Preble Chapter 900

For Casey Marcum, working in the Ohio State Parks system is like putting on a fuzzy hoodie. It's comfy and warm. She was a third generation Hueston Woods Park employee: both her uncle and her mom worked there. "My great uncle was on the maintenance staff. Then my mom worked at the golf course and helped at the park in the wintertime," she explained.

Casey says working at Hueston Woods State Park was her dream job growing up. "My mom always told me about working there. I'll never forget when her best friend gave me a paper application and they hired me right then and there. I was still in high school but worked at the park for two hours a day after school," she said. That's when her journey with state employment began. It was her first job ever.

In the 19 years since she's worked for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Parks and Watercraft Division, she's held just about every Parks job classification you can think of.

But through all those positions and job changes, Casey was always only a permanent part-time employee. "It was always scary and stressed me out every year because I had to get 1,560 hours (30 hours per week) to get my health care," she said of the years she struggled as a part-time employee. Now those days are over.

In August of last year, after nearly 20 years as a permanent part-time employee, Casey applied for and got a full-time permanent position with the division. And it happened because of her determination, grit and talent.

She explains getting her full-time job this way: "Mary Mertz, the Director of ODNR, visited Hueston Woods and liked a renovation of one of our restrooms. She asked who did it, and I looked down at my own hands. I had completely renovated the restroom down to the studs, and the director liked it. Then she asked me: 'What is it that the Parks need?' And I said, 'We need more full-time employees.'

THE UNION DIFFERENCE

Three months later I applied for and was offered a full-time Parks position,” Casey beamed.

Now, Casey doesn’t know if the Director had a hand in that or if it was just her own resolve to get a full-time position, but in any case, last year Casey became the first full-time employee at the Little Miami State Park.

She explains that the Park is basically a multi-use trail that runs from Xenia to Terrace Park, which is past Milford Park. She also works at Cowan State Park. “I do anything and everything. Mowing, cutting brush off trails, cleaning out culverts and ditches, dealing with electric and water issues, even interacting with people, like Friends of the Parks volunteers and city and town officials,” she said.

Even though Casey was part-time for so long until last year, she was always a member of the union. “I joined the union as soon as I started. My dad works for the City of Fairfield and is a big union guy,” she explained.

She’s currently seriously considering entering a leadership position at her local chapter. □



Marcus Harris, MHAS Chapter 2502

Marcus Harris grew up on the eastside of Youngstown. That’s where he learned about life and a work ethic as a Therapeutic Program Worker with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Marcus was raised in a two-parent household, something for which he says he’s lucky, in a generationally owned homestead. “My dad was a hard worker and took good care of the home and land that once belonged to my grandparents,” said Marcus. His dad worked in the steel mills, first in Youngstown and then in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. Later, he found his way to working in plastics. That’s how Marcus learned about the importance of unions and a hard days’ work.

“But my dad was always there,” said Marcus who talked about how his dad chose to work third shift so he could be there for everything he did. Marcus was a high school scholar and track athlete at Youngstown’s East High School. He said his parents always made time to encourage him and show up.

Thanks to that encouragement and work ethic, Marcus earned a full-ride scholarship to The Ohio State University where he would run varsity track and study sociology. While things didn’t go exactly as planned after breaking his wrist and losing his scholarship for a year, he worked hard and made his way back to the track team. During his hiatus, he worked at the OSU Medical Center in several fields, including neurology, psychology, and out-patient physical therapy rehab.

After college, Marcus took his love of ministry and athletics and went overseas to Prague in the Czech Republic. “I’m an athlete at heart and wanted to help others,” said Marcus who worked closely with university students on training, motivation and goals, and conversational English.

When Marcus made his way back to the U.S., he began his career in the private sector putting his work ethic in action at a mail-order pharmacy and a group home. But the pharmacy was bought out and jobs were being cut right and left. That’s when he turned to public service, for the security and stability he needed for his new and growing family.

In 2010, Marcus began his career with MHAS at Twin Valley Behavioral Healthcare in Columbus. He started out on second shift early on, but as his son got older, he was reminded of his dad and how third shift permitted him to be an active participant in his life. He wanted the same for his son. Third shift allowed him to coach soccer, to help with conditioning and training, and to “show up” for his son Mace—who is now 16—just like his dad and mom did for him.

“It’s hard work, but it’s rewarding,” said Marcus. “We’re going into a fire every night. We do patient observations all night, suicide watches, and there’s constant instability,” he said. “But we’re an important part of making sure things run smoothly for the first shift the next day.”

He says the revolving door of staff makes it harder. But that’s where his “stick-to-itiveness” and union leadership skills come into play. Marcus says he’s not timid about filing grievances and speaking up.

Marcus says the victories in his work come when he “never sees a patient again” or he sees them in the community living a life of recovery. “I saw a guy at Giant Eagle. We looked at each other, and I nodded to say, ‘you doing good?’ That’s all that I needed to do,” he said. Marcus says his facility is important for those people who suffer a one-time psychotic break. Others need the stability of the state facility to live their lives, he said.

Marcus is proud of the work he does, and so is his family. His wife of 17 years, Tracy, also serves the community with the Children’s Hunger Alliance, and supports what he does for his community. □



How to crush bargaining? **FIGHT FOR IT!**

CHRISTOPHER MABE, OCSEA President

about workers and working families everywhere!

The same with our contract. Our negotiations matter. They have an outsized effect on this state's economy and on union contracts around the state and country. That's why our contract is worth fighting for!

Yes, the circumstances of every union contract and every contract negotiations is unique. Ours will be no exception. But we do have leverage. State employees have felt the sting of a lack of recognition for our work during COVID and the slap in the face over emergency pay for front line employees. Retention and recruitment issues are still being felt by persistent mandatory overtime in our state institutions.

While OCSEA demanded additional compensation throughout COVID and recently during state budget talks, this Governor turned a blind eye, and anti-labor politicians in our State legislature gave massive tax breaks to corporations instead of investing the money in state agencies—instead of investing in YOU. Worse than that, the state legislature and the Governor keep bragging about how “fiscally conservative” they are, which ultimately translates to less investment in public services and state workers.

But we also know this State has the largest Rainy-Day Fund ever, we have huge budget surpluses, and the State is in good financial health.

That's why it's past time to invest in our public employees!

COVID was an eyeopener. We lost hundreds of staff to retirements, resignations, and

just burn out. Nine OCSEA members (that we know of) died as a direct result of their jobs. And in general, our folks are just done taking it up the backside, to be blunt.

That's why this is going to be a negotiations like no other. We are all in for the ride of our lives. So everyone (especially management) needs to buckle up!

This is serious business, folks. That's why we need each and every one of you to get involved in your local union chapter NOW. And chapter leaders need to reach out to every member in their workplace. We need the kind of solidarity we haven't seen since Senate Bill 5.

Other unions on the brink of strikes or walk offs, or already striking, know the union is about all of us. It's union members on the picket line. The union doesn't exist outside the membership. Same here.

The only way we crush bargaining is by showing up. We have to be strong. We have to be united. And we have to be willing to go to the mat on this. And no one can do it from the sidelines. You've got to get involved. Make sure you're signed up to receive our emails and that your co-workers are signed up, too. Once we get underway, we'll have details about solidarity events to take part in and other information at OCSEA.org/bargaining.

This is our contract. Now let's fight for it! □



LOCAL 77 AFL-CIO

Ohio Civil Service
Employees Association



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CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING



Union leaders, including OCSEA President at the time, Ron Alexander (center giving the peace sign) celebrate joining AFSCME 40 years ago.

Former Governor and union supporter Dick Celeste signs the collective bargaining bill in 1983.

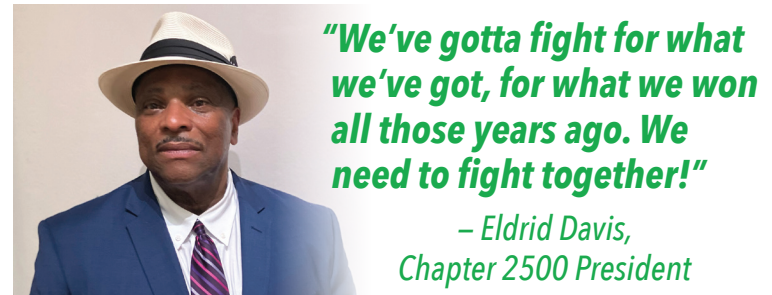
“Forty years ago, we didn’t have a voice at the table, but we do now, and it needs to be protected,”

said AFSCME President **Lee Saunders** at the OCSEA 35th Biennial Convention in August. Brother Saunders was at the very first OCSEA bargaining table after Governor Richard “Dick” Celeste signed the Ohio Collective Bargaining bill into law in 1983. The two recently met up at the OCSEA convention to reminisce about

who was also at the first bargaining table, was proud to introduce Dick Celeste at this year’s OCSEA Convention as a true partner in the union fight and OCSEA’s history to protect public employee union members. He applauded the former governor for fighting to get the law passed for public employees. “The bill only passed by 1 vote. Can you believe that? Can you believe where’d we’d be today without it if it hadn’t passed along party lines?” asked Alexander.



AFSCME President Lee Saunders and former Ohio governor Dick Celeste meet up at the OCSEA convention to reminisce about 40 years of public collective bargaining.



the power of public collective bargaining and what a union voice has meant to Ohio public employees over the past 40 years.

Since 1983, and the first contract in 1986, Ohio’s public employee union members have been fighting to build and protect their union contracts. This includes the right to bargain wages, health care, leaves, safety on the job, longevity, overtime, pick-a-post and so much more. But it has also meant having a unified union voice on issues and politicians that build up working people across Ohio and the nation and that put the priorities of working families first.

“In July of 1983 a new day dawned for Ohio public employees,” said 30-year OCSEA President and retiree representative **Ron Alexander**, who was vital in the fight to push through the Ohio Revised Code 4117, Ohio’s Collective Bargaining law. Alexander,

But President Saunders warns, everything we fight for could be taken from us if we don’t fight to protect it. “The ambush could come at any time, because there are so many groups who want to take everything away from you, take away your seat at the table,” he told OCSEA leaders. “They want to take that power away from you. But we can’t let them,” said Saunders who says that we must stand united in solidarity to protect “what is ours, no matter what.”

Chapter 2500 OCSEA leader **Eldrid Davis** couldn’t agree more. “We’ve gotta fight for what we’ve got, for what we won all those years ago. We need to fight together,” he said. See more about the importance of union solidarity on page 6 as we head into state bargaining in the months ahead. □

Tell us what collective bargaining means to YOU!

SCAN QR CODE



CELEBRATING INNOVATION & SKILL IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

CELEBRATING INNOVATION

Every year at Team Up ODOT, we are reminded about the innovation that comes out of the Ohio Department of Transportation. From drones for mapping and air support to mechanisms that keep employees safe on the road, Ohio's public transportation employees are always thinking outside the box. This helps to stay on top of technological advancements and to make sure employees on the job, and Ohioans on our public roads, stay safe.

At this year's Team Up ODOT, an activist from Athens-Vinton Chapter 550 and Highway Technician 2 from ODOT District 10, **Davey Christman**, was on hand to show off the HIVE, short for Hydraulic Inspection Vehicle Explorer. It may just look like a small truck, but this vehicle with a camera is driven into culverts to inspect for debris, which helps take out a lot of the guess work when it comes road projects. A culvert is a structure that channels water past an obstacle or to a subterranean waterway. A culvert may be made from a pipe, reinforced concrete, or other material. Typically, most modern culverts are made of concrete, but the remnants of old pipes can make road maintenance tricky, says Davey.

"The HIVE has really helped identify obstruction when we're looking into road deficiencies," said Davey. "If you can see it with the plain eye, that's fine, but sometimes that's not possible. In a recent project down in Meigs County we used it to find out where the end was, because we couldn't get to it to see where it was failing. We found out it was an old pipe metal," he said.

Davey says exploring innovation in ODOT is important. "I believe it gives us more opportunities, to do more exciting jobs," he said.

The HIVE was the creation of ODOT District 10 Transportation manager Chad Folmer. This innovation is making life easier for highway workers in southern Ohio, said Davey, to find issues before they become a major problem, something which will help lessen the burden on taxpayers. Davey says this is just one way to help with preventative maintenance, which is good for everybody. □



Davey Christman, ODOT Dist. 10, shows off the HIVE, a motorized truck with a camera that finds obstructions workers can't always see.



ODOT employees test the HIVE vehicle through a makeshift culvert.

CELEBRATING SKILL

Skill building is also a huge part of Team Up ODOT, with the Directors Cup Roadeo coinciding with the Team Up ODOT innovation event each year.

The Roadeo is a friendly competition that pits ODOT equipment operators against each other to test their skills in maneuvering equipment through a series of obstacles. Participants compete in plow truck and loader competitions that simulate situations they might encounter on the job. And before running each course, participants also must find “deliberate mechanical bugs” during a pre-trip equipment inspection. The competition also includes a test on the rules and laws pertaining to holders of a commercial driver’s license (CDL), of which all highway technicians at ODOT are required to retain.



This year **Becky Mills** participated in her first statewide Roadeo in the loader competition. She is a Highway Technician 2 from Hamilton County in ODOT District 11. She wasn’t one of the top scorers, but she got so much out of the competition and competing with the “big guys.”

“Really, anyone can do this, even though sometimes I feel like some people don’t think a girl can do it, too,” said Becky. “I always tell my two daughters (and my son too) that they can do whatever they put their minds to,” she said. Becky’s three children are grown and pursuing their own careers. “I like to think I inspired them,” she said.

Before coming to public service in ODOT three years ago, Becky refueled helicopters on the pipeline and drove a school bus for Buckeye Local School District near Steubenville. □



Dana Missler, ODOT District 2, and Joel White, ODOT District 5, were the top winners of the ODOT Director’s Cup Roadeo, in the truck and loader competitions, respectively.

Each of ODOT’s 12 regional districts hosts its own annual Roadeo events. Then those the winners advance to the statewide Director’s Cup Roadeo in Columbus. It was a tough competition, but in the end **Dana Missler**, ODOT District 2, came out on top in the plow truck competition and **Joel White**, ODOT District 5, came out on top in the loader competition. Joel also placed 3rd in the truck competition. All Director’s Cup Roadeo winners were awarded trophies and cash prizes from the OCSEA ODOT Assembly.

“Team Up celebrates all that transportation employees can do.”

-Larry Moore, Pike Chap. 6600 Vice President & Steward



The OCSEA ODOT Assembly had a booth at Team Up ODOT to talk with members about the role a union contract plays in keeping members safe at work.



This snowplow painted by family members from ODOT District 9 during a family fun day event reminds communities about protecting snow plow drivers who take care of treacherous winter roads.

Motor Vehicle Inspectors: A vital piece of the school bus safety puzzle

Rodney Parker, an OCSEA member with the Ohio Department of Public Safety, is one of 45 Motor Vehicle Inspectors (MVIs) statewide, many of whom have the critical job of inspecting school buses and ensuring the safety of children using school transportation. And recently, these important public employees have come to the attention of Governor Mike DeWine.

At the end of August of this year, Governor DeWine created a working group to help monitor school transportation safety and to review the rules and regulations around school transportation, after a tragic school bus accident that killed an 11-year-old in Clark County. That prompted the creation of the 13-member School Bus Safety Group. The group is expected to make recommendations by the end of the year.

Rodney, who is headquartered in southeastern Ohio, is one of three state employees in that area for whom school bus safety is the center of their job. “I inspect about 530 school buses a year,” he said. Every school bus is inspected twice a year, including an annual inspection and a spot inspection, he explained. In total, MVIs statewide inspect more than 19,000 buses twice a year.

But that’s just the start of his duties as a Motor Vehicle Inspector for the State Highway Patrol. Rodney does his own scheduling; he contacts the schools and he takes calls from the schools whenever they have an issue or have a new bus that needs inspected. “We control our own schedule, we handle any complaints or issues, everything,” he said. He also inspects vehicles connected to church programs or other government agencies in his 10-county, southern Ohio region.

While Rodney prefers staying on the sidelines, the important work he and his fellow inspectors do is anything but irrelevant. Recently, Governor DeWine travelled to Mentor, Ohio in Northeast Ohio to observe OCSEA member bus inspectors in action. The Governor went through an abbreviated version of an inspection of a school bus and walked away impressed with their knowledge, skill and care in ensuring Ohio’s school buses are safe. In a press conference after the inspection, the Governor declared: “Buses are the safest transportation for our kids.”

Not only are school buses inspected twice annually, says Rodney, but they are gone over with a fine-toothed comb, using a 182-point inspection system. In other words, he puts his hands on nearly every moving part of the vehicle.

“This is not a paper inspection,” said Rodney. “This is a hands on, under the bus, over the bus, inside the bus, every nook and cranny inspection,” he said. “Anything mechanical, we check. We inspect the frame, the undercarriage, the tires, the doors, the windows, the mirrors, the engine, radiator, the brakes, the light systems, the stop sign, the batteries, the exhaust, all the controls inside, the seats, emergency exits—even the lettering on the bus!” Rodney exclaimed. “A malfunction of many of these items can put a school bus out of service,” he said. “You can’t have a screw missing on a bus,” he said.



Rodney Parker, Jackson County Chapter 4020, helps keep Ohio’s buses running and safe for school children.

Not only has Rodney been inspecting buses for eleven years, he also helps run a school bus class each year for those public employees, like state highway patrol officers, who want to learn about school bus safety and inspection.

Rodney also is trained on anything new about bus maintenance or mechanics continuously. “Anything that’s new that comes out, we are right away in-serviced about it,” he said.

“We have a great working relationships with the schools down here. It’s just a great thing. The way I look at it, it’s a team. It’s a complete circle. It’s me, it’s the transportation supervisor, it’s the mechanics, it’s the bus drivers, we are all one part of the puzzle that makes this circle go around,” said Rodney. “And it doesn’t hurt that we have great support from our local supervisors as well as the ones in Columbus,” he said.

Before becoming a Motor Vehicle Inspector, Rodney was a Portable Load Limit Inspector, weighing trucks with the State Highway Patrol for 15 years. □

Building love of music, teamwork at School for the Blind

OCSEA member marching assistants: Shelly Jackson, Olivia O'Hara, Natasha Knight and Cindi Swisher.

“Prepare, adapt and overcome.” That’s the theme posted in the band room of The Ohio State School for the Blind Marching Panthers. And that’s exactly what these talented and dedicated young, visually impaired students, their directors, teachers and volunteers live by every day as they work tirelessly to build music appreciation, teamwork, and family at the school.

This theme has been at the heart of it all as the Panthers and their supporters kicked off this year’s band season. It has included a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Boston, a week-long band camp, and a full schedule of events this fall all around Central Ohio.

OCSEA activist **Natasha Knight** is one of those Blind School employees who has been marching right along with them. As an OCSEA bargaining unit Child Teacher’s Aide 2 and a marching assistant, she works

directly with the students to make sure they are comfortable and in step during their performances. She has been a marching assistant for nine years. During out-of-town performances, each student receives their own marching assistant, which means lots of dedicated volunteers and staff are on hand. Other OCSEA members who serve as marching assistants include other Ohio School for the Blind union sisters, **Shelly Jackson, Olivia O’Hara, and Cindi Swisher.**

Marching assistants like Natasha were vital as the marching band headed to Boston this summer to participate in the Lions Club International Parade of Nations. The Marching Panthers marched along other visually impaired performers from all around the world and placed 2nd out of all high school marching bands in attendance.

“It was a big city, and new experiences for so many. Not only were we there to assist in

the parade but throughout all their unique experiences,” said Natasha. “It meant the world to me to see their faces light up with joy, almost two years in the making, to watch them participate in the parade and do all the things they experienced,” she said. In addition to the international parade, the children, staff, and volunteers visited the U.S.S. Constitution, performed at Fenway Park, and took a ride around Boston Harbor, just to name a few of the sightseeing adventures. The trip was financed by the Lions Club International and through student-led fundraising.

“This was a lifetime of memories. I love being a marching assistant and to watch the kids flourish. You just see them grow, performing is their sweet spot,” said Natasha. “I’m just so proud of our kids. Our kids are the bomb,” she said.

At band camp in August, not only did the kids learn their

marching drill but so did the assistants who march every step along with them. Volunteers make up the bulk of the marching assistants and even include highly skilled marchers and musicians from The Ohio State University Marching Band.

“Everything I do is for the kids,” said **Olivia O’Hara**, a Children Teacher’s Aide 2, who’s been a marching assistant for seven years. She, too, was in marching band in school and loves being able to relive her amazing memories through this program. “It is such a cool feeling to watch these kids get such joy out of it. This is a very rewarding job,” she said. “We are a big family that works hard and looks out for each other,” she said. Olivia’s mother and coworker, Cindi Swisher, is also a marching assistant.

This fall, the band has also performed at the Marion Popcorn Parade and the Johnathon Adler “Pride of the Pioneers” Band Show.

Natasha would like to give a huge shout out to all the volunteers, too many to name she says, for their time and support, and those who run the program. She encourages OCSEA members to follow The Ohio State School for the Blind Marching Panthers Band Boosters Facebook page and attend future events and “be amazed,” she said. □



Marching Assistant Olivia O'Hara (center right) stands at attention at the School for the Blind band camp performance.



Natasha Knight (center) performs with the visually impaired student band.



Shelly Jackson (far right) guides her percussionist marcher through the performance.

Subordinate Body Meeting & Election Notices

ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

BWC Assembly	Dec. 2 - E-Board: 9 a.m.-10 a.m.; Meeting 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	OCSEA-Union Hall, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville
MHAS/ DODD/ OVH Assembly	HYBRID Meeting : Nov. 17 - 10 a.m.-12 p.m.	OCSEA - Union Hall, 390 Worthington Rd. Westerville Request meeting link: junderhill@ocsea.org
ODJFS Assembly	VIRTUAL: E-Board - Dec. 1 - 6 p.m.-8 p.m.; Meeting - Dec. 2 - 10 a.m.-12 p.m.	Request meeting link: ivypayton@yahoo.co:m
ODNR Assembly	HYBRID: Dec. 2 - E-Board - 9 a.m.-10 a.m.; Meeting - 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	OCSEA - 188, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville. Request meeting link: tjknasel29@gmail.com
ODOT Assembly	Meeting: Nov. 18 - 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	OCSEA -Bowman, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville
OOD Assembly	VIRTUAL: Meeting - Nov. 8 - 7 p.m.-9 p.m.	Request meeting link: assembly.ood@gmail.com
Public Safety Assembly	VIRTUAL: Dec. 2 - E-Board - 10 a.m.- 11 a.m.; Meeting - 11 a.m.-1 p.m.	Request meeting link: publicsafetyassembly@gmail.com

DISTRICT MEETINGS

District 6	Meetings: Nov. 6, Dec. 4 & Feb. 5 - 6:30 p.m.-8 p.m.	OCSEA - Bowman, 390 Worthington Rd. Westerville
District 8	HYBRID: Meeting - Nov. 14 - 6:30 p.m.-8 p.m.	Holiday Inn Express, 11 E. Park Dr, Athens Request meeting link: Junderhill@ocsea.org

CHAPTER MEETINGS

Chapter 2513	VIRTUAL: E-Board - Nov. 2 - 5 p.m.-6 p.m.; Meeting - Nov. 9 - 5 p.m.-6 p.m.	Request meeting link: wingtwoings@aol.com
Chapter 2538	VIRTUAL E-board: Nov. 9 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.; HYBRID: Meeting - Nov. 16 - 7 p.m.-8 p.m.	OCSEA - Union Hall, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville. Request meeting link: chapter2538@ocsea.org
Chapter 2595	Nov. 7 - E-Board - 5:30 p.m.-6 p.m.; Meeting - 6 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	OCSEA - 188, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville
Chapter 3100	Meeting: Nov. 21 - 6 p.m.-8 p.m.	Request meeting link: mjill@cinci.rr.com
Chapter 3510	Dec. 20 - E-Board: 6:30 p.m.-7 p.m.; Meeting: 7 p.m.-8 p.m.	VFW Hall, 1133 N. Ottokee St., Wauseon

Chapter 3700	Nov. 15 - E-Board: 5 p.m.-5:15 p.m.; Meeting: - 5:15 p.m.-6 p.m.	Ohio EPA SEDO 104, 2195 E. Front St., Logan
Chapter 4500	Meeting: Dec. 7 - 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.	Pizza Cottage - Back room, 969 Mt. Vernon Rd., Newark
Chapter 5410	HYBRID Chapter Meeting: Nov. 6 - 5:15 p.m.-6:15 p.m.	Korner Kafe, 7995 OH -119, Maria Stein; Request meeting link: ddmusnr@yahoo.com
Chapter 7600	VIRTUAL Meetings: Nov. 13 & Dec. 11; 6 p.m.-7 p.m.	Request meeting link: susanmariemjohnson@yahoo.com
Chapter 7760	VIRTUAL: E-Board - Nov. 14 - 12 p.m.-12:30 p.m.; Meetings - Dec. 12 & Feb. 13 - 12 p.m.-12:30 p.m.	Request meeting link: ocsea7760@yahoo.com
Chapter 8320	Meetings: Nov. 16 & Dec. 21 - 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	The Village Family Inn, 144 S. Main St., Waynesville
Chapter 8700	Meeting: Nov. 21 - 5:30 p.m.-7 p.m.	Hampton Inn Conference, 142 Campbell Hill Rd., Bowling Green

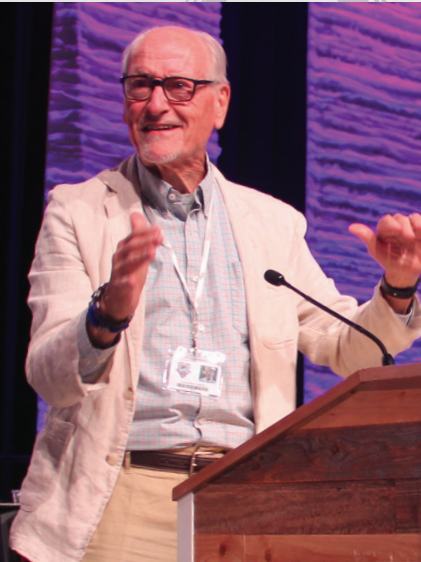
OFFICER ELECTIONS

Body	Dates	Location	Positions
Chapter 2513	Nov. 9 - Nominations: 5 p.m.-5:15 p.m.; Elections - 5:30 p.m.-6 p.m.; Run Offs - 6:15 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	ODOT Central Office Headquarters - Conference Rm. GB, 1980 W. Broad St., Columbus	President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Executive Board (3); Central Ohio Labor Council AFL-CIO Delegate (2)
Chapter 2595	Dec. 9 - Nominations - 10 a.m.-10:15 a.m.; Elections - 10:30 a.m.-11:15 a.m.; Run Offs - 11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	OCSEA - 188, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville	President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Executive Board (3), District Delegate/Alternate, Assembly Delegate/Alternate.
Chapter 7810	Nov. 20 - Nominations: 6:15 p.m.-6:30 p.m.; Elections - 6:30 p.m.-6:45 p.m.; Run Offs - 7 p.m.-7:15 p.m.	Carl Dittmer USW Union Hall, 1265 Main St., Niles	President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, Executive Board (4), District Delegate/Alternate, Assembly Delegate/Alternate (ODOT, ODJFS, BWC, Taxation, ODNR & Public Safety)

Magazine Notice Deadlines:
Visit [OCSEA.org/meetingnotices](https://www.ocsea.org/meetingnotices) for deadlines to post meeting or election notices in this magazine.

TOGETHER AGAIN, FIGHTING TO WIN CONVENTION 2023 WRAP UP

The OCSEA 35th Biennial Convention went off without a hitch with speakers, workshops, solidarity and more. See highlights below:



The 35th OCSEA Biennial Convention was held Aug. 24-26 in Columbus and was attended by OCSEA delegates from every corner of the state. On the first day, former Governor **Dick Celeste** and Former OCSEA President Ron Alexander reflected on 40 years of collective bargaining. Gov. Celeste thanked activists for carrying on a strong labor tradition with Senate Bill 5 and then again, more recently, with Issue 1.

A lively panel with some leaders of OCSEA discussed how

they got involved in the union and what advice they would give to new leaders. **Jon Fannin**, one of the panelists and Montgomery Chapter 5700 President, said he got involved with the union because he wanted to make ODOT a better place to work for his son when he got older. **Cindy Whicker**, Vice President of Chapter 2510-School for the Deaf, got involved after a union leader helped her apply for other positions and really took an interest in her career goals. “When she came tapping on my shoulder to come to a chapter

meeting, I said ‘yes,’” she said.

The power of bargaining was on full display during another afternoon panel discussion on Friday. Delegates were introduced to three young AFSCME activists who know what it’s like to organize their workplaces. Guests included **Kyle Stoller** from the Franklin County Public Defenders Office; **Jo Snyder**, from the Wexner Center for the Arts; and **Zach Frye** from the Legal Aid Society of Cincinnati.

The panel discussed how they were each able to energize their members to organize for the first time ever. Some of the tools they utilized included activating Member Action Teams to map their workplaces as well as keeping members mobilized by consistently reaching out to touch base.

Friend of Labor, Ohio’s U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown stopped by on Saturday morning and got a rousing reception from

delegates who know how much he values unions and the labor movement. Senator Brown talked about the dignity of work and thanked OCSEA members for their service to Ohio.

“When you love this country, you fight for those who make it work!” said Senator Brown. “We know the fights we have to fight...And that starts with staffing the front lines!” he said.

OCSEA President **Chris Mabe** and Vice President **Rocky Jolly** were re-elected by acclamation on the convention floor. An election was held for the Secretary-Treasurer position. **Kathy Gersper** was re-elected to that position. Delegates also updated the constitution; attended workshops on telling their union stories, new employee orientations, and virtual reality; and took part in a Staff the Front Lines rally. *Read more about Staff the front Lines on Pages 2-3.* □



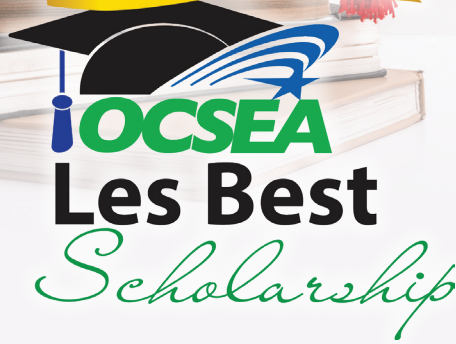
CONGRATULATIONS LES BEST SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!

OCSEA is excited to announce the recipients of the 2023 OCSEA Les Best Scholarships. Eleven awards were given in the Dependents' College and Members' College categories as well as two book scholarships for members.

OCSEA's Les Best Scholarship makes available a total of \$12,000 in scholarships each year to OCSEA members, their dependents and spouses. An additional \$500 is also awarded to two members through the Pat Callanan-Castro Book Scholarship.

Applicants are encouraged to reapply yearly, as Les Best Scholarship recipients are eligible to win up to three total awards during their educational journey. Each year, the scholarships are determined by an independent judging panel with backgrounds in education and labor. Check out the spotlight below on a first-time member winner, Landon Conley. □

\$12,000 in awards!



SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT Landon Conley, SOCF Chapter 7330



It's not lonely at the top if you bring your friends." This is a motto that **Landon Conley**, a Correctional Officer at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility, lives by. He firmly believes that when you treat others with kindness and respect, it usually comes back to you. Landon was one of the recipients of this year's Member Les Best Scholarship.

Landon began working at SOCF eight years ago, and became an active union member and a steward two years ago. He wanted to get more involved in representing employees and work toward solving issues facing his coworkers, and becoming a steward allowed him to do so. "Being a union steward helps employees and that's my whole goal," Landon says. He also works as an On-the-Job-Training instructor and says that he learns something from every class he teaches, then passes it on. "I feel like I'm making a difference by training everyone here the right way," he said.

Landon says that having a great support system at work has been very encouraging. **April Duckworth**, a Training Officer at SOCF, said of Landon: "Officer Landon

Conley is very inclusive, meaning he always makes people feel like they're part of a team. He is a positive influence to all staff in an environment that has a tendency to lean negative." **Les Ellis**, the Chapter 7330 President, couldn't agree more. "Landon is one of those people who always makes time to help others and puts people at ease, so everyone enjoys his company and seeks him out for advice," he said.

After challenging himself to earn an associate degree from Eastern Gateway Community College, Landon discovered a love for pursuing further education. "I want to see how far I can go with this career and prove to myself I can do it. The union has given me this blessing of going to school." Landon is now putting his scholarship funds toward earning a degree in Criminal Justice from Ashland University, and has plans to look into graduate school after that. "All my family are proud. The scholarship can lead to a degree that will better support my family."

Landon has a message for those who have supported him. "I would like to thank my wife, family, friends, and fellow employees for the support. I also want to thank my



Officer Landon Conley, first-time member winner, pictured above. See more member winners on the opposite page. →

fellow employees for the work you do that goes unnoticed."

His advice for anyone who is considering going back to school as a working adult is this: "If you want to do something, you owe it to yourself to at least try... Life is too short not to." □

DEPENDENT CATEGORY WINNERS



Daniella Seum

Daniella will be studying Aerospace Engineering and Computer Science at the Florida Institute of Technology. She is the child of Robert Seum, an OCSEA member with the Ohio Department of Public Safety Chapter 2505.



Isabelle Kolleth

Isabelle is studying Sociology and Environmental Studies at Grinnell College. She is the child of Adam Kolleth who is an Adult Teacher Aide 3 with the Ohio Department of Youth Services and member of OCSEA Cuyahoga Hills Chapter 1830.



Willis McClure IV

Willis is studying Music Performance and Computer Science at Bowling Green State University. He is the son of Willis McClure III, Ohio Public Safety employee and OCSEA activist with Bureau of Motor Vehicles Chapter 2503.



Karlie Kistler

Karlie is studying Exercise Physiology at Ohio University. She is the child of Kimberly Kistler, a Hearing Officer with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and member of Cuyahoga County ODJFS Chapter 1805.



Alaina Robirds

Alaina is studying Psychology and Spanish at Ohio University. She is the child of Amanda Robirds, an Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation member Allen Chapter 200.



Aiden Bennage

Aiden will be studying Physics and Engineering at The Ohio State University. He is the child of Jennifer Bennage, an OCSEA member with the Ohio EPA with Twinsburg Chapter 7760.



Alyssa Sifuentes

Alyssa is attending the University of Notre Dame, studying Mechanical Engineering. She is the child of Holly Sifuentes, an OCSEA member in Taxation with Northwest Chapter 3510.



Maranda Dick

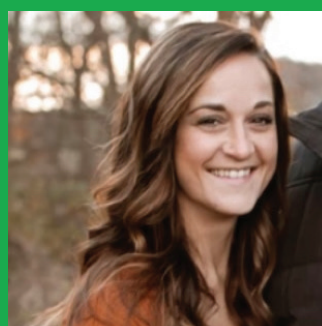
Maranda is studying Physician Assistant Studies at Duquesne University. She is the child of Vanessa Steigerwald-Dick, an Ohio EPA union member with Twinsburg Chapter 7760.

MEMBER CATEGORY WINNERS



Patrick Gant

Patrick is an Information Technology Specialist 2 with the Ohio Department of Administrative Services. He is studying Cyber Security at Franklin University.



Stephanie Peeper

Stephanie is a Therapeutic Program Worker at the Cambridge Developmental Center. She is a member of Cambridge DODD Chapter 3020. She is studying to be an LPN at the Hondros College of Nursing.



LOCAL 77 AFL-CIO

Ohio Civil Service Employees Association

390 WORTHINGTON ROAD, STE. A WESTERVILLE, OH 43082-8331

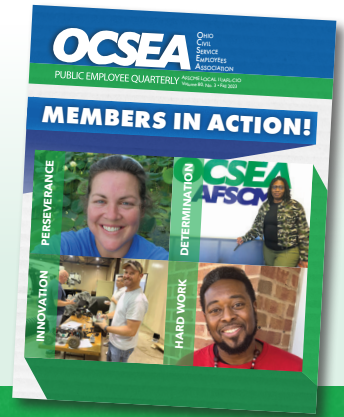


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OCSEA

FALL 2023



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The time is now!



3 **Toledo activist knows value of staffing front lines**



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The Union Difference



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A vital piece of the school bus safety puzzle



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