Jaime Valente

NEW JERSEY MEMBER HELPS TO BUILD MEMBERSHIP

My NEA membership is a privilege—one that I have taken for granted and worked for very hard. My journey as a union member began right out of college, when I began working in a New Jersey school district where the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) had represented educators for a long time. During my first week of employment, the local union membership chair approached me. I readily signed up. My contract was in place. My rights were being protected.

Eventually, I relocated and became the musical director at Teaneck Community Charter School where educators did not have the NJEA to represent their concerns. There was no contract, and employees’ rights were completely unprotected. As a previous NJEA member, I knew this should not be the case for any educational professional, regardless of whether they teach in a traditional public school or a public charter school. To me, there was only one solution to this issue: Organize the union at my charter school.

Along with like-minded colleagues, I began the process of bringing NJEA to my school. Now—following one year of active campaigning—we are a fully affiliated school working to negotiate our first collectively bargained contract and protect the rights of our members. This process has given me the experience and opportunity to work with NJEA to organize other public charter schools. We want to protect our many brothers and sisters who work at public charter schools across our state.

My efforts are founded upon two important, yet simple, beliefs: Every educator in this country deserves a fair contract, and every educator deserves someone to protect their essential rights. I want to make these things a reality for my brothers and sisters across the country. This is why I’m a member.

—JAMIE VALENTE

Discover!

Kids say the darndest things

Graduating high school is a big deal. But you know what else is a big deal? Graduating from kindergarten! Here’s what the Class of 2027 would like to do when they grow up!

One of my students told me she was going to be a veterinarian during the day and a rock star at night!
—TAMMY POPE MOOTZ

The guy at Golden Corral (a buffet restaurant) who bakes the chocolate chip cookies.
—TABYTHA SIDDERS

Last year, I had a little boy who wants to be a toy reviewer, a police officer, and a ninja. I have him again this year for first grade and he has not changed his mind.
—ERIN EDWARDS

Me! I have had many say they want to be me! Always makes my day!
—KIM POTTER

One of my kindergarten students said that he wants to be a veteran. He then added that he wants to be in the Navy like his cousin so that he can help save people. I thought this was a very thoughtful response.
—KARI JOHNSON

One of my girls told me she wants to be a grandma when she grows up!
—KAYLA JOHNSON

A little boy of mine wants to be a man when he grows up.
—KELLY FISCHER

The guy at Golden Corral (a buffet restaurant) who bakes the chocolate chip cookies.
—TABYTHA SIDDERS

A mom!
—KATHI CALIVA

Garbage man and a dog catcher.
—KIMBERLY STORMS YONTS

One year a student said he didn’t need to work because his dad and grandfather didn’t have to.
—DARCY NOBLE MALONE

I don’t teach Kinders this year but my son is in kindergarten, he wants to be a “baker of cakes.”
—JULIE KRISTINE ADOLPHSON