

ESPecially Yours

Volume 14, Issue 1

September/October 2013

Message from Your President:

Welcome back!! Hopefully you have all had a chance to relax and regroup over the summer after a challenging year. It was relatively quiet in the office over the summer, allowing Leif and I to get some much needed holiday time.

As it does every summer, OSSTF offered a Leadership Conference in mid-August. We were able to send six of our executive members to the conference this year. There were lots of great workshops and your executive is ready with new ideas to start the year.

This year got off to a rough start with technical difficulties affecting school network access, including servers, BEAM and Trillium. Our B< staff worked long hours to resolve the issues so that members could perform their duties. THANKS!

The upcoming year will have its own challenges. OSSTF is your union and we need to ensure that all members are aware of the importance of their union -- what it can and does do for you. Both the Federal and the Provincial government are proposing legislation that will impact the ability of unions to work for all members fairly. Leif and I hope to hold meetings in different regions of the District to make it easier for our members to interact with us. We'll be coming to you in early December.

As a result of the government imposed working conditions, our usual PD Day in February will not take place. The ESP executive and PD Committee, along with our Education Services Officer (ESO) Judy Soifer, are looking at alternate ways to provide professional development to our members for the 2013-2014 school year. If you have any ideas or would like to join the PD Committee, please contact Judy Soifer via BEAM.

Over the summer, many of our elementary schools had new security systems installed. This involves having all doors and entrance points locked with buzzers and security cameras to allow

identification of and entry to staff, parents, students and visitors to the school. There are many concerns regarding the additional workload for our members as well as issues of liability and responsibility. Leif and I are working with the Board to resolve some of these issues.

As I noted last year, our elementary office staff have had more and more tasks assigned to them with Ministry

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initiatives such as OnSIS, Ministry Report Cards, Full Day Kindergarten and Extended Day programs. While many of our elementary schools are larger than some of our secondary school, these changes have not been reflected in staffing formulas. I am hoping to work with our elementary school

members to find some way to resolve this discrepancy.

Central staff and secondary school office staff have also been hard hit with additional duties and less staff. Members need to ensure that they manage their workload so that they



are not stressed and have time to perform all tasks properly.

As I said earlier, this school year started off at a full sprint. I have been very busy answering questions from and addressing the concerns of members.

OCDSB staff seem to be under more and more stress each year. Please remember that your health, both physical and mental, should always be your first priority.

Please feel free to call either myself or Leif regarding issues you may have in your workplace. We do our best to ensure that you have a happy, respectful and safe workplace. You can contact us at the OSSTF District Office by phone at 613-729-7211 or in person at 67 Jamie Ave by appointment.

Email for Nancy
nancy.akehurst@d25.osstf.ca

Email for Leif
leif.walther@d25.osstf.ca

*When adversity strikes,
that's when you have to
be the most calm. Take
a step back, stay strong,
stay grounded and
press on.
LL Cool J*

Nancy



***The labour movement is not
just about decent jobs.
It's about a better life, for
everyone.***

part of a national advertising campaign sponsored by the Canadian Labour Congress to remind people about the good things we all enjoy because unions bring fairness to the workplace - and to our lives. OSSTF is supporting this campaign with its own logo and promotional materials.

This is the message that millions of Canadians across the country will see on their television sets from October 7 through November 17. It's

Watch for this ad on television and check out <http://fairnessworks.ca> to learn more about some of the benefits that unions deliver, for everyone.

You can also see it on Youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhlnxpMMqk0&feature=youtu.be>

If you like what you see, tweet about it with #FairnessWorks.

KEEPING WELL AND KEEPING THE FAITH

Across Ontario, the process of local Collective Bargaining between Education Unions and School Boards took a beating during the last round of "contract negotiations". The outcome was in fact not a new "contract", but rather a Letter of Understanding regarding conditions imposed over top of and in some instances in place of our previous agreement, as well as a new set of Ontario Education Act Regulations that modify our working conditions.

While placing a strain on Labour relations, the experience was even more significantly damaging to the faith and morale of education workers across the province and how they see themselves valued by their employers. At a practical working level, staff have struggled through changing parameters, conflicting directions and confusing instructions in the implementation of the new conditions. All of this took place at the same time as a seemingly endless "workload creep".

It is perhaps not surprising then that ESP President Nancy Akehurst and myself are seeing a far higher level of workplace stress and at a far earlier stage in the school year than normal this year. Several of our management counterparts at the OCDSB have reported observing the same.

The inevitable consequences of this stress are increased illness, friction among colleagues, and conflict between staff and their work superiors.



Should you encounter problems with your sick leave, issues of respect in the workplace, or conflict leading to potential discipline, your Union is here to support you. Although you are expected to first seek clarification, support or resolve through the Employer's mechanisms and agents responsible whenever possible, you should not hesitate to call the OSSTF office if you feel you need help in the process or if you are unsure of the outcome.

With that said, it is important for all of us to remember that everyone we work with, whether Union

colleagues or Management, deserves to be treated with the same level of fairness and respect that we each expect for ourselves. Each of us should recognize that we have all had a lot to cope with, and that, in the end, we are mostly all just trying to do our jobs as best we can as we work to deliver quality public education.

A little bit of patience and understanding will go a very long way in helping to keep ourselves and each other healthy and happy in the process. And keeping ourselves that way will go a very long way toward giving us the strength and spirit to move forward in repairing some of what has been broken.

Leif



The survey can be easily accessed at the following website: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WAVE_Survey This is an opportunity for every board-employed OSSTF member who has given of their own personal time to have it measured. It is also an opportunity for OSSTF members who have participated in Ministry or board initiatives that impacted on their regular work to place a value upon such initiatives. Although the questions are geared to teachers, there is plenty of opportunity to use "Other" boxes to answer from your own perspective. The WAVE survey will be accessible until Saturday, November 30, 2013.

ESP GOES GLOBAL

On July 8th 2013 I was saying farewell to my family and friends as I was leaving Canada for 5 weeks to begin a journey of a lifetime. This journey was something that I had always wanted to take. I'd like to share my story with you on how I got inspired.

At the age of 18 my childhood friend was diagnosed with brain cancer. She battled this disease for over 6 years. In May of 2012 she started to become really ill. I knew that my time with her was beginning to be very precious. I spent every spare moment I had driving 3 hours to my hometown to visit and take care of her. She was my inspiration and my drive to live to my life to the fullest. She always encouraged me to do what inspires me and what I am passionate about. This is when I told her about Africa. Volunteering and giving back was always something I wanted to do in life. While sitting on the couch with her she turned to me and said "Charly look at me, your life can change in the blink of an eye. You need to take advantage of the time you have now. Live your life to the fullest and do what you want to do now, because you never know when your life might change". That is when I decided to fulfill my dream of volunteering abroad. I remember telling her how I was accepted to go and I was so excited. She was so

happy for me. She said "Charly, you're amazing and I'm so happy you're going". Later that year, in December, she passed away peacefully in her home. That was the moment when I made a promise to myself to carry through

family during my volunteer trip. Words cannot express how amazing my family was. They took such good care of me and made sure I was always comfortable and had enough food to eat. It was such a wonderful experience. I

also had a great time with other volunteers that were also staying at my host family. They were eager to help me in any way they could.

While experiencing all this on my volunteer trip, I realized that I was also experiencing self-healing in my personal life. I had gone through tough times in my life and I couldn't believe how this experience was affecting me in a positive way. Today I look at people differently and I see things with a different perspective. I appreciate life and the things that I have.

I would encourage anyone who wants to travel abroad and volunteer

their time to do so. There are so many things we can do to help. I feel that young students would



with this volunteer trip, knowing she would be watching over me.

I travelled to Africa this summer to begin my life-changing journey at the Underprivileged Children's Center in Ghana. This school supports orphans and children who live in extreme poverty and cannot afford to go to school. When I first arrived, as you can only imagine, I became very attached to the children that I worked with day in and day out. I started to really get involved in their everyday routines. I also stayed with a host



Charly Ainsworth in Africa

really benefit from this experience as well. I think it would teach young children to appreciate and become better role models and leaders for our schools and communities as well. Personally, it was so rewarding and life changing that words can't express how grateful I am to have had this opportunity.

I am proud to say that after returning from Africa I have decided to continue to support and help the children that I met. I keep in contact with the founder of the school and speak to him almost every day and I am working on new and exciting projects here in Ottawa that will help these children.

I want to thank all my friends and family and the OCDSB employees who have supported me throughout this journey, but most of all I want to thank my dear friend Danielle Provost for encouraging me to do this. Even though she is not with me today I know she is watching over me. She will be in my heart forever.

Charly

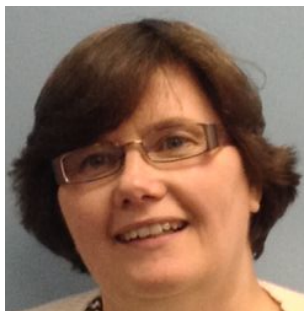
(Charly is an ESP member who works at First Avenue Public School. The ESP Bargaining Unit was pleased to support her work in Africa.)



Meet the ESP Executive for 2013-2014. Contact information for the executive is posted in the ESP conference on BEAM. We look forward to hearing from you!



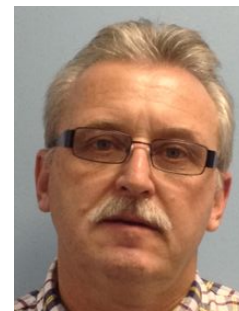
Margaret Elson (ESP Secretary) and Executive Officers Amir Ismail and Shelly McQuillen at this year's Labour Day Parade



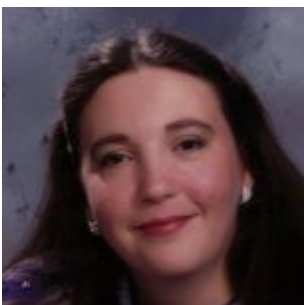
Bev Charles, Health & Safety Officer



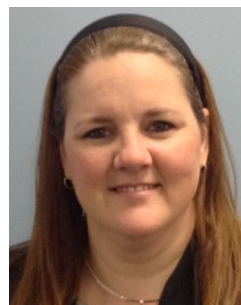
Chouy Johnston, Executive Officer



John Grochot, Executive Officer



Judy Soifer, Education Services Officer



Kelly Mills, ESP Treasurer



Roseann Perry, ESP Vice President

WHO'S WHO IN DISTRICT 25

So Who Else is in YOUR Union?

As part of an ongoing series for *ESpecially Yours*, we will be highlighting the different OSSTF bargaining units in the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB). District 25 has seven bargaining Units in the OCDSB. They are:

- Student Support Professionals (SSP);
- Plant Support Staff Unit (PSSU);
- Professional Educators and Child Care Staff (PECCS);
- Professional Student Service Personnel (PSSP);
- Secondary Teachers Bargaining Unit (TBU);
- Secondary Occasional Teacher Bargaining Unit (OTBU); and
- Educational Support Professionals (ESP) - that's us! All office, clerical and technical staff at the OCDSB belong to our Bargaining Unit.

In this issue, we will be highlighting the SSP Bargaining Unit. The Student Support Professionals

Bargaining Unit is made up of Educational Assistants (EAs) and Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). They currently have 619 EAs and 410 ECEs. With the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten and the Extended Day programs, their numbers have increased significantly and will continue to increase until the implementation is complete.

Educational Assistants in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board are a very diverse group of professionals. They are committed to providing quality education to every student according to their needs. They work in elementary and secondary Schools with Special Education students in both integrated and congregated sites. They also work in an itinerant capacity, assisting in the assessment of students for appropriate placement. Their duties can vary from implementing behaviour management plans to instruction in a therapeutic swim program. It may also include administering medication, responding to students' physical needs such as dressing and feeding,

communicating through signing or Braille, providing work place experiences in the community and enhancing educational connections, life skills, socialization and community learning experiences.

Early Childhood Educators in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board are registered with the

College of Early Childhood Educators. They work together with the classroom teacher to deliver a Full Day Kindergarten Program. The main focus for the ECE is to engage students in healthy physical activities and arts education. While doing so they provide a high quality and effective play-based education to support enhanced learning and cognitive, emotional and social development.

Early Childhood Educators also operate an extended day program that is offered before and after school. During this time they offer the students the opportunity to develop skills to become more comfortable in social settings and to interact with their peers and the adults who guide them.

So, if you see an EA or ECE at your site, please remember that they are part of your union. Say hello!

OSSTF D25 now has a Facebook group!

Its purpose is to foster member engagement and improve communications within our district. If you are on Facebook and would like to join the group, search for "OSSTF", then look for the group titled "OSSTF District 25 Ottawa-Carleton." Once you request membership, an administrator will add you to the group, as long as he or she can confirm you are a member of OSSTF D25. This group is currently for OSSTF D25 members only. The mission statement and guidelines for participation can be found on the District 25 website.



SSP President Cheryl Cavell and SSP Chief Negotiator Jean Trant

The Editor of *ESpecially Yours* is Margaret Elson. Comments, suggestions and contributions may be sent to her by BEAM anytime. Next issue - December 2013

Health and Safety - Everyone's Business

Ergo = work, Nomics = science of, and you...

Ergonomics is the science of working correctly to avoid Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) and Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs). These disorders develop over time, not caused by a single slip, trip or fall.

Between 1996 and 2004 Ontario Workers Compensation paid out over \$3 billion in direct costs and employers paid out \$12 billion (yes that's billion with a B). MSDs are the number one reason for lost time. And these are only the claims reported. Many suffer in silence or just take a sick day. It's known as the invisible illness as workers are often unwilling to complain. Warning signs are shaking fingers and hands, supporting wrists, massaging hands and arms or necks. Symptoms include swelling, redness, difficulty moving, numbness, tingling and pain. The major risk factors are job demand and work place environment.

Job demand is what you do. Is there repetitive movement? How quickly are movements performed? Do you hold tools for long periods of time? Is your back supported while sitting? Is any part of your body held in a static position for a period of time?

Force is another part of the job demand. Are you lifting, pushing, carrying or twisting? Is your action being repeated more than 5 times a minute? Are you lifting properly? Workers who use nail guns, screwdrivers or a computer mouse are at risk



because of the force used to grip or trigger. When vibration is added to a tool, the posture of the hand and wrist are affected. Doing a task using the same muscles over and over without adequate recovery, frequency, speed and duration are all part of the job demand component.

The work place component considers your workstation design, the equipment and tools you use, what materials you are handling, what the environment is like, how your work is organized, the work heights and reach

distances. Is your workstation adjustable and can both the shortest and tallest worker both work there? What are your tools like? Is the grip and weight comfortable? What about noise, vibration, position of the body? What is the temperature, lighting, noise and indoor air quality like?

Cold causes blood vessels to constrict, reducing blood flow and oxygen to muscles. If also exposed

to vibrations cellular damage is more likely. Heat can cause dehydration, slippery sweaty hands which affects grip, heat rashes, cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Glare and direct lighting can cause workers to use awkward

positions leading to eye, neck and shoulder strain.

If the air in your workplace is stale, contaminated or not properly circulated, the body reacts. The worker may not feel it at first, but just have an out of sorts type of feeling. It can

be periodic or continuous leading to feelings of lethargy, weakness, fatigue, or sluggishness, which can all cause an increase in injury.

Noise can affect the ability to concentrate or communicate. Physical stresses can cause damage to the hearing. Using awkward positions in an effort to communicate or avoid the noise source can cause strain.

How fast a job needs to be done, poorly organized work, too much to do, lack of variation, working at a pace dictated by a machine, inadequate breaks and working overtime, time pressures, job responsibility, lack of support, all contribute to the physical stress which can lead to MSDs or RSIs.

What can you do? If something hurts that means something is wrong and it should not be a normal part of your job. Report it to your supervisor or principal. Arrange to have an ergonomic assessment of your job and workplace. Report and get it corrected. See your medical professional if necessary. You are too valuable a person to let this slide!

Bev Charles

ESP Health and Safety Officer
OSSTF District 25

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE ...



Disclaimer - Although care has been taken in preparing the information contained in this publication, accuracy cannot be guaranteed. The opinions and views expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of OSSTF, or District 25.