



# 1274 NEWSLINE



NORTH SUBURBAN TEACHERS UNION – LOCAL 1274, CFL, IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

## Big Changes at NSTU Local 1274!

### NSTU President Steve Grossman Steps Down to Serve on the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board

Our NSTU President, Steve Grossman, had been appointed by Governor J.B. Pritzker to serve on the [Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board](#). Because board members are prohibited from holding other offices, Steve had to resign as president of the NSTU. He will be one of five members of the IELRB, the state agency responsible for administering the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act, which establishes the right of educational employees to organize and bargain collectively.

This is a highly prestigious appointment. With almost 25 years of experience in union leadership, Steve is eminently qualified to protect the rights of educational employees in Illinois. According to Steve, "While it is difficult for me to step away from my work with our local, the IFT, and the DePaul Labor Education Center, it is gratifying to know that through my position on the Labor Board I can play a role in bringing fairness to labor relations in educational work settings." We were incredibly fortunate to have had Steve as NSTU President since 2010, and we wish him the best in his new, well-deserved position.

### Vice President Pankaj Sharma Steps Up as President

We are in good hands as Vice President Pankaj Sharma succeeds Steve as NSTU President. Pankaj grew up in Skokie and is a Golden Apple Award winning social studies teacher in his alma mater, Niles North High School. He has served in union leadership his entire teaching career, including terms as NTFT President and NSTU Vice President, and he currently sits on the AFT's K-12 Program and Policy Committee.

### Jill Paisley Appointed as the new Vice President

The NSTU executive board elected Jill Paisley as the new vice president. Jill is a special education teacher at Clarence E Culver School, where she has taught 26 years of her 27 year teaching career. She joined their council leadership in 2013, stepped in as president in 2017, and is currently co-president with Beth Polich. As a council president, Jill currently serves on the Local Executive Board and has served for two years as the constitution committee chair.



## PEGGY COUCH PSRP MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Local 1274 offers a \$1,000 scholarship to a graduating high school senior who has been accepted to a college or university and whose parent is a NSTU member and a PSRP. These scholarships are renewable for four years!

Applications for the 2021 Scholarship will be out in the spring, so watch for the email.

## From Our President

As you have seen for this newsletter, there have been many significant changes at Local 1274 recently. We welcome our new Vice-President Jill Paisley to her new position and welcome back Field Service Director Debra Takehara to Local 1274. We must thank our outgoing president, Steve Grossman, for his nearly 25 years of union leadership in our local during which time we have seen record membership and increased engagement with our councils, members, and community leaders. Steve gave so much of himself to our local over the years and helped set a standard of leadership and dedication that is an example for all. We will miss him as our president, and congratulate him on his new appointment to the IELRB. Fortunately we will continue to benefit from the leadership, wisdom, and experience of our local treasurer, Robyn Caplan, who continues to provide exemplary service to our local.

Our new leadership team is committed to maintaining the strengths of our local: member engagement, meaningful resources for councils and members, good fiscal stewardship, and being active within the community, the IFT, and the AFT. We do recognize our ongoing and difficult challenges surrounding racial equity, teaching and learning safely during a pandemic, and the larger challenges facing the labor movement and working people around the state and country.

One specific goal we have as a leadership team is to encourage and assist all councils within our local to develop their own equity policies and programs to encourage anti-racist policies and efforts at the council level with union and school activities. In addition, the NSTU is exploring opportunities for offering equity and anti-racist professional development trainings for members through the NSTU. Finally, we plan to include an equity portion to the new council president and officer training conducted by the NSTU at the beginning of every school year. We look forward to working with all of you in the days ahead to take on the necessary challenges to create the best schools possible for our members, our students, and their families.

In Solidarity,  
Pankaj Sharma

## More Changes at the Local Office

Our Local 1274 IFT Field Service Director, Cameron Sweeney, has transferred to the Lake County IFT office, which is much closer to her home and to her childrens' school. She has deep ties to Local 1274 and grew up in the community, attended our schools, and served as the president of NTSS at District 219 while working there as a paraprofessional. Although we will miss her, this is a great opportunity for Cameron, and we wish her well!

Cameron's replacement also has deep ties to the Local. Not only has Deb Takehara served previously as our Field Service Director, she's also a long-time Skokie resident who was a union leader at District 69 before going on to work as an organizer for the IFT. She will be leaving her current position at Local 942 in Orland Park to return to our office. We're lucky to have her again. Welcome back, Deb!

### 1274 Newsline

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### Officers and Staff

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Deb Takehara

### Equity Chair

Omar Salem,

### Retiree Chair

Jacki Naughton

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Sherry Jo Baehr

## April 6 School Board Elections at Local 1274 Councils



Many of our Local 1274 councils have important school board elections in the April 6 election. It's important that we elect school board members who support educators and who are committed to working with council unions to provide quality education for students. Below is a list of all the school board candidates for local councils, along with some links to candidate information.

### Northbrook School District 28 (4 open seats)

- [Northbrook Caucus: Candidates for District 28 School Board](#)

Matthew Cassidy  
DeShawn Clayton Arms  
Jennifer G. Gallinson (incumbent)  
Shweta Jinkala

### West Northfield School District 31 (4 open seats)

- [League of Women Voters of Glenview/Glencoe Candidate Forum: West Northfield District 31 School Board \(video\)](#)

Darrin Stern  
Jeffrey Steres (incumbent)  
Allison Slade Rothstein  
Meredith Estes  
Laura J Greenberg (incumbent)  
Nancy Hammer  
Nicholas G Parfitt  
Matthew Dapin

### Kenilworth School District 38 (4 open seats)

Ashish Kaura  
Stephen N. Potter (incumbent)  
Paul W. Anderson  
Bill Graham (incumbent)

### Wilmette School District 39 (4 open seats)

- [League of Women Voters of Wilmette Voter Guide 2021](#)
- [League of Women Voters: Candidate Forum \(Video coming soon\)](#)

Jane Hong Shissler  
Bonnie Kim  
Lisa Schneider-Fabes (incumbent)  
Anne Hart  
Jon Cesaretti (incumbent)

### Golf School District 67 (4 open seats)

Jermaine Lindsay (incumbent)  
Alex Beck  
Noel Lorenzana  
Nada Ardeleanu (incumbent)

### Skokie School District 69 (5 open seats)

Stephen Dembo (incumbent)  
Lindley Wisniewski  
Fernanda Perez (incumbent)  
Laila Iqbal  
Kandice Cooley Jones  
Richard Van Hees (incumbent)  
Kennya Durr (incumbent)

### Morton Grove School District 70 (4 open seats)

- [Morton Grove District 70/Park View School candidates in April 6 election share their views](#)

Paul L. Torres (incumbent)  
Kristey Michalak Chalabi  
Pamela Alper  
Jeremy Wilson  
Mark Thannert (incumbent)

### Niles Elementary School District 71 (4 open seats)

Matt Glancy (incumbent)  
Jaclyn Jaime  
Dexi Karabatsos (incumbent)  
Matthew Holbrook (incumbent)

### Fairview School District 72 (3 open seats)

- [Candidate Questionnaire for Fairview South School District 72 School Board](#)

Jacqueline Bujdei  
Sargon Guliana  
Diana Diakakis  
Erin C. Swanson  
Roxann Salgado  
Lawrence Walters  
Petar Gataric Jr.

**East Prairie School District 73** (5 open seats)

Atanu Das (incumbent)  
 Erick Tumang (incumbent)  
 Amanda Martinsen (incumbent)  
 Sarah Connolly

**Skokie School District 73.5** (4 open seats)

Ashley Wooten  
 Emily Twarog Miller (incumbent)  
 Victoria Wolfinger  
 Maureen Jacob

**Lincolnwood School District 74** (4 open seats)

- [Candidate Questionnaire for Lincolnwood School District 74 School Board](#)

Nashra Mohammed  
 Leah Brennan  
 Greg Petersen  
 Mateo Farzaneh  
 Lidia Kaihara  
 Kevin Daly (incumbent)  
 Rupal Shah Manda (incumbent)  
 Scott L. Anderson (incumbent)  
 Peter D. Theodore

**Niles Township High School District 219** (3 open seats)

- [Candidate Questionnaire for the Niles High School District 219 School Board](#)
- [Niles West News: D219 School Board Candidate Forum](#)
- [D219 TV: D219 Board of Education Candidate Forum 2021](#)

Naema Abraham (incumbent)  
 Richard Evonitz (incumbent)  
 Joseph S. Nowik (incumbent)  
 Irena Petryk  
 Kathleen Weiss Boyle  
 Elana Jacobs  
 Ross Sawyers

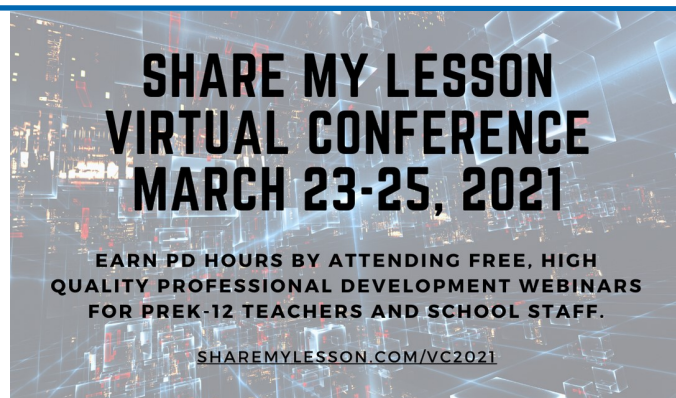
**Ridgewood High School District 234** (3 open seats)

Christopher O'Leary (incumbent)  
 Michael J Straughn (incumbent)  
 Paul R Draniczarek (incumbent)  
 Jamie Richardson

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## NSTU Equity Committee

Last summer, the NSTU executive board voted to create a committee focused on equity and led by an appointed equity chair. The primary goal of this committee is to encourage and assist all Local 1274 councils to develop their own equity policies and antiracist programs. Other initiatives include providing equity and anti-acist PD for members through the NSTU, and providing equity training to new NSTU council presidents and officers.

**Meet Omar Salem, NSTU Equity Chair**

We are pleased to welcome Omar Salem as Chair of the NSTU Equity Committee. Omar has already led several meetings of the Equity Committee, where members discussed possible training opportunities, barriers to entering leadership, creating affinity/ally spaces, and supporting colleagues of color without burdening them. Please contact your council president if you are interested in serving on the NSTU Equity Committee.

Omar will be leading a workshop in AFT's *Share My Lesson Virtual Conference* on March 23. Click here to sign up: [LGBTQ+ Identity In The School Community: Confronting Barriers To Acceptance](#).

**Introduction from Omar Salem**

I grew up in Morton Grove and I attended District 69 (Madison, Edison, Lincoln Jr. High) and District 219 (Niles West) schools. I graduated from Illinois State University with a Bachelor's in Business Teacher Education. After student teaching at Niles North HS, I spent the next five years working as a paraeducator in the Special Education Department at Niles North. I worked for one year as a .6 paraeducator and .4 teacher before teaching full time in the ELL Department at Niles North and West in 2014.

Starting in July of 2019, I've had the opportunity to get involved with many projects through the American Federation of Teachers. I attended the TEACH Conference in 2019 and the AFT/UFT Leadership Summit in 2020. I am also a member of the AFT's Identity Affirming Classroom Team where we are developing a curriculum for members of the AFT. I hope to utilize the many resources provided by the IFT and AFT to be able to facilitate meaningful equity work for people in all positions across the NSTU.

## The Chicago Union of the Homeless

This year, Local 1274 gave a donation to the Chicago Union of the Homeless (CUH) after Susan Dobinsky, a retired member, came to us about the valuable work of this organization. Susan is a supporter of the CUH and was an ELL and Spanish teacher at Niles North High School for 27 years, and a long-time member of Niles Township Federation of Teachers and Support Staff (NTFTSS) and Local 1274. We asked Susan to write a guest article on CUH and the realities of homelessness in and around Chicago.

### Homeless, Not Helpless! Organizing the CUH

by Susan Dobinsky

The Chicago Union of the Homeless (CUH) is a membership organization of people who are currently homeless or have experienced homelessness. Having been a member of NTFTSS and Local 1274, I am very aware of the benefits my family and I have enjoyed as a result of my union membership, including financial stability, access to good health care, and an equitable and safe workplace. The work of the CUH should be of interest to all of us who understand the strength of union solidarity. While the CUH is not a labor union, it does share a similar mission to empower people to act on their own behalf.

The original chapter of CUH was disbanded in 1991, but [this new local Chicago chapter was re-constituted in October 2020](#). Their mission is to commit their lives to ending homelessness and poverty and to work tirelessly for the human right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and for social and economic justice. Bruce Perry, a member of the CUH and an Executive Board member for the National Union of the Homeless (NUH), estimates there are 7,000 to 8,000 people currently living on the streets in Chicago. Homeless encampments can be found all over the city, often under viaducts or elevated train tracks. Some people stay on CTA trains in order to stay warm. In the Loop, people are found living on Lower Wacker Drive, on the upper floors of enclosed parking lots, in alleys and doorways. Perry believes if you also count people living in impermanent housing such as cars, RVs, squats or "couch surfing," there are tens of thousands of homeless individuals in metro Chicago. Finding and connecting to people living in such diverse settings is the greatest challenge to organizing for the CUH. Perry says, "the goal of the



The CUH February 23 protest at CHA included a procession a symbolic coffin to memorialize homeless city residents who have died on the streets.

CUH is not just to get people off the streets, but to find tangible ways to end poverty and homelessness and the only way to do that is for those people without homes to lead the way. The Chicago Union of the Homeless is going to be organized by, for and of the people without homes."

This winter, the most critical work was to save the lives of people living on the streets during sub-zero temperatures. The CUH and mutual aid partners have moved more than 100 people to hotel rooms and supplied tents, blankets, food, drinking water and propane. Many people rely on propane heaters to stay warm in their tents, but this can lead to tragic accidents. In February, a propane tank fire started at the Sacramento and Wellington encampment. One man suffered 3rd degree burns to his back and was hospitalized for several days. He had nowhere to go after being discharged except back to his encampment, but his tent and belongings had burned. Someone donated a tent, but after a day he was in so much pain that he was moved to a hotel room where he was better able to recover. His burns are healing well and he has returned to his tent. City warming centers were opened during the cold snap but did not stay open at night, and there wasn't enough capacity in 24-hour shelters. Risking hypothermia or using a dangerous heater to stay alive is a terrible choice. Another complication was the COVID 19

protocols which limited available spots in shelters. Homelessness is cruel anywhere, but especially in cold climates during a pandemic.

Hopefully, spring weather will accelerate the pace of membership organizing. By May, CUH intends to form a representative council, rather like the NTFSS system of department reps. In District 219, it's relatively easy to maintain communication between union leadership, department reps, and teachers and staff. Communication between leadership and members of CUH will certainly be more challenging but they are determined to establish a representative, democratic organization.

Some of the actions CUH held this winter:

- On the December 10th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, CUH met at the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services to help people with processing for housing through DHS, and to invite people to sign the [CUH Human Rights petition](#).
- On December 21, the CUH held a memorial service at the State of Illinois Thompson Building and led a procession to City Hall to commemorate Wayne Warren, a U.S. military vet who froze to death in his tent, as well as others who have died in homelessness during the last 12 months.
- The homeless communities received more than they could use at the holidays and wanted to share the excess with the wider community, so CUH organized the Christmas Love initiative to give some of their donations to food distribution sites and mutual aid networks.
- On Martin Luther King Day, CUH held a rally and press conference at Cabrini Green to draw attention to more than 1,000 vacant CHA units that could be used to house people.
- On February 23, [CUH held a protest and press conference in front of CHA headquarters](#) to demand that CHA move quickly to open vacant properties to people in need.

Housing often exists in tandem with other advantages such as having good health care, dental care, adequate nutrition, food storage, and access to laundry and bathroom facilities. Most of all, those of us with housing enjoy the comfort and relaxation of being in our homes. Being housed takes care of many of our simple, personal needs without having to consciously plan for them. Being unhoused means having to manage every personal need, every day. It means always looking for solutions. It is a stressful existence. Yet, even considering these differences between people who are homeless and people who are not, we are the same. Our humanity is the same. I am hopeful that CUH is successful in its mission of eliminating homelessness and promoting positive social change.

## Support Staff Council of Skokie 73.5 Joins NSTU

Please welcome the Support Staff Council of Skokie 73.5 as our newest council of our Local. They represent paraprofessionals and support staff personnel working in three Skokie schools: Elizabeth Meyer School, John Middleton Elementary School, and Oliver McCracken Middle School. After receiving notification that an overwhelming majority of its PSRP workers had signed cards declaring their intent to unionize, the District 73.5 Board of Education recently voted to *voluntarily* recognize the new union. This is exciting news, and the organizers of our new council deserve special recognition for all their hard work on behalf of their colleagues: Tseggy Gomez (President), Kaleb Carter (Vice-President), Heather Haggerty (Secretary), Aasia Shahid (Meyer Building Rep), and Joann Eisenstein (Meyer Building Rep).

This makes two new councils within the past year! We welcomed the Support Staff Council of D38 in 2020 (See page 6 in [October 2020 Newslines](#)). We are happy to say that we now have almost 2,000 members in Local 1274.



## Are You Interested in Pursuing National Board Certification?

Illinois offers a subsidy to pay for the \$1,900 fee associated with becoming a National Board Certified Teacher. Go to [nbc.illinoisstate.edu/firsttime](http://nbc.illinoisstate.edu/firsttime) to apply. The deadline for applications is May 10, 2021. Find more information and resources at The [National Board Resource Center \(NBRC\) at Illinois State University](#).

## Support the Bill to Include NBCT's on School Report Cards

[House Bill 2438](#) was recently introduced in the Illinois General Assembly. This bill amends the School Code to require the State Board of Education's school report cards to include the number of teachers who are National Board Certified Teachers. Please contact your [state representative](#) and encourage them to support this important bill.