

ECSSA News

Edmonton Catholic Support Staff Association

January 2007



On behalf of the Executive and Board of Directors of ECSSA, we would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members the best that life has to offer in 2007. ECSSA will be undergoing some major changes this year and there will be plenty of news during the upcoming months. Our President, Denise White will be stepping

down after ten years in this position. That will result in some significant changes within our Executive. At our General Meeting in May or June, elections will be held for the positions of President and Secretary. As well, our Employer Liaison Officer, Veronica Slavik, will be retiring at the end of June. This position was advertised in our December newsletter and we encourage any of our members who may be interested to apply. If you wish to discuss the position or have any questions regarding the competition, please contact the ECSSA office. Application deadline is January 31, 2007. ECSSA will be entering into another round of negotiations with the District. Lots of changes, lots of challenges...another year in the life of ECSSA. Please remember, at all times, that we are here to serve you—our members. If you need any assistance, please contact the ECSSA office.

General Meeting

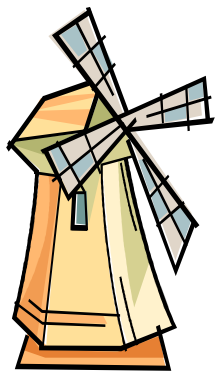
**Wednesday, February 21
St. Joseph High School Theatre**

5:00

A package of information for this meeting has been mailed to your home. Please bring this package with you to the meeting. We will be sending a reminder and final agenda to your worksite the week prior to the meeting. There is a very full agenda of items that we need to present to you and we look forward to your input, your questions and your vote at this meeting. See you on February 21. Please note ALL temporary, probationary and continuous members are asked to attend.

Negotiations Input

We are now in the final stages of putting together our list of proposals for the next round of negotiations. We have been gathering input from our members, as well as the Executive and Board of Directors of ECSSA. If you have any proposals that you would like us to consider, please contact the ECSSA office by e-mail at ecssa@interbaun.com or give us a call at 419-2519. This may be your last opportunity to provide your suggestions before we finalize our list. We are hoping that negotiations will be underway sometime in March. Your negotiations committee will be Denise White, Rick Klimchuk, Danny Burrell and Veronica Slavik..



Welcome to Holland

Our family is one that has been truly blessed by having a special needs child in our midst. Although my niece is no longer a child, the richness and joy she has brought to all our lives is immeasurable. My sister, (her mother), shared this article with me and I felt that many of our members would appreciate the truth and sentiment in this article. So many of you work either directly or indirectly with these very "special" people and will understand what this mother has to say. I truly hope you enjoy it!!

Veronica Slavik

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I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum...Michelangelo's David...The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very, very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.

On behalf of my family, and the families of the special children our members care for...many, many thanks to those of you who provide support, caring and education to these special people. Without your support, these children would likely never fulfill their true potential. Making a positive difference in the life of a child is one of life's truly important callings. You should all be extremely proud of the work you do and the children you care for.

Special Need Teacher Assistants—Substitutes

As many of you are more than aware, the school district has been having an increasingly difficult time providing substitute staff for SNTA's. There are many factors that are driving this problem. There has been a marked increase in the number of absences, and there is rapid turnover of our special needs support staff. However, the most important factor is the situation all Alberta employers are dealing with right now...the serious labour shortage, and the problems of effectively recruiting and retaining qualified staff. The District is continually interviewing potential candidates and hiring people as quickly as possible. However, the problem persists. ECSSA has been asked to participate on a committee to look at ways the District may be able to address this problem. The committee consists of staff from Human Resource Services, Learning Support Services, school administrators and ECSSA. Your representatives on this committee are Danny Burrell and Veronica Slavik. With the cooperation of all the stakeholders present at the committee table, we are hopeful that we may be able to alleviate some of these demands. If you know of anyone who is considering a position working with special needs children, please encourage them to visit the Human Resources website to apply for a position. Rest assured, Edmonton Catholic Schools is doing all it can to solve this problem and we sincerely hope that our committee will be able to provide some new and inventive methods of attracting staff. If you have any suggestions or ideas that may help us in our deliberations, please contact the ECSSA office.



Caring Report

We extend our sympathies and prayers to Debbie Durante of St. Johan Bosco on the passing of her daughter; Glenda Narten of St. Paul on the loss of her father-in-law and to Pat Letwin of Learning Support Services on the loss of her father.

We also extend best wishes for a speedy recovery to Dora Winski of Our Lady of Peace; Linda Sittler of Archbishop McNeil; Glenda Narten of St. Paul; Sue Posteraro of Louis St. Laurent and to Graciela Hernandez of St. Cecilia.

Professional Development and Wellness Library

NEW! Consumer Reports on Health

Sign up to borrow this new monthly newsletter available through the ECSSA Professional Development and Wellness Library. Just 12 pages long, each newsletter contains these regular features:

Main article (2-3 pages)
News, Healthy Ideas
Office Visit

Special Report
Health Care Savvy
On Your Mind (Q & A)

Recent articles include: How to Keep Your Brain sharp and Youthful, Diet and Cancer, Flu Prevention, Consumer Drug Ads, How to Treat Coughs. Please contact Joanne Howell at Austin O'Brien High School if you would like to have your name included on a distribution list for this very interesting and informative newsletter.

Meetings

- Wednesday, January 10..... Harassment Policy Review Committee
- Thursday, January 11 SNTA Substitute Staffing Committee
- Tuesday, January 16..... District Budget Committee
- Tuesday, January 16..... Harassment Policy Review Committee
- Wednesday, January 17 Liaison Committee
- Friday, January 19 Harassment Policy Review Committee
- Wednesday, January 31..... Classification Review Committee
- Friday, February 2-Sunday, February 4 Second Annual CEP Support Staff Conference
- Sunday, February 4 Executive Meeting
- Wednesday, February 6..... Board of Directors Meeting



Did You Know?

If you must be away from work for a medical appointment, you are required to enter your absence in AESOP. Any time you take for medical appointments is considered part of your Sick Leave entitlements (Article 11 of the Collective Agreement). You do not have to make up time lost for attending these appointments

*If you don't like the way the world is you change it.
 You have an obligation to change it.
 You just do it one step at a time.*

Marian Edelman

Edmonton Catholic Support Staff Association

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Support Staff

The glue that holds it all together!!

