

LOCAL 1600  
College Union

# VOICE

COOK COUNTY COLLEGE TEACHERS UNION,  
LOCAL 1600, AFT, AFL-CIO  
FALL, 2015



Celebrating **50 YEARS** as a Union



David Richmond  
President

### Fifty Years – And Counting

Recently I had the privilege of attending the Local 1600 Retirees Banquet. More than one hundred retirees from our fourteen community colleges attended. It was great to listen to the many stories of our Union in action. The story of Local 1600 is directly linked to the history of Illinois community colleges, the Illinois Federation of Teachers, the American Federation of Teachers, and organized labor. It is a proud tradition. Someone really should write a book.

When we look at all of the issues facing higher education and Unions today, it's easy to feel a slight sense of despair. The issues are myriad and formidable. There are hostile Boards, incompetent administrations, dwindling funds, unfriendly judges, unsympathetic politicians, antagonistic political organizations, and efforts to “automate” education. But looking back at the 50-year history of Local 1600, times have always been tough. And I found listening to the retirees reminisce about their battles and victories an encouraging reminder that as long as the Union is still standing, the forces against us haven't won. We've successfully navigated down many of these roads before.

It's easy to forget that we haven't always had the right to collectively bargain. Try to imagine how difficult our work-lives would be without a union contract. Community college faculty haven't always had tenure, either. Public employee unions in Illinois, including Local 1600, have constantly had to fight to obtain and keep the right to strike, and we've successfully used that right to strike many times.

We've seen countless aggressive Boards and administrations come and go. There have been impossible governors and tone-deaf legislators. We've won court cases we thought we would lose and lost some we thought we should win. From the chapter, to the Local, to the state, and even the national levels we've had some great Union leaders and some leadership that left a lot to be desired. Through it all, our members have prevailed. The willingness to stay united and work together means that we continue the fight despite the constant challenges and the occasional setback. Of course there is no guarantee any one of these tactics will work in every situation, but it is the willingness of our members to take action that makes them all effective sometimes. When we are active collectively, we are our most powerful. Working with the Union for our contracts, our students, our schools and our communities is vital to all our interests. The more activists we have, the more effective we will be. It's not realistic to expect all of our members to be passionately engaged in every issue, but where we have engaged members we see success.

If you get the chance, ask some of our more senior members to share their memories of past battles with administrations, Boards, and even politicians. The history of Local 1600 is something we should be proud of. As we recognize our Golden Anniversary as a Union, we should do more than remember our history. We should celebrate it.

# *You're Invited...*

to help the Union celebrate its  
**50th Anniversary!**

**Friday, November 20th  
4:00 pm**

**CTU Executive Board Room  
Merchandise Mart, Suite 400  
222 W. Merchandise Mart Plaza  
Chicago, IL**

## COOK COUNTY COLLEGE TEACHERS UNION, LOCAL 1600, AFL-CIO



|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
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### Celebrating 50 Years of Activism

Fifty years ago, none of our colleges were unionized. Tenure didn't exist, management could determine work load however they saw fit and there was no grievance procedure to protect workers against unfair treatment. Prior to collective bargaining in our colleges, the administration would often "meet and confer" with groups of employees, agree to handshake deals, and then proceed to do whatever they wanted without consequence.

Everything changed starting in the mid-60s. A teacher's union movement was starting to take hold in the country. In New York there was a historic teacher's strike that resulted in an actual contract for teachers—something unheard of before. Here in Chicago, teachers and administrators took notice.

In 1964, our local didn't yet exist. Some of the faculty at Chicago's City Colleges were represented by a college functional group that was under the umbrella of the Chicago Teachers Union, but there was no exclusive representation at the City Colleges. Multiple unions claimed members, but no actual negotiating took place. The founders of what became Local 1600, inspired by the actions in New York, determined that if City Colleges faculty were to receive the rights they deserved, they would need to rally the faculty behind a new, strong union.

In 1965, with the support of the Chicago Teachers Union and the Chicago Federation of Labor, City Colleges faculty led by Norman Swenson officially split from the CTU and formed Local 1600. With 250 initial members, Local 1600 received its charter on December 1, 1965. Union leaders immediately demanded the administration at City Colleges authorize an election for the faculty to vote to select the union who would represent them exclusively. The faculty, eager to obtain rights in the workplace, overwhelmingly chose Local 1600.



But exclusive representation was only the first step. The administration, while they recognized the union, declared that there would be no contract. The faculty had to go out on strike – an action against the law at the time – in October of 1966 and again in March of 1967 before the union and administration were finally able to agree on a first contract for employees. The contract was the first of its kind in Chicago, providing a grievance procedure, 12 contact hour load, and a 1 to 1 lab to lecture ratio. Union President Norman Swenson was sentenced to jail for leading the 1966 strike. The judge convicted him of violating a court injunction against the strike and he had to serve 30 days in jail in 1971. A few years later, Norm would again be sent to jail for violating a court injunction – this time for the City Colleges strike of 1975.

The newly acquired City Colleges contract proved to be a rallying cry for other colleges in the Chicago region. Soon faculty members at other colleges wanted what Local 1600 was able to negotiate for its members, and through organizing efforts, campuses began voting to join Local 1600. Moraine Valley Faculty had its first strike in 1974, South Suburban Faculty in 1975, Morton Faculty in 1984 and Triton Faculty in 1985. With every strike a fair contract was reached with the administration, leading to improved work protections and benefits for our growing ranks of members.

In 1984, Illinois passed a collective bargaining law that finally made it legal for employees to strike. This law enabled classified employees to fight for their work rights and expanded the efforts of Local 1600 to organize. At our campuses where we already had faculty unions, local 1600 worked to organize classified divisions and negotiate fair contracts to extend job protection and benefits to classified and support staff employees.

Throughout our Union history, as our membership has grown, our strength and power has grown. We now represent more than 5,000 members at 14 colleges across Cook County. Our challenges have changed over the years, yet many of our fights remain the same. With every contract negotiation we face threats to our working conditions and benefits, but our biggest fight may be just around the corner.

Governor Bruce Rauner has declared a war on Unions. He wants to end collective bargaining, threatening to take Illinois back to the 1960s. If Rauner ends collective bargaining rights, we will need to rally together and fight for our rights like our founders were forced to do. We will need to recall the fierce activism and dedication displayed by our founders if we are to defend our rights and survive



# OUR UNION...A TIMELINE



President Swenson celebrates his birthday in jail.



President Swenson heads into jail to serve his 30 day sentence.

**December 1, 1965**  
LOCAL 1600  
RECEIVES  
ITS CHARTER

**1967**

City Colleges of Chicago out again on strike, finally resulting in the first contract for the City Colleges of Chicago.

**1971**

City Colleges of Chicago Strike

President Norm Swenson serves 30 days in jail for violating a court injunction to end the 1966 City Colleges Strike

**1973**

City Colleges of Chicago Strike

**1975**

1st Thornton College Faculty Strike (Renamed South Suburban College in 1988)

City Colleges of Chicago Strike

President Norm Swenson sentenced to 5 months in jail for violation on injunction to end 1975 strike. He would serve 8 days in jail with work release time to continue negotiations.

1st City Colleges of Chicago Strike  
**1966**

City Colleges of Chicago Strike  
**1969**

1st Moraine Valley Community College Faculty Strike  
**1974**





Moraine Valley Support Staff during their one-day strike in 1986.



Thornton Faculty members Paul Gill and Jim Steimis walk the line during the 1986 strike.



City Colleges Faculty and Staff on strike in 2004.

**1984**

Collective Bargaining becomes legal in Illinois with Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act

Thornton College Faculty Strike

1st Morton College Faculty Strike

**1986**

Thornton College Faculty Strike

Thornton College Faculty Strike

1st Moraine Valley Community College Support Staff Strike

**2004**

City Colleges of Chicago Strike

**1977**

Thornton College Faculty Strike.

City Colleges of Chicago Strike

**1978**

1st Triton College Faculty Strike

**1985**

1st Harper College Faculty Strike

**2002**

### From the Archives

*The following articles are pulled from a series recounting our Union's history that ran in The Voice in 2000. They chronicle the history of how some of our suburban chapters came to join Local 1600. With every new chapter, Local 1600 grew larger and stronger.*

#### **1971: Thornton College Faculty Joins Local 1600**

The faculty at Thornton College (later renamed South Suburban College) voted for representation by Local 1600 in 1971. In a bitterly contested election, the union defeated an affiliate of the National Education Association. Faculty leaders Dennis Dryzga, Bailey Magruder, Doug Tweeten, Katherine and Paul Wessel, Jim Moody, Charles Pennington and union President Norman Swenson led the drive for representation.

The Thornton faculty struck three times to win contracts: September 1975, September 1984 and October 1986.

In 1975, the faculty walked the picket lines for 11 days before the board moved off of its original economic offer, a salary freeze. The new agreement also added a longevity step to the salary schedule and granted paid dental insurance.

In 1984, the faculty went out on strike for three days and won a 14.8 percent salary increase over two years, fair share, and the union's right to appoint faculty to college committees.

In a classic example of union solidarity, the faculty struck for six weeks in 1986 to protect the contract. Despite board threats to replace faculty with scabs, cancel health insurance, take reprisals and reduce benefits, the faculty stayed on the picket line. Finally, the union negotiating team led by Jim Flynn and assisted by Local 1600 President Norman Swenson agreed to arbitrate the unresolved contract issues.

Since the 1986 strike, the Union has continued to fight for fair raises and strong contracts that benefit all the members.



Thornton Faculty members Don Kramer and Joe Gutenson on strike in 1971.

#### **1971: Moraine Valley Faculty Win Bargaining Rights**

When 60 percent of the Moraine Valley faculty voted to form a union in 1971, they faced a hostile board that opposed unionization and tenure. Faculty members signed one-year contracts that included a 60-day cancellation clause.

The union used political pressure to force the board to agree to hold a bargaining election in 1972. Fighting off the administration's nasty anti-union campaign, the union won bargaining rights for 120 teachers, coordinators, counselors and librarians by a 60-55 vote.

In the weeks before the election, the administration harassed faculty members by conducting staff meetings denouncing the union, sending out anti-union mailings and requiring eligible voters to meet in private with their immediate supervisors on the evils of unionization. Yet, a majority of the faculty stuck together and won recognition.

The hostility toward the union continued and forced teachers to strike for 17 days in 1974 to win their first contract. After two days of intensive negotiations with a federal mediator, both sides approved a two-year contract with salary increases of 10 percent in 1974 and 8.89 percent in 1975. The new agreement also granted tenure to 70 faculty members.

Activism and solidarity that continues today has kept Moraine Valley Faculty a strong and united chapter.



## 1972: Morton Faculty Join Strength of Local 1600

The faculty at Morton Community College joined the CCCTU in 1972. Prior to 1972, the 64 member union was affiliated with the West Suburban Teachers Union, AFT Local 571.

Relations between Morton faculty and the board remained peaceful until 1984. That year a 60-year tradition came to an end when the teachers angrily manned the picket lines and closed the college for the first time in its history. The board forced the strike by offering to spend only \$80,000 of its \$4.3 million audited budget surplus on salaries and by demanding that faculty pay any future health insurance premium increase.

During the 29-day strike the chapter remained solid as the board threatened to fire the teachers and hire scabs. Because of the hard work of chapter chair Cliff Jensen and other faculty leaders, none of the faculty crossed the picket lines.

Finally, the board agreed to negotiate in good faith and an agreement on a new contract was reached. By a 52-3 vote, Morton faculty approved a new two-year pact that included a 6.2 percent salary increase in the first year and a 6.5 percent increase in the second year.

In the years since that strike, Morton leaders have continued to negotiate strong contracts that support members' best interests.

## 1976: Harper Faculty Organize with Local 1600

Because of a breakdown in negotiations with the Harper College board in 1976, the Harper Faculty Senate voted 98-56 to affiliate with Local 1600 "for purposes of negotiations with the Board." After many difficult negotiating sessions and a court order requiring the board to negotiate in good faith, the employer agreed to sign a memorandum of agreement on June 14, 1976.

It wasn't until two years later, on September 14, 1978, that the Harper Faculty achieved its first comprehensive contract. The one-year agreement, achieved only after seven months of difficult bargaining, was approved the same afternoon by Harper College Union members 94-57, and by the Harper Board in a unanimous vote.

This agreement was significant in that it was a true contract covering salary, fringe benefits and working conditions. The new contract provided for the establishment of a step-lane salary schedule and for an across-the-board salary increase of 5.2 percent.

Chief Union Negotiator Mike Bartos said that the inclusion in the contract of working conditions provisions was in itself a major achievement. In previous negotiations, the board had adamantly refused to discuss any matters except salary and fringe benefits.

Bartos said, "We are no longer working under a five-page memorandum of agreement. We now have tenure, academic freedom, and work load provisions as well as grievance and layoff procedures. We are," he declared, "working under a contract."

In the years since that first comprehensive contract was negotiated, the faculty has worked diligently to protect and enhance working conditions and benefits.



Morton Faculty members Diane Bales and Lyn Raines on the picket line during the 29 day strike of 1984.

### From the Archives *(continued)*

#### 1979:

##### **Triton College Faculty Unionize**

On February 13, 1979, the Triton College Faculty Association (TCFA) became the final suburban faculty to affiliate with the CCCTU. In a two-part referendum, the faculty first decided 114-35 to affiliate with a national teachers organization and then chose the AFT over the NEA by a vote of 83-58. The victory for the AFT and for Local 1600 climaxed six years of patient and successful organizational efforts at Triton by union president Norman Swenson, suburban division vice-president Dennis Dryzga, former chapter chair Russell Bruce and former TCFA president John Boyle.

The next confrontation between the faculty and board occurred on September 30, 1985 when 250 Triton faculty struck the college in a dispute over salaries, benefits, class size and a host of noneconomic issues. During six months of fruitless negotiations leading up to the strike, the parties conducted 30 bargaining sessions including five with a federal mediator. After a successful six-day strike, the Triton faculty negotiators produced a two-year contract which included an average salary increase of 16 percent over two years and fair share.

The next fifteen years featured a fierce fight over negotiated gains, and included a near strike in 1997. After the dust had cleared, the faculty had maintained the salary structure, insurance package and retirement package.

#### 1988: Harper Professionals Join the Union

Harper administration's attempts to intimidate professional employees failed when they voted 44-31 to form a union in June 1988. Prior to the election, the administration actively campaigned against the union, threatened employees with a loss of benefits and ran a vicious no-union campaign.

The professionals led by Julie Hennig, Tom Choice, Joan Young and Jane Harris fought back with a well organized campaign of one-on-one visits, luncheon meetings and union literature to counteract management's threats.

Nine months later the union emerged from negotiations with a 2.5 year contract with an average salary increase of 14 percent over the life of the agreement and \$600 per year for college tuition of which \$100 could be used for other professional expenses. The contract allowed employees to request job audits of their positions and permitted the union to represent the employees in their audits. This language helped over 40 percent of the employees win upgrades in the first 10 years of the agreement.

# Become a **LOCAL 1600** **A C T I V I S T**



We need you to step up and join us as  
WE FIGHT TO DEFEND PUBLIC EDUCATION.

**WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER.**

BECOME AN ACTIVIST BY EMAILING LEGISLATIVE CHAIR  
TONY JOHNSTON – [TONYJOHNSTON08@GMAIL.COM](mailto:TONYJOHNSTON08@GMAIL.COM)





By Rose Sakanis,  
Classified  
Vice President

### Local 1600 History: How Classified Members came to join Local 1600

In 1984, a law was passed in Illinois giving public employees the right to organize to bargain collectively. Moraine Valley Classified was the first support staff chapter in Illinois to organize after the law was passed. They were also the first support staff chapter admitted into Local 1600. Since I was not an employee at Moraine Valley at that time, I interviewed Gail Wiot to get information for this article. Gail Wiot was a member of the steering committee who worked to organize the support staff at Moraine Valley. Following are recollections from Gail on the organization of the chapter.

The Moraine Valley Support Staff employees chose to organize to negotiate for better salaries, better benefits, safe working conditions, and equal treatment for the support staff employees at the college. The first steering committee was comprised of seven people. It was the steering committee who went about the process of getting members to sign cards showing that they supported unionization. As Gail recalls, “the deciding factor came when an administrator called a special meeting of all of the support staff employees to outline for them the reasons why organizing as a union would be a bad decision.” They were told that they did not need a union because the wages at the college were fair; they did not need a union because the benefits were good; they did not need a union because all the employees were treated equally. She further explained that back then it was the department supervisor who determined how much of a raise each employee would receive, and the money was not always distributed evenly among the employees. It was practices such as these that drove

the employees to seek unionization.

Once the decision was made to unionize, the chapter was approached by three organizations who wanted their members. One of the organizations was CCCTU Local 1600. Three Moraine Valley faculty members approached the group asking them to join Local 1600. CCCTU

President Norm Swenson and his assistant, Bob Breving, came to meet with the organizing group to persuade them to choose Local 1600 over the teamsters and the IFT. The group chose to go with Local 1600 because they felt it was important that they were united with the faculty and that they would have more support. After months of work and various meetings, which were all done after their regular work hours, the members voted in favor of unionizing and to join Local 1600. The decision on which support staff positions would be in the bargaining unit was determined by the Labor board.

The chapter was officially organized in October 1984.

Once the process started, Gail explained, there was no turning back. Negotiations were extremely difficult. Negotiation sessions would begin at 4:00 p.m. and run straight through until at least midnight, oftentimes, much later. Afterward, each employee on the negotiating committee was expected to report to work the next day as usual. The fact that they were the first support staff community college chapter to organize in Illinois made their negotiations even more difficult. What language should they include in their contract? What benefits should they be seeking? There were no other contracts to refer to. The internet did not exist. Research took hours. The committee members

“They were told that they did not need a union because the wages at the college were fair; they did not need a union because the benefits were good; they did not need a union because all the employees were treated equally.”

attended numerous conferences held by the IFT and AFT often paying for their own expenses so they could learn all they could. But even then, support staff in higher education was a new entity to the AFT and IFT.

Moraine Valley Classified's first contract was for two years. The negotiations for the second contract lead to the support staff's first and only strike. The strike lasted one day. Members picketed in the pouring rain. One of the core team members, Gail Wiot, met with the faculty asking for their support. After a series of meetings, the administration saw that the faculty were in support of the staff and negotiations quickly began in order to bring an end to the strike.

South Suburban organized soon afterward, with Triton, Prairie State, Oakton and Morton following in their footsteps. Bob Breving was the Local 1600 organizer who worked with each of these colleges to organize their members and assist in contract negotiations. If you review each contract, you will see much of the same language negotiated in each of the classified/support staff contracts.

So now all of these chapters were part of Local 1600. Honestly, the transition of support staff into the Local was difficult at first. The faculty did not know how to deal with non-faculty in a union for teachers. It took almost 20 years after Moraine Valley joined Local 1600

before the Classified division were given the opportunity to elect their own Local Vice President. Most fittingly, the first Classified/Support Staff Vice President for Local 1600 was Gail Wiot. It took many years, but eventually we all learned to work together for the good of our

members, our students, and our institutions. We are a better union now. The AFT and the IFT have also been beneficial to us in finding a way to address our issues and concerns at the various conventions and conferences that they conduct. As the current Vice President of the Classified Division, I am extremely proud to work with all of the Classified Chapter Chairs who work hard to represent their members every day.

As I wrote this article, it made me realize that many of our new members do not understand the importance of their union membership and where their benefits came from. All of the benefits negotiated in each contract are because many strong people from the past fought to unionize and negotiate fair raises, good benefits, and most important, safe working conditions for their members. This work was not easy, but it took strong people at each chapter to lead the way. What we

need now are more strong people to join in to preserve the excellent benefits that are in each of our contracts. Happy Anniversary, Local 1600! Best wishes for fifty more years of union solidarity!

**Negotiation sessions would begin at 4:00 p.m. and run straight through until at least midnight, oftentimes, much later. Afterward, each employee on the negotiating committee was expected to report to work the next day as usual. The fact that they were the first support staff community college chapter to organize in Illinois made their negotiations even more difficult.**



By Don Radtke,  
Retiree  
Chapter Chair

### Local 1600 - Fifty Years of Union Militancy

For 50 years, Local 1600 has been a union of militants. The Local has engaged in over 20 strikes throughout Cook County. Its Union President was thrown into jail twice for striking. The Local negotiated the first public employee collective bargaining agreement in Chicago. Then the Local brought collective bargaining to all the Community Colleges in Cook County. The Local took mild mannered teachers, professionals, and classified employees and made them into staunch unionists demanding respect, good wages, benefits, and working conditions. When you got hired at a Local 1600 College to practice your profession and skills, you also became a union militant.

Like most of you, I did not know about Local 1600 when I was hired in 1977 at Daley College. My first contact with the union was to sign the membership card. My union representative, who already had gone through 6 strikes, simply commanded me to “sign this form”. At Local 1600, you were either with us or against us. My first strike was in 1978, my second untenured year of teaching. Whatever fear I had of losing my job was removed by the confidence of fellow striking members. Contract negotiations were always rough years. The letters from the Local would inform you of administrative threats and take backs. With strong Local and Chapter leadership, outrage would be turned into determination to fight back for our demands. Talks of going on strike would transform individuals into “brothers and sisters” ready to battle for a good contract.

In a recent conversation with Norm Swenson, former Local President for forty years, it was indicated that this strike strategy unified and motivated our members resulting in the “best” contracts. News of the rights and benefits of these contracts help organize new members from Suburb Community Colleges. As a union representative at national conferences over the last 10 years, I learned that our contracts were the best. Union members from other states would be surprised and envious of our work load, health benefits, pension benefits, and working conditions.

Our militancy as a union was felt every day by our members in their working conditions at the colleges. Whether it was seniority, selection of schedules, overtime, pay rates and other available benefits, the process was clearly and fairly presented in the contract. Knowing their rights in the contract, our members challenged administrators and their actions. The grievance process insured that our members’ rights were respected and discipline was fair and progressive. The contract gave the colleges a consistency in operation which could not be offered by College Presidents and administrators who came and went in a few years. Even administrators, frustrated with the constant change in executive directives, learned to appreciate our contracts.

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## Upcoming Retiree Chapter Social Events

**Nov. 8, 8 pm**

**Play at Morton College**

**Dec. 12, 2 pm**

**Concert at Wright College**

**For more details and to attend, email Retiree Chapter Chair  
Don Radtke at [dradtke2133@gmail.com](mailto:dradtke2133@gmail.com) or call 312-502-2363**



Our militancy gave us a mission beyond ourselves. The Local and all its Chapters have established Scholarship fundraising and award presentations. My first position with the Union was treasurer where I administered our Chapter's Scholarship Fund. A \$100,000 donation was given by a Daley Chapter member. Over the 50 years, Local 1600 members and Norm Swenson established a Local Scholarship fund with a nearly \$200,000 balance which uses earnings to give student scholarships per year.

The Local's militancy gave us political power through its Committee on Political Education Fund (COPE). The AFT has lauded our COPE as the best in the national union. Annually, the Local would ask our members to donate through a paycheck deduction. Besides our members receiving t-shirts, jackets, and other Local 1600

trinkets, our members' voices were heard by college boards, local officials, and state representatives and officeholders. The members influenced college funding, education policy, and opportunities for students.

Every two years at the AFT Convention, the AFT celebrates our militancy through the N. G. Swenson Militancy award. This award is handed out to an AFT member who has changed lives through being militant. At the 2010 AFT convention, the award was given to the adjunct that started the uprising in Madison, Wisconsin that protested the attack by Scott Walker on public employees. The adjunct mentioned the importance of \$12,000 raised by Local 1600's Retiree Chapter and the support it expressed. For us at Local 1600, this action is who we are, a union of militants!



Local 1600 Members join Union Members from across Chicago for the 2011 We Are One Rally

### South Suburban Classified Unionizes with Local 1600

*By Berdy Kuiken, Former South Suburban Classified Chapter Chair*

In 1982 Dennis Dryzga, a Local 1600 Vice-President and faculty member at what was then called Thornton Community College, approached me about starting a support staff union. At the time other Community Colleges were beginning to organize their support staff. I was very interested in forming a union because the administration and faculty had been receiving raises above 5%, but the support staff were receiving much lower raises and there was an unfair merit raise system. Most importantly, there was no grievance system. The support staff was governed by an employee handbook that the administration created without any input from the employees.

Over the next several months, I spent countless hours talking with everyone on campus to gain support for a union. The IFT and Local 1600 also sent representatives to answer questions about unionizing and encourage employee support. Bob Breving from Local 1600 spent many hours on our campus explaining the benefits of having a union and how the working conditions would improve. I searched for fellow employees who would assist in the organization, and slowly, the interest grew and we knew a support staff union was a strong possibility. It was beneficial that the faculty was part of Local 1600 because they encouraged the staff. The administration was not happy with the movement and

set up barricades, using fear tactics. But, they were not successful.

In 1983, a consent election was held and the staff chose to be organized. AFSCME also came to the campus and tried to organize, but the staff realized the benefits of belonging to Local 1600. The faculty already belonged to the Local so we knew Local 1600 would have better knowledge of the system, good resources and have our best interests at heart. In 1983, the Thornton Community College Support Staff Association was formally organized and recognized. When the College changed their name to South Suburban College, we became the South Suburban College Support Staff Association.

In 1983-1984, with the assistance of Bob Breving and Local 1600, we negotiated our first contract. It was a three year contract that took almost one year to negotiate. The first year we received an 8% raise, an increase in vacation and medical days, a voice in our insurance benefits, and most importantly, a grievance procedure. The College also agreed to pay for a Comparable Worth Study for all the employees. It was a huge victory that set up years of successful negotiations to follow. In fact, the contract that was negotiated in 2014 contains over 50% of the language that was negotiated by Local 1600 back in 1984!



Berdy Kuiken and other founding members of South Suburban Classified sign the first negotiated contract in 1984.

## Memories from My First Strike

In the fall of 1996, I was hired as a full-time faculty member at Olive-Harvey College. In 1999, I was tenured and began my career as an active union member. I became a *Voice* staff writer and a voting member of the House of Representatives. By 2004, my union membership card was actively punched. In the fall of 2004, I experienced my first time as an adult on a picket line. It was a bonding experience that changed the trajectory of my life and cemented my devotion and role in the Union.

It was a Saturday; I was on the phone with my mentor, Claudette Burchett, an English professor at Malcolm X College. She and I were planning our shopping and dinner outing for Sunday when her other line clicked. When she returned, she asked me did I get the call yet. I asked, "What call?" She replied, "From your strike captain. It is on. We are officially walking out on CCC next week." Two minutes later my line clicked. It was my strike captain. We were indeed on to go on strike.

The next three weeks of my life were filled with strategic movements created and implemented by our illustrious founder, Norman G. Swenson. Each union member met every day at

his or her two-hour block of strike duty in the student parking lot. We each had our own picket signs that read "We deserve a fair contract" or "A Quality Education Costs." My favorite was "Stop Cheating Students: Pay Teachers Their Worth!"

We walked that picket line from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. NOBODY was absent, and EVERYBODY was on time for his or her shift. We chanted "What do we want? A contract. When do we want it? Now" and "Hey, hey, ho, ho. Poverty wages have got to go." When I got my hands on the bullhorn, I was the loudest chanter ever.

City Colleges had commercials advertising that classes were still being conducted. That was correct; adjuncts were teaching our classes. However, the faculty had its own personal commercials. We stopped each and every car that came into the parking lot and told the students that none of the work that they were doing while we were on strike would count towards their grades when we returned. That was like putting a cul-de-sac at the front gate. Students would hear that, and turn right back around and go home. The college was a ghost town after that.

*continued on page 18*



By Rochelle Robinson-Dukes,  
City Colleges  
Vice President



Members of the Olive-Harvey Chapter on strike in 2004.



### Memories from My First Strike (continued from page 17)

There was another strategy in which I participated daily for a while. I called it the “garbage removal game.” Every time I saw a sign advertising that the colleges were open, my strike captain (Gide Colinet) and I would drive around in my car and remove the signs, rip them into pieces and put them in the back of my hatchback car. After four blocks of driving, we had removed every sign with a half a mile of the college. If City Colleges added new signs, I would simply do a sweep and remove them again. Their signs were in essence “hot garbage” to me, so I was simply taking out the trash.

Those were good times. I bonded with members in other departments and really felt the

spirit of the union during those three weeks. When the contract was signed, I was happy to learn that we were being paid for two of the three weeks that we were not working. I was also happy that Local 1600 was so organized during the strike. Norm Swenson’s phone tree was brilliant. His constant reminders to join the credit union two years prior is what saved most families from losing their homes and going broke. I have to thank Norm Swenson and our original striking members for giving us this union. We must always be ready to fight for what we have or we may lose it all one day, especially in this anti-union climate.

### College and University Credit Union Formed to Aid Members

Did you know that your union has its own credit union? The College and University Credit Union was established in 1979 as a service to its members. The founding members created the credit union to financially assist members in times of need. The credit union has been able to assist its members with low interest loans and higher than average savings rates for over 35 years. It has also been there to give financial aid to all of its members during five work stoppages. Our founders knew the greatest benefit of having our own credit union is being able to write interest free loans to all of its members while out on strike. This was never more important than during the strike of 2004. The credit union was there to give over 200 interest free loans over the three week work stoppage. This would never have been possible without a strong credit union. Whether it’s a debt consolidation, an unexpected bill, or small home remodeling project, the credit union is here with a quick and easy loan. The credit union also has very competitive new and used car loan rates. The credit union can loan up to \$40,000 on a new car with rates as low as 3.95%. The used car rates are as low as 4.95%. The credit union can also extend members up to \$10,000 in personal loans with rates as low as 3.95%. All savings accounts are NCUA insured for up to \$250,000. The credit union has proven to be a valuable service for its members. Support your union and fellow union members and join the credit union today.



During the City Colleges strike in 2004, more than 200 members received interest free loans through the Credit Union allowing families to not worry about finances during the work stoppage.

**For more information go to [CUCU1600.com](http://CUCU1600.com), or call Kevin Barrett at (312) 755-0997.**

## Springfield Budget Impasse Continues



Our colleges are beginning to feel the stress of not having a budget. Colleges are unsure of when they'll receive funding from the state and that uncertainty can lead to programs being cut or reduced. And the situation is only getting worse. The longer the impasse continues, the more agencies and programs will be affected.

In large part, the impasse is due to Governor Rauner's obsession with unions—his obsession to destroy them. Seemingly, every discussion boils down to the same deal: give up fair share and he'll give you X. His singular focus on union-busting is hurting the middle-class, communities, and putting those most vulnerable at risk.

Unfortunately, there is no good news to report out of Springfield. Illinois has now been without a budget for more than 100 days. There seems to be no end in sight.

Governor Bruce Rauner has decided to close the State Museum Network to the public, social service agencies have had to turn people away due to lack of funding, and the governor is offering tax breaks for corporations to relocate to Illinois, who in turn lay employees off during the move. Even emergency centers are facing problems because of the impasse.

Rauner is sacrificing essential programs in his single-minded attempt to break the backs of unions. Now, more than ever, it is important for every member to do their part to protect these programs, their jobs, and their futures. There are many ways to speak out against this impasse, whether it is writing to senators and representatives to support certain legislation, joining rallies protesting cuts, or making a trip to Springfield to speak with representatives in person. Whatever it may be, it is imperative to be active in order to encourage legislators to pass a fair budget that protects the best interests of all people of Illinois.

## UPCOMING UNION DATES

**November 20th**

**January 15th**

**February 19th**

**50th Anniversary Celebration and House Meeting**

**House of Representatives Meeting**

**Executive Board Meeting**



AFT-Local 1600  
Cook County College Teachers Union  
208 West Kinzie Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60654

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LOCAL 1600  
College Union

# *VOICE*

- The struggle to gain recognition and fair contracts
- What we can learn from our history
- Celebrating 50 years of activism and growth

The Union is Turning  
**50!**

