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[sftunion.org](http://sftunion.org)



Ron Caplan gives his dedication speech at Stockton's Solidarity park.

Photo Credit: Sue Allen

# We Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Us Around

*Drawing on the inimitable Dr. King, Emari DiGiorgio, President of SFT Local 2275, tells us how a coalition of 14 labor unions fought state healthcare cost increases last month.*

On March 18, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his speech "All Labor Has Dignity" to an overflowing crowd of sanitation workers on strike and their supporters at the Bishop Charles Mason Temple of the Church of God in Christ in Memphis, Tennessee. A month earlier, a thousand members of AFSCME Local 1733 had walked off the job after two sanitation workers, Echol Cole and Robert Walker, were killed in a garbage compactor. As trash piled up in the streets of Memphis, the strike brought attention to years of poor pay, dangerous working conditions, and continued racial inequity.

political and financial support to the sanitation workers.

I reflect on this historic moment in labor history because I believe we are entering another.

***This premium increase would translate to a 1-1.5% pay cut for employees across the state***

King's historic speech rallied the crowd, "Nothing worthwhile is gained without sacrifice. The thing for you to do is stay together, and say to everybody in this community that you are going to stick it out to the end until every demand is met, and that you are gonna say, 'We ain't gonna let nobody turn us around'" (from *The Radical King*, published by Beacon Press, 2015).

In 2022, Gallup found that [71 percent of Americans approve of labor unions](#) and that over 40 percent of non-union workers have some interest in joining one. The last time union approval was this high was in 1965, when union membership rates were more than two times higher than they are now.

Though King would not live to see the end of this ultimately successful strike, he did witness the power of coalition, as other unions, including Steelworkers Local URW 186 and the United Auto Workers, lent their

This past month, here at Stockton, we were reminded of the strength our local - AFT 2275 - yields and how much stronger we are when we work in collaboration with other unions across our campus and the state.

On Wednesday, July 13, 2022, Aon PLC, a financial services consulting firm hired by the State of New Jersey, proposed to the NJ State Health Benefits Commission (SHBC) a 20-25% increase in premiums next year for healthcare benefits for public employees covered by the State Health Benefits Plan. This premium increase would translate to a 1-1.5% pay cut for employees across the state and saddle local municipalities and school boards with an untenable bill, as they can pay as much as 70% of the total premium on employee benefits.

Though the vote on this increase was originally scheduled for late July, it was postponed after a copy of the proposal was leaked. On Tuesday, September 13, 2022, thousands of state employees, a coalition of at least 14 labor unions, rallied at the Statehouse in Trenton, urging lawmakers to use a portion of the \$1 billion in federal COVID relief money the state has at its disposal.

At Stockton, AFT, CWA, and IFPTE leaders sought President Kesselman's support to bring members to the rally, and the President offered work release for eight staff members from each of the three unions to attend as representatives of the University.

This was an unprecedented collaboration between management and the three unions, and thirty employees traveled (in style) in a Stockton bus to Trenton to make their voices heard.

The following day the State Health Benefits Commission voted 3-1-1 in favor of increasing the amount public sector workers will contribute to their health insurance premiums in 2023. However, behind the scenes, a coalition of unions (AFSCME, the Council of New Jersey State College Locals, CWA, IFPTE, and IBEW) worked together under a tight deadline to negotiate a statewide [memorandum of agreement](#) (links to .pdf) to avoid the 18% across-the-board increase that the State threatened to impose.

This coalition was able to secure a

***"By standing together, we were able to push back the State's proposed increases ..."***

modest contribution increase of only 3%, and they were able to reduce the proposed specialty co-pay amounts and to get a carve out to keep OB/GYN co-pays at \$15. [For more information on how these increases will impact you or for additional resources, please read through these [FAQs.](#)]

This was a win for organized labor statewide. By standing together, we were able to push back the State's proposed increases, and we are in a better position to enter statewide negotiations this year.

Locally, we continue to develop and nurture our relationship with CWA and IFPTE, and we are stronger because of it. In our local multi-union coalition, we have been advocating for all staff to be off and paid for the week between Christmas and New Year's Day, so as to not have to use accrued leave when the University is



closed.

As of Tuesday, October 4, 2022, the three unions have come to an agreement with the University for this year to trade two holidays - Indigenous Peoples Day on Monday, October 10, 2022, and Presidents' Day on Monday, February 20, 2023 - for the four working days between December 26, 2022 through January 3, 2023, as the other days off are holiday observances of Christmas and New Year's Day. This is a huge win for staff and professional librarians, who essentially have gained two paid days off.

Again, this labor victory would not be possible without the combined efforts of all three unions and the strength of their memberships:

*The thing for us to do is stay together, and say to everybody in this community that we are going to stick it out to the end.*

In solidarity,

Emari DiGiorgio, MFA  
Stockton University  
President SFT Local 2275

## Help SFT Be the Best Dressed Local!

In the spring of 2020, SFT launched a spirit wear campaign because having Union pride should be fashionable and fun.

Unfortunately, the pandemic spoiled our attempt at being the best-dressed local, but we're ready to claim that superlative this year.

How would you like to help outfit AFT local 2275?

We need volunteers to help us select spirit wear styles, promote to members, keep track of orders, distribute product, and organize the fashion show/lookbook (JK on this last one, unless you really want to, of course).

Please fill out this survey to help get our Spirit Wear campaign started.



# Professional Staff Events and Updates

As always, Maria Spade, Vice President of Professional Staff, keeps us up-to-date on the latest concerning our treasured staff.

The fall semester is in full swing, and the SFT professional staff are working hard to share important information with their members. There are a few upcoming events that everyone should know about.

**On October 21st**, there was another tri-union workshop, where members from all three unions had the opportunity to meet. It is important for all staff members to know who the union executives are on campus so they know who can assist them with concerns regarding terms and conditions of employment.

Below is a breakdown of the current executive members for each of the unions and information on each of their 2019-2023 Statewide Master Agreements.

**On November 2nd**, the Professional Staff Advisory Committee will be hosting a workshop on *How to*

*Construct Reappointment Files.*

I would like to give a shout out to the members of the Professional Staff Advisory Committee, Lauren Fonseca, Donna Hauer, Natalja Manger, Tara Marsh, and Barbara Tilelli, who volunteer their time and assist in making these events a reality. Together we have created the Professionally OURS Workshop Series, with OURS standing for Our Union Representing Staff.

We will be soliciting feedback for topics that members would like to see in the spring as well as offering a special workshop led by our Council. Keep a lookout in your email for this information. If anyone has any ideas they would like to share and/or are interested in becoming a part of the Professional Staff Advisory Committee and/or has any questions or topics that they would like to see addressed in a workshop,

please contact me at [maria.spade@sftunion.org](mailto:maria.spade@sftunion.org).

I would also like to welcome the members of our Professional Staff Peer Review Committee, who will serve the committee by reviewing Performance Based Promotion Applications. Dayna DeFiore, Lauren Fonseca, Natalja Manger, Nathan Morell, and Diana Strelczyk all ran unopposed and have been elected to the committee. Staff that are currently on a multi-year contract and are interested in going for a Performance Based Promotion can review the current [MOA](#) and reach out to the committee with any questions or concerns..

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Maria Spade  
Stockton University  
Vice President of Professional Staff  
SFT Local 2275

# Grievance Versus Code of Conduct Matter

Our Grievance Officer, Nazia Kazi, explains what issues constitute an actual grievance and urges you to reach out if you are unsure.

You've heard me say a number of times (in this newsletter and at our membership meetings) that my role is to determine whether any of your contractual or employment rights have been violated. If they have, we might have a grievance or unfair labor practice (respectively) on our hands. Filing a formal grievance sets into motion a sequence of events in which the University and Union attempt to resolve the matter at hand and restore the losses you've incurred.

But what if there's something else happening in the workplace, something you can't point to in one of our Memoranda of Agreement and say "a-ha! This section was violated by my supervisor!"? Or what if a colleague of yours (another member of the SFT) has fostered a hostile work environment or infringed upon your job duties?

In the latter case, you usually do not have a grievance. We, the SFT, are prohibited from filing a grievance

against another SFT member, only against University management.

This doesn't necessarily mean you shouldn't inform us of the matter at hand. I often make determinations as to whether or not a contractual violation has occurred. When it has not, SFT can help you navigate the procedures around reporting a code of conduct violation to the University.

Anyone who's been through the formal grievance process can tell you: it's not quick! The steps involved span several months, and a grievant will wait a long time to find resolution for these matters. To speed up the process, you will want to

- 1) Notify me as soon as the violation has occurred. We have a very tight calendar in which to file grievances, and every day matters.
- 2) If you are able to, indicate which Agreement (state-wide or local)

you suspect has been violated. If not, I will work with you to determine whether this has happened.

3) Attach any and all documentation (meeting notes, a timeline of events, emails documenting the matter) so that we can move swiftly with any formal action.

4) As always, use my SFT e-mail address, [Nazia.Kazi@sftunion.org](mailto:Nazia.Kazi@sftunion.org), and contact me from a non-Stockton email address, for the sake of maximum privacy.

As always, when supervisors or potential discipline is involved, we can provide you with a Union representative to observe any meetings with HR or management.

--

Nazia Kazi, Ph.D.  
Stockton University  
Grievance Officer SFT Local 2275

SFT 2275	CWA	IFPTE
President: <b>Emari DiGiorgio</b>	President: <b>Robert Wallace</b>	President: <b>Todd Doughty</b>
Vice President: <b>Tara Luke</b>	Vice President: <b>Christy Engelhardt</b>	Vice President: <b>Mike Mason</b>
VP of Professional Staff: <b>Maria Spade</b>	Secretary: <b>Karin Kallert</b>	Secretary: <b>Arthur "Jamie" Jones</b>
VP of Adjuncts: <b>Stephanie Cawley</b>	Treasurer: <b>Tucker Rowlinson</b>	Treasurer: <b>William Albertson</b>
Grievance Officer: <b>Nazia Kazi</b>	Shop Stewards: <b>Erika Cassetta</b>	Sgt-at-arms: <b>In electoral process</b>
Lead Negotiator: <b>Tina Zappile</b>	<b>Sam Doughty</b>	Shop Stewards: <b>Greg Hauser</b>
Treasurer: <b>Heather Perez</b>	<b>Ryan Schocklin</b>	<b>Louis Parks</b>
Communications Officer: <b>Justin Maciejewski</b>	<b>Linda Shea</b>	<b>Dennis Finnegan</b>
COPE Officer: <b>Erin O'Hanlon</b>	<b>Rochelle Iannuzzi</b>	<b>Robert Deitrick</b>
	<b>Brittany Boone</b>	<b>David Jimenez</b>
	<b>Irvin Moreno-Rodriguez</b>	
	<b>Raymond Edwards</b>	
	<b>Joe Vannucci</b>	
	<b>Shekhania Demosthenes</b>	



**SFT Master Agreement (PDF)**



**CWA Final Contract (PDF)**



**IFPTE Final Contract (PDF)**

Please welcome  
**Lilia Yang O'Brien**  
(杨本霖 Yang Ben Lin)  
to the SFT family.

She arrived on September 29,  
weighing 7lbs 8oz, at 19.75in long.

Kaite Yang & her partner Dan:  
"We're all excited to be together!"



## Committee on Political Education Elects New Chair and Contributions Increase

Welcome to the SFT Exec, Erin O'Hanlon, our new COPE chair who immediately brings good news about increased contributions.

I would like to take a minute to introduce myself as the new COPE chair. COPE is the Committee on Political Education, an essential tool in communicating our member's unique perspective to legislators.

I work in the Stockton Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning as the Coordinator of Service-Learning. I have been a member of SFT since I joined in 2009, initially as an adjunct member. I was a member of the CWA local before becoming a professional staff member recently.

As the new COPE chair, I am writing today to introduce myself and let you know that our recent appeals to members to consider increasing their contribution has been successful. Rodger Jackson recently increased his contribution by 200%. This moved several other faculty members to increase their contributions.

I believe in the work that COPE focuses on. Faculty, faculty librarians, and professional staff



Our own Rodger Jackson and Erin O'Hanlon along with Tim Alexander are enduring the brutal weather—warm sun with a light breeze—so you don't have to!

all benefit from the work of COPE – bringing front and center the concerns of the membership to local elected officials. While negotiators are keeping an eye on your interests at the bargaining table, members of COPE are convincing legislators to support laws that will give us voices in important spaces, provide equitable pay, and focus on accountability from our institutions.

COPE, in short, helps to ensure that our voices are heard and that our needs are considered with politicians, both locally and statewide.

**However, I am one of only six professional staff who contribute to COPE.**

Did you know that over 66 faculty members contribute – resulting in over 90% of COPE contributions? Professional staff make up less than 9%.

I know that we can do better than this.

COPE ensures an essential function

– that our voices are heard and that our needs are considered with politicians both locally and statewide.

Please consider contributing to COPE through a payroll deduction. Even \$1 per pay (\$52 per year) adds to our collective political power and demonstrates that Stockton University faculty, faculty librarians, and professional staff are willing to take real action to support our future.

I am happy to hand deliver a COPE form to you. Please let me know if you are interested in contributing and I will get the form to you. My email is [erin.ohanlon@sftunion.org](mailto:erin.ohanlon@sftunion.org), Sue Burrows also has COPE forms in H230.

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Erin O'Hanlon  
Stockton University  
COPE Chair SFT Local 2275



From left to right: Lisa Bender, Somers Point City Council, Judy Ward, Mayor of Pleasantville, Rodger Jackson, Professor of Philosophy/SFT Strongman, Tim Alexander, US Congress District candidate, and Habib Rehman, Atlantic County Commissioner-at-Large candidate.

## Inflation Is Only Good for Balloons

SFT Treasurer, Heather Perez, is not trying to take the wind out of your sails. This financial report is so much more than just hot air.

The good news - the union's financial accounts are in good standing. All the bills are getting paid, we are providing great services to you, our members, and we are saving for rainy days. We certainly look forward to resuming payday parties this year! We also received a \$6,000 grant from AFT-NJ to reimburse us for organizing expenses.

The serious news - the union's budget this year is a cautious one. We are carefully considering the impact of inflation. The Executive Board made the decision to factor in a 12% increase in most of our spending lines this year to account for the uncertainty in inflation. Inflation affects us all right now. Local restaurants must raise prices to cover their expenses as they provide the food for payday parties.

The cost of the coffee and tea and candy provided for you in the Faculty Lounge and Union office is up. Higher gas prices affect transportation costs to and from Trenton for contract negotiations.

Our income comes from you, our members, based on 1% of your salary, in addition to small grants and benefits from our AFT and AFL-CIO parent organizations. Over the past few years, a number of our long-time members have retired (yay - congratulations!), which means their salaries are no longer part of the equation for our income. And, of course salary increases have not kept pace with inflation, as we are all painfully aware anytime we go to the grocery store or the gas station. SFT is dedicated to keeping our expenses lower than our income

so that we don't have to ask for an increase in dues.

The fun news - we have an SFT intern this semester! Tyneka Boggs, an American Studies student, is going to be helping me conduct an inventory of the SFT records and look at best practices for archives and records management for unions. Later in the semester, she'll present her findings and recommendations to us so that we can make some decisions about our 50 years of history and records. Sue and I look forward to working with her!

--

Heather Perez  
Stockton University  
Treasurer, SFT Local 2275

## Welcome to Our New Vice President of Adjuncts

Introducing, Stephanie Cawley, our new Vice President of Adjuncts.

Greetings, SFT! I wanted to use my newsletter space this month to introduce myself as the new Vice President of Adjuncts. I was thrilled and honored to take on this role from my dear friend Maxine Patroni, whose (much more stylish) shoes I hope to fill.

I was born and raised in Cape May County and am a Stockton alum, having graduated in 2011 with a B.A. in Literature. I also hold an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Pittsburgh. I returned to Stockton in 2018 when I began working as an adjunct in GENS, and I later held a full time staff position as the Director of Murphy Writing. Now I am again working as an adjunct here, teaching mostly first-year writing courses, and I also teach at the University of

the Arts in Philadelphia where I live.

When I'm not teaching or doing work for the union, I am also a poet, so I spend a lot of time reading and writing. When I'm not doing any of those things, I like going on aimless walks, telling my cats they are the most beautiful creatures on the planet, watching horror movies, and going to karaoke.

While I know firsthand many of the challenges and struggles that adjuncts face at Stockton and elsewhere, I have spent my first few months in this role familiarizing myself with the specific issues Stockton adjuncts are facing. I hope to spend my year working to recruit more adjuncts to join the union in addition to supporting and

representing our current members.

You might not see me around campus too much because, like many adjuncts, my time is divided between Stockton and elsewhere, but I look forward to getting to know more SFT members better in the months to come and to working with my brilliant colleagues on the executive committee this year. I am proud to take on this role fighting to make our workplace more equitable for those of us who are most precarious, especially with a new contract on the horizon.

--

Stephanie Cawley  
Stockton University  
VP Adjuncts SFT Local 2275

## Dedication of Solidarity Park

*Ron Caplan, Professor of Public Health at Stockton and long-standing AFT member, gives the dedication for Solidarity Park.*

Good afternoon. As Emari said, I am Ron Caplan, Associate Professor of Public Health. But more importantly than that, I was Vice President of the union while Dave Emmons was president. Dave was a terrific mentor and the most important lesson he taught me was that the union exists to serve its members. And that is still true today! As Vice President, I helped resolve staff grievances and accompanied Dave to Council meetings and contract negotiations. And, nearly 20 years ago, I chaired the search committee that hired Sue Burrows as office manager! I also served as treasurer for over 12 years under four different union presidents. I guess they just couldn't find anyone else to do it -until Stacy Rose and now more recently Heather Perez!!

But enough about me. Why are we here today? We are here today to honor many of the men and women who not only founded the SFT, but helped it to become one of the strongest, best run and most effective unions for faculty and professional staff in the state of New Jersey! The Stockton Federation of Teachers local 2275 was officially chartered on June 1, 1972 (almost exactly 50 years ago today). Since then, it has worked continuously,

tirelessly, and effectively to maintain and improve the quality of education and working conditions at Stockton. In short, improving the lives of Stockton students, faculty (including librarians and adjuncts) and the professional staff has always been our union's primary purpose.

Perhaps at various SFT events you have seen or heard the three words "We are Stockton". This is not just some fancy logo or slogan. It is the truth! Without a strong and fearless union right from its start, Stockton College (later to become Stockton University) would not be the quality institution it is today. Shared governance has benefited all of us! But shared governance is not a privilege to be occasionally granted by the administration, but a right to be continuously and fearlessly demanded and protected. Shared governance has benefited everyone at Stockton! It has helped make both the union and the university not only bigger but better! Simply put, Stockton would not be Stockton without a strong and fearless SFT right from its very beginning! Please don't let anyone forget or rewrite this glorious history!

But please also never take the union for granted. Past success is no

guarantee of future success! A union is nothing more than the people who join it, lead it, fight for it, support it and believe in it. The men and women we honor here today -some still living, some still dead! did all this and more over the last five decades. Now it is your turn! I say "your" and not "our" because I am in the twilight of my career at Stockton, my legacy, my mark on the university and the union has already been largely determined over the past 28 years. But most of you have plenty of future at Stockton ahead of you and what do you want your legacy to be? I hope that building a bigger and better union over the next fifty years will be part of it.

And the time to begin your legacy is now! As you leave this hallowed ground today, please commit to honoring those who came before you by continuing their union-building efforts well into the future. Thank you for coming and I wish you all the very best! Be well! Stay Safe! And stay forever Stockton Strong!

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*Ron Caplan, Ph.D.  
Stockton University  
Associate Professor of Public Health*



Credit Sue Allen

## Team PayDay Party Needs You!

SFT's notorious PayDay Parties have returned, and we need YOU to help us make them as amazing as ever!

We'd love your help contacting caterers and placing orders and setting up and breaking down each party. If you like throwing parties, potlucks, family picnics, or Sunday brunch, we welcome you to join Team PayDay Party!

Please follow the link to fill out our survey to show how you might help this year.



### HOW'D WE DO?

You can reach me, Justin Maciejewski, your editor and Communications Officer at:



# SAVE SFT UPCOMING THE EVENTS DATES

- September 23 - Membership Mtg**
- September 30 - Pay Day Party**
- October 14 - Pay Day Party**
- October 21 - Tri-Union Mtg**
- October 25- Preceptor Lunch**
- November 18th - Toast & Roast**
- December 2 - Membership Mtg**