

## **Membership matters...now more than ever!**

No one has been hit harder in this budget crisis than the ESPs. It seems that our job group carried the biggest burden on some already weakened shoulders. Some of our co-workers were RIFed and some were just not asked to return at the beginning of the year. A few of those who stayed returned to work with a larger workload, but we have all born this burden because of one thing ... Our love for Arizona's school children.

The majority of ESPs do not work for the money, for the sake of having a job; we work because we love to be around the children and are committed to seeing these children succeed. It is hard sometimes to believe that we are valued, especially since we were the largest job group hit by the budget cuts.

What may seem strange is that this current situation is a membership opportunity. I know it is much easier to talk to someone about how bad things are or how they are going to get, but that does not mean that this has to be our conversation.

When times are rough in my personal life I surround myself with people that make me feel stronger, people who share the same values as I do, those who stand up for what they believe in, those who want to take charge of a situation to change it rather than waiting for it to be changed for them. I look for those people who know what is right and do it and not take the easy road out.

When I want to speak to someone about something that is going on in my professional life, generally I can not talk to my husband ask my father for advice. They do not have a clue as to what I am talking about. Who do I go to? I go to my co-workers and to people in my association. They are here for the same reason that I am. They share the same values as I do. They understand what I am going through because they have received the same furlough days as I have, they have known someone who was not asked back, they work in the same environment as I do. These people are the ones that I surround myself with ...why? ... Because they are choosing to stay ESPs. They are staying positive and doing their jobs professionally, with dignity and with respect. Some do not feel as respected as they should however they remain because they want to make a difference in the life of a child.

I believe that MESP and AEA are trying to change things. They are trying to do what is RIGHT. Their values of are demonstrated in their actions. The Arizona legislative leadership and the Governor are feeling the effect of their actions. Instead of sitting back and allowing all of the budget cuts locally and state-wide to happen, our members called, emailed, rallied, picketed, blogged and even twittered to put pressure on the legislature.

MESP and AEA are doing what is right for the children of Arizona – not to mention they are fighting for the rights of not only support professionals but for teachers. There have been results but the battle is surely not over. As this fight continues MESP/ AEA and its members will keep putting the pressure on the legislature to do what is right.

We need people to take a stand and join in. In these tough economic times there has never been a greater need for a strong association. We need someone to speak out for public education and people listen when our membership is high locally and statewide.

When someone asks you why they should join when they still get the benefits of our negotiations ... your answer is simple..."Because it is the right thing to do!"

Make the commitment to talk to someone in your site who is not a member. Share with them the benefits of membership. I asked a recent member why they had never joined before now her reply was simply..."Because no one ever asked me before." This is often the case, so take a chance and ask those people who share the same values as you do, Those people who are living through the same experiences that you are, ask those co-workers who you know care about Arizona's children to join us to fight for what is right!

# What are our Committees and What do they do?

- **Bargaining:**

Also known as the Negotiations Committee, the Bargaining Committee surveys members and prepares a proposal package to be negotiated with the Governing Board by the Association's negotiating team. This package will cover all areas of member welfare and general working conditions.

- **Membership:** Heather Johnson - Chair

The Membership Committee organizes and conducts membership enrollment. Its members shall attempt to enroll members and former members for the current school year.

- **Political and Legislative:** Robin Abrams-Ryan - Chair

The Political and Legislative committee shall have a broad concern for state and national legislation affecting the interest of the Association. It shall inform members about newly proposed and enacted legislation related to their welfare; promote activities leading to the passage of desirable legislation; encourage members to exercise their responsibility to vote and their right to participate in political activity.

- **Advocacy:**

The Advocacy committee shall explore and prepare programs for securing satisfactory policies and procedures for addressing grievance issues. It shall be proactive in seeking to prevent, provide alternative solutions, and resolve any problem or issue involving the defense of our member's individual rights.

- **Social/Retirement:**

The Social and Retirement Committee organizes such social activities that promote fellowship within the Association.

- **Budget:** Heather Johnson - Co-Chair / Phyllis Yancey Co-Chair

The Budget Committee prepares and proposes to the Executive Board a plan of action for a budget for the Association each year.

- **Elections:**

The Elections Committee handles the end of year elections that fill our MESP officer positions, (ARs) Association Representatives as well as elections for AEA Delegate Assembly and National RA representatives from MESP.

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To volunteer to be on one of these committees please contact Robin at 400-3258 or Crystal at 954-5594. You may also interoffice mail this section to Heather Johnson at Tortolita Middle School.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Located at: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee(s) Interested in: \_\_\_\_\_