



Retirees Across the Country Organizing for the Union

By Renee Potter, Director, Retiree Chapter

2020 was the setting and the time for the national level of AFT Retirees to define a new era for retirees, with many opportunities within the union. Opportunities ranged from building retiree membership through organizing to engaging members in political and social justice activism.

Some AFT Washington members have heard me talk about the AFTerburners. It was begun as a group of retirees who were interested in becoming politically active during the 2020 election season. Retirees from across the US, members of Retiree Chapters of AFT and other education unions, came together and were organized and trained by AFT national field organizers to make phone calls across the entire country.

The AFTerburners' primary activity is Virtual Phone Banking (VPB). You might remember phone banking as gathering together at a site, sitting in front of a bank of phones and making calls, usually for political causes. The 2020/21 version of VPB is virtual, in front of a screen on a computer, cell phone or tablet in one's own home or place where one can work virtually without having to go into an office or other site.

It turns out VPB can be useful for various projects involving a large number of people, including membership drives, relaying general information or as a means for members to keep in touch with each other. It's a good way to inform members of up-coming meetings, activities, or to promote our work.

This year, the AFT Washington Retirees Chapter needed to build up its membership and contact a large number of retirees, about 600. AFT Washington staff compiled the list, updated it and had it ready for the AFTerburners to tackle. There were about ten AFTerburners, out of about 60, who graciously offered to help out over a span of several weeks. Under the guidance of a national field organizer, we got to work making phone calls at home from cell phones and/or computers and tablets. Our guide is more than patient as a trainer and a virtual host, giving us plenty of time to ask questions and to talk about what strategies work and don't work.

There is always time to socialize with other each other; we have developed long-distance friendships over 2020 and, now, into 2021. These retirees are all actively involved in their own personal lives (there's an endearing grandson with an eight-year-old's astute observations about being in school virtually for a year and now, hybrid), their local Retiree Chapters and their unique state politics.

As a result of the AFTerburners' efforts, the AFT Washington Retirees ended up with more than a quorum for our annual meeting in May, the addition of about fifty new members, and an

energized executive board with several new volunteers.

Note: We AFTerburners came up with our own name; the most clever name got the most votes.

Keep In Touch

AFT Washington is still in the process of updating its database to a system called Connect, and it's a great time to update your information! Please contact Christine Landon (clandon@aftwa.org or 206-432-8075) to start the process.

Want to stay in touch with the Retiree Chapter? Contact Cortney Marabetta (cmarabetta@aftwa.org or 206-499-4826) to get on our list.

President's Update

By Merrilee Miron, President, Retiree Chapter

Greetings all! I am so very pleased to be the new President of the Retiree Chapter! I am looking forward to working with the Board and you the members over the next two years!

Last year we had plans to do workshops and get speakers to address the needs of the retirees. Unfortunately, COVID-19 put the brakes on this. In the next two years we want to get this back and bring to you those areas of interest that you the member are wanting. Some of the ideas that the Board members and those attending the Annual meeting suggested were:

1. Information, like medical plans, that would be helpful to those considering retirement and how best can we get that to them;
2. Updates on Social Security and other legislation that affects retirees;
3. A workshop on how to get back to normal after the pandemic;
4. Workshops on sharing one's hobby/crafts with members.

I know there are many more ideas on workshops and speakers and I would love to have you share those with us. We want to start planning and moving forward to plan events and update our website at our first Board meeting in July. So I am asking you to share with us your thoughts.

You can email Cortney Marabetta at cmarabetta@aftwa.org or me at Merrilee.miron@gmail.com.

I look forward to hearing from you and meeting you in the upcoming two years!



The 2021 Annual Meeting was busy and engaging!

Photo by Cortney Marabetta

New Board Announcement

By Karen Post, Secretary, Retiree Chapter

The AFT Washington Retirees Chapter held its annual meeting via Zoom on May 21, 2021.

The following is an introduction to the members elected to the Executive Board for a two-year term beginning May 21, 2021. At the time of this writing, board members were still finalizing areas of responsibility over the next two years – we expect needs to change as the pandemic eases and we get into a more active phase for the chapter!

President: Merrilee Miron

Former affiliation:

AFT Washington staff for 17 years
School Bus Driver with Renton School District (RSD)
Local leader with UCWU and AFT Renton

Former affiliation:

VP Legislative Affairs AFT Washington
Retired President, Lake Washington Institute of
Technology

Vice President: Debby Dodd

Area of Responsibility: TBD

Director: Susan Levy

Area of Responsibility:

Social Security Works & PSARA

Secretary: Karen Post

Former affiliation:

Member of Renton Technical College RFT for 33 years.
Faculty/co-founder of the Computer Science program at
Renton Technical College 1984 – 2017.

Former affiliation:

Shoreline CCFT and AFT Washington

Treasurer: Sandra Schroeder

Former affiliation:

President, AFT Washington

Director: Renee Potter

Area of Responsibility:

Chapter rep to AFT Washington Executive Board
AFT Retirees Program and Policy Council Member

Director: Jim Howe

Area of Responsibility:

Legislative Affairs & Labor Rep on Healthcare as a
Human Right

Director: Barb Randall-Saleh

Area of Responsibility:

Director for Events

Director: Burt Weston

Former affiliation:

Shoreline CC Local 1950