**Lepore... Continued from page 1**

Staff Guild established a scholarship for LACCD Labor Studies students. Donations can be made to the AFT Sandra Lepore Labor Scholarship. In 1983, Lepore began working on what became the cause of her life – organizing classified employees of the L.A. Community College District. During this period she also met her future husband, Marty Hittelman, a Faculty Guild leader who was chief negotiator for the Staff Guild’s first contract.

In the 33 years since then, Lepore has worked closely with hundreds of dedicated Staff Guild activists at all levels, and has served as Executive Secretary and Director under all three union presidents: Barbara Kleinschmidt, Yvonne Owens and Butler. Looking out on a balcony crowd-ed with well-wishers, a visibly moved Lepore said, “My legacy, hopefully, will be the lessons I learned and the lessons I taught.”

**Contract... Continued from page 1**

- Release time will increase from 4.75 FTE to 5 FTE to facilitate the AFT Local 1521A and the District identify a 10% reserve fund. Just as a reminder, all health benefits are negotiated by the Joint Labor Management Benefits Committee.

This July, base salaries will increase another 2%, plus COLA and 30% growth funding. That formula will be implemented after AFT Local 1521A and the District identify a 10% agreement reached after two years of negotiations

A fter nearly two years at the bargaining table, classified staff at the L.A. Community College District approved a 3-year contract that begins to close the salary gap with other local districts and makes other improvements. Just before the holidays, many Staff Guild members received checks for about 16 months of raises.

“With months, members kept asking when we would reach an agreement,” said President Velma J. Butler, emphasizing that “the negotiating team brought home an excellent contract that was worth waiting for.”

The breakthrough in bargaining came after an outpouring of faxes and emails from Staff Guild members to the LACCD chancellor and trustees. Salary wasn’t the only area of advancement:

- LACCD will increase the tuition reimbursement fund from $120,000 to $140,000 per year, and allocate $10,000 yearly for professional development, to be distributed equally among the ten worksites.
- To renew eligibility for the computing differential after three years, an employee must present proof of having successfully tested and received a current MOS certification for the version of MS Office in use at his or her worksite.

**Let the Chancellor Lead**

By President Velma J. Butler

D. Francisco Rodriguez made a great first impression when he was hired to lead the L.A. Community College District. Chancellor Rodriguez began his career in public education as a classified employee, giving Staff Guild members hope that we would build a relationship on mutual respect.

There has been open communication – even warmth – during the nearly two years since Rodriguez took office.

We have all the pieces for a good relationship, but we aren’t there yet. And it won’t happen until Rodriguez stands up and leads decisively. The chancellor is the highest official in the district. He has full authority to resolve problems, but the Board of Trustees needs to stand back and let him do his job. A priority must be acting on district-wide grievances Local 1521A has filed. For example:

- We demand accountability and transparency in foundations that seek outside funds for District programs. Staff Guild members are supposed to work in those foundations. We even have a classification Foundation Assistant, but it isn’t applied uniformly. Each foundation is operating without common LACCD principles.
- We have also filed a grievance against the District for allowing a consulting firm – LACCD Build – to perform clerical-technical work on our computer servers and rewrite programs. Again, those are our jobs, as is clearly spelled out in the collective bargaining agreement.

**Staff Guild Honors Lepore**

One of the Staff Guild’s pioneers has retired to lofty tributes from elected officials, heartfelt thanks from classified workers, loving observations from grandchildren, and soaring rendi-tions of Italian arias.

Sandra Lepore was a driving force when AFT Local 1521A was organized in the early 1980s, and her signature is the only one on all 11 contracts the Staff Guild has since negotiated. “Sandra has been the glue of this organization,” President Velma J. Butler said. “Officers come and go, but as Executive Director she held us together.”

A proclamation from the LACCD trustees and chancellor praised Lepore’s “uncommon vision and for-thetude,” and Senator Dianne Feinstein said, “Your legacy will continue to inspire all those who follow in your footsteps.”

To honor her contributions, the **continued on page 2**
County Fed Reinforces Endorsement Process

Labor has been key for success in dozens of political campaigns for federal, state and local offices. Union members knock on doors, help mobilize neighbors, and turn out to vote, and our financial support can be the margin of victory, especially in large districts where radio and TV advertising are costly.

At times, different unions have supported competing candidates, leading to some tense confrontations in the L.A. County Federation of Labor over endorsements. Those are the moments when all participants must trust that decisions are made based on the federation’s constitution/bylaws and Robert’s Rules of Order.

That wasn’t the case, though, when County Fed delegates debated endorsements for the L.A. Community College District’s Board of Trustees in December 2014. There was unity on seats 3, 5 and 7, but heated disagreement over seat 1.

The Staff Guild and other unions strongly supported Andra Hoffman, while the Faculty Guild and its allies backed another candidate. Although the Fed sided with the faculty that night, Hoffman won the election last March.

The question remained, however, of whether the decision was fair. The Staff Guild filed a formal complaint against actions that violated rules of order that night. A settlement was eventually reached that has strengthened and restored faith in the endorsement process.

“It’s up to us to make the endorsement process work,” said Staff Guild President Velma J. Butler. “It is important and it’s my duty to my members.”

The Guild complaint pointed out that:

• The chairperson asked all candidates to leave the room before delegates began to debate but allowed visitors and guests to remain.
• The vote was conducted by voice, not by delegates raising their voting cards.
• A delegate’s request for a “division of the house” — separating voters for an accurate count, as defined by Robert’s Rules — was denied that evening.
• County Fed leaders in the meeting did not challenge any of the violations.

The resolution includes additional training regarding Robert’s Rules and the County Fed’s constitution; using voting cards for all endorsements; and asking all candidates, guests and visitors to leave the room before debates.

“Let the Chancellor Lead…”

Continued from page 1

• And we have demanded that the District stop using Career Guidance Counseling Assistants (CGCA)/student workers in place of Unit 1 staff in the Central Financial Aid Unit of the Educational Services Center.

Rodriguez has told us repeatedly to be patient, but the Staff Guild is tired of waiting. Local 1521A has decided to file for arbitration to defend our contract and rights. It’s a shame that the union and District will spend thousands of dollars on legal fees instead of seeking resolutions.

We know Rodriguez has a lot on his plate, including leading LACCD through the accreditation process. Yes, it’s complicated and time-consuming, but operating our colleges and honoring our contracts must also be priorities.

It’s time for Rodriguez to step up to the plate. The District Office should set the tone. It’s time for the chancellor to lead by example.

Let the Chancellor Lead…

A Year to Celebrate

Keeping the Dream Alive

When Staff Guild members pull together they accomplish great things, and those victories are on proud display at the union’s annual meeting. The 2015 gathering was a political celebration, contract rally and family reunion rolled into one.

Months earlier, AFT Local 1521A political activists had mobilized for a clean sweep of four open seats on the LACCD Board of Trustees, and were just days away from a contract breakthrough providing much-needed economic relief.

“Keep the dream alive,” President Velma J. Butler told cheering classified staff during her State of the Union speech. “And California needs our strength.”

Butler wasn’t alone in her praise. State Controller Betty Yee — who also won a tough political victory in 2015 with Staff Guild support — told union members: “You are probably the best-kept secret of why California continues to grow.”

And newly elected LACCD Trustee Sydney Kamlager encouraged 1521A members to stay strong in contract negotiations that seemed to drag on forever.

“Can you imagine how America would suffer without unions?” Butler asked.

Staff Guild members aren’t waiting for the Supreme Court to rule. Local 1521A is organizing all Unit 1 employees. Membership is 100 percent on the West, Valley and Mission campuses, and overall union membership is now 95 percent.

Local 1521A is counting on Yee and the CalPERS Board to resolve the long-time demand for equity in death benefits. Survivors receive $2,000 when a staff member dies, but a faculty member’s survivors receive more than $7,000.

Betty Yee points to community colleges’ role in California’s economic recovery. “At CalPERS, we’re all about return on investment, and you’re worth every penny.”

Elementary School in Westchester that accompanied AFT Local 1521A.

“The girls will remember this forever,” said Tristahan Williams, director of the cheerleaders.

Also marching with the Guild were LACCD trustees Andra Hoffman, Syd- ney Kamlager and Mike Fong, as well as former trustee and state assemblyman Warren Furutani and Cindy Montañez, a former mayor of San Fernando.

We salute the job that Rusty Hicks and the Condorettes, above, a cheer领先 from Westport Heights 