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Allegany County Education Association

13145 Warrior Drive

P.O. Box 5179

Cresaptown, Maryland 21505-5179

T: 301-729-8280 F: 301-729-4834

aceamsea.org

A full color electronic version of this newsletter can be found on our website.

November 2021



The



Advocate

President's Message >>>

**Welcome new
ACEA Members!**

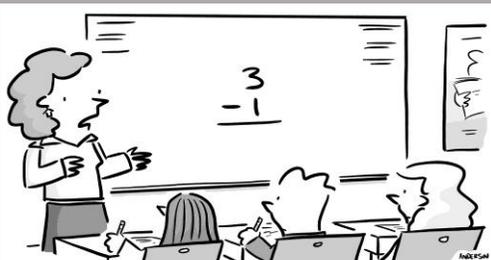
Unit 1

Angela Africa	JH
Kelsey Boyer	GC
Julian Gates	SP



November 15-19

November 15 – Kickoff Day
November 16 – Parents Day
November 17 – ESP Day
November 18 – Educator For A Day
November 19 – Substitute Educators Day



"This week we've got an in-service, testing, an assembly, and class picture day. So if you want to know how to subtract, you should pay attention now."

An ESpecially Important Time of Year

The 2021
ACEA Education Support Professional
of the Year:

Shelly Fitzgerald



Even though she was introduced in our May 2021 edition, we want to take this opportunity to congratulate Shelly once again for her selection as the 2021 ACEA ESP of the Year, and for representing her many unit colleagues so well.

Since receiving this honor, Shelly has expanded her ESP experience and accepted a position as the school secretary at Westernport Elementary School.

Our ESP colleagues provide a variety of supports for both our students and certificated colleagues. They are our Instructional Assistants, Secretaries, and Information Technology Technicians in our association. There are still others such as nurses, custodians, maintenance, food service workers and bus drivers without whom we could not successfully meet the needs of our students.

I encourage you to take time to thank those ESPs working in and out of your building this month. They truly are ESpecially important educators!

On Sunday, October 24, ACEA participated in the first *Trunk and Treat* sponsored by Rocky Gap State Park. "Mary Poppins" (President, Kim Sloane) and the "Wicked Chimney Sweep" (Executive Director, Peggy Bass) served "a spoonful of sugar" to approximately 400 area children on behalf of our members. This was approved by our ACEA Representative Assembly and funded from the public relations portion of our budget.



TOYS FOR HAPPINESS 2021!

Since 2005, ACEA (formerly ACTA), in conjunction with ACPS, has hosted an annual *Denim Day for Toys for Happiness* collection to support this local charity and help spread the spirit of giving in our community. Over the past 16 years, this event has collected close to 5,000 toys and \$30,000 dollars in donations for this worthy cause!

This year, **Tuesday, November 30** will be designated as the ***Denim Day for Toys for Happiness***. Also, this year, we will again collect both toys and monetary donations. Toys and monetary donations (cash or checks) will be accepted at each work location that day, and can be given to one of your building representatives or another designated individual. Checks should be made out directly to *Toys For Happiness*.

We encourage staff to consider making a \$5 minimum donation. In exchange for your support of this event, Mr. Blank has agreed to permit the wearing of seasonal garb and denim to work on this day.

Did you know???

Retirement

At qualified retirement, Unused Sick Leave Days are converted by the [Maryland State Retirement and Pension System](#) into credit when calculating the amount of your retirement benefit.

In addition, our current contract benefits include an agreement that the ACPS shall pay qualified retirees \$30.00 for each day of unused sick leave accumulated, not in excess of 140 days, or \$30.00 for each year of service to ACPS, whichever is greater.

See Contracts:

[Unit 1: Article VII.A.3](#)

[Unit 4: 9.6 Severance Pay Upon Retirement](#)



It was a proud moment for our Interim UniServ, John, during a recent visit to South Penn Elementary. After years of inviting educators to join our association, he presented a membership packet to one of his own for the first time. John's son, Julian Gates, was hired this year to serve as the Community School Coordinator for South Penn Elementary. Congratulations to both!



From the Ubiquitous UniServ...

In 2020, the State of Maryland and Federal Government Agencies granted funding to local school boards under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) to aid states and school districts. One of the ways school boards could use this funding was to place quarantined employees on paid administrative sick leave who were unable to work due to COVID-19 exposure. However, paid administrative sick leave for public school employees ended in January of 2021.

Nevertheless, ACEA advocated and convinced local school board officials to continue paying administrative sick leave for quarantined employees vaccinated or non-vaccinated. As a result, local school board officials agreed to continuing the practice until the end of the school year in June 2021.

At that point, all county school boards in Maryland assumed the posture not to grant any paid administrative sick leave in the current school year, vaccinated or non-vaccinated. ACPS followed suit and did not offer paid administrative leave. As previously stated, funding for paid administrative sick leave stopped under ARP.

Even though paid administrative leave for COVID-19 symptoms is not a contractual right, the ACEA Executive Board requested that I attempt to negotiate new language to move ACPS off its position that there would be no paid administrative leave. We were able to negotiate through a collaborate effort with BOE officials that at a minimum, paid administrative sick leave should be afforded to vaccinated employees who still must be quarantined because of COVID-19 symptoms.

ACEA understands that some members do not want to receive the vaccination and that's your right. We will continue to have conversations with the BOE that all employees should be placed on paid administrative leave when required to quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure. We also encourage you to contact ACEA if you were exposed in the course of the workday, or you have medical exemptions from the vaccination. Additionally, ACEA is often asked what will happen if ACPS attempts to mandate vaccinations. ACEA would not entertain any talks requiring mandated vaccinations like in some other counties.

We appreciate all you are doing for ACPS students, and we will continue advocating for ALL members.