

THE

The Newspaper of Local 1776
The Association of Catholic Teachers

SPIRIT '76 OF

1700 SANSOM STREET - SUITE 903 - PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103 - 215-568-4175 - VOLUME XXXV- NO. 3
Fax 215-568-8270 - email (nacst.nacst@verizon.net) - web site (www.act1776.com) - December 2014



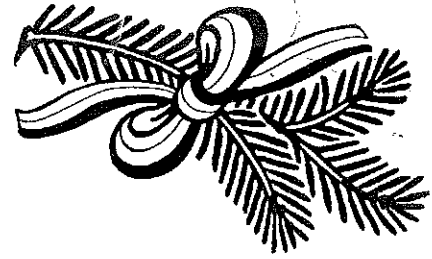
From The President's Desk

T'WAS THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS

It is the week before Christmas and our busy lives are getting even more hectic, if that is possible. In the midst of shopping for ninja turtles, decorating the house and writing my cards, I do like to take a little time to look back at what the year has brought.

A major happening was the Early Bird contract that made negotiations a lot less complicated and created a more positive working relationship. Because of the issues surrounding medical insurance, we opted for a one-year contract, which means we will be negotiating, again, this coming spring. The Association's letter requesting the opening of negotiations was sent to the Secretary for Catholic Education on December 10. The use of the Early Bird format for the upcoming negotiations had already been discussed. The Secretary responded that, "Our aspiration is also to complete an Early Bird negotiation as we did last year." When we return from Christmas break, teachers will be receiving contract survey forms to complete.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)



FROM THE PRESIDENT. . .

All teachers received a copy of the 2014-2015 Labor-Management Agreement electronically. It can also be found on the ACT Website.

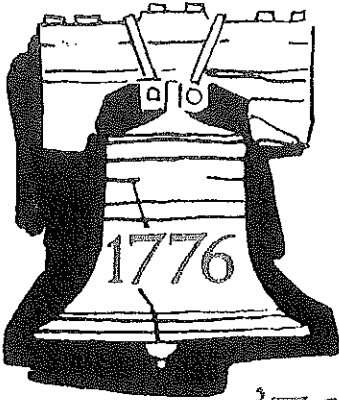
Grievances have not been as numerous, thank the Lord. Unfortunately, one of them is headed for binding arbitration. Throughout our history, there have been very few grievances that have gone to arbitration. I believe that last one was more than 10 years ago. This particular grievance concerns a teacher who continues to be laid off while teachers with less seniority have been hired. This is a serious breach of our contract. The Association's grievance was upheld by the Diocesan Appeal Board. The decision stated that the teacher should be reinstated "forthwith, on her appropriate salary level with full benefits, seniority and back pay." The System immediately filed for arbitration. Hopefully, the case can be heard soon, so that the teacher who remains unemployed, can return to her rightful place in the System.

Another issue very much on the table at the moment is Flexible Instructional Days or, as they are called in our Archdiocese, Cyber Snow Days. Let me say at the outset that the Association is not against the concept; it is, certainly, creative. However, as with all creative concepts, the devil is in the details. One extremely important detail is that the use of Cyber Snow Days would be a change in teacher working conditions. As such, nothing can be finalized unless there is a mutual agreement in writing between the Association and the System.

The first meeting between the Association and the System concerning Cyber Snow Days did not occur until December 17. The materials relating to the plan were sent to the Association on December 14. The Association's Executive Board will be reviewing the documents as well as the information ACT received at the December 17th meeting. We will keep you posted.

As you can see, the Association's Staff will be quite busy in the weeks and months to come. However, for now, let us concentrate on the blessings of Christmas and on all that the Christmas season means for us and for those we love.

Christmas Blessings to you and your family and best wishes for a Happy and Healthy New Year.



LOCAL 1776
Association of Catholic Teachers

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The Spirit of '76

November 17, 2014

Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., D.D.
Archbishop of Philadelphia
222 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Archbishop Chaput,

I am writing to thank you for being with your teachers on October 31 and for letting them know that you value them and the work that they do. Their gratitude for your faith in them was voiced throughout the day and in subsequent conversations.

Thank you as well for sharing with the people of the Archdiocese your thoughts on Catholic education, "Equipping Saints." It seems an eternity since January 6, 2012, when the Blue Ribbon Commission released its list of elementary and secondary schools earmarked for closing. Since that day, our teachers have labored hard to achieve sustainability, while always keeping the mission of our schools clearly front and center.

As the collective bargaining representative of the high school teachers, the Association of Catholic Teachers is proud of its forty-six year partnership with the Archdiocese. Our Union and its members remain committed to the schools and the students whom parents have entrusted to our care.

On behalf of our members, I wish you a Blessed Thanksgiving.

In his response, the Archbishop said, in part, "Like you, I was pleased to be able to gather with our valued administrators and teachers from across the Archdiocese on October 31st. I was reminded once again how blest we are to have such wonderful witnesses for our young people."

Sincerely,

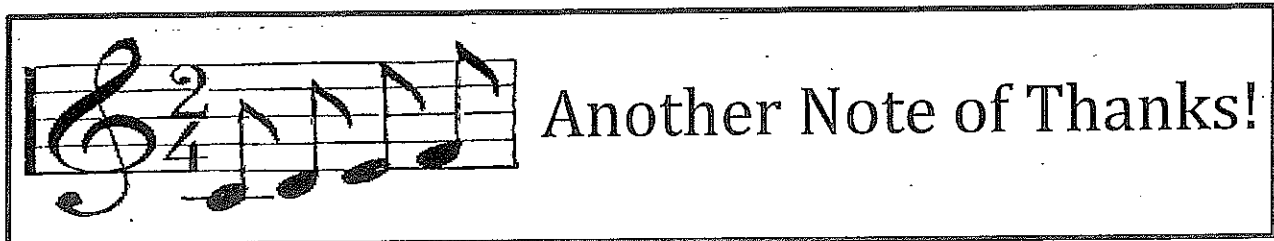
Rita C. Schwartz
President

FINAL STATEMENTS FROM THE LAY EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT PLAN

A number of teachers have asked when the Pension Office will be issuing the final statements to teachers on their benefits under the "frozen" Lay Employees' Retirement Plan. Originally, we had been told that teachers would receive their statements in November 2014.

I was informed by the Pension Office this week that final statements are expected to be issued in late January or February 2015.

If you are contemplating retirement at the end of this school year and need information now on your retirement income, please contact the Pension Office at 215-587-0570.



From: John J. Reilly Scholarship Award Winners

"Each year, the Association's Executive Board awards a \$500 Scholarship to the 9th grader in each Archdiocesan high school and at Holy Cross High School, Delran, New Jersey who has the highest general average as of the end of the first semester. If that student is already on scholarship, it is given to the highest student not receiving financial assistance. The \$500 Scholarship is sent to each school to be applied to the student's 10th grade tuition."

Dear Friend,

Thank you so very much for all that you do to support Hallahan and our Mission. Your generosity and kindness over the past year have been very much appreciated.

Warm Regards,

*Denise Kassekert
President*

IMPORTANT INFORMATION CONCERNING YOUR DENTAL PLAN AND PERIODONTAL COVERAGE

CONNECTING ORAL HEALTH TO OVERALL WELLNESS THE PERIODONTAL LINK

In 2012, United Concordia joined with Highmark Health Services to conduct the largest study of its kind to better understand the link between oral health and medical costs. They examined 1.7 million people over a three-year period and found that significant health care cost savings were possible when individuals with certain chronic conditions addressed their gum disease. For example, they found that there was a 33% drop in hospitalizations, a 13% drop in doctor visits and an overall savings of \$1,814 annually when gum disease was treated and managed in individuals with diabetes.

Periodontitis is an epidemic. Researchers know that those bacteria are able to travel the body's pathways through the bloodstream and respiratory system because they have found oral bacteria in other areas of the body, such as the arteries, lungs, and brain.

As a result of this three-year study, United Concordia Dental created **Smile for Health Wellness** to help close the gap between oral health and total body health. By preventing and treating periodontal disease, the cost relating to infection and inflammation was greatly reduced. And as a result, there was also a positive effect on the overall health for individuals with certain chronic diseases.

Under your dental coverage with United Concordia, periodontics is covered at 50%. However, teachers with any one of the following chronic diseases will have periodontics covered at 100%. These chronic conditions are as follows: Diabetes, Heart Disease, Cerebrovascular Disease (stroke), Rheumatoid Arthritis, Lupus, Organ Transplants, Head and Neck Radiation Therapy.

In order for you to receive 100% coverage on Periodontics, you will need to go to the United Concordia website at www.UnitedConcordia.com. Sign in or create a *My Dental Benefits* account. This is where you will sign up for the Smile for Health Wellness Program. Once your medical condition is verified, United Concordia will turn on the added periodontal coverage. You may also contact United Concordia at 1-800-236-9168 for additional information.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ACT MEMBERS

All teachers are asked to logon to the ACT Website (www.act1776.com) and verify your personal information. It is critical that we have your current information and that it is accurate, since this is a contract year. It is important that we have a **PERSONAL** email address for you, since contract information and updates, Executive Board Minutes, and other pertinent information will be sent via email. We cannot and will not send email to a school email address.

Every teacher was provided with a username and password for the ACT Website. If you do not have this information, please contact Ginny at the ACT Office at 215-568-4175 or email her at ginny@act1776.com and she can provide this information to you.

To update your personal information, logon to the ACT Website and, in the upper right hand corner of the homepage, click on member login. Type in your username and password and then verify the information on file. Any changes made will be sent to the ACT Office automatically.



Lancer's Local

Issues or contractual items of interest to
Holy Cross H. S. (Delran, NJ)

The faculty wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!



ADDITIONAL REMINDERS

ADDRESS CHANGES -- If you are in the process of moving or have already moved to a new address, don't forget to call the ACT Office with your new address and phone number. You can also visit the ACT Webpage and log-on to your personal page and update your information.

VISION CARDS -- All teachers currently on the vision plan should have received a new vision card in the mail. Teachers who have signed up for benefits beginning January 1, 2015 will be receiving their identification cards before the end of the year. If you are currently on the vision plan and did not renew for 2015, your benefits will end on December 31, 2014.

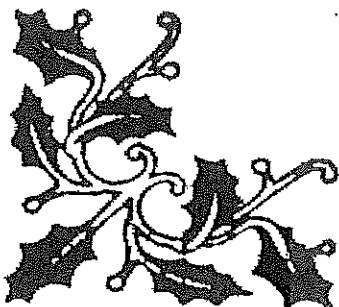
MEDICAL CARDS -- Teachers should have received new medical cards in November. If you did not receive a new card, or if you are in need of additional medical cards, please call Claudia Bonde at the Office of Catholic Education at 215-587-4520 or contact the ACT Office.

RETIREMENT INFORMATION -- The ACT Office has put together some medical information (rates, comparison sheets and contract provisions) for teachers who are considering retirement in the near future. If you are considering an early retirement or if you will be reaching the age for normal retirement, call the ACT Office at 215-568-4175 for your retirement packet. You may also email your request to ginny@act1776.com.

FREEDOM CREDIT UNION -- The Freedom Credit Union offers teachers and their families a wide range of financial opportunities. Savings accounts, loans, MAC, IRAs, to name a few, are available to members of the credit union.

The Freedom Credit Union has four Philadelphia locations, as well as an office in Abington, Lansdale and Warminster. For more information visit the credit union's website at www.freedomcu.org. You may also call the ACT Office at 215-568-4175 or the Freedom Credit Union at 215-612-5900.

AT & T DISCOUNT OR ACT MEMBERS: ACT Members can receive a 15% discount on their AT & T monthly mobile phone bill. Proof of membership will be required (ACT Union Card).
You Must Mention Code 3508840.



MONTHLY GROUP MEDICAL RATES FOR RETIREES AGE 65+
(Effective January 1, 2015)

PERSONAL CHOICE 65:

Single Coverage: \$718.90

KEYSTONE 65 HMO:

Single Coverage: \$626.10

Retired teachers who are enrolled in any of the above plans are automatically enrolled in Medicare Part D. **You DO NOT need to enroll in an individual Medicare Part D plan, if you are enrolled in one of the above medical plans with the Archdiocese.** In fact, if you do, you will lose your Archdiocese medical and prescription drug coverage because the Archdiocese plans are now considered Medicare Part D plans, and you may not be enrolled in two Medicare Part D plans at the same time.

FOR TAX PURPOSES and/or FSA REIMBURSEMENT

DENTAL BENEFITS: If you are retired and/or on an Extended Leave of Absence beyond three semesters and paid for your dental benefits, the amount paid in 2014 is as follows: Individual Coverage = \$258.36, 2-Person or Family Coverage = \$658.32.

VISION BENEFITS: If you participated in the Voluntary Vision Program in 2014, the amount you paid for this benefit is as follows: Individual Coverage = \$83.28
2-Person Coverage = \$166.80 and Family Coverage = \$250.20.

FSA REMINDER

If you were a participant in the 2014 FSA Program, please remember that all monies in your account should be exhausted by December 31, 2014. Any funds that remain in your account after December 31, 2014 will be lost. However, this does not mean that all your eligible expenses have to be submitted by December 31, 2014. You have 90 days after the close of the calendar year in which to submit eligible expenses for 2014. All eligible expenses for 2014 must be submitted by March 30, 2015.



**Merry
Christmas**

and

**Happy
New
Year**



**From
Rita, Irene and Ginny**