

West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, IFT, AFT, AFL-CIO

Union Messenger

"A Union of Professionals"

November Calendar

11/4-5—IFT Fall ULI (Westmont)
 11/6—ExBd Mtg. (5:30 p.m.—
 Westmont)
 11/15—Deadline for filing IRS forms
 for Councils that closed their books in
 June

Union Messenger

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Margaritaville

Dear Union Siblings,

As the president of West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, my daily life is a whirlwind of phone calls, meetings, internal negotiations, and advocacy for the dedicated educators and support staff in our union. That's on top of my full-time job as a high school math teacher. It's a role that demands constant dedication and often leads to stress and burnout. However, I



occasionally find myself contemplating an unusual source of inspiration to counteract these pressures: the music and lifestyle of Jimmy Buffett.

I must admit, I've never been a Parrot Head, nor have I attended any of his legendary concerts and now I never will. It's my own damn fault. I never even owned one of his albums either. Yet, as I occasionally would tip my toes into the world of Jimmy Buffett, I always discovered a philosophy of life that I believe could benefit teachers and support staff in our profession.

Buffett's music embodied a laid-back, carefree spirit that seems almost counterintuitive to the high-stakes nature of our jobs. However, there's a valuable lesson here – the importance of balance. Just as Buffett's lyrics celebrate escapism and the simple pleasures of life, we, too, can benefit from taking time to unwind and appreciate the small joys around us.

One of Buffett's signature songs, "Margaritaville," speaks to the idea of letting go of stress and embracing a relaxed state of mind. While we may not be sipping margaritas on a beach, we can adopt the mindset of finding our own "Margaritaville" in our lives – a place of respite from the demands of our profession.

Additionally, Buffett's song "Cheeseburger in Paradise" reminds us to indulge in life's pleasures. It's a nod to the idea that even in the midst of our responsibilities, we should make time for the things that bring us joy, whether it's a delicious meal, a hobby, or quality time with loved ones.

So, as I reflect on the teachings of Jimmy Buffett's music and lifestyle, I find myself thinking, "Maybe there's something to this 'Margaritaville' state of mind." While I may not become a full-fledged Parrot Head, I can certainly learn to appreciate the value of relaxation, balance, and taking a break from the daily grind.

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Margaritaville

As the sun sets on another busy day, I'll take a page from Buffett's playbook and declare, "It's 5 o'clock somewhere." I hope he's having a cheeseburger in paradise, and I hope that all of us in the world of education can find our own moments of paradise amidst the chaos. Cheers to a more relaxed and stress-free future! RIP Jimmy. Thank you and here's hoping he is correct that come Monday it'll be alright.

In Unity,

Kyle Stern

Press Release—September 13, 2023

AFT's Weingarten Calls for AI Guardrails, Smart Regulation to Ensure New Technology Benefits All

Congress Must Act, Not Leave AI Oversight to the Companies that Created It

WASHINGTON—American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten issued the following statement after attending today's [AI Insight Forum](#) hosted by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer:

"It was an honor to represent educators, other workers and families at today's forum to discuss the artificial intelligence technology that holds so much promise for America but also presents serious concerns for democracy and humankind. If we want to harness that promise, we need both innovation and commonsense safeguards.

"Both Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Mike Rounds agreed that with rapid growth comes huge responsibility. Just as safety protections drove the expansion of the airline industry, the same holds true for AI.

"We're concerned about worker displacement and inequity, but with the right regulation there's also potential for new jobs and career pathways, starting in high school.

"Seventy-one percent of educators use education technology every day in the classroom. We're not Luddites. AI is a game-changer, but teachers and other workers need to be coaches in the game.

"That's why we can't make the same mistake we made when we failed to act after social media's damaging impact on kids' mental health became clear.

"AI needs to supplement, not supplant, educators, and special care must be taken to prevent harm to students. In that way, we can seize the future together."

<https://www.aft.org/press-release/afts-weingarten-calls-ai-guardrails-smart-regulation-ensure-new-technology-benefits>

Take advantage of IFT's Virtual Instructional Coaching & Mentoring

Interested in participating in VIC as a mentee (first, second, or third year teacher), mentor, or coach?

Please [contact](#) your IFT Field Service Director for more information. Thank you!

[Take advantage of IFT's Virtual Instructional Coaching & Mentoring \(ift-aft.org\)](https://ift-aft.org)



Life Lessons from Sports

It was Saturday, Oct 20, 2018, and I was excited after a very tumultuous season as head coach of the Argo Girls Tennis team. A season which would be my last, but I did not know it at the time, nor did I want it to be my last. While most of America had moved onto football, I was still holding on to a Major League Baseball season that was trying to stay alive amidst the fall and inevitable coming winter. Oh, how I am not a fan of the darkness of winter. I was not yet an Area Trustee of Local 571, that would happen in November of 2018. I thought it would be a great opportunity and plus I'd get to visit my grandmother on my way to meetings. She would die November 19, 2018, but I didn't know that on this Saturday in October. All I knew was that my wife, kids, and I had plans. We would watch game seven of the National League Championship Series between the Los Angeles Dodgers and our adopted team, the Milwaukee Brewers.

I was raised a White Sox fan (stay with me, I know I'm aggravating some of you) but as an avid baseball fan, I love the Brewers' ballpark. Knowing I never have to worry about the weather with a retractable roof, makes it appealing in the briskness and rainy or snowy days of late March and early April, and very appealing to my family over the years. Plus, I love their logo with the M and B that looks like a baseball glove and Milwaukee is not a far drive away; especially, since I have visited over 130 ballparks across America. My wife has visited over 100. My girls ages 10 and 12 have visited 63 and 65 ballparks respectively. I am fortunate my family lets me live my dream of attending ballgames all over the country.



Anyway, back to October 20, 2018. The Dodgers were clearly the favorites, having been to the World Series the year before. The Brewers, though, have home field advantage, a great manager in Craig Counsell, a shut-down relief pitcher in Josh Hader, and an MVP in Christian Yelich. What do I remember about this game and why am I writing about it? Well, spoiler alert, the Brewers lost. Josh Hader came into the game way too early, and a lifetime backup catcher Erik Kratz started at catcher. Yes, I remember Erik Kratz. I never thought much of it until recently when I was at a bookstore.

I am an avid reader but have been in a reading slump recently. I haven't found books I find interesting as of late. After attending a Chicago Dogs baseball game Labor Day weekend, I drove home and stopped at my local Barnes & Noble hoping to find something to spark my interest. I saw the typical Rom-Coms, the Reese Witherspoon and Jenna Bush Hager Book picks, the latest on political affairs and opinions, and then there it was *The Tao of the Back Up Catcher* by Tim Brown with Erik Kratz. I picked up the book and started reading. I got home and read some more, so much so that my wife complained I wasn't with my family. My dog woke me up early the next day and I read some more. I love this author, I thought. I wondered if I had read any other Tim Brown books and it appeared I had. My mentor, Paula Panfil, who died in October of 2022, was an avid reader as well. The last book she recommended to me was a book by Tim Brown. In my mind Paula was speaking to me from the heavens. She was never a fan of baseball and told me the only baseball book she ever read was by Tim Brown and it was fantastic. So, what's the deal with Erik Kratz and why am I writing this article? Well, I think we can learn a lot from this backup catcher.

Erik Kratz's career was a testament to resilience. As someone who has followed baseball closely, I understand the ups and downs that players can experience. Kratz faced his share of setbacks, bouncing between the minors and the majors, and switching teams multiple times. However, he never allowed these challenges to deter his passion and determination for the game. This resilience can be applied to the challenges we face in our professions, such as negotiations and advocacy within our teachers' union. Kratz teaches us that perseverance in the face of adversity can lead to eventual success.

Much like Kratz's ability to adapt to different teams after many transactions, we can learn the importance of adaptability in our careers and personal lives. As President of our teachers' union, I have had to navigate various roles and responsibilities. Kratz's readiness to embrace different roles, often as a backup catcher, demonstrates that being flexible and open to change can lead to success and make us more valuable contributors in our chosen fields.

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Life Lessons from Sports

In a world where professional athletes often command the spotlight, Erik Kratz stood out for his humility and gratitude. In my role as the President of West Suburban Teachers Union Local 571, I've come to realize the importance of humility and gratitude when working on behalf of our union members. Kratz reminds us that recognizing and appreciating the contributions of others is essential in building strong communities and organizations.

Erik Kratz's leadership qualities in the clubhouse are admirable. He served as a mentor to younger players, offering guidance and support to his teammates. In my role as a union leader, I see the significance of mentorship and leadership every day. Kratz's willingness to share his knowledge and experience emphasizes the importance of guiding and nurturing the next generation of professionals. As educators, we can take this lesson to heart by supporting and mentoring our fellow teachers, ensuring the growth and development of our profession.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Erik Kratz's career is his ability to play baseball into his 40s, challenging the notion that age limits our capabilities. I appreciate Kratz's determination and passion for the game. His story teaches us that age should never be a barrier to pursuing our passions or achieving our goals, whether it's in our profession, our hobbies, or our advocacy work within our union.

In a twist of fate, Erik's wife is a former elementary school teacher. It just makes sense. Saturday, October 20, 2018, that's about five years ago. A lot has changed for me in those five years. I've lost loved ones, a coaching position, and moved up in the Union world. I am nervous and excited about the next five years, maybe you are as well. So, let's remember Erik Kratz, who never won a World Series, will only visit the Hall of Fame, and never went to an all-star game, but his resilience, adaptability, humility, mentorship, and passion have valuable applications in our lives. Kratz's journey serves as a powerful reminder that the lessons learned from the world of sports can inspire and guide us in our personal and professional endeavors. Let us use these lessons to inspire us to lead the next generation of both educators and students.

~ Kyle Stern

Calling All Members 35 Years or Younger!

NEXT GENERATION

Are you 35 years old or younger? Do you enjoy planning fun events? Do you want to connect with other teachers your age?

Yes?! (Or maybe??)

Then the Next Generation Chair position is right for you!



Local 571 is looking for a member to help bring the issues of newer and younger members to the forefront to help strengthen, improve, and build council and local unity as well as enhance their professional work. This person could also recommend training and workshops that would empower the next generation of teachers. There are lots of different options and opportunities with this role! Think bowling, karaoke, paint 'n sips...the options are plentiful!

Interested in finding out more about this role? Email Kyle Stern at kstern@wstu571.org

WSTU Legislative Reception

On September 8th, the West Suburban Teachers Union hosted its very first legislative reception in Westmont. The event drew an impressive turnout, with over 40 members in attendance, eager to engage in productive dialogues with their elected officials.

One of the highlights of the evening was the opportunity for members to converse with key political figures, including Senator Glowiak Hilton, Representative Ladisch Douglass, Representative Blair-Sherlock and Summit Mayor Sergio Rodriguez. These elected officials have a direct influence on the policies and decisions that impact the education system in the region, making the reception an essential platform for teachers to voice their concerns and aspirations.

Throughout the event, union members seized the opportunity to discuss a range of critical topics with their elected representatives. Conversations delved into issues like education funding, classroom resources, teacher compensation, and the overall welfare of both educators and students. It was a rare and valuable chance for educators and support staff to share their insights and experiences directly with those in a position to affect change.

The purpose of this event was to make a significant step in strengthening the connection between educators, staff, and their elected representatives. It is a reminder that when union members and lawmakers come together, they can work towards a brighter future for education in the region, ensuring that every student has access to a high-quality learning experience.

~Kyle Stern

The Power of Connecting

Social connections can help lower anxiety, help us regulate our emotions, lead to higher self-esteem and empathy, and actually improve our immune systems. Humans are a social species. We *thrive* by connecting with others.

One great thing about being a part of the Union is that there are always others out there who you can connect with. Even more so, your Union brothers and sisters know the day-to-day challenges that you face in the world of education.

On Friday, September 8th, we had the opportunity to connect with people who might not always know the hardships we face in our schools and classrooms. We had the chance to break bread and socialize with local legislators at the Back-to-School Legislative Open House & Reception. Let me tell you, it was a fantastic opportunity for all!

Many of our local legislators love hearing from us! They are very interested in getting teachers', paras', custodians' and nurses' perspectives on what's happening in our schools.

During the event, I had the opportunity to sit down and talk with State Representative Diane Blair-Sherlock. I learned a lot about Representative Blair-Sherlock! She has a number of projects currently going on including a knitting and crocheting group that makes hats and scarves to donate to shelters in the winter months. She also had a highly successful school supply drive at the beginning of the school year.



I was also able to chat with State Representative Jenn Ladisch Douglass. This was my second time talking with Representative Douglass and it was just as enjoyable as the first! She was very interested in ideas on how she can help better public education. We discussed finding ways to help students with less resources and we brainstormed plans for having a book giveaway event.

At the end of the evening, I was in a great mood! Not only was I glad at how successful the event turned out, I was energized by conversing with others. Connecting that night not only helped to improve my mood, but it also solidified my optimism for the future of public education.

~April Giannosa

Members Engaged

Argo Homecoming Parade

September 9, was a beautiful day to celebrate Argo's victory in the game and our community as a council within the greater Argo Community.

~Heather Siegel-Hickman



Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans Biennial Convention

Congratulations—On September 16, Jane Russell, past WSTU president was elected to a 4 year term as secretary for the IARA.



Northwest Suburban Women Democrats 2023 Eleanor Roosevelt Tea

I hope the women of the United States will awaken to the full sense of the influence which they can wield if they accept the responsibility which all power implies.” - Eleanor Roosevelt

Sunday, September 17, the Northwest Suburban Women Democrats held their annual Eleanor Roosevelt Tea at the Belvedere in Elk Grove Village. Jane Russell was the MC for the event, introducing local Democratic elected women and candidates to address the guests about the upcoming elections. WSTU 571, Legislative Directors, Monique Manuel, Jennie Crownson, and Grace Drobny attended the event to honor not just the spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt, but the courage and passion of all the Democratic women candidates who spoke at the event.



Breast Cancer Awareness Month is an annual observance held in the month of October. It is intended to raise awareness about breast cancer, the second most common cancer among women in the United States.

Dear Union Siblings,

Is your council or anyone in your council doing something you would like to share? Did someone in your council create a new class? Did you settle a contract? Did you canvass or phone bank? Did your council have a celebratory meeting? Did your council do something for Homecoming? Is your council doing anything for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion? Did your Local 571 committee meet and make an accomplishment?

Well it's that time again to write articles and brag about all these and any events, accomplishments, etc. for the Union Messenger. Please submit all articles and pictures to me kstern@wstu571.org and Robin Hancock rhancock@wstu571.org

Thank you!

In Unity

Kyle Stern

Members Engaged



Kyle Stern, Representative Gill and Legislative Director Jennie Crownson



Kyle Stern and Senator Dick Durbin



Senator Mike Hastings and Kyle Stern



Representative Bob Rita and Kyle Stern



Senator Robert Peters and Kyle Stern



Kyle Stern and Representative Anna Moeller



Senator Harmon and Kyle Stern



Kyle Stern and Senator Faraci

Did You Know?

The Great Chicago Fire destroyed the city and left 100,000 people homeless on October 8, 1871.

France gifted the US the Statue of Liberty in October 1886.

Yosemite National Park was created by US Congress on October 1, 1890.

The Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, into orbit on October 4, 1957.



Member Benefit Reminder

Reduced Admission

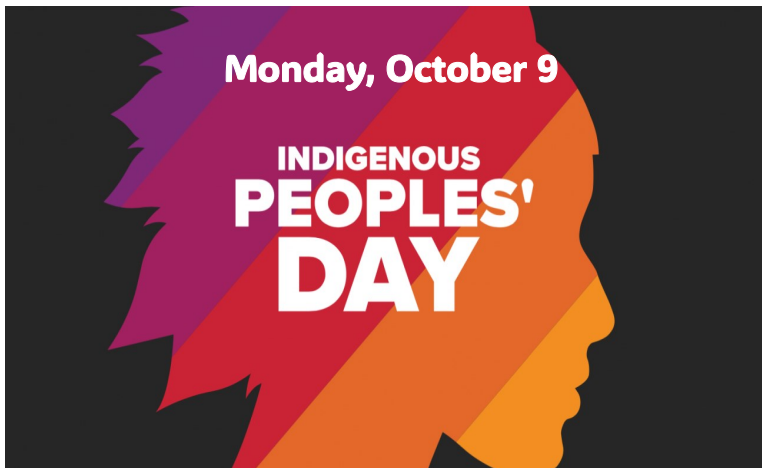
Movie Tickets

For Union Members only. Available for

Marcus Theaters

Theater location and movie ticket order forms available at www.wstu571.org





Indigenous Peoples' Day honors the histories, cultures, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples and their ancestors who lived on the land now known as North America.

Illinois was home to several indigenous tribes, including the Illinois, Miami, Winnebago, Fox and Sacs (Sauk), Kickapoo, and Pottawatomie tribes.

**Tuesday
October 31**



Tip: Enhance visibility. Choose costumes that are visible at night so drivers can see them in the dark. Having kids carry a flashlight or wear glow-in-the-dark bracelets, or other reflective gear, is also a smart way to make sure your child is easy to see

The Day of the Dead (el Día de los Muertos), is a Mexican holiday where families welcome back the souls of their deceased relatives for a brief reunion that includes food, drink and celebration. A blend of Mesoamerican ritual, European religion and Spanish culture, the holiday is celebrated each year from October 31-November 2.



While October 31 is Halloween, November 2 is All Souls Day or the Day of the Dead. According to tradition, the gates of heaven are opened at midnight on October 31 and the spirits of children can rejoin their families for 24 hours. The spirits of adults can do the same on November 2.

<https://www.history.com/topics/halloween/day-of-the-dead>



Save on everyday things, every day

Ready to save on everyday expenses, like your monthly wireless phone bill, shopping, or even going to the movies? We thought so. Save on everyday things, every day.

[Shopping & Discounts | Union Plus | Union Plus](https://www.unionplus.org/benefits/shopping-discounts)

<https://www.unionplus.org/benefits/shopping-discounts>





What's Missing from the Messenger?

Is there something innovative or exciting happening at your school?

If so, we want to hear from you!

Email your news to Robin Hancock at: rhancock@wstu571.org





www.wstu571.org
<https://www.facebook.com/WSTU571/>

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