

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Schools, the District, and Los Angeles County have recently completed recognition of the Hart District Teachers of the Year for 2011/2012. HDTA joins in celebrating the recognition of these fine educators. Each was selected by teaching peers at his or her site, and each is truly worthy of the honor received:

Doug Labus (AOC)
 Rachel DeMik (AS)
 Jennifer Dermody (BO)
 Patricia Kingery (CA)
 Pete Pew (HA)
 Lesley Day (LM)
 Allison Fitzpatrick (PL)

Brenda Mumford (RP)
 Chad Powell (RN)
 Rene Paragas (SA)
 Laura Luxmore (SEQ)
 Summer DeWitt (SV)
 Anna Bettencourt (TLC)
 Aaron Davis (VA)
 Richard Haring (WR)

Special recognition has been extended to Kate Povletich, Golden Valley's Teacher of the Year and the Hart District Teacher of the Year for 2011/2012. We congratulate Kate and all of this year's Hart District Teachers of the Year.

OPEN ENROLLMENT REMINDER FOR NEW TEACHERS

One of the benefits of CTA membership is that you can sign up for the CTA-endorsed Group Disability and Life insurance plans during a special enrollment opportunity, without providing proof of good health, in most cases. Of course, as a CTA member, you can apply for coverage at any time, but your application will be subject to health evidence and insurance company approval.

New employees have the opportunity to sign up for Life and/or Disability/Income Protec-

tion insurance during the first 120 days of employment without having to provide health verification from a doctor. What this means is that, no matter what your health condition may be, you would be automatically accepted for coverage. After the 120-day open enrollment window closes, should you wish to apply for either coverage, the insurance company could accept or reject based on a prior condition. Information about the plans was included in the New Teacher packet you received.

HDTA SMALL CONTRIBUTOR COMMITTEE CAMPAIGN

Authorization forms to join the HDTA Small Contributor Committee have once again been distributed to all members. This is a normal fall distribution. This is also a purely voluntary activity. Having the Small Contributor Committee allows us as educators to have an active role in local school board races and local legislative races.

Perhaps the easiest way to become a member of the Small Contributor Committee is just to approve diverting one dollar or 50 cents per month of existing dues to the Committee. No ad-

ditional money is taken from one's check and yet one is still helping out for the cause!

Everything that the Small Contributor Committee does is strictly legal. The Association retains the services of a CTA recommended legal firm to guarantee that all laws and procedures are followed correctly.

If you think that you joined in the past but do not remember, it is all right to submit an authorization form again. WE PROMISE NOT TO DOUBLE DIP!

IRS FLEX 125 PLANS

It is fall and that time again to consider whether or not you want to take advantage of the optional IRS 125 Flex benefit. If a person opens an IRS 125 Flex account, one may direct monthly income into a tax-exempt account to pay for additional health/dental, vision, child care, or elder care expenses. This voluntary program can produce significant tax savings for the year while one covers the ad-

ditional out-of-pocket expenses.

First time and continuing participants must enroll each year. If you are interested him at doug@dougeagle.net or call 661.257.9800. The open enrollment period is set so that the new benefit year may begin on January 1, 2012.

SUMMER SCHOOL SURVEY LINK

The Association is interested in gathering information about summer school. If you taught summer school this past summer, please take a few minutes to complete the survey. The link is <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CB7GZ2Q>. The link will remain open until October 21, 2011.

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JAYME'S MEMBERSHIP CORNER

"It isn't a benefit if you are not aware of it." Of all the things I brought home from CTA Summer Institute that quote from one of the presenters just may be the most valuable. I am Jayme Allsman, a teacher at Placerita and your HDTA Membership Queen Bee, which means I am responsible for maintaining all of our information with CTA and NEA. I have decided to branch out by tackling the vast amount of member benefits available to all of us through CTA and NEA. Using more of the member benefits could save each of us some of our hard-earned paychecks so I am going to share my new-found knowledge on a regular basis in The Voice.

In order to make the best use of all the member benefits, you will need to log in at www.neamb.org. Follow the prompts and get yourself registered. You don't even need to have your membership card handy because it is linked to your name and birthdate. Once you are logged in, you really should take advantage of the FREE \$50,000 life insurance policy that is just part and parcel of your membership. Only one-fifth of our teachers are taking advantage of this benefit! To activate it, you simply need to

WIN A STAFF LOUNGE MAKEOVER

California Casualty, the CTA-endorsed Auto and Home Insurance provider, would like to invite you to enter the School Lounge Makeover contest. This is an opportunity for your school to get a Free makeover of its school lounge. The lounge makeover is valued at \$7,500 and the winner will be announced on November 15, 2011.

You can even increase your chance of winning by encouraging as many people in your school as possible to

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK

The Hart District Teachers Association has updated its group page on facebook. If you are on facebook and have not joined us, please search for the group and add yourself as a member.

Currently, chapter leadership has been adding

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For many years, CTA lobbied to get teachers a voting representation on the STRS Board. Several years ago, teachers voted for the first time for teacher members on the STRS Board. These elected positions give us a voice in how our retirement money is managed.

Coming to all of us in the mail sometime in October is an STRS ballot for each of us to use to vote for teacher members on the STRS Board. CTA strongly recommends that we vote together for two candidates: DANA DILLION and HARRY KEILEY. Both are current members of the STRS board. Dana Dillion is now the chair of STRS and a teacher in Northern California. Harry Keiley serves as Vice Chair and is the president of the Santa Monica/Malibu Teachers Association, a chapter in the Bay Valley Service Center. These two teachers will work collaboratively with the STRS and CTA to ensure that STRS makes decisions that protect and improve our

designate a beneficiary (Jayme has a Y and Allsman has two Ls if you need help deciding whose name to use).

Do you need some new lesson plan ideas to replace some of your old, well-worn, slightly tired ideas or are you a new teacher in search of good stuff to build your lessons on? Once you have signed up for your life insurance, you can use links such as Curriki to download free unit plans, powerpoint presentations, activities of all sorts and begin using them right away. You can also find link to low cost and/or no cost class supplies at such places as Smilemakers, a Staples Co. Weekly Reader is also available at a discount. There is a wealth of resources available to us all.

That is enough for now! If you have questions, please feel free to email me at Placerita and I'll try my best to get you the answers you are seeking. Look for more stuff here next month!

-Jayme Allsman

enter the contest. If your school doesn't win in November, each entry will automatically remain in place for three additional drawings that will occur in 2012. This means you have four chances to win!

Go to www.schoolloungemakeover.com to enter the contest. It only takes a few minutes. You will also be able to see a video of the winner of our first school lounge makeover contest.

education related articles that have appeared in the media. Feel free to start discussions, ask questions, and share information. The site is open so any and all can see postings so please post comments and topics with care.

retirement benefits.

As they work to keep the STRS system solvent for all members, the system itself is facing another attack in the form of a statewide initiative that just qualified for signature gathering. The initiative is sponsored by anti-tax advocate Edward T Costa and its purpose is to reduce pensions for firefighters, nurses, teachers, and other public employees. They have until February of 2012 to gather enough signatures for it to qualify on a ballot. The best way to avoid any attacks on our pensions is for people to not sign the petitions. Our pension is not the reason for the state fiscal crisis. Falling tax revenues due to the mortgage meltdown and the economic downturn are to blame. If you see someone gathering outside a store, don't sign the petitions.

-Leslie Littman