

# LEADERSHIP FORUM

The Newsletter of the Association of Educational Leaders, Anne Arundel County

Vol. 4, No. 2  
June 2006

## Why join AEL?

*Some of AEL Executive Board Members share their insights*

### **Reggie Farrare**

“In the business of administration you need to have a partner – an individual to be there for you when you’re in need. As a veteran in this business, I’ve always thought that AEL is that partner. When Executive Board members give you information, they’re not guessing. The support and information they provides is based on experience – they’ve been there, done that. The bottom line is that you need accurate, current information and timely support — and that’s what you get from AEL.”

### **Charles Jansky**

“I would encourage an educational leader to join AEL because, first and foremost, all principals need to stick together. Second, is that it is good to have an association behind you — especially if you find yourself on the wrong side of the fence. When you find yourself in a bind, you have to have knowledgeable, experienced representation – and that’s what you get from AEL. Third, I think we all have a need to work to improve your working conditions.”

### **Rick Wiles**

“AEL gives all its members professional representation, which is especially important to Unit II employees. This is an organization that gives you a voice and represents your interests.”

### **Ric Chesek**

“I think on of the best things about AEL is that it is a local organization – it serves the specific needs of educational leaders in Anne Arundel County. It is also an organization that is concerned about my professional growth, not just getting my dues. AEL knows the importance of being plugged into the right source and makes it easy to join ASCP and the national school principals’ associations.”

### **Barry Fader**

“AEL represents a network of colleagues that are working together for the same common purpose. It is an organization that is committed to supporting the needs of administrators

## An announcement from AEL Administrator Don Smith

After eleven years I have decided that AEL would be better served with some-



*Don Smith*

one else in my position. I have enjoyed my work and will greatly miss the contacts with all of you. However this year I have not been able to contribute to the degree I have in the past so I have decided it is time to move on. Hopefully I will still see some of you through my work with UMBC.

across the line – from Board policies to benefits. The members of the Executive Board are a committed, dedicated group of professionals, who are here to support the needs of the members. They listen carefully to the membership and respond appropriately to topics of concern.”

### **Rocco Ferretti**

“When you’re an AEL member, you carry with you the idea that you are being represented by a group – that you are not alone. Our organization provides an effective way to raise an issue and allows us to speak in one loud voice.” ■

## You can make a difference

This has been a learning year for me as President of our association. I often think about a favorite coaches saying, "Experience is a great teacher, unfortunately it burns us first then it teaches us." This year I have gotten an education.

Last fall, my primary goal was to improve member participation and respond to the wishes of members. In September, we hosted a breakfast hoping that we would get some direction as to the issues that we would need to pursue for 2005-2006. I was disappointed that attendance wasn't stronger. Another idea was to have cluster reps attend the Board meetings and a few reps have attended but of late the interest has waned.

### Contract Negotiations

In the coming year we will be entering negotiations for your 2007-2010 contract. In this negotiation process we will be addressing cost of living increases, work load increases, health care packages and pension issues – to name just a few. These are issues that will directly impact your wallet. As I see it, you have two choices: you can step up, speak up and play an active part in this once-every-three-years opportunity or you can keep your opinions to yourself and hope for the best.

Of course, those of you who have complained to me or the other members of the AEL Board about how night activities are burning out your staff or that your paycheck isn't keeping pace with cost of living in this county (or any

number of other gripes) – I expect you to be first in line to participate.

Going into this process we have to know what is important to YOU. We need you to get involved by coming to board meetings, dinner meetings or simply calling or writing to an AEL Board member or staff and letting us know your thoughts or concerns. Don't depend on someone else to say it for you. You will strengthen our negotiation efforts by sharing your stories with us. With your help, we will know the difference between something that is an isolated problem and something that is plaguing educational leaders across the county. Give us insight on what you face daily.

There is no better or more important time that to get more involved in this association. You can absolutely have a direct impact on your work life by being getting involved, being active and vocal in AEL now. ■

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### AEL Elections

Enclosed please find a ballot for AEL leadership positions. Those elected this year will serve two-year terms. Please return the ballot by June 20. If you have any questions, contact an AEL Executive Board Member. The names and numbers of those that serve on the board are listed on page 4 of this newsletter.

## *AEL End of the Year Happy Hour*

*Thursday, June 22*

*4:30 - 6:00 p.m.*

*following the Leadership Conference*

*Kaufmann's Tavern*

*329 Gambrells Rd., Gambrells*

*Open bar, light hors d'oeuvres*

*Sponsored by:*

*AEL and  
Classic Photography*

*AEL Members: Free*

*Non-Members: \$25*

*RSVP to Don Smith*

*at 410-349-1764*

## Health Care negotiations update

As some of you are already aware, the bargaining units remain constantly involved in “negotiations” concerning health care coverage and the cost associated with the same. Understanding the plans, the benefits, and in some cases, the liabilities associated with one form of coverage versus another is a daunting task. Most of the work in this effort is “accomplished” through the Benefits Review Committee (BRC) which is comprised of representatives from all unions, senior management and Board consultants. This committee “meets on a regular basis” in an effort to review coverage features, design bid documents and generally try to insure that the employees get the biggest bang for their buck.

Recently the Board proposed a three tier coverage plan for retirees. This plan permits a participant to elect coverage between an HMO, PPO, and a modified PPN. This election is not a locked option; rather it permits an individual to switch back and forth within this plan as his/her needs arise. The plan is being offered by Care First, which believes that this plan will reduce costs. The plan is so “good” that the Board wants to include it as an additional option for Unit II employees to “consider” along with existing cov-

erage. We have been told that this is an “add on” to existing coverage and not in lieu of existing coverage. The pitch, we are told, is that the addition of this plan to already existing coverage will lead to a reduction in that portion of the administrative charges that impact on the premium cost. These administrative costs run in excess of \$4 million and represent part of the escalating cost of the overall coverage.

Under our current agreement with the Board, Unit II employees are scheduled to increase their premium contribution by 1 percent. The small amount of this increase is not as troubling as the failure of the Board to agree to pass along any cost savings they receive as a result of employee participation. It seems there is never a problem on the

**by Richard Kovelant,  
Executive Director & General Counsel**

Board’s side in asking Unit II employees to share in increased premium cost, but when there may be a cost savings, the phone never rings. We should share in the savings as well as the cost.

Increased current health care costs are generally a result of the claims made, the fees charged, and the administrative costs associated with processing these claims. The current insurance is really part of a self insurance fund. That is to say, the premiums paid by all employees and for all employees are held in a self insurance fund and are paid out to network providers by Care First who is in charge of the administration of this program. Since the employees are, in some sense, part of the “insurance carrier”, it should only stand to reason, that they should be given a larger voice in the governance of this program. Currently reserves are set, but who determines the amount, the criteria to be used, and how these funds are to be invested? We need to ask more questions and demand more answers. This is a benefit that we all need to understand and become involved. The BRC is a starting point, but it is not the final word. Your thoughts please.

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*It seems there is never a problem on the Board’s side in asking Unit II employees to share in increased premium cost, but when there may be a cost savings, the phone never rings.*

### Contact

Rick Kovelant with your thoughts on health care and other issues:

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### Story ideas and Letters to the Editor welcomed

We encourage members to use this newsletter to share their opinions and ideas. If you would like to express your thoughts on an issue (i.e., "climate surveys") or a time saving tip or a creative solution to a common problem, send your submission to: Don Smith at 410.349.1764 (fax) or Denise Hofstedt at 410.421.5832 (fax), dmhofstedt@verizon.net.