

THE SCHOOL BELL

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COME HELP US CELEBRATE!!!!

Mark your calendar! The 5-E/G (SMEA) Coordinating Council will be celebrating the 150th birthday of the Michigan Education Association. We have scheduled our party for Thursday, May 8th from 4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. at the UAW Hall in Three Rivers. We are excited to have this opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of our association and the public schools in our communities.

Each local has been asked to nominate one community organization or business as a special friend of public education. We will honor up to ten groups or businesses. Each will receive a special invitation in March to the May celebration where they will be awarded a certificate of appreciation and have the chance to win some nice door prizes.

Volunteers are needed to help put on the party. Please contact your local president to volunteer.

Please help us show our appreciation to the groups that are special friends of education and make this a great celebration!

TEACHER AND ESP TAX BREAK REMINDER

For the 2002 and 2003 tax years, teachers and education support professionals (employed for at least 900 hours in a school year) can claim an above-the-line Federal tax deduction for the first \$250 of "out-of-pocket" spending on student supplies. The above-the-line deduction is important because an eligible school employee does not have to itemize to qualify.

The new deduction is included in the economic stimulus bill signed by the President on March 9th.

THERE'S STILL TIME TO PAC!!!

Although most PAC campaigns are over, we will continue to accept contributions through out the remainder of the school year. If you haven't given yet, please consider becoming involved. We must protect our schools, student and ourselves by contribution whatever we can. **EVERY DOLLAR COUNTS.**

In the Senate House race, 56 of the 74 candidates that MEA recommended won, and in the State Senate race 19 of the 28 won, and we helped to elect the governor we had recommended. We are making a difference, however, our work is still cut out for us. A recent article in The Missaukee Sentinel states the Great Lakes Education Project placed fourth in PAC fund raising in 2002 with \$1,094,000 – taking in nearly half of its contributions (\$545,000) from Betsy and Dick DeVos. In comparison, the 157,000-member MEA was fifth with \$1,066,000. In reality, this means our 157,000 membership raised only \$221,000 more than Betsy and Dick DeVos contributed!

If you haven't filled out your PAC, do it now. Political contributions are the lifeblood of lobbying. MEA's lobby efforts mean more money for schools. An MEA PAC contribution is a vote for better schools, locally, statewide, and nationally.

Give what you can. Every dollar donated goes a long way in Lansing and locally.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

March 11-12	Kathie in Mt. Pleasant for Statewide Staff Meetings
March 11	SMEA Board of Governors Meeting
March 20	"Grievance Processing" Training, 4:00 pm - RSVP
March 25	MPERS Retirement Workshop – Kalamazoo RESA - RSVP
March 28–29	ESP Statewide Conference – Marriott, Troy, MI. Forms available in the office or on line – at www.mea.org
May 2-3	Spring RA
May 8	150 th MEA Celebration

WORDS YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO HEAR

Many times it was what we didn't say that made the difference to our children. Here are some of those "didn't say phrases" that we need to make sure we do say:

I'm so lucky to have you
You are a great helper
I like it when you try so hard
Let's talk about it
I'm sorry
You're very special to me
Thank you for being patient
You're a great kid
I love you

They are small phrases that can produce big results.

NEW MEMBERS – VETERANS

New members, do you want advice on surviving your first years on the job? Veteran teachers and ESP, do you need an update? Want to know how MEA can help you? Sign up for "Skeeter's" New Member Tips at www.mea.org/newmembers. Every month you will receive timely tips, reminders and suggestions to make the job easier.

MARCH 2003 IS NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The National Women's History Project (NWHF) organization has selected "Women Pioneering the Future" as the theme for National Women's History Month, March 2003.

This national celebration, originally "Women's History Week" was initiated in 1978 by the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County (California) Commission on the Status of Women.

In 1979, a congressional resolution declaring a "National Women's History Week" was proposed. Celebration of National Women's History Week spread across the nation as an effective means to achieve equity goals within classrooms.

In 1987, the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to expand the celebration to the entire month of March.

One goal of this year's celebration, according to NWHF, is for students to recognize and honor women

within their own communities whose pioneering work and leadership has sustained the health and well being of their towns.

In conjunction with the MEA's Women's Issues Committee, we invite you in your classroom and workplace to showcase women, pioneers of the future. We urge you to celebrate women's history during March 2003 and every month throughout the year.

Lu Battaglieri, President
MEA

Lynda Min, Co-Chair
Women's Issues Committee

Debra Morgan-Muse, Co-Chair
Women's Issues Committee

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

The 4C and 5E/G Coordinating Councils have a Legislative Council Meeting scheduled for Monday, March 31st at 6:00 p.m. in the Bronson MEA office. Senator Cameron Brown, Representatives Bruce Caswell and Rick Shaffer will be present to meet with the members. School funding is a critical issue that needs to be placed before our state representatives in a manner that shows our commitment and concern.

Members are needed to represent the 5 E/G Coordinating Council. MEA-PAC contributors who are registered to vote and live and/or work in the districts represented are eligible to participate in the legislative council's activities.

Remember, most decisions concerning public education are decided by elected officials. Show your interest in today's critical education issues. Make sure that your elected officials hear and understand your concerns. Please contact Glenna in our office, (269) 279-5285, by March 14th to volunteer.

This edition and the next edition of the School Bell will be posted on our SMEA website which you can reach at www.iammea.org/smea.