

UTNO Update



Summer 2009

ALL ABOARD – Don't miss the UTNO Train!

It's busy at UTNO "Grand Central" station.

The trains are running fast and furious at UTNO this summer as members charge full speed ahead attending professional development seminars and bashing down walls for the Extreme Classroom Makeover.

Members also are steaming into Baton Rouge to push legislators for a solution to rising retiree health insurance premiums and to let the BESE board know New Orleans parents and teachers want local control of our schools.

Next Stop: Washington, D.C.

UTNO Members Rally for Healthcare

The train also stopped in D.C. where UTNO joined thousands of trade unionists from across the country in lobbying for access to affordable, high-quality healthcare.



Summer is a time to recharge after the end of another busy year. It's also a time to reflect on the many challenges facing New Orleans teachers and support personnel, some good—such as improvements in LEAP scores, some bad—such as the cruel and unfair increases in retiree health insurance premiums.

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Fighting for Collective Bargaining

Efforts to re-instate collective bargaining are continuing to gather steam. Executive Council members are fine-tuning strategies and laying the groundwork to re-ignite the fight.

UTNO Wins Victory on Sabbatical, Sick Leave

Eligible members may be entitled to receive payments following preliminary approval for a settlement of an UTNO class action lawsuit against the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB).

A Civil District Court judge upheld an UTNO claim that the school board failed to distribute savings from amendments to the sabbatical leave and sick leave laws in 1999.

Notices have been sent out, and those who wish to file a claim to participate in the settlement must complete the Claims Form and return it postmarked no later than Oct. 15, 2009.

Visit www.utno.org for information or call 1-877-864-2199. Important note: This settlement is unrelated to the wrongful termination class action lawsuit filed after Katrina.

Members Kick Off Summer Fun at UTNO Picnic

The first stop this summer was the UTNO Picnic on May 22. More than 200 members, potential members and friends, made a rest stop at Popp Fountain in City Park where a perfect evening of music, dancing, food and great conversation was enjoyed by all. For announcements of other future fun social events, visit the UTNO website: www.utno.org.

photo by Sylvia Hillard



UTNO Professional Development: Improving Teaching and Learning

As the one organization that involves teachers and other school employees from the whole spectrum of public schools in New Orleans, UTNO takes seriously the goal of a quality education for all young people.

One of the many ways the union helps accomplish this goal is by providing professional development opportunities for educators. A major objective of UTNO's professional development program is to develop teachers who can assist in the training of their colleagues.

All members and potential members are encouraged to attend workshops and to join in the planning and development of professional opportunities.

UTNO's Professional Development Committee meets at 5 p.m., on the second Thursday of every month beginning August 13.

Kids Ride Free

Middle school students are invited to take part in a free writing and creative arts workshop July 27-31 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m., at the UTNO headquarters, located at 4718 Paris Avenue.

The New Orleans Bread Loaf Experience (NOBLE) Writing Workshop for Middle School Students is a one-week, intensive writing and arts workshop to help students discover how enjoyable creating arts and writing can be.

Students will become more competent and confident writers and artists, and will improve their public speaking skills. NOBLE offers students the unique



experience of being part of a community of writers. By the end of the program, students will produce a literary magazine, artwork, and a public reading and exhibition of their work.

Students must send in an application. Selections will be based on recommendations and a desire to write. Applications are available at www.utno.org. Please complete and mail application to: NOBLE, c/o UTNO, 4718 Paris Ave, New Orleans, LA 70122.

Contact: Shavon Magee, (504) 339-9792 or shavon_magee@nops.k12.la.us or Julie Wedding, (217) 652-5813, or mswedding@hotmail.com.

Extreme Classroom Makeovers Begin

The walls came tumbling down at Eleanor McMain Secondary School (NOPS) as soon as school ended in May, and work on a brand new art room



for Natalie Maloney's art class is well underway. The art room will be revealed on Aug. 12.

McMain is one of two schools selected for this year's Extreme Classroom Makeover. Renovations on Justin Mack's science room at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School (RSD) will begin soon.

Retirees Fight Health Insurance Rate Hike

Members of the UTNO Retiree Chapter and other union members stormed legislative committee meetings and hearings in Baton Rouge to raise the urgent need for intervention on the astronomical health insurance rate increases.



But our voices were not heeded.

After a last minute Sunday session, held with little public announcement, the health insurance appropriations efforts stalled and died as the last days of the legislative session came to a close.

Even after UTNO urged members to phone and email legislators to demand that they help our retired teachers and support staff, the session ended with no help for retirees.

The Retiree Chapter is formulating new strategies to continue this fight for fair treatment for our retired educators.

Back To School Event

The third Annual Back To School Event—Bridging the Gap 2009—will be held from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Aug. 1 at Willie Hall Park (1101 Milton Street). Students will receive free school supplies (while supplies last) and free immunizations. The event also will feature free food, games, the Audubon Zoomobile and the Wetlands Express.

UTNO members are encouraged to volunteer and help our students prepare for the year.

Community Involvement

Momentum is building to regain local school control. Parents, teachers and community members are demanding that BESE (the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education) allow community involvement in our local public schools.

UTNO has joined others in the New Orleans educational community in urging BESE to give control of our schools back to the parents and teachers who want a quality education for all children.

UTNO is a member of the *Yes We Care* Education Committee and is working with a coalition of clergy, community and union activists to ensure local concerns are addressed. A busload of concerned parents and community members traveled to Baton Rouge on May 19 to demand that BESE become accountable to the students, parents and community of New Orleans. UTNO believes BESE meetings should be held in New Orleans so those affected by BESE decisions can provide input on critical decisions affecting our children.

On the Radar

Some of the issues on the horizon that will need immediate action include the next round of school closings and school mergers, the RSD extended day, and petitioning for collective bargaining.

Watch your email for UTNO *Get Active* email blasts announcing upcoming actions and events, and be ready to add to the collective voice.

It's already an exciting summer ride and you are invited to climb aboard the UTNO train. Ride it or drive it – but don't miss it!

Call the union at (504) 304-2160 to find out how to get onboard. Your ticket to better learning conditions for students, better working conditions for teachers and other school employees, and a stronger voice in your school is here at UTNO Union Station! Come on board!

In Solidarity,
Larry Carter, UTNO President



United Teachers of New Orleans

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