The GEA Observer

October 2019

Vol. XLXVII Issue 38

President's Reflections

There's a definite chill in the air, and the leaves are changing colors, which can only mean that we are in open enrollment season. **Every contract employee is required to waive or elect insurance benefits.** The deadline for signing up for your district insurance benefits is 5pm on October 16. **Don't get stuck paying a $50 late fee** – enroll today!

Deadline to waive or elect district insurance benefits: Wednesday, October 16!

In last month's Observer, we pointed out that the state income tax is dedicated to the education fund, and is the only constitutionally guaranteed source of funding for K-12 education in Utah. The thought for this month follows logically: a cut to the income tax is a cut to education funding. The 2018 legislature cut the income tax rate from 5% to 4.95%. This seemingly small cut cost the schools of Utah $55 Million a year. Keep your eye on that ball as the 'tax reform' discussion progresses. For more info, go to myuea.org/TaxReform.

This edition of the Observer has examples of how GEA advocates for teachers and students, both individually and collectively. The column on page 4 talks about how to be your own best advocate, when you are questioned, and how to protect your rights even before your GEA advocate gets there. The AdvoCats column on page 7 talks about your liability coverage through GEA in the event you get sued by a parent. We hope you never need this individual advocacy, but it is available, and that's possible because of your membership.

Also in the AdvoCats column: how to get more involved with GEA. There are many opportunities to get involved. One such opportunity is described in detail on page 2 by Adela Genoves, a science teacher from Kearns High who ran for the position of delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly last year. I hope that you will read about her experience at this national meeting, and then consider running for such a position yourself. Declare your candidacy before the November 1 deadline. The elections announcement and candidate form is in your inbox, and on the GEA website at http://www.gea-ut.org/

Being involved with GEA has been very rewarding for me. I love working with such a dedicated group of professionals. Seeing you all in action gives me energy. My recommendation to everyone is – find ways to get involved.

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Dates to Remember:

—Wed., Oct. 16: Deadline to waive or elect District insurance benefits.

— Tues., Oct. 22, 5:00 p.m. @ the GEC: Granite School Board Study Session

— Wed., Nov. 6, 4:30 pm GEA Board/UniServ Meeting

— Tues., Nov 12, 7:00 p.m. @ the GEC: Granite School Board Meeting

— Wed., Nov. 13, 4:30 pm, @ GEA AR Meeting

Representing Granite Educators

One week of Houston summer as an National Education Association Representative Assembly (NEA RA) delegate wasn't just about Tex-Mex chile rellenos, the MetroRail, Houston Dynamo, the Historic Buildings, or even the humid heat. And even though Houston is known for many interesting things such as being the world capitol of space exploration "Houston we have a problem" and as the capitol of air conditioning (Thank goodness!); the real highlight of this trip was attending the 2019 NEA convention as a first time RA delegate with Granite Education Association (GEA) and as a Utah educator.

Each day as an RA delegate began early with our Utah Education Association (UEA) State Delegation meetings. After catching up on important points, FYIs, and general delegation work, we headed as jubilant masses to the convention center to congregate with the thousands of educators from across the nation participating in the annual representative assembly. We were greeted by NEA's staff and volunteers. Educators walked the convention hall checking out information booths, meeting in special interest caucus committees, chatting with other educators, and looking for the next coffee or snack to stay alert for the long game of the day's work. NEA's president, Lily Eskelsen Garcia, former UEA president and Granite teacher from Orchard Elementary, warmly welcomed delegates and led the representative assembly. Every day of the convention was a day of vigorous and passionate discussions and points of view. The democratic process was in full display, with Lily presenting resolutions and approximately 10,000 delegates providing context, experiences, and stories in support or opposition to the hundreds of resolutions that we, as delegates, considered and submitted our votes.

As if the day-to-day work of the NEA RA wasn't exciting enough, NEA hosted the Strong Public Schools Presidential Forum. The aim of the forum was to focus on issues most important to public education in our nation. Ten democratic presidential candidates were invited to participate in a 10-minute question session per candidate. It was amazing to be in close proximity to presidential hopefuls such as Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders, Beto O'Rourke, Amy Klobuchar, and a handful more. The questions asked by educators included the following issues:

- Student loan debt,
- charter school funding,
- school infrastructure
- educator training,
- the future of standardized testing, and
- pension and benefits for retiring educators.

It was quite a unique experience to see the candidates walk across the stage and address a sea of educators who will be at voting booths in 2020.

As a 2019 RA delegate I learned and engaged in the work of the NEA representative assembly. The experience was completely new to me, and with the guidance of seasoned delegates I gained a greater appreciation for the important work the assembly performs every single year. NEA is the largest union in our nation, and the work of this union is to protect the salary, benefits and working conditions of educators and the future of public education as the foundation of our nation's democracy. The work of our collective assembly transforms students and their families, and its effect ripples through communities large and small. Our nation's growth and prosperity are influenced by educators and their collective action to improve the state of education in every school district. I feel quite fortunate to have represented Utah and my local association, GEA, at this year's National Education Association Representative Assembly. Thank you for the opportunity.

—Adela Genoves, Earth Science Educator, Kearns High School , GSD

Who You Gonna Call?

Do the two documents pictured here look familiar? October is the time of year when GEA Association Representatives (ARs) distribute information about "Red Flag Moments" and inform GEA members in their buildings of the importance of asking for representation when facing disciplinary discussions with an administrator.

Why does GEA focus on Red Flag Moments every year? Teachers are trusting and don't always look out for their self-interest. In cases of potential discipline, it's **essential to first be your own best advocate.**

Let's take this concept one step further, "What do I do if the police come to school to ask me questions?" Granite District is one of the few districts which employs its own police force. The officers in our schools support teachers and students in so many ways, but remember, they are still police officers and anything you say to them can and will be used against you in a court of law. So what to do when your principal calls you to the office and the resource officer is present? UEA's general counsel offers the following advice:

⇒ Find out! Are they there to interview you as a witness or suspect, or both?

⇒ Listen first. Find out as much information as possible before you offer an answer to any questions.

⇒ Once you find out, don't jump into a statement—take some time to think through your response (written or verbal).

⇒ ALWAYS ASSUME THERE IS MORE TO WHAT THEY ARE ASKING!

⇒ The safest route is to always ask to speak to your GEA representative first.

If an incident occurred within the scope of your employment (i.e. assault, accidental inappropriate touch of a student (pulling on a student's shirt, hoodie, arm, hand, etc.) or any restraint or abuse of another person, as a GEA/UEA member, you have the right to legal counsel.

DO NOT MAKE A STATEMENT TO YOUR ADMIN OR THE POLICE WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF TALKING TO A GEA DIRECTOR ("ADVOCAT") FIRST!

One of your benefits as a GEA/UEA member is representation by an attorney or GEA Director through any investigation and/or prosecution of an offense. There is no mandatory time frame within which you must give a statement. Simply say: ***"I have done nothing wrong, and I am happy to cooperate as soon as we can do it through my attorney."***

What if an incident occurs outside the scope of employment (domestic violence, DUI, substance abuse on or off the job, threatening a student or colleague). There is "absolutely no good reason to answer questions or give a written statement without talking to an attorney first. "

Considerations:

1. Do not assume you know the whole story.
2. Do not assume everyone is telling the truth.
3. Do not assume you can explain.
4. Do not assume admin or the police are on your side.

Again, simply say: ***"I have done nothing wrong, and I am happy to cooperate as soon as we can do it through my attorney."***

A great benefit of GEA/UEA membership is that you have a director available at any time, and immediate legal support as needed. If you haven't yet joined GEA, JOIN NOW before something happens.

Healthy Lifestyles: Granite District Wellness Clinic

Schedule an Appointment:
Download the My Premise Health app or visit mypremisehealth.com or call 801-964-WELL (9355)

Address:
4163 S. 3200 West
West Valley City, UT 84119

Hours of Operation:
Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Saturday, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Get your flu shots at no cost!

Does Exercise Relieve Depression?

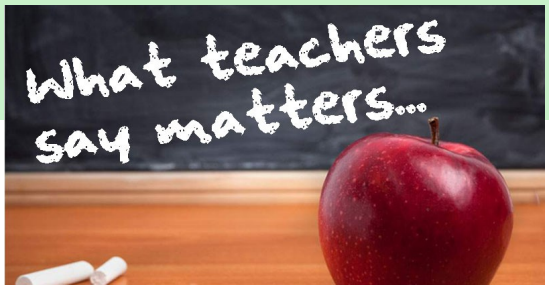
A: For mild to moderate depression, exercise is sometimes as effective as antidepressant medication — without the side effects. Exercise promotes improvement through brain changes: neural growth, reduced inflammation and feel-good chemicals (endorphins). It can also help by distracting from negative thoughts, promoting social connections (through exercise classes or clubs) and fostering self-esteem.

To reap these benefits, try 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity exercise (e.g., brisk walking): one 30-minute, two 15-minute or three 10-minute sessions, 5 days a week. Of course, any physical activity is better than none. After being cleared for exercise by your health care provider, start with several minutes of activity and increase your time each day. Choose an activity you enjoy, reward yourself to stay motivated and add variety to prevent boredom. Stick with it and you may soon feel better in mind and body.

— Eric Endlich, PhD (Hope Health/EMI Health Newsletter, Sept. 2019)

For immediate mental health services and crisis intervention, this link contains options and resources for you and your family. You're not alone: reach out: support is waiting. https://www.graniteschools.org/hr/benefits/employee-resources/

GEA Members Speak Out



"I have enjoyed teaching special education for 26 years now. The past 8 years I have been at a "highly impacted" school. We've had very dedicated, excellent teachers over the years. We all have stayed at our school because we are committed to help improve the lives of these "highly impacted" students. The past few years, however, with the new "grades" and "punishments" for the work we do, morale has gone way down and many of our best teachers are leaving our school. It is so discouraging to see the perception that our students are struggling because of us, the teachers, and we are punished for trying our best to make a difference in these children's lives. Please support and help us to make a difference in our students' lives so that they can grow up to be contributing adults. Smaller class sizes would make a huge difference in our school, as would higher pay for not only teachers, but the paraprofessionals and support staff necessary for our success." —Lisa Foster, Educator

GEA Directors, Star Orullian and Cindy Formeller—Your "AdvoCats"

Star Orullian

Cindy Formeller

Dear AdvoCat,

I've been teaching for five years and have been a member of GEA. I'd like to get more involved in the Association. What are some things I can do?

Signed: My Voice Matters

Dear Voice Matters,

Your email caused uncontrolled purring to occur! There is nothing I love more than hearing that teachers want more of a voice in their profession (well, except maybe pizza). There are several ways for you to be involved, both small and large.

- Talk with your GEA building representative and ask how you can support them in your building.
- Call GEA's president, Mike McDonough, and set up a time to come to the GEA Office for an informal discussion on how your particular skills and interests fit within the Association.
- Stay tuned for opportunities to attend Educator Day on the Hill during the 2020 Utah Legislative session,
- Attend a Granite School Board meeting with the GEA crew and learn more about how to navigate local politics.
- Think about running for a GEA position on the Board of Directors, elections for open seats (ethnic/minority representative, at-large rep, and attendance to the National Education Association Representative Assembly).

Give us a call on the "Cat Phone" and let's talk more—801-266-4411.

Dear AdvoCat,

This year, I have some extremely motivated parents who are critiquing my teaching and threatening legal action—what supports are in place for me to access?

Signed: No Good Deed

Dear Good Deed Doer:

Sadly, we live in a very litigious era and people can threaten legal action for any reason. For a teacher who only wants to support students, these threats can feel traumatizing. That's why you are a GEA member—so that you won't have to face these threats alone.

As a public employee, you are protected under the Utah Governmental Immunity Act which provides protection for public entities and employees from charges made against them for the day-to-day operating of their work. However, if something has occurred that is outside the scope of your teaching assignment, i.e. you restrained a student in some manner, are accused of saying or doing something unprofessional, allegedly treat another student differently, etc. etc. etc., then you need to contact GEA as soon as you're able. Your AdvoCats will guide you and arrange for legal assistance if necessary.

Talk to your building representative about "Red Flag Moments" and stay connected to the GEA Office (801) 266-4411 for those times when you need additional support. GEA membership = Peace of Mind!

URS
Utah Retirement Systems

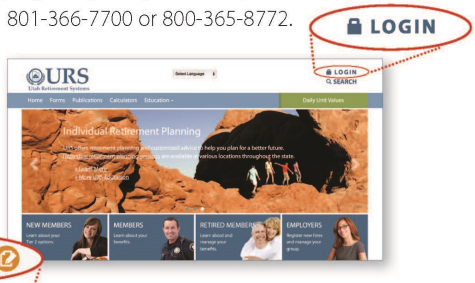
We don't care if your look is out of date.

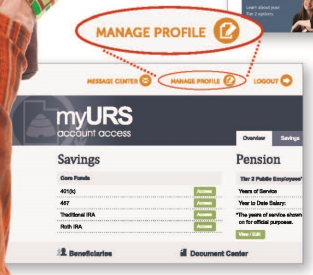
We just want to make sure your information isn't.

Even if your sense of fashion never changes, your personal information probably will. That's why it's a good idea to review your **contact information** and **beneficiaries** at least once a year at myURS. Incorrect or outdated beneficiary information could delay your wishes or prevent us from fulfilling them.

Log in to myURS

Go to www.urs.org and click "LOGIN" in the top-right corner. To create an account, you'll need your URS account number — a "W" followed by eight digits. If you have questions, call 801-366-7700 or 800-365-8772.





Click "Manage Profile"

It's the top-right corner of the myURS homepage. Next, choose "Beneficiaries" from the menu at left to make changes.

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Our page is: GEA

We also invite you to check out our website:

WWW.GEA-UT.ORG