



# The Advocate

## Education for Democracy—Democracy for Education

### The Student of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Millennials

**The Advocate** is pleased to publish the first of what we hope will be a year long rumination of our current students, the Millennials. We have other essays in the pipeline to be presented in the first issue of '06, particularly some very interesting socio-economic material from Carolyn Davis, Professor of political science, North Harris College. We, nonetheless, continue to urge all of you to consider an essay for future use since there are so many perspectives from which this subject can be considered. Over the holidays when waiting line at the mall or wrapping presents, why don't you give this issue some thought? The more we consider the topic and share with each other, the quicker we may address the solutions rather than just complain to each other in the hall. Think! Write!



Happy holidays, Pat Gray, editor

I read with fascination and general agreement Pat Gray's article in the October/November 2005 **Advocate** and wanted to offer a few thoughts on the subject of the Millennial Student. First, I have many reservations about labeling student behavior and ability to make a commitment to their studies as a generation affect. I suspect baby boomers and generation X'ers as with the millennials showed similar behaviors when they were each in their respective late teens and early twenties. I also suspect the educationist attempt to portray immature, selfish and ill-mannered behavior as a generation affect will prove to be somewhat off target. I would like to suggest that what we see in our classes is a maturity issue as opposed to a generational is-

sue and any attempt to consider it otherwise will result in a delay in addressing the problem. Second, I have been to countless workshops modeling how to communicate with the millennial student. I continue to wonder why we, the instructors, must speak their language and make education entertaining to them when the student, in my opinion, should be learning to speak the instructor's language and taking their education seriously. When we water down our language to reach the student, I must ask how we know that we are helping the student as opposed to enabling him or her in using undeveloped language skills and a lack of seriousness in his approach to his education. I am not as convinced that we must speak the student's language as that the student should

speaking ours. Third and finally, it is my opinion that some of the cause of this affect is a result of a successful marketing program on the part of education in which students, who may not have considered going to college, suddenly find themselves sitting in a college classroom simply because they were sold on the idea by a clever ad campaign. Now we have managed to recruit countless students who may not be prepared and may not even truly want to be in the classroom ; therefore, to keep the students we must start speaking their language and being entertaining to them ; otherwise, they may take their business elsewhere.

Bill Simcik  
Tomball College

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Our website, [www.aft-nhmccd.org](http://www.aft-nhmccd.org) will have a new look in the near future. Be sure to check it out!



# Houston, We Still Have a Union!

At the AFT 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations two of the program speakers were Alan Vogt and Alan Hall. Here is a version of what they said that happy, glorious night. Enjoy.

Pat Gray, editor

Twenty-five years as a union - what a ride! And what a difference twenty-five years can make:

1980: KEG	1980: Going to a new, hip joint
2005: EKG	2005: Receiving a new hip joint
1980: Acid Rock	1980: The Grateful Dead
2005: Acid Reflux	2005: Dr. Kevorkian
1980: Rolling Stones	1980: Trying to look like Liz Taylor
2005: Kidney Stones	2005: Trying NOT to look like Liz Taylor



In contrast, of course, I believe that our union has aged quite gracefully.

Just how gracefully we've managed was demonstrated at our successful October 21 commemorative celebration. The Shirley Acres facility provided a cordial and helpful staff, delectable food, and an impressively sylvan setting. The "gaggle" in attendance totaled slightly more than 100, and the "silent auction" netted \$572 for the AFT Disaster Relief Fund, set up primarily to assist Gulf Coast hurricane victims.

Special kudos for our memorable party go to Bob Locander and Vivian Brecher, movers and shakers extraordinaire; Velma Trammel, whose ideas and organizational skills, tireless work, and gentle nudging made the whole shebang possible; to Nick Oweysi and Drew Hazzlerigg, whose technical expertise and stage management allowed us, most especially, the enjoyment of a long-overdue spiritual reunion with Peter, Paul, and Mary; to Bryan Barrows', soul-inspired rendition of MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech had its usual dramatic and

powerful impact and was so perfect for our gathering; and to Pat Gray, the perfect late-night emcee, with, in the words of Pat Szmania, "perfect pitch and perfect poise," and, in my words at the time, the same feisty, sometimes irreverent character of Mary Harris Jones, known affectionately to the early twentieth-century U. S. labor movement as "Mother Jones" and also known to others as "the most dangerous woman in America."

Given who we are and what we celebrated in October, I cannot let the Jones reference go with only a perfunctory mention. Born in Ireland on May 1 (May Day!), 1830, she migrated with her family to the U. S. in 1835, and became, among other things, a dressmaker in Chicago where she was attracted to the oratory, ideals, and solidarity of the

Knights of Labor -- a "nation" of organized workers who would bestow upon her the

title "Mother Jones." When asked where she lived, Jones simply replied, "Well, wherever there is a fight." In 1920, she visited Gary, Indiana and denounced the capitalist "robbers and political thieves," thundering, "I'll be ninety years old the first of May, but by God if I have to, I'll take ninety guns and shoot hell out of 'em." Mary Jones, too, had a dream, and she carried it several months beyond her one-hundredth birthday! Her dream, of course, has not died, because fellow dreamers like Pat Gray will not let it. We love ye, "Mother Gray!"

Meanwhile, at our party the scheduled "dinner speakers," including myself, were, I trust, appropriately brief but informative - particularly about our group's roller-coaster history. The union was officially organized in February, 1980 under the guiding hands of the "Dirty Dozen," whose names belong on a wall of honor:

## Dirty Dozen

KEVIN BAILEY  
CAROLYN DAVIS  
ALAN HALL  
GARY HALL

JEAN HAYDEN  
THELMA JONES  
OLIN JOYNTON  
WALTER LINDSEY

ROBERT LOCANDER  
VIRGINIA PERRENOD  
ARLENE SCHULTZ  
CAROLE VIGH





## Houston, We Still Have a Union! (cont'd)

My own membership commenced in late March 1980 when "Founding Person" Carolyn Davis made an offer ("Put up or shut up!") that idealists such as myself could not refuse; additionally, in those days the dues were a mere \$8.00/month! Then, on a fateful day in May 1986, Bob Locander "sweet-talked" me into taking over his role as group treasurer, a job, as ye members well know, occasionally

requiring a smidgen of "sweet-talking" of my own! I still believe the "sweetest words" about union dues and other expenses are those attributed to AFL founder Samuel Gompers: "There is not a dollar which the working man or woman pays into a labor organization which does not come back a hundredfold." (I have cited this quote many times previously, and, as long as I am treasurer, I

can guarantee that I will visit it upon the membership again in the future).

I saw the union survive unrelenting administrative harassment and a lost federal lawsuit and proudly participated in the official chartering by AFT in late 1986, whereby our group became AFT Local 4518. Nineteen intrepid souls signed that charter:

### The Founding Few

CAROLYN DAVIS  
STEPHEN DAVIS  
KARYN GIBLIN  
PATSY GRAY  
GARY HALL

J. ALAN HALL  
JEAN HAYDEN  
THELMA JONES  
OLIN JOYNTON  
WALTER LINDSEY

ROBERT LOCANDER  
BLISS MAYBERRY  
ROBERT MILLER  
BERTHA PARLE  
VIRGINIA PERRENOD

MARTHA PIERCE  
KERN PIGG  
MARILYN RHINEHART  
ALLEN VOGT



Nine of these names are carry-overs from the "Dirty Dozen" list, with my "late-comer" name listed last. (Alas, it seems to be my fate always to bring up the rear.)

Since that memorable chartering, our union has expended to include support staff to full membership; performed tireless work on behalf of NHMCCD employee rights and interests; involved ourselves in activities such as Board elections, relief projects, and the historic Lech Walesa visit; we have further enjoyed several awards and recognitions for membership growth. Just consider that, since I became treasurer in mid-1986, our membership has increased exponentially, into the hundreds far more than anyone ever imagined at the beginning.

Someone is doing something right, and that principal someone is Alan Hall. In 1866, William H. Sylvis, founder of the National Labor Union, proudly proclaimed his devotion to the ideal of unionism by saying, "I love this union cause.... I am willing to devote to it all that I am or hope for in this world." For twenty-five years, in word and deed, as founding member and as long time president of our union, Alan has been busy fulfilling the essence of the Sylvis quote. In his brief re-

marks during our October celebration, TFT's John O'Sullivan related to us the esteem in which Alan is held on the state level and thus forcefully reminded us how fortunate we are to continue to experience his dedication firsthand. Otherwise, I will let the e-mail words of Pat Szmania summarize the honor and pride we all feel: "We are all in your debt, Alan. Thank you for your steady, intelligent, courageous leadership." Quo Vadis? I hope our union will continue to grow and be of service. On his reasons for joining the AFT, Albert Einstein said, "I consider it important, indeed urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together, both to protect their own economic status and also, generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field."



These considerations are still as pertinent as ever, especially, for example, when contemplating the anti-intellectualism and assaults on academic freedom and tenure fostered by the modern-day Neo Conservation movement. Also pertinent, specifically, is the continuation of unconscionable socio-economic conditions in Texas, reflected in such statistics as Texas (as

of May 2005) being ranked fiftieth or last in percentage of population with health care insurance and in number of high school graduates twenty-five and over, while also being ranked number one in number of executions and in violation of clean air, clean water, and civil rights (*Texas Monthly*, May 2005, 170 - 71). The current batch of Texas state lawmakers (they of the failed-public school financing efforts) quickly and adequately addressing any of these conditions is as likely as Mike Tyson writing a book on dinner etiquette or the Houston Texans winning this season's Super Bowl! Our union can still serve real needs; as long as we do, we will be able to say to the employees of NHMCCD (and ourselves) that we have kept the faith - and the Dream. At our October party, I quoted from Langston Hughes' poem "Still Here."

I've been scarred and battered  
My hopes the wind done scattered  
But I don't care!  
I'M STILL HERE!

We, the union of NHMCCD, are still here! The party is not over! Houston, we still have a vibrant, heart – stopping union!

Allen Vogt



## AFT 25th Anniversary Celebration

Several common threads tie together tonight's program: freedom, equality, fairness, justice, dignity and respect for every individual. All of these are values in which the union believes. Tonight's overriding theme, the dream to make those values a reality, is something our union has been working on for years.

We're not just a local operation that deals with salaries, benefits, and conflict resolution although we are pretty good at it. We are part of a cause, a movement, with connections to Martin Luther King and the March on Washington, Caesar Chavez and the Farm Workers, Nelson Mandela and human rights on so many fronts, and Lech Walesa and the Solidarity Movement in Poland. It is worth noting that Solidarity is also celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

Lech Walesa was an electrician in the Gdansk shipyards who was fired for union activism. Twenty-five years ago, he and a group of shipyard workers launched a strike which united Poland and eventually toppled the Communist regime when, after a seven year struggle, the Polish government agreed to hold elections. Solidarity won by a landslide, putting Walesa in as president. The AFL-CIO and the national AFT played a role in Solidarity's success with political and financial support, including sending equipment and supplies through the underground. Those shipyard workers and those that supported them had a dream, and they made it a reality.

In many ways, a similar scenario played out here at this District. Our first administration was relatively oppressive and ruled with an iron fist. Twenty-five years ago, there was a knock on my door. It was Bob Lomander. He said that a few faculty in his department were thinking of or-

ganizing a union and they had heard I might be someone willing to join. Little did he know---he'd come to the right place.

I was a natural to join. My father, J.D. Hall., was a Steelworker president, and my mother, Virginia, was a union steward for the Communication Workers of America. I sat at the dinner table as a child listening to stories related to issues where they had helped people deal with irrational management decisions, wacky supervisors, personality conflicts, and some outright mean-spirited behavior. Listening to my parents' stories clearly had a profound effect on me. Early on, I was aware of the value of a collective voice in helping individuals deal with the establishment.

Kevin Bailey became president, and I became the first vice president of the union. After we had organized in the Spring of 1980, Kevin took our executive committee with him to address the college's Board of Trustees. He gave a very conciliatory presentation. Kevin told them that we had organized, wanted to work with them, and were hoping for a positive relationship.

In response, a Board member took out of his pocket a piece of paper and read its contents into the record. It was an anti-union resolution that said that unions are bad and that it was not in employees' best interest to join. The Board voted on the resolution, and it became Board Policy.

Basically, Kevin had offered them an olive branch. Their response couldn't have been much more hostile. The college president later sent a letter to every employee's home expressing his desire that

employees not join the union. Later in the year, when contracts were mailed to employees' homes, they included a copy of the Board's anti-union policy.

Then the union executive committee was called in by the administration and told the union was forbidden to meet on campus during working hours which they defined as 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. We were forbidden to use the campus mail system, forbidden to discuss the union in employee offices or other locations where work was conducted, and forbidden to read union material on campus. I always felt that if they could have figured out how to get the Thought Police after us, we'd have been forbidden to think about the union. I might add, all these prohibitions were not applicable to other similar organizations. When we pointed that out, the response was, "You're a different kind of organization."

The president and Board members also traveled to Florida to attend a seminar on how to break unions. So impressed were they by what they heard that they paid the presenters to come to campus to teach other upper level administration how to break us—all at taxpayers' expense. We began to feel a bit like Lech and Solidarity up against an oppressive crowd. Ironically, the administration was all for Solidarity—in Poland.

Another irony: while imposing these prohibitions on the union, the administration invited to campus a nationally known speaker, John Henry Faulk. He was a freedom fighter who had been blacklisted during the McCarthy era and spent the rest of his life giving eloquent presentations on the First Amendment focusing on freedom of speech and freedom of association. As union members sat listening to this giant in the cause of freedom, we wondered if the administration understood the irony. It became clear that an appreciation of irony







## AFT 25th Anniversary (cont'd)

did not appear to be one of the administration's strengths. Ultimately, the union filed suit in federal court for First Amendment violations. Astonishingly, we lost the suit and appealed to the 5<sup>th</sup> circuit and lost there as well. The TFT and national AFT, our state and national affiliates, were as astounded as we were. For a time, we thought we were done for. If these prohibitions stood, how would we operate? Then another irony occurred. The administration suddenly began removing all of the prohibitions placed on the union. We never understood that change of heart. Had they never implemented those prohibitions in the first place, that whole ugly episode, with its attendant grief and expense, could have been avoided.

Given the level of open hostility we initially faced, the union has accomplished amazing feats in the last twenty-five years in this district. My parents always believed that education employees should be organized. They would be very proud to see us tonight. There's not enough time to review all that we have accomplished, not even the high points. If you're a reader of *The Advocate*, you are familiar with them. We are about to put a new look on our website that will include an

archive of previous newsletters, and I invite you to look over the collection. The union's story is told in those newsletters. The union has stood up and many issues and won. We have stood up on a few where we lost. That's the way it works. What is important is that we always stood up.

Tonight's event is a celebration of the past and the future. Woven through our history are those threads I mentioned at the outset: freedom, equality, fairness, justice, and dignity and respect for every individual. Another equally important thread binding us together is the human connection we have with one another. We could not do what we do without the support of one another. We couldn't do it without the dedicated group of volunteers who make up our executive committee. I personally thank all of them for their efforts in the cause of justice. I also thank their families, and mine, for putting up with



us. It isn't always easy serving on the executive committee. Typically we are on the front line of a conflict, the union takes time away for meetings, and sometimes we get frantic calls from members late in the night. It is invaluable to have the support of families who believe in the cause.

I also thank you, the members. Membership isn't cheap. We know that. In order to have a high caliber, full-service operation like ours costs money. I appreciate your financial support for the cause and any volunteer work that you have offered.

We, the union, should be proud of our 25 year history. We have helped a lot of people. We have made the college district a better place. We are bound by human threads that have made us strong. It has been a magnificent ride so far. For the benefit of those coming after us, I close with a challenge all of us---in solidarity---to make sure the next 25 years are just a strong.



## Abolish the Caste System

Recently, employees were asked to review degree information for administrators and faculty for the 2006/2007 Catalog. Curiously, many of the District's professional and support staff have degrees, yet they are not listed in the catalog. NHMCCD is an institution that values education and lifelong learning. As such, it seems appropriate that the District should proudly recognize the educational achievements of all its employees. Therefore, the catalog should include the degrees of professional and support staff as well as faculty.





## Adjuncts and Health Insurance

Senate Bill 1370 passed in the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the Texas Legislature. This bill allows certain adjuncts who qualify to participate in the Texas Employees Groups Benefits Program, enabling them to purchase insurance through their college. Section 1551.1021 of the Texas Insurance Code lays out the requirements:

**Sec. 1551.1021. PARTICIPATION ELIGIBILITY:  
CERTAIN FACULTY OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**

(a) An adjunct faculty member at a public institution of higher education is eligible to participate in the group benefits program as an employee if the faculty member:

- (1) receives compensation for services rendered to a public institution of higher education as an adjunct faculty member;
- (2) has been employed as a faculty member by the same public institution of higher education and has taught at least one course in each regular fall and spring semester at the public institution of higher education in each of the preceding three academic years; and
- (3) is under contract or is scheduled to teach at least 12 semester credit hours in the academic year of coverage or, if the person is also employed by the public institution of higher education to perform nonteaching duties, is under contract or is scheduled to teach at least six semester credit hours in the academic year of coverage and has been approved by the public institution of higher education to participate in the group benefits program.

Adjuncts should check their eligibility carefully. If you are eligible and interested in purchasing health insurance through NHMCCD, the District is mandated to allow your participation.



*From the AFT*

### Education Finance Solutions

The AFT PLUS Education Loan Marketplace™ is the tool that will help you and your family solve the puzzle of paying for and managing the costs of education. Program features include:

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- Relevant articles and resources to assist you as you plan for paying for your education

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12/05

**USE THIS AD IN DECEMBER**

Monthly AFT Dues	
Full-time Faculty	\$27.55
Full-time Professional Staff	\$24.00
Full-time Support Staff	\$20.40
Adjunct Faculty & Staff	\$10.00

### Membership Eligibility

Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full and part-time faculty and staff up through the dean level. If you would like to join or find out more information about membership, please contact any of the officers listed on page 8 of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at [www.aft-nhmccd.org](http://www.aft-nhmccd.org).



## Campus Updates

### NORTH HARRIS COLLEGE

At NHC, we assisted a member with a negative work environment complaint. We also helped with a workload matter involving two staff members. Alan and I are currently working on a variety of district-wide issues. A number of members from across the district have contacted us with concerns about the proposed outsourcing of WebCT. We are taking steps to ensure that the decision-making process is transparent and that DL faculty and CTDL staff have a voice in the process. Other technology related issues that we have begun researching include the distribution of the \$6 per credit hour student technology fee as well as the district formula for allocating funds earmarked for technology to individual campuses. Lastly, we are looking into adjunct faculty eligibility for purchasing health insurance from the district.

Nick Oweyssi

### KINGWOOD COLLEGE

The semester has literally blown by and we are looking towards holiday celebrations and time with family and friends. This has been a relatively quiet semester for AFT issues, but storms and IT problems have more than made up for the calm. With "Rita," viruses, and accidental unplugging there have been some trying times for our DL students, faculty and staff. As AFT-VP'S Laura and I would like to thank everyone who has gone above and beyond to accommodate as many of these students as possible. I know we've still lost some, but I think your efforts have saved many. Many of you will be spending time with students over the Holidays to finish work for the fall semester. As AFT-VP I am proud of the efforts of everyone at Kingwood this semester. Have a great Christmas and New Year!

Rich Almstedt

### MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

At Montgomery we continue to work on some lingering personnel issues and hope to have resolution in the near future. The AFT will host a holiday party at MC from 11:00 – 2:00 on Monday, December 12 in the Blue Star Café. All employees are invited to drop by to visit and enjoy chili and holiday snacks.

Julie Alber

### TOMBALL COLLEGE

Well, mates, the seas are calm and the only spray on the waves is some internal concerns with our on-board Marines. Other than that we find ourselves getting ever closer to our winter destination as we continue sailing WNW for Port Finals and Grade City.

Richard Becker

### GY-FAIR COLLEGE

November has turned out to be a busy month. In the latter part of this month, we have been dealing with three rather weighty issues, ranging from problematic supervisory activities to terminations. We are following up on each one and hope to come to reasonable and equitable solutions by mid-December. When we know more, we will keep those involved informed.

We also held our monthly meeting with Dr. Troyer, which went well. In this meeting, she assured us that the administration wants to see faculty and staff alike be able to pull back now and focus their energies on those projects for which they feel they have the most to offer. I urge AFT members, then, to review carefully their workloads and focus their energies on a few projects instead of working on dozens. I am happy to help any AFT members who want to review their workload and redistribute their energy.

Finally, we will be having two holiday gatherings – one at Fairbanks, and one at Barker-Cypress. Watch your email and your inbox for more information!

Once again, please remember: as members, you have the right to contact me before attending a meeting, writing a response, or signing a document. Let me know if I can help you!

Sandra Elliott



2700 W. W. Thorne Dr.  
Suite A217



### CALL FOR ARTICLES

We invite all employees to send us their opinions, news, questions, and so forth. *The Advocate* is a forum for information and free interchange of ideas. Send your articles to **Pat Gray, Editor**, NHC, ext. 5545 or e-mail: [patsy.gray@nhmccd.edu](mailto:patsy.gray@nhmccd.edu), or **Heather Mitchell, Assistant Editor**, CFC, ext. 3254, or e-mail: [heather.mitchell@nhmccd.edu](mailto:heather.mitchell@nhmccd.edu) or submit to any of the other following officers:

Alan Hall, President	North Harris College	ACAD 217-G	ext.5544
Velma Trammell	North Harris College	WNSP 174	ext. 5612
Nick Oweyssi	North Harris College	ACAD 221-A	ext. 5547
Bob Locander	North Harris College	ACAD 270	ext. 5592
Allen Vogt	North Harris College	ACAD 264-C	ext. 5583
Vivian Brecher	North Harris College	LIBR 114	ext. 5403
Rich Almstedt	Kingwood College	FTC 100-G	ext. 1656
Laura Yates	Kingwood College	SFA 113-D	ext. 1414
Richard Becker	Tomball College	E-271-D	ext. 1835
Julie Alber	Montgomery College	SSC 205-A	ext. 7241
Cheri Riggs	Montgomery College	C 100-C	ext. 7370
Sandra Elliott	Cy-Fair College	HSC-200-K	ext. 5256

## Membership Has Its Benefits

The union encourages employees to join because they believe that college employees should have a voice in their professional lives. We don't encourage employees to join because they anticipate conflict or are already engaged in a conflict. In fact, if they are already embroiled in a situation, we are unable to help them. It is all too common for someone to approach the AFT and say something like, "I've been an employee for the district for several years, and I've just recognized the importance of joining." Typically, following that comment is, "I'm in trouble and need help." I finally lost track of how many times in the last year I've had to say, "I'm sorry, but member benefits don't cover anything that pre-dates membership." The individuals to whom I had to say that were invited to join and provided some advice on how to proceed with their

situation, but assistance ended there. Were they members, a host of benefits would have been available. The AFT provides its members with advice and guidance as well as representation in conflict resolution and grievances. We have our own local attorney and can seek legal advice and counsel for members. We maintain a local legal defense fund. In addition, membership dues include, at no extra charge, \$8 million in professional liability insurance for claims arising out of professional activities.

Most of our members don't join because they believe that they may need the AFT's help in a conflict. They join because they believe in the values of the AFT— that employees should be treated with dignity and respect, that employees should help each other, that employees should have a voice in their professional

lives, that employees deserve fair pay and good working conditions, and that the district needs a system providing checks and balances. They join because they want to support an organization that helps others in so many ways. A nice benefit is that, if they do need help, it's there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. The AFT advocated effectively for the raise employees received this year. The annual membership dues are a small percentage of the raise. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.

Alan Hall