

SPRING 2024 VOLUME I

AFT GUILD 1931

Standing in Solidarity, Building Our Community

BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY

Larissa Dorman-Cobb
Organizer/Trainer



AFT Guild, Local 1931 Member Colleagues,

Welcome back to Spring 2024!

We are so excited for this semester--we have so many amazing events and workshops planned and opportunities to build our union community (check out our Feb/Mar events calendar on the next page or on our aftguild.org website).

Our union now has 30 campus coordinators, our newest group of union leaders! These members help to support social events and opportunities to build our union network on campus. This semester, we are finishing up our recruitment of our next group of union leaders, liaisons. We also have over 150 members interested in serving as liaisons so far and we are looking for more (check out our flyer below)!

Be sure to come out for our Valentine's Day Events on Wednesday, February 14th to meet your campus coordinators and learn more about our liaison role (look for the flyer with details for your campus)



We will hold our Liaison Retreat and Training on: Friday, April 19th from 10am-12pm (Location TBD) so be sure to sign up today (aftlarissa@gmail.com)!

We look forward to building upon our AFT Guild Community Network and finding ways to continue supporting our members!

In Solidarity,

Larissa Dorman-Cobb

Member Spotlight



JESSICA STANFIELD
GROSSMONT & CITY COLLEGE
ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR

I was born and raised in east county San Diego. From the time I entered Monte Vista High School as a freshman in 1995 I knew I wanted to be a teacher in some form. My mom had a long career as a high school teacher in the Grossmont Union High School district, so I grew up around education. I earned my B.S. from SDSU in 2005 and my M.S., also from SDSU, in 2008. I loved my TA duties so I focused my goals on teaching at the college level.

I've been teaching chemistry as an adjunct for Grossmont College since 2013 and San Diego City College since 2016. I really enjoy getting to share things that excite me with my students and seeing them grow in their skills as scientists. I found a sticker on the instructor podium in one of the classrooms I teach in recently that says "Some people only dream of meeting their favorite scientists. I teach mine." I couldn't agree more. I also love that I have the opportunity to not just teach standard chemistry courses, but I get to teach classes in scientific thought, chemistry through the lens of every-day life, and environmental chemistry, all of which are really fun to teach.

When I was hired by Grossmont in 2013 I did not have health insurance through the district. After I'd been around a bit I heard that health benefits for adjuncts were newly available for those who taught long enough and at a high enough load. These health benefits are phenomenal. In June of 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, I gave birth to my daughter. While I didn't catch Covid, I did end up having some very serious complications and experienced two Covid-era hospital stays. Thanks to the amazing benefits AFT negotiated for adjuncts I paid \$0.00 for both of my hospital stays. I've had multiple health issues related to my pregnancy in the last few years and one thing my family never has to worry about is being able to afford all the doctor's visits, tests that I've undergone, or the surgery I recently had. I paid \$15 for that surgery. This has allowed me to focus on my family, my health, and my students instead of how I'm going to pay for all this care. I've also been able to say "okay, sure, let's do that" when one of my doctors wants me to have a test done without needing to see what it's going to cost. Another major benefit is that my daughter is also able to be on my health benefits as well.

I am so incredibly grateful to AFT for negotiating such robust health benefits for adjuncts. The work the union has done to improve the working conditions of adjuncts inspired me to want to get involved with AFT resulting in joining our Executive Council in 2019. I feel privileged to work with such an amazing group of people in the union who are all focused on uplifting each other, our colleagues, our students, and our society as a whole.



Soon-Ah Fadness Professional Development Coordinator



Hello again from the AFT Professional Development program!

First, I hope you all have found a way to navigate the start of the rainy semester for yourselves and for our students. Second, whether you serve our students as a classified professional, a part-time faculty member or a full-time faculty member, AFT has professional development events that will assist you with personal and professional skills. If you're part of our the cohort participating in AFT's Leadership 101 series, we met on February 9 to learn and discuss how we can lead with our strengths.

Then on Thursday, February 22 from 2:30 – 4:00 pm, we will be hosting a free Wellness, Self-Care and Sound Bath at Mesa College. If you're intention this year is to take better care of yourself physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, this event is for you!

And for March - we'll be holding another Tenure-Track Bootcamp at City College Please share this information with any of your part-time faculty colleagues and ask them to put Friday March 18, 9:00 - 3:00 in their calendar. We'll also be hosting another Communication Bootcamp on Friday, March 15, 9:30 - 12:00 - Communications Bootcamp at Grossmont College. This is an amazing opportunity to learn about your communication style, improve your interpersonal communication skills, and learn to navigate conflict with kindness. Finally, on Wednesday, March 20, 3:00 – 4:30 we'll be hosting a Equitable Administrative Practices at City College.

This event focuses on how we can re-think our administrative practices (email, calendar usage, effective digital communication) to create equitable and kind boundaries, that better support our own well-being and the well-being of our colleagues and campus community.

For all these events, please be on the lookout for emails from AFT/Jim Mahler for more details and how to register. As always, I'm excited to be doing this work for AFT and grateful for every one of you who has taken the time to attend and event, and to provide feedback and ideas. If you have ideas and suggestions, please reach out to me at AFTprofdev@outlook.com.

AFT & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR OF EVENTS



EVENT CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2024

09
FRI

Leadership 101: Leading with our Strengths

14
WED

AFT Valentine's Day Love Our Union Events

22
THU

Wellness, Self Care & Sound Bath

28
WED

Adjunct Day of Action

MARCH 2024

01
FRI

Building Financial Wealth

08
FRI

Tenure-Track Bootcamp

15
FRI

Communication Bootcamp

20
WED

Equitable Admin Practices

FURTHER DETAILS: AFTGUILD.ORG/EVENTS



Union Healthcare Coverage Saved My Life—Everyone Should Have It

Last summer, after twenty-six years in the classroom, something taught me even more about what it means to be a human being than I had learned from all my time as a professor in the humanities: I almost died.

On vacation in Hawaii, I was suddenly hit with acute liver failure caused by previously undiagnosed autoimmune hepatitis and then rapidly declined after barely making it home from Maui. If the liver specialists at Kaiser and UCSD had not gotten me into the ICU and to the top of the transplant list in time, I would be dead. I had less than a day left, I'm told.

As I wrote in a piece for the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#):

What did this teach me? A number of things. The great James Baldwin's title character in "Sonny's Blues" says that sometimes you need to "smell your own stink." I did. I was incredibly humbled, made aware of the lack of control I had over things we delude ourselves we can control. I watched my body and my mind's decline—I lost my ability to read deeply, write, and even think clearly by the time I reached the operation table. My idea of "me" withered, and I was not at all confident I would be there after the surgery. I had to tell the ones I love the most, my son, my wife, my family, my closest friends, that I might not make it to the other side; the kinds of conversations I would wish on no one, friend or foe.

I also learned how important the love and support of others was in sustaining my family and me at a profound, existential level. Their compassion and love helped keep us going. It gave meaning to suffering.

Finally, I have come to value the labor of union healthcare workers even more, from the brilliant and fiercely dedicated Kaiser doctors and the UCSD Liver Transplant team who saved my life, to the nurses, like the one in ICU, Jeff, who reminded me of Whitman's "Wound Dresser"—who was "faithful" and would "not give out"—stepping from the poem to my bedside, whispering to me in the dark of the night that "you can't fight the river, go with the river." And amazingly, both he and one of my surgeons used to be my neighbors in Golden Hill and remembered me. It gave a whole new and deeper meaning to what "love thy neighbor" really means.

And now, as I recover, with deep gratitude and compassion for the struggle and suffering of others, it is still hard to write a piece like this, word by word, sentence by sentence, step by step. Life is about persistence in the face of hardship and if we are lucky, we can transcend and heal.

At present, as I head back to work after making it through several other near-death experiences, I am also grateful for the community of colleagues at my college and in AFT 1931 across our two districts and CFT statewide for all their support.

But, most importantly, I am humbled by the good fortune, indeed the privilege, I have as a union worker with fully funded healthcare coverage. During my long journey, I spent over a month in the hospital, endured too many tests and procedures to list, and am on buckets of medications that help keep me alive. Without the healthcare I have because of our amazing union contract, I would be bankrupt or dead.

Amidst my crisis, I was witness to the harsh realities facing the millions of Americans who are still lacking affordable healthcare. I saw them ushered out of emergency rooms too early and rolled out onto the street in wheelchairs to suffer (and perhaps die) alone. In fact, I will never forget the sight of a homeless man, still wearing a gown, sitting in a wheelchair outside the hospital that I was leaving after my recovery from surgery as he stoically held a sign in his lap that simply said "Help."

As an educator, I have always thought that teaching is first and foremost an act of compassion, a practice or feeling with others that requires deep listening. It's not about you; it's about others.

In the world of the union movement, we are guided by an old motto that expresses the central principle of labor: "An injury to one is an injury to all."

In other words, anyone's plight should always be everyone's concern. None of us have real freedom, justice, or equity until all of us do. It's about the greater good. At the heart of the notion of solidarity is, as with teaching, a profound compassion for others.

As the saying goes, "there but by the grace of god [and a good union contract] go I." Thus, I am living proof of the value of the union and the benefits we have won for each other and our families. Not everyone is so lucky.

That's why it's essential that we keep our union strong and do what we can to expand quality healthcare coverage to all, both maintaining and improving access in our own ranks and pushing for basic social justice in the society at large. Every human being should be granted healthcare coverage, not as a privilege but as a fundamental right.

-Jim Miller



GETTING TO KNOW: YVONNE SCHMELTZ OUR NEW AFT GUILD MEMBER ADVOCATE

I grew up in the midwest, raised by a unionized Teamster diesel mechanic, and a non-unionized door factory worker. I grew to understand the acute differences between a job with a union, and a job without. After 22 years of being surrounded by factories, cornfields, and cemeteries; I moved to San

Diego, California. My career and passions revolve around creativity, education, advocacy, and lifelong learning. For more than 15 years, I have been working for the San Diego Community College District, excited to build community, support, and help lead efforts like the Annual Social Justice in Education Conference, and the AFT Immigrant Student Support Committee. When I first became a contract classified employee in 2008, my kid was 3 months away from being born. I had worked for the district as a Nance employee for years before getting my contract position. When the baby came, the union helped enforce my parental leave under the bargaining agreement and CFRA. District HR was saying my Nance hours didn't count towards qualifying for CFRA leave, despite being the same employer.

I joined the AFT Executive Council in Fall of 2011, and have been representing and advocating for folks in different capacities ever since. Currently, I am thrilled to be working for the AFT Guild 1931 full-time, and am well versed in mediation, contracts, connection, communication, community building, and leading. Active in the San Diego Imperial Queer Alliance (SDIQuA) which is a regional hub of LGBTQ+ identified community college educators, students, community members, and collaborators, I work to support Classified educational workers, and the queer community in advocacy, visibility, and research. I am looking forward to working hard for AFT members, advocating, enforcing, and organizing efforts around more equitable workplace environments, including the push for a 32 hour work week, and living by the daily mantra, "leave it better than you found it."

I also sit on the Board of Directors for Gxrls Rock Camp San Diego, empowering non-binary youth, and girls through music. I believe in this organization, and spaces like this for our youth, whole-heartedly. Along with parenting and spending time with friends and family, any extra moments are spent playing and listening to music, doing book arts, reading, writing, embroidering, and laughing loudly.



Tina Solorzano Fletcher Organizer & Membership Coordinator



As we closed out the fall semester, the organizing department worked diligently to contact as many people as possible to discuss membership before the holidays. As a result, we had several people become members over the winter break! Welcome to our newest members!

In November I was invited to give an overview of the benefits of Union membership to the Project Assistants at ECC.

The new "AFT I am my Union" water bottles will be available for our members at our first AFT events this spring semester. To receive yours attend the Valentine's Day: Love our Union, Love our Members event on February 14.

We have many AFT Union benefits that are available to members. If you are interested in any of the following, please contact me at aftTina@mac.com.

- AFT Member number or a membership card
- AFT Member Benefits presentation
- AFT Swag for your next event





What's Next After the 30-Dollar Minimum Wage? How About a 32-hour workweek!

The San Diego Community College District is setting the bar high with its new \$30 dollar and hour minimum wage for classified employees. As the Voice of San Diego (insert link: <https://voiceofsandiego.org/2024/01/29/san-diego-community-college-district-has-a-new-minimum-wage-30-an-hour/>) observed of the increase, “That means it’s now \$12 higher than at any other community college district in the county.” This increase dwarfs the city of San Diego’s minimum wage of \$16.85 and puts pressure on other employers to follow suit.

As the Voice also noted “the district can act as a disruptor and encourage other employers, including other community colleges, to increase wages for their employees. It may even draw people working in private industry or city or county governments to the district.”

Of course, AFT applauds this well-deserved gain, and hopes it will push the ceiling higher for union and non-union workers across the city of San Diego, one of the most expensive places to live in the United States. By establishing a living wage as a standard, we can help lead the way for a more economically just San Diego.

But we should not stop there. Just as the \$30-dollar minimum wage for employees can help set the mark for other workers across San Diego, we believe achieving a 32-hour work week would have a huge impact for non-union and union positions within the county. In the coming months, we will be organizing around this issue and seeking to change the way folks think about the nature and value of classified work and work in general.

As Senator Bernie Sanders wrote in the Guardian:

[M]illions of Americans are working longer hours for lower wages, with the average worker making nearly \$50 a week less than he or she did 50 years ago, after adjusting for inflation. Further, family life is suffering, as parents don’t have adequate time for their kids, life expectancy for working people is in decline, and increased stress is a major factor in the mental health crisis we are now experiencing.

Compared with other countries, our workplace record is not good. In 2021, American employees worked 184 more hours than Japanese workers, 294 more hours than British workers, and 442 more hours than German workers. Unbelievably, in 2023 there are millions of Americans who work at jobs with no vacation time . . . It’s time to reduce the work week to 32 hours with no loss in pay.

Studies have shown that despite working fewer hours, workers are either more, or just as, productive during a four-day work week. One study found that worker productivity increased 55% after companies implemented a four-day week. A trial of four-day work weeks for public-sector workers in Iceland found that productivity remained the same or improved across the majority of workplaces.

Sociology professors Juliet Schor and Wen Fan of Boston College make a similar case to Sanders in the LA Times reporting that, “Our research suggests that the four-day, 32-hour week is not only feasible; it’s better for workers and employers.” They note that companies that reduced workers schedules without reducing pay wound up with improved well-being and greatly reduced stress. In fact, “Of more than 100 companies with thousands of workers around the world, nearly 70% experienced reduced rates of burnout.”

So, if employers think it’s better to have workers with better attitudes, less stress, fewer conflicts, and more robust mental and physical health, then they should pay attention to Schor and Fan’s research. Significantly, they found that most employers rated the success of such a change very highly and most who have participated in trials of a 32-hour week have continued the practice.

Why then, if productivity does not take a hit, do some still oppose the 32-hour week? Schor and Fan speculate that, “Many will continue to oppose a shortened work schedule because it sounds un-American or unprofitable.” Nonetheless, they argue that “we’re finding out that modern challenges make the four-day workweek not only possible but better for workers, employers and society.”

As The Week (insert link: <https://theweek.com/articles/454364/what-happened-sixhour-workday>), “Studies over the last half century have shown that productivity caps out at eight hours for manual laborers, and even less for “knowledge workers” — those who sit at desks and deal with words and data. These workers generally only churn out about five to six “good, productive hours of hard mental work” a day, says Sara Robinson in Salon. ‘After six hours, all [the boss has] really got left is a butt in a chair.’”

Thus, the 32-hours week simply makes sense not just for the San Diego Community College District but for all workers. The issue occupies an key nexus where the bread and butter concerns of workers meet the larger goals of social justice in that giving more time for workers liberates to own more of their own time and live richer lives than move beyond the merely instrumental.

Achieving this lofty goal will depend on us having a strong membership will keep its eyes on the prize and stay active and ready to contribute to this larger campaign.

-Jim Miller



AFT GUILD INTERNS IN ACTION

MARCH
SECURING STUDENTS' FUTURE
THURSDAY, MARCH 7th, 2024
MARCH

ITINERARY FOR THE DAY'S ACTIVITIES:

12:15pm-2pm:
Groups meet in the parking lot of Sutter Health Park, AKA River Cats stadium

2pm-2:15pm:
Gather to begin march toward the California State Capitol, crossing the Tower Bridge

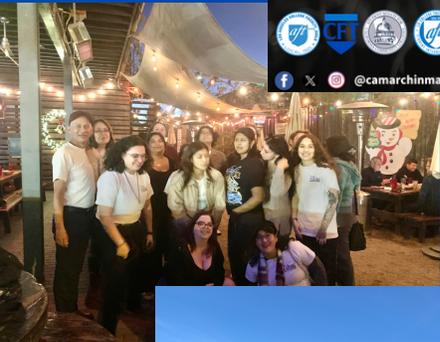
3pm:
Arrive at the California State Capitol

3:30pm-4pm:
Spiritual rally on the West Lawn with a schedule of speakers

4:30pm-5pm:
Participants depart

#MARCHINMARCH

@camarchinmarch



You can keep up with our amazing interns between newsletters by following @aft1931interns on Instagram.

AFT GUILD INTERNS



AFT 1931's student interns were on fall break for January, but they stayed active and engaged with our community action groups throughout January. They worked on a variety of climate change campaigns and events with organizations like DSA-San Diego, Garden 51, and Power San Diego, and continued to stay active with cease fire protests and events through People for Palestine, North County 4 Palestine, and the Black Panther Party of San Diego. Interns are also getting more and more embedded in our ecosystem of advocacy organizations by volunteering at events like Alliance San Diego's annual MLK Day gala- the All People's Celebration. The All People's Celebration draws some of the most well-known change makers in San Diego, including organizers from United Domestic Workers, San Diego 350, Jewish Family Services, and Activist San Diego. They remain some of the best representatives of AFT 1931 and our commitment to social justice unionism.

One issue and campaign that the interns will work on throughout the spring semester is the illegal eviction of farmers from the New Roots Community Garden. This garden is a longstanding and beloved natural sanctuary in the middle of City Heights. For decades, this enormous garden farm has been a place where people who are newly immigrated, many with refugee status, and from a variety of countries come together to work with the land and provide healthy food to their communities. Now, the City Heights Community Development Corporation is trying to evict local residents who have put in their blood, sweat, and (now) tears into turning the land into a resource for all. But they won't go down without a fight. On Sunday, January 21st, a garden defense event was organized in a coalition effort with New Roots Community Garden farmers, Enero Zapatista, the Tenants Council of San Diego, and DSA-San Diego, and labor was there in full force too. Our interns, faculty from SDSU who went on strike the next day, and UCSD graduate students from UAW 2865, were all there showing what worker solidarity and social justice unionism looks like. For more information about the campaign, just search "New Roots Community Garden lease dispute" for recent news reports on the ongoing legal battle.

Our first meeting with AFT interns was last week. We hashed out plans for participating in the upcoming primary election and recruiting students for the March in March event in Sacramento next month. (See flyer announcement for more information!) They also finished up the first ever intern zine and will start distributing to students and local zine libraries. Come to our next general meeting in March to see the zine and meet the interns for yourself!

~Erin Evans, AFT Student Internship Coordinator