



THE AGITATOR

Newsletter of the University of Oregon
GRADUATE TEACHING FELLOWS FEDERATION
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Mark Your Calendar!

Friday, Jan. 11

GTFFF General Membership Meeting
Campbell Senior Center
5:30 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 19

Executive Council Retreat
Contact David Craig for information:
organizing@gtff.net
All Day in the Erb Memorial Union

Week 3

Winter Organizing Drive
Contact David Craig for information:
organizing@gtff.net



Community activists protest outside the Eugene Wal-Mart on Black Friday.

GTFFF Joins ESSN, Local Labor Groups in Black Friday Wal-Mart Protest

On Black Friday, over two dozen protesters converged on the Eugene Wal-Mart on Green Acres Road.

Representatives from other organizations, including the Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network (ESSN), the Eugene Peace Choir, the Green Party, Occupy Eugene, and a host of other unions and community groups joined members of the GTFFF. They were there to show their solidarity with Wal-Mart workers nationwide, which, in recent months, have been stepping up efforts to fight for better hours and pay and the right to organize.

One store manager refused to take a letter that had been signed by community members demanding

better working conditions for Wal-Mart workers, and the police eventually forced the protesters to leave the privately owned parking lot.

Some of the store's customers, however, were surprised by the protests and concerned when they heard how Wal-Mart treats its workers. The protest also received substantial media coverage, including national coverage by the blog *The Daily Beast*.

The Eugene protesters were not alone. Wal-Mart workers in at least seven states walked off the job on Black Friday, and protests took place in an estimated 46 states. Wal-Mart, the world's largest private employer, is notorious for its anti-worker policies, such as keeping employees ... *cont'd pg. 5*



Letter from the President: Make a Resolution, And a Difference

Quitting smoking, losing weight, and working out are all very popular and well-intended New Year's resolutions, yet they often fail because they require a lot of motivation and self-discipline. Although they are very desirable, healthy resolutions, being charitable can be as rewarding and increase your self-esteem.

Additionally, to improve your personal well being, why not contribute to the well being of your GTFF community, by dedicating one hour of volunteer work to a cause of your choice?

The GTFF is an organization run by members for members. Besides our staff, Lisa Hamilton and Amber Cooper, all the officers and stewards are working on a voluntary basis and dedicate a lot of their time, term after term, to improve our union culture, plan events and help members with contract conflicts.

There are plenty of ways to get involved and our upcoming events include a broad variety of activities such as organizing our Political Action Committee, writing for the newsletter, running a 5k for a good cause, and planning the Great Cover-Up—a charity event showcasing GTFF's musical talent while collecting money for Food

for Lane County.

If you want to start your own project, such as a soccer club or a caucus concerning family matters, for example, we would be happy to support you. We also always need people with creative talents to design flyers and posters or to help re-design our GTFF website.

You can already help by dedicating one hour per term and contributing to your union in a social and creative way. You will feel

"If you want to start your own project . . . we would be happy to support you."

better about your social engagement and the beer at the next GMM or End of Term Celebration will taste better as well. And who knows, maybe you'll find a lot of new friends. That wouldn't be too bad either, right?

To get involved just email Amber Cooper (amber@gtff.net) or Judith Lechner (president@gtff.net) and we will make sure to point you in the right direction. Also, come to the next GMM on January 11th to meet people, socialize and learn more about your union.

In solidarity,

*Judith Lechner
President
German and Scandinavian*

Join Us At The Winter Term GMM!

The Winter Term's General Membership Meeting will be held on Jan. 11, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. at the Susan Campbell Senior Center, 155 High St.

This term's meeting will include officer reports and caucus reports as well as reports of our benefits administrator and our organizer.

Further, we are holding nominations for the next annual AFT-Oregon convention in April. In order to become one of the delegates, either come to the GMM and nominate yourself or have somebody else nominate you.

You may also submit nominations via email by Friday, January 11th to Amber Cooper (amber@gtff.net). As usual, we'll provide pizza, snacks, beverages and, of course, beer and wine.

For GTFs with children we provide 'childcare stipends,' you can hire your own childcare provider during the time of the meeting and get financial support. Please contact Jacob Barto (operations@gtff.net) to discuss the availability of partial reimbursement from the GTFF.

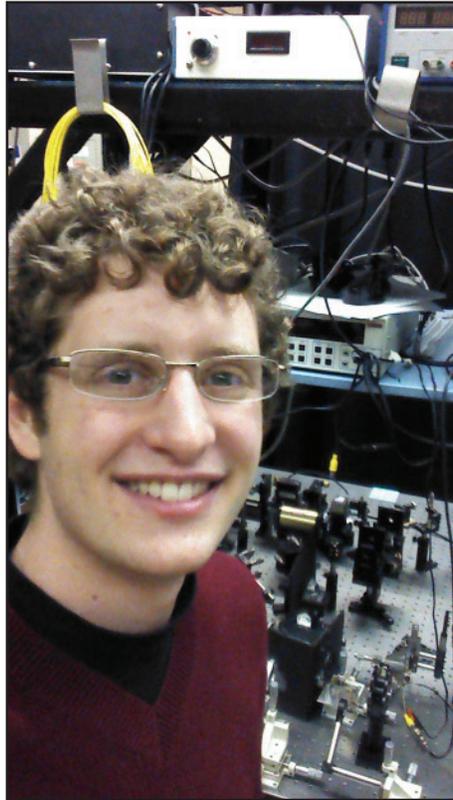
*Want to contribute to your union newsletter? Submissions of all sorts are welcome!
Contact gtffnewsletter@googlegroups.com for more information!*

A Day in the Life of a GTF: Meet Kyle from Physics!

The Big Bang Theory's Sheldon claims to "tear the mask off nature and stare at the face of God." My work is similar. Only I don't tear or stare; I timidly prod and briefly glimpse. Semantics.

As an experimental physicist, my days revolve around equipment. There are dozens of cool toys, which can cause a thousand different problems. Mornings are spent prepping: checking pressure gauges, warming up lasers, cooling gases and detectors, and making sure nothing goes BOOM at an inconvenient time...

In the optical physics we do, thousandths of a millimeter can be all the difference between results and rubbish. So assuming nothing unexpected occurs during morning prep (not a given, sad to say), a good chunk of time is spent minutely adjusting parameters. Did anything interesting happen? No. How about now? No.



When I find myself cajoling the equipment, it's a clue to take a lunch break with some real, human interaction. Best time of the day. I chat, joke, and laugh with

real people! I also wonder if that one GTF eats the same lunch every day. Evidence over the past 2 years suggests: yes.

The afternoon is more of the same. Anything interesting? No. Now? No. Now? ...Yes! (j/k. That's not typical.) When not in the lab, I'm in the office. Priority #1 is to NOT open Facebook, NPR, or the like. If I can do that, I'm being productive. Priority #2 is to read papers, analyze data, or play with math.

At some point in the evening, hunger, fatigue, or the occasional social event means it's time to shut down the lab and head out the door. But I'm back the next morning for a repeat. Anything interesting? No. How about now?

Endless optimism.

*Kyle Lynch-Klarup
Steward
Physics*

From the Editor: A Call for Website Designers!

Many GTFs, including myself, have just returned from a holiday season well spent with family members. In my experience, this included good cheer, good food, as well as the inevitable confrontation with my family's technological (in)capacities.

Yes, I'm talking about the confrontation with and navigation of the Tangled Wire Jungle. Tasks taken for granted, such as how to restart the router so you can send that really important email or trying to hook ye olde laptop up to the TV screen for family Netflix viewing, take on

a whole new daring (and stressful) dimension.

Imagine that sort of puzzled frustration and apply it to a Wordpress site administration page and you have the beloved GTF website. If you thought the webpage itself was difficult to navigate, the frustration is only magnified behind the curtain.

This is why, as VP of Membership Communications, I'm imploring GTF members with expertise in web design to please join me in an

ad hoc committee to re-design the website. Give it a fresh look. And make its administration as simple as possible so it may easily be handed off to future Communications officers.

I'm also happy to take suggestions as far as layout is concerned. If you're interested, please contact me (dlrognlie@gmail.com) so we can prune the jungle together.

*Dana Rognlie
VP Membership Communications
Philosophy*



Treasurer's Budget Updates: Surpluses and Dues

Greetings Fellows! It's the beginning of a new year, and with that, I think it's time for an update on the financial condition of the GTFF.

The E-council just approved a revised budget for this fiscal year (July 2012 to June 2013), reflecting some adjustments I've made since the Spring 2012 General Membership Meeting approved it. Briefly, I dug up some of the old financial audits for our local, and by plotting our dues income for the last several years, I discovered that the previous treasurer and I had a tendency to underestimate dues in each year's budget, because they have been growing at a steady 5% or so since 2008.

This, it turns out, is largely due to increases to our minimum wage and the increasing size of the bargaining unit, and has resulted in unbudgeted surpluses for the last several years. So I revised the budget to reflect what I feel is a more accurate estimate of our likely dues income this year.

Also, last year we discussed the possibility of lowering dues, from 2.1% and 1.79% for Full and Fair-share Members, respectively, to 2.0% and 1.6%. While the membership responded to this proposal favorably at the spring GMM, I didn't discover until afterward that the bylaws state that we cannot raise or lower our dues except to match adjustments in our per capita payments to the state and national AFT affiliates.

This means that changing our dues structure would require amending the bylaws, which requires a significant amount of time to organize, as a full paper ballot election conducted by mail is required—the recent addition of Article 18 to our bylaws is an example of that process, and was the result of nearly a year of work. So that proposal could not be enacted, resulting in another change to the budget.

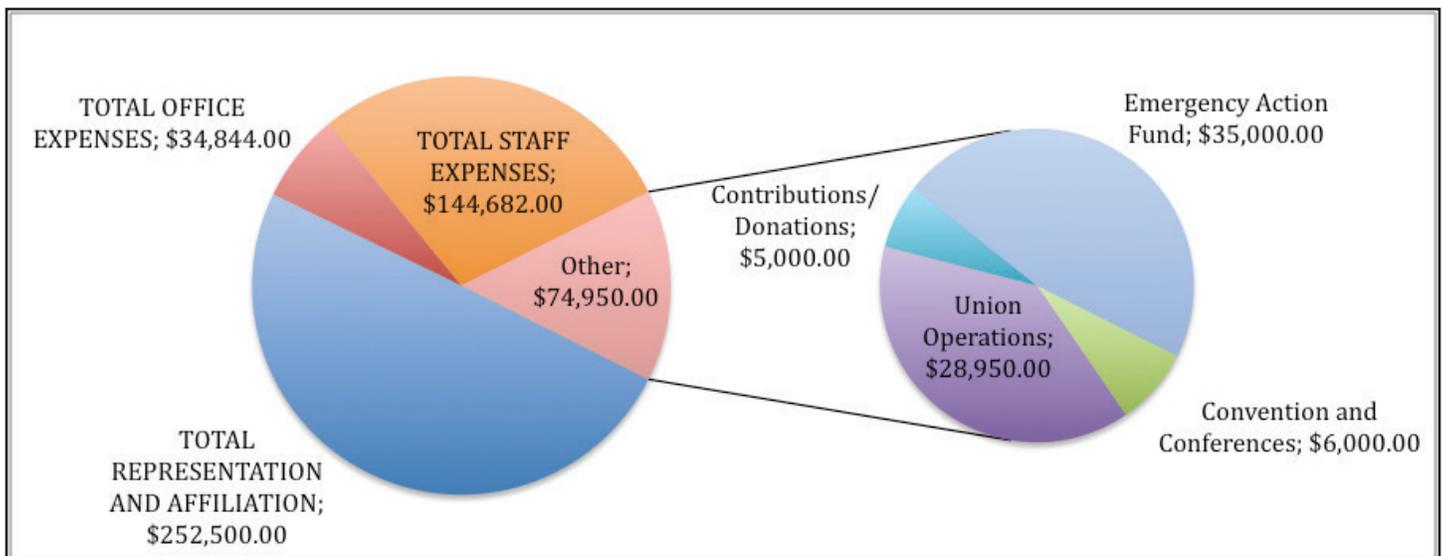
The good news is that the GTFF is now running a sizeable surplus, to the tune of \$35,000 expected at the end of the year. I recommend,

and the E-council has concurred, that we bank this surplus, as part of a new project to build an emergency action fund.

The more money our local has in the bank, the better able we are to respond to crises that may arise from attacks on our union, such as legislation attacking our ability to collect dues, or even eliminating our right to collectively bargain entirely. As it stands, we do not have the reserves to keep the office open and the staff fighting for us for more than a couple of months if something interferes with our cash flow; at the currently budgeted rate, we'll build up an action fund capable of sustaining our operations for a full year by 2020.

Finally, see below for a figure summarizing our budget as it now stands!

*Steve McAllister
Treasurer
Biology*





Introducing Jeff Ewing, New VP of Political Education!

Hi all!

I'm Jeff Ewing, newly appointed VP of Political Education (jeffaewing@gmail.com). Now that election season is over, a primary duty of the VP of Political Education (and my primary goal this Winter term) is to form the Committee of Political Education (COPE), which serves to keep the General Membership knowledgeable about political issues that affect the GTFF and, moreover, the concerns of its membership.

As a GTF body and as an organization, we have not been afraid to take a stand on issues that affect or concern us. Many of us are active in issues related to civil rights and liberties, women's rights, the LGBTQ community, the environment, foreign policy, and a number of other important causes.

Consequently, the COPE should serve as a venue to help keep our members informed about the events and news happening locally, statewide, and nationally that affect these issues—but to really succeed in bringing them to the General Membership, we need you.

I'd like to ask you, the members of the GTFF, to volunteer to sit on the Committee of Political Education to help keep our members in-the-know about events, talks, actions, news, etc., in all these topics that are so important to all of us. I know that you're busy, I'm busy . . . GTFs are busy people. I'm hoping that in forming a strong committee, we can get enough committed volunteers to succeed in spreading political knowledge with only a reasonable time burden for individual COPE members. The more the merrier!

Our first and primary duty this Winter will be to inform the membership, through committing to a little regular research and recon. We'll meet however often we vote to, cover issues we deem relevant.

Serving on the Committee of Political Education will empower you to reach our members about the issues you care about, and make a difference in our union and in the community. So join!

In Solidarity,

Jeff Ewing
VP Political Education
Sociology

Join the GTFF Potluck Club

Hey y'all!

I'm Greg and I'm in charge of the GTFF potluck club. We met once earlier in the year at Amber Cooper's place and it was a swell time. I made some cheddar-stuffed bacon-wrapped jalapenos, Robin Barklis made some kind of Thai pasta dish, Dana Rognlie made a salad, a bunch of other delicious dishes were shared, and more than a few bottles of wine were downed along the way.

I reckon it's time to gather the group together sometime soon. If you're not on the email list but would like to join, please email me at gliggett@uoregon.edu. We're always looking to expand the size of the group, so newcomers are especially welcome.

I should also say that you don't need to be particularly good at cooking to join. I, for instance, straddle the line between slightly below average and bad-but-not-terrible. You just have to enjoy making dishes and being social. Anyway, I will email everyone about our next meeting shortly!

Greg Liggett
Steward
Political Science

Cont'd from pg. 1: Local Protest Nets National Recognition

below full-time hours so that they are ineligible for health insurance, systematically discriminating against women and people of color, and going so far as to shut down an entire store rather than allow its workers to organize a union.

Wal-Mart so that its workers have a living wage, benefits, and organizing rights, we will change the entire picture for workers in the retail sector. The fight for the rights of Wal-Mart workers will continue in the New Year!

of the Eugene protest at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/23/do-the-walmart-protests-matter.html>.

Sarah Praskievicz
VP External Relations
Geography

If we can change the practices of See The Daily Beast's coverage

Fellows Find Fun and Festive Finals Finale at GTFFFFF

No, the Fs aren't a reflection of grades given out (hopefully!); they stand for Fabulous Fall Fiesta!

With the term at an end, GTFFs from various departments gathered at the Hilyard Community Center for an evening of burritos, beverages, and belting out karaoke—everything from Queen to Johnny Cash to the truly inspiring Miley Cyrus.

We hope that the celebration helped GTFFs relax and regain some strength for the holidays, and with its success, we hope that we can reprise some of the performances in the future. Thanks to everyone who helped organize and helped make it a great time!



Dana Rognlie (Editor-in-Chief/VP Membership Communications, Philosophy) and Phil Mayo (Editor-at-Large/Steward, Philosophy) show off their karaoke skills at the GTFFFFF.

*Jacob Barto
VP Operations
German and Scandinavian*

Winter E-Council Gathering: What is a Retreat?

The word “retreat” has several senses. One retreats from the line of battle when the enemy has definitively gained the upper hand. Individuals, groups or entire armies may retreat in this way.

In a similar vein, one retreats from a difficult situation to a place more calm and manageable. Who cannot recall retreating into a bedroom or closet as a child, finding security there, suddenly having the space to organize one’s thoughts and feelings before making the inevitable return to the outside world?

A wholly other sense of “retreat” (at least at first glance) is the withdrawal-to-somewhere groups sometimes make in order to relax

and get work done together. These retreats are common in the corporate environment, as well as in the newsroom, the non-profit office, or the film or television studio.

The underlying idea of such a retreat is that the group of collaborators or co-workers can be more productive, more inventive, and overall more effective when they withdraw-to-somewhere rather than staying put. Such retreats typically combine work and play, activity and relaxation, focus and detachment—and the combination of these factors seems to be one secret of the success of the retreat paradigm.

On Saturday, Jan. 19, the GTFF’s Executive Council will retreat to a

handful of rooms in the EMU for a full day of productivity, enjoyment, brainstorming, laughter, collaboration, snacking, puzzle-solving, dialogue, institutional-critique, and friendship.

As VP of Organizing this academic year, I am charged with making this “Winter E-Council Retreat”—the first ever of its kind—a success. In order to do so, I have invoked in my planning every sense of “retreat” I can imagine. The beleaguered soldier, the overwhelmed child, the overworked corporate staffer—all will have a place here. Such is the variety of the GTFF.

*David Craig
VP Organizing
Philosophy*

Fat Cats of Unionism Comics



Mara Williams, VP Grievances, Journalism and Comm.

GETTING INVOLVED IN YOUR UNION!

Want to make a difference in the GTFF? Consider applying for one of these officer positions!

ORGANIZING

Work to increase the level of involvement and activism in the GTFF; work to organize members and coordinate campaigns

organizing@gtff.net

POLITICAL EDUCATION

Educates and advocates around political issues affecting GTFF's membership; forges solidarity with other unions

political.education@gtff.net

BARGAINING

Engage in contract negotiations with the Administration by doing research, preparing proposals, and strategizing

president@gtff.net

GRIEVANCES

Helps enforce the GTFF contract by stewarding employees through the grievance procedure and providing contract education

grievances@gtff.net

COMMUNICATIONS

Ensure that information is available to GTFF members through newsletters, the GTFF website, and other media

member.communications@gtff.net

Or, join a caucus with fellow grads!

**INTERNATIONAL CAUCUS, DISABILITIES CAUCUS,
PARENTS CAUCUS, WOMENS CAUCUS,
QUEER CAUCUS, STUDENTS OF COLOR CAUCUS,
AGE DIVERSITY CAUCUS**



From the Editor

The Editorial Committee for The Agitator is very pleased to have received so many submissions to the newsletter. Keep them coming to gtffnewsletter@googlegroups.com!

If you do submit, we ask that you submit up to 300 words in a Word document with standard formatting. Also, don't forget to include a title! Thanks :)

Staying informed & connected is easier than ever!

- We want feedback! Tell us what you think about the newsletter at: gtffnewsletter@googlegroups.com
- Come to membership meetings and social events! (see calendar on p. 1 for times and locations)
- Join the Facebook group: GTFF
- Follow on Twitter: @GTFF3544
- Check out the website: www.GTFF.net

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German and Scandinavian

TREASURER

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About the GTFF

Our Mission Statement:

"The Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation, a union of the graduate employees of the University of Oregon, commits to creating a strong, safe, and diverse community of educators and scholars for the purpose of protecting and promoting the interests of its membership."

The Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF) is a labor union representing over 1300 Graduate Teaching Fellows and Research Assistants at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon.

Our goals are:

- to improve the quality of life for GTFs in the areas of salary, workload and working conditions through collective bargaining and the enforcement of our contract,
- to fight for an adequately funded educational system, accessible for all people, and
- to help create a revitalized, socially aware union movement, which is a positive force for change for the entire community. Volunteers and activists are welcome!