

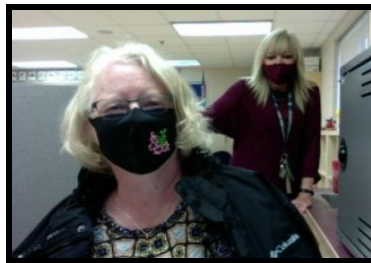


Paraeducator Association

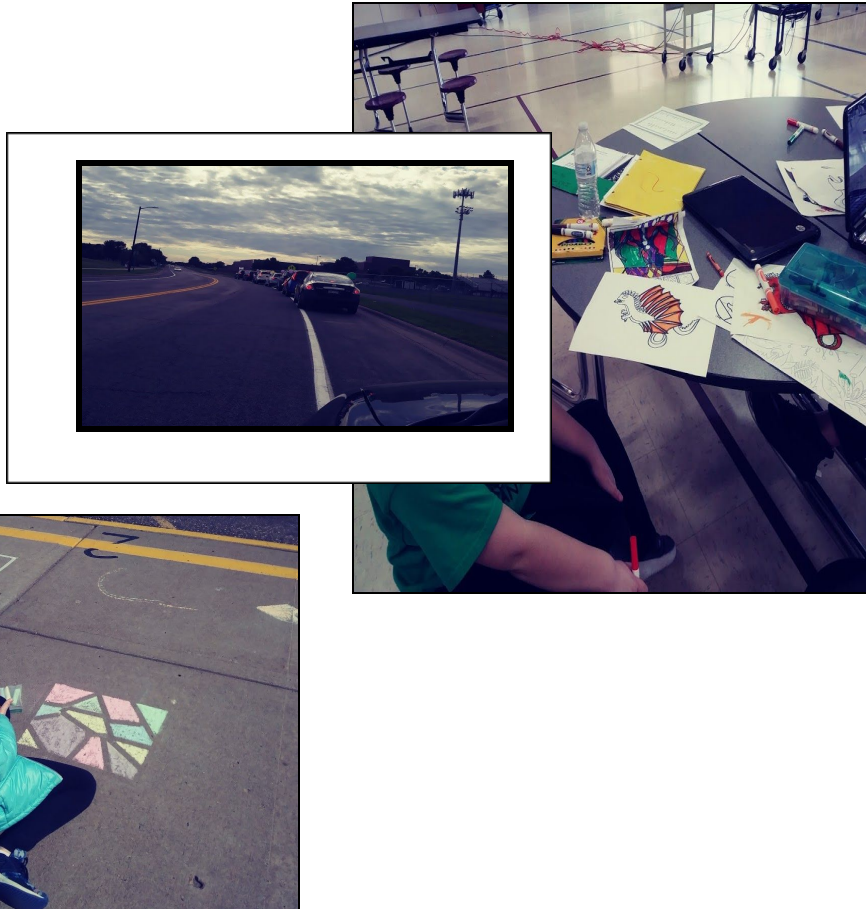
Newsletter

November 2020

COVID 19 Has Changed How Anoka Hennepin Does School!



In March, everyone quarantined at home. We began to follow 6 feet distancing and sanitizing. We packed up our schools for the year. Some Paraeducators provided emergency childcare to students of Essential Workers. Some Paraeducators helped teachers photocopy items or create lesson activities to go home. Others passed out breakfasts and lunches from school buses. Many of us even cleaned and passed out computers to the students. Spring for the year 2019-2020 felt and looked very different.



We navigated school from home, setting up mini classrooms. We virtually walked our students through their lessons. When we ventured out of the house, we started “Drive-By” parades to celebrate student milestones. It didn’t matter if cars drove past us, or if we drove past the students. We waved like crazy, having fun.



The high schools invited their students to take graduation pictures outside of their schools to celebrate. Coon Rapids High School put individual pictures on the boulevard to celebrate their graduates. Whatever the challenge, Anoka-Hennepin Paraeducators rose to the challenge and completed the jobs set before them.



Meeting with students could be difficult. Sometimes they wouldn't get on or didn't understand concepts. But, throughout the pandemic, Vicki Ekbohm devised a way to give one of her students a positive "End of the Day" reward, by putting together a 3-D globe of the world. Before starting, Vicki put the puzzle pieces into baggies according to continents. She asked her friend to tell her what was close to the puzzle piece she was holding. Looking at google maps, he would find countries, states, oceans or cities close by. She would put the puzzle pieces into place. They worked for 15 minutes each day.

Finally, the day came when they put the last puzzle piece in the globe. They celebrated, inviting teachers to "toast" their work, clicking their glasses of water and pop together through the computers!

But, it didn't stop there. During the Fall of 2020 when this student was distant learning, she continued to find ways to reward this student. They made an ABC book, featuring English and Russian words by using Jam Board. Now, they are working on a United States slideshow, linking coordinating slides that tell information about the state. This has been a rewarding experience for both of them.

New Contract

The negotiating team met with our lawyers to discuss changes we would like to make to our contract before we began negotiating with the district. During formal negotiations, the job of committee members was to be quiet and observe while our president and lawyers negotiated. When we met in private, we could discuss issues and ask questions.



We had completed one joint meeting with the district when future meetings were interrupted by Covid 19. We continued meeting via Google Meets. After several lengthy negotiation sessions we reached a tentative agreement. President Gina Uebel and Bargaining Team member Vicki Ekbohm met at the ESC to sign the final contract.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

“The times they are a-changin”

Gina has found herself very busy during these changing times of Covid 19. This summer and fall, she met weekly on the Fall Contingency Planning and Steering Committee and many of the subcommittees that were formed out of it: Workplace Environment, Safety and Access; Operations; Mental Wellness; and Secondary Contingency Planning. In addition to these committees, she served on the Covid calendar committee, Para PD Planning, Risk Assessment committee, Website committee and others. She spent time talking with district administration and working to secure safe working conditions for all paras as the district prepared to return to the 2020-2021 school year in various learning models.

As the school year began, Gina found herself answering many questions related to Covid, safety protocols, accommodations, etc. She also kept up with guidelines related to Covid, district policies and ever changing information and decisions from the district, conveying this information to Paraeducators.

On November 1st, Gina, (after discussions with our attorneys and General Counsel for the district) began a “Union Leave of Absence” per PELRA law. This LOA involves her stepping away from her role as a paraeducator so that she has the necessary time and energy to represent our AHPA members and meet their needs.

In her announcement to the Paraeducators she stated:

“Making this change will be beneficial for AHPA. It will give us the opportunity to become more organized and have the time necessary to be proactive. Right now there are issues **every day** that need to be dealt with *immediately*. When the workload eases up a bit, there will be time to focus on planning for the future. ... It is a time to delegate duties to officers and members. Time to offer them opportunities for training, growth and experience within our organization. This will leave us with a stronger union and members who will be prepared to step up in the event of a crisis. ... We have strong leadership and knowledgeable and influential legal representation at our fingertips everyday.”

Gina says, “We are stepping up to the challenge!”

2019-2020 Thank you's

Even though we couldn't celebrate the retirees and attend the presentations for scholarships, we loved hearing from and getting thank you notes from so many of the recipients.

High School Scholarships

This year the Anoka-Hennepin Paraeducator Association decided to provide one \$500.00 scholarship to each high school. Scholarships were awarded to seniors at Andover, Anoka, Blaine and Champlin Park High Schools. Coon Rapids High School did not have a scholarship recipient this year.

Retirees

While Covid prevented us from hosting a member meeting where we could celebrate our retirees, we did present them with a \$50.00 gift card and recognition certificate. Congratulations to AHPA retirees; Rosemarie Wenum, Cynthia Blommel, Denise Hoffer, Deborah Jackson, Sue Albrecht, Kimberly Roth, Wendy Engelstad, Terry Guadarrama, Deborah Gable, Mary Hammett, Nicholas Braschayko, Elizabeth Manners, Andrea Devine, Joan Orgiesen, Cindy Reinert, Kathleen Persuitti and Sandra Harrington. Enjoy this little slide show featuring some of the thank you notes we received.

[2020 Thank you's](#)

INTRODUCING...

OUR WEBSITE!!!

For many years, there has been discussion about creating a website for our paras. Some people wanted it, others thought we could do the same thing through a shared folder in GoogleDrive. So, we put information in both places!!

First...the recently created Shared Drive, entitled AH Paraeducator Association holds a variety of useful information. It contains the previous and current contracts, cluster information (from which cluster a school is in, to who your cluster representatives are), how to find out what step you're on, protocols for paras to resolve building or contractual issues and many forms that paras may need. It also holds folders with AHPA meetings, member meetings, documents and forms, and seniority lists.

This is a good resource for our members.

AHPARAS.COM

Last year a committee was formed to put together a website for our Association. Over the summer, we met to decide what should be included on the site.

You can find:

- information on clusters, leadership, both the district para calendar and AHPA calendar, how to join AHPA, and how to contact the association.
- a "Resources" tab with our current contract, bylaws, Association calendar and seniority lists.
- a link to "Tickets At Work", an AHPA benefit where paras can receive discounts on movies, plays, hotels, rental cars, amusement parks, etc. and gift certificates with no taxes or fees
- information on the retirement process and where to access that information.
- a history of the Association.
- a blog and photographs of our paras.

Check out these two new resources to find the answers you are looking for -- they were created to save you valuable time and put the information you need most at your fingertips!