

# WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ June 2, 2014 – June 6, 2014

## **CORRECTION!** Director Mitchell's Going-Away Party Is June 12!

There was an error in last week's WIA announcement from VSEA President Shelley Martin about a going-away party the union is sponsoring for Mark Mitchell. The party is actually on Thursday, June 12 from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the VFW Hall at 1 Pioneer St. in Montpelier. A special gift will be presented to Mark at 6:00 p.m. The party is a potluck, so everyone attending is urged to please bring a dish to share.

Please R.S.V.P. to Nikolas Stein by calling 802-223-5247 or send an email to [nstein@vsea.org](mailto:nstein@vsea.org)

## **Council Members Urged To Bring Food Donations To June 10 Meeting**

A reminder to VSEA Council members that there will be a food/toiletries/sundries drop-off table at the June 10 meeting at Johnson State College. Council members are urged to bring your donations to the meeting.

If you're not sure what to donate, please see this helpful list below:

Canned Meat - Beef, Pork, Chicken, etc.

Canned Fish - Tuna, Salmon, Sardines, etc.

Canned Vegetables - All Varieties

Canned Fruit - All Varieties

Canned Soups and Chili

Pasta and Spaghetti Sauce - All Varieties

Cereal - All Varieties

Peanut Butter

Boxed Meals - Macaroni and Cheese, Hamburger Helper, Tuna Helper, etc.

Soap

Shampoo

Laundry Detergent

Toilet Paper

Toothbrushes  
Toothpaste  
Diapers - All Sizes  
Pet Food - All Varieties

Here are items to AVOID:

Beverages & Snacks

Baby Food - For safety concerns, we are prohibited from distributing donated baby food

All perishable food items and food needing to be refrigerated or frozen.

## **Victory For Barre P&P Workers' Fighting For Office Air Conditioning**

Fed up with years of sweltering workplace conditions due to a lack of air conditioning (a/c), Barre Probation and Parole Office employees decided to mobilize in April and begin an employee petition to ask the State to install a/c. In addition to the petition, which a majority of the Barre P&P employees signed, workers also filed dozens of BRIN (Building-Related Issue Notification) forms with the State, reporting that during the summer months temperatures in their offices can reach over 100 degrees. Finally, the P&P employees turned out en masse to the Barre Chapter's May 29 meeting, where they discussed the lack of a/c with invited guests Washington County Senators Ann Cummings, Bill Doyle and Anthony Pollina and State Representatives Paul Poirier and Tommy Walz. Lawmakers indicated their willingness to help, and just a few days later, Sen. Cummings, Rep. Poirier and VSEA Board member Mary Poulos and P&P employee Laurette Edmunds were meeting with BGS Commissioner Michael Obuchowski to discuss the issue. Then VSEA DOC Board member Dave Bellini met personally with DOC District Manager Dale Cook to ask for his assistance. All the work paid off, as the P&P employees learned this week that DOC has allocated \$10,000 to the office to purchase window a/c/ units.

"This is really great news," said Edmunds, a worksite leader and 14-year DOC Program Services Clerk. "I learned a lot in this process, and I thank VSEA for the guidance it provided to me and my co-workers. We came together and we were able to get the job done. I know there are still some state employees out there without air conditioning and I only hope relief for you will come as well."

*Note: Throughout their campaign for a/c, one argument the P&P workers were advancing is that they were being subjected to "salary-based discrimination," meaning the judges' offices across the hall from the P&P workers had a/c but they did not.*

## **Seven Days Reports On State Spending Money To Combat VSEA Drive To Organize County Employees**

***Note: The following was published June 3 on the 7Days' blog "Off Message"***

*The two-year quest by deputy state prosecutors to join a labor union is growing more contentious. After failing to win recognition as state employees in recent years, deputies from eight counties filed petitions with the Vermont Labor Relations Board asking to be recognized as county employees—as some State officials have long suggested they are.*

*But now the Department of State's Attorneys is opposing that request. The state's attorneys have retained a private lawyer to argue that their deputies aren't state or county employees, but rather at-will workers with no right to form a union.*

*"It's amazing, the firestorm we are seeing right now," said Justin St. James, staff attorney for the Vermont State Employees Association, which is trying to organize the deputies. "There's a lot more anger now. They were told they weren't state employees, they were county employees. And now, [there is] all-out opposition to being county employees."*

*Department of State's Attorney's Executive Director Bram Kranichfeld, citing the pending labor board decision, declined to comment.*

*The opposition from the Department of State's Attorneys, the body that represents Vermont's 14 independently elected state's attorneys, is the latest wrinkle in a twisting labor saga.*

*Deputy state's attorneys, who handle the bulk of criminal cases in Vermont, along with the other support staffers in state's attorneys offices, [have long worked in legal limbo.](#)*

*Though they receive state paychecks, work at state-funded offices and enforce state laws, Vermont does not consider them to be state employees. While they are hired and fired by state's attorneys, it is the state that dictates their pay.*

*Though the deputies have long been aware of their tenuous place in government, they took action only after they were told in 2012 that, unlike other state employees, they would not be receiving raises.*

*The deputies and support staffers petitioned the Vermont Labor Relations Board asking to be recognized as state employees, but withdrew the petition in favor of another strategy — asking lawmakers to pass a bill recognizing them as state employees who have a right to unionize. At the time, some Vermont officials opposed to the bill argued that the deputies were, in fact, county employees.*

*When that bill languished in the statehouse in recent months, the deputies decided to go back to the Labor Board, asking to join VSEA as unionized county employees.*

*VSEA petitioned on behalf of more than 60 deputy state's attorneys, victims' advocates and administrative staffers from eight counties — Chittenden, Franklin, Essex, Orange, Rutland, Windsor, Addison and Windham.*

*VSEA spokesman Doug Gibson said the VSEA has also filed a public records request to learn how much money the Department of State's Attorney's is paying a lawyer to oppose the deputies' efforts to unionize.*

## **State Announces New Dental Benefit Improvements**

This week, the State's Employee Benefits Unit announced improved dental benefits under the State of Vermont Employees Dental Assistance Plan! The improvements were negotiated for by VSEA Bargaining Teams in the most recent contract negotiations.

*From the announcement:*

Beginning July 1, 2014, dental benefits will no longer be based on the current Schedule of Benefits, but rather Delta Dental's allowed amount for in-network (PPO and Premier) and out-of-network providers. This will result in higher levels of coverage for patients when having basic and major dental services.

For example:

- Diagnostic and Preventive Services (Coverage A) will continue to be covered at 100%;
- Basic Restorative Services (Coverage B) will be covered at 80%;
- Major Restorative Services (Coverage C) will be covered at 50%;
- Orthodontia (Coverage D) will be covered at 50% up to the lifetime maximum of \$1,750; and
- The annual maximum of \$1,000 per person and the \$25/\$75 deductible per individual/family will remain the same and correspond with the plan year of July 1–June 30.

Delta Dental's allowed amount will be determined by the type of network provider you see. Patients can continue to see any dentist they'd like. Patients visiting a Delta Dental PPO provider will enjoy the lowest out-of-pocket costs and stretch their annual maximum dollars further. As always, patients who visit a Delta Dental PPO or Delta Dental Premier provider will receive network advantages, including protection against balance billing, no up-front payment required for covered services, and no claims paperwork.

To find out if your dentist is in the Delta Dental PPO network or search for a new dentist, visit Delta Dental's website at <http://www.nedelta.com/LocalDentistSearch>. Consider nominating your dentist to join the PPO network by clicking the "Ask Your Dentist to Join Our Network" link on Delta Dental's website.

If planning for an upcoming dental service, your dental office should have Delta Dental's allowed amount on file. After July 1, 2014 patients are encouraged to ask their dental provider to do a predetermination of benefits. With this request, the patient and the provider will receive a written statement notifying them what portion of the procedure will likely be covered under the plan, and what portion the patient is responsible for (based on information available at that time).

Questions? Please contact:

Jerry Fry  
Employee Benefits Unit  
Administrative Services Division  
State of Vermont

802-828-6726 (phone)  
802-828-5489 (fax)

## Registration Now Open For VSEA's 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

VSEA's Special Events Committee met this week to finalize the registration form to attend the union's 2014 Annual Meeting on September 13 at the Killington Resort in Killington. This year, VSEA is celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, so the Committee is sponsoring a special birthday party event on Friday night, September 12.

Here is how the Committee is billing the events on the forms:

*"The 70th VSEA Annual Meeting is being held on Saturday, September 13, 2013. All members are encouraged to attend the meeting and participate in the festivities. Friday night there will be a dinner banquet followed by a Happy Birthday VSEA Party (ADULTS ONLY). Feel free to wear your fanciest birthday attire! There will be games and tear-off tickets with the proceeds going to VSEA's Member Support Fund, so bring your dollars and play!!"*

To find official VSEA Annual Meeting 2014 registration forms online, please [click here](#).

## DOC Town Hall Meeting Is June 11

On June 11, the Department of Corrections (DOC) is hosting a town hall meeting via Vermont Interactive Television to hear feedback (pro and con) about how the DOC is currently operating. Historically, the meetings provide a forum to discuss a host of issues, including topics important to frontline workers like the DOC's use of temporary employees, Vermont's use of private prisons, DOC mental health services and P&P caseload sizes.

VSEA is urging its DOC members to attend this town hall meeting (or the next one on October 8, 2014) to lend your voice to the dialogue about how the DOC could be operating better. As frontline DOC employees, your input is valued and important.

VIT has sites in Williston, Bennington, Brattleboro, Rutland, Springfield, Montpelier, Middlebury, Newport, St. Albans and Lyndonville.

The town hall agenda and past meeting minutes can be found by [clicking here](#). To suggest future agenda items, please send an email to [monica.weeber@state.vt.us](mailto:monica.weeber@state.vt.us), with the subject line: Corrections Town Hall Meeting.

## Smoking Now Banned For Employees Working At State-Owned Health Care Facilities

A reminder to all VSEA members about the State's rules governing smoking in public places. The reminder is especially important to VSEA members working in State-owned health care facilities because of the language contained below in Section 4(b). Lawmakers adopted the language this session.

Here is the exact wording:

Sec. 3. 18 V.S.A. §1742 is amended to read:

### § 1742. RESTRICTIONS ON SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES

(a) The possession of lighted tobacco products in any form is prohibited in:

(1) the common areas of all enclosed indoor places of public access and publicly owned buildings and offices:

(2) all enclosed indoor places in lodging establishments used for transient traveling or public vacationing, such as resorts, hotels, and motels, including sleeping quarters and adjoining rooms rented to guests;

(3) designated smoke-free areas of property or grounds owned by or leased to the State; and;

(4) any other area within 25 feet of State-owned buildings and offices, except that to the extent that any portion of the 25-foot zone is not on State property, smoking is prohibited only in that portion of the zone that is on State property unless the owner of the adjoining property chooses to designate his or her property smoke-free.

(b) The possession of lighted tobacco products in any form is prohibited on the grounds of any hospital or secure residential recovery facility owned or operated by the State, including all enclosed places in the hospital or facility and the surrounding outdoor property.

(b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict the ability of residents of the Vermont Veterans' Home to use lighted tobacco products in the indoor area of the facility in which smoking is permitted.

## **Solidarity On June 11 With Howard Center Workers!**

VSEA is urging members in Chittenden County and nearby to please attend a public forum on June 11 to support the Howard Center workers' fight for a fair contract. Workers are involved in a tough contract fight and are seeking dignity and respect, a safe work environment, improved wages and better working conditions. The forum begins at 7 p.m. in Contois Hall in Burlington City Hall (149 Church St.). For more information, please contact 857-5985.

## **The Employee Assistance Program: A Valuable Resource For Employees Needing Help**

VSEA Members! This is a reminder that your Employee Assistance Program is strictly confidential, free and here for you 24/7 at [1-888-834-2830](tel:1-888-834-2830).

Employees call for all sorts of reasons: stress, relationship problems, parenting issues, workplace issues, financial, legal, substance dependence or abuse, anxiety, depression, etc. When you call the general toll-free number, you will speak immediately with one of our licensed, masters' level counselors. That person will listen and help you with your issue and, if you wish to see a counselor in person near home or work, will provide you two names and contact numbers to set up an appointment. We are not just here for crises. We are here for the small stresses that when unaddressed can build up and lead to big problems.

Also, let us know if your office needs EAP brochures and we will get those to you. If you and your co-workers would like to have an EAP rep come to a staff meeting to explain the EAP (15 minutes), we are happy to do that, too. Call us at [1-888-834-2830](tel:1-888-834-2830) for any service.

## **VSEA Advantage Discount Program Pleased To Once Again Offer Discounted Day Tickets To:**



The Great Escape & Splashwater Kingdom

"Two parks of fun for the price of one!"

Lake George, New York

Park Opens Today, May 23, 2014, & Splashwater Opens May 24, 2014

Discount Tickets Now Available Through VSEA HQ & Online\*

2014 Regular Day Tickets — \$31 each (\$24 Savings)

### To Get Tickets

Send or drop off check (made out to VSEA), noting how many tickets you need. VSEA can mail your tickets or you can pick them up at VSEA HQ in Montpelier. VSEA members can also order tickets online by going to GE's [homepage](#), looking in the upper right-hand corner for the "Promo Code" box and entering VSEA's promo code, which can be [found here](#)\*. GE Phone Number: 1-888-792-3500

New this year is the Extreme Supernova thrill ride!

Note: You must be a registered VSEA website user to view the VSEA promo code. You can sign up online [here](#).

## **VSEA Needs To Know If Your Mailing Address Is Different Than Your Home Address**

Many VSEA members have a mailing address that is different from their home address. They may keep a P.O. Box at the post office, or they may have a mailbox with an address different from their actual house address. If this is the case with you, please email the Union at [nstein@vsea.org](mailto:nstein@vsea.org) and let us know! Our reason is that the address information for our members that we receive from the State is unreliable. The State cannot report to us both a "Mailing Address" and a "Home Address." We only occasionally send paper U.S. mail, but, when we do, it's important, and includes: Ballots for Union elections, insurance information, and legally-required warnings of Union meetings.

If your mailing address is different from your home address, we need you to tell us!  
Email [nstein@vsea.org](mailto:nstein@vsea.org). Thanks!

## Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

### June 10

VSEA Council Meeting  
Johnson State College  
Johnson  
9:00 a.m.

### June 10

VtPAC Meeting  
Johnson State College  
Johnson  
5:00 p.m.

### June 11

Steward Training: Your Bargaining Unit's Contract (NMU)  
Fourth Floor Conference Room  
88 Merchants Row  
Rutland  
9:00 a.m.

### June 11

Howard Center Workers' Public Forum  
Burlington City Hall  
Contois Auditorium  
149 Church St.  
Burlington  
7:00 p.m.

### June 12

AOT L/M Committee Labor Team Meeting  
VSEA HQ  
Montpelier

8:30 a.m.

**June 13**

Steward Training: Solidarity, Power & State Policies

Fourth Floor Conference Room

88 Merchants Row

Rutland

9:00 a.m.