

Special Edition

Today's Sharpener is for **all** members in your union's four bargaining units: accountants/bookkeepers, substitute teachers, educational assistants, and teachers.

HRA Briefing

A health reimbursement account (HRA) is an individual employee account regulated by the IRS, which may be spent **only** for medical expenses. Only the employer may deposit funds in an HRA, and all funds are **tax-free**.

Many Medical Uses

HRA funds can be spent on medical expenses, defined by the IRS, such as:

- ◆ Deductibles, copays, and co-insurance payments to doctors, clinics, labs, and hospitals.
- ◆ Over-the-counter drugs and prescriptions.
- ◆ Dental and vision care costs, not covered by insurance.

Go to mtea.org (GoodHealth) for quick access to a listing of IRS-approved expenses.

Convenient Card

You can use your SHPS card to draw from your HRA account. For example, if you buy aspirin at Walgreen's, you can use your HRA card for payment, if you have funds in your account.

HRA Funds Roll Over

HRA funds not used one year are "rolled over" to the next, and can be accumulated for several years. For example, you can build up your HRA funds to pay for laser eye surgery.

Earned GoodHealth Incentive? Got Card?

Did you complete a voluntary program(s) during the 18-month start-up of the joint GoodHealth wellness/health education program? If you are among the over 1,000 MTEA members who met the December 15, 2008 deadline, you should have received your \$200 debit-like card.

During the week of February 23-27, an individual MPS SHPS Spending Account card was mailed to the home of each employee who earned the financial incentive. SHPS is one of two national firms that administer the district's GoodHealth program.

The \$200 financial incentive on your SHPS card is in your individual MPS health reimbursement account (HRA). Key points about IRS-regulated HRAs are outlined to the left.

March Morale Magic

Tired of winter? Need some motivation, an emotional boost?

This March, all MTEA members are invited to four events that will inspire, motivate, and educate. (Plus another activity that's just plain fun!) Your union is hosting or sponsoring the following events.

An Evening With Jonathan Kozol - March 9

Jonathan Kozol is an internationally known author who has devoted his life to education advocacy and social justice issues. He writes and speaks with power and passion and conviction on issues that matter deeply to MPS students, parents, and educators.

On Monday, March 9, Dr. Kozol will speak on "Public Education, Poverty, Race and Segregation." His presentation will take place at 7:30 p.m. in the UWM Student Union, 2200 East Kenwood Blvd.

As a sponsor, we have a limited supply of coupons for a discount on tickets. For details, e-mail Kris Collett of the MTEA staff at collettk@weac.org or call her at 259-1990.

"Early Education Benefits Everyone" - March 11

A public forum on early childhood education and its long-term impact is being sponsored by the MTEA Legislative and Early Childhood Committees.

When: Wednesday, March 11, 4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Where: Hawley Environmental School, 5610 W. Wisconsin Avenue

This event will feature a panel presentation on the academic and financial value of high-quality, age-appropriate early childhood education - and legislative efforts to support it. The speakers are:

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EA Contract Not Settled

Here are a few facts that should concern all MTEA members - and more importantly, all nine School Board members!

◆ The contract between the School Board and the MTEA covering educational assistants expired on December 31, **2006**.

◆ EAs, some of the lowest paid employees in the district, have not received a raise for two years and three months.

◆ The last time the School Board's team met with the EA bargaining team was in mid-November, 15 weeks ago.

◆ The Board's team has not yet made an initial salary offer.

Perhaps Some Progress

The only good news is that an EA contract bargaining session is set for March 17. The Board's team is scheduled to present a comprehensive counterproposal to the package your union's EA team offered weeks ago.

Four MTEA Contracts

Your union bargains four separate contracts with the School Board - one for each of four employee bargaining units. Each MTEA unit has its own team, comprised of union members who work within the unit. Members of MTEA's professional staff support each team.

Two Recent Settlements

During the past few weeks, two-year contract agreements were reached for two of the MTEA bargaining units.

◆ The substitute teacher pact will expire on June 30, 2009.

◆ The new school accountants/bookkeepers contract expired on December 31, 2008.

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Dave Edie, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families; **Douglas Udell**, Milwaukee Area Technical College; **Dawn Calarco**, MPS kindergarten teacher; and **Senator Spencer Coggs**, Wisconsin Legislature.

If you have questions, please contact Kris Collett of the MTEA staff at collettk@weac.org or call her at 259-1990.

Thirsty Third Thursday - March 19

The MTEA SpeakOut! Committee invites you to relax and socialize at O'Brien's, a casual pub at 4928 West Vliet Street, two blocks east of the MTEA Building. As usual, the good times begin at 4:30 p.m.

Peter Blewett and Larry Miller, the School Board candidates recommended by your union for the April 7 election, will join us for this month's Thirsty Third Thursday.

MTEA Movie Night - March 19

The first-ever MTEA Movie Night takes place on March 9 at the Times Cinema, located at 59th and Vliet. A 90-minute documentary, "A Little Bit of So Much Truth," will be screened, starting at 6:00 p.m..

In the summer of 2006, a non-violent, uprising exploded in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. **When the people of Oaxaca decided they'd had enough of bad government, they didn't take their story to the media...they TOOK the media.**

"A Little Bit of So Much Truth" captures an unprecedented media phenomenon when tens of thousands of school teachers, housewives, health workers, farmers, and students took 14 radio stations and one TV station into their own hands. This film delivers a breathtaking, intimate account of a history-making revolution when the people used the media to organize, mobilize, and ultimately defend their grassroots struggle for social, cultural, and economic justice.

Tickets are \$5 each. Concessions will be available for purchase. The screening is open to the public. (The film is appropriate for young people, though probably not for very small children.)

Anti-racist, Anti-bias Teaching Conference - March 28

The Educators' Network for Social Justice is presenting its 2nd Annual Conference focused on anti-racist, anti-bias teaching. The keynote speaker is Rosemary Christensen, an Ojibwe tribe member.

The all-day conference will offer a variety of sessions providing active, hands-on engagement with content and critical thinking about anti-racist, anti-bias teaching. Educators will receive ideas readily applicable in PK-12 classrooms.

When: Saturday, March 28, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Where: Indian Community School
10405 West St. Martins Road in Franklin

Registration: Go to mtea.org (Events)

More on March Events

You'll find more details on the MTEA-sponsored events and other activities of interest to educators this month at mtea.org (Events).
