

Spotlight on Locals

Cudahy Education Association



Cudahy Education Association Members (Left to Right) Teri Cianciola, Miranda Beninger, Christine Janusiak (CEA Co-President), Kerry Beamon, Curtis Kadow (CEA-Co-President) accept the WEAC Strong Local Affiliate Certificate presented by WEAC Vice President Peggy Wirtz-Olsen.

It was clear from my conversation with the Cudahy Education Association that much credit for their success is the ability of their local to reframe their work in a positive light over the past few years. Co-President, Curtis Kadow, said, “we have spent the last two years focusing on building relationships with administration, our Superintendent, our members, and our potential members.” And, clearly, this approach has paid off. Teri Cinaciola, spoke about the engagement from their Building Representatives saying, “our old school approach wasn’t working. There is a new focus on relationships and membership-- and people are joining.”

These leaders made a conscious effort to change the direction of their local toward a culture of positivity. Kerry Beamon, CEA Secretary said that, “Curtis and Christine as new leadership and Co-Presidents have moved us to a focus of positivity and doing this work differently. Having a structure

with Co-Presidents seemed to be a welcomed change. It was clear that there is a focus on clear, positive communication with members and potential members about the work that is happening and the victories of the CEA.

Most notably, the Cudahy EA is proud of a school board victory in recent years, which has changed the make-up of their school board, and, ultimately, the direction of the district. They are currently working on the upcoming election for school board on April 3rd. A second victory is within their salary structure, which used to be a merit-based system with arbitrary measurements for wage increases. Curtis and Christine were determined to find a way to change this. When the district convened a salary committee, the CEA was involved and engaged in the process. Ultimately, this led to positive changes and the removal of the Educator Effectiveness scores as a part of their compensation system.

These leaders expressed gratitude for the assistance provided by WEAC Region 7 through their membership chair, Rachel Swick, along with the support network provided through WEAC's Organizing Institute for Anchor Locals citing the importance of collaboration. Christine Janusiak, Co-President, said, "we've branched out to connect with others. We've started attending meetings with grassroots organizing groups in Cudahy." All of this has helped them with their work in the community and on their school board races, but most importantly, as Curtis said, "we are not alone. We are connected to surrounding locals, and we can tap into a network to help us."

When I asked about advice that the Cudahy Education Association had for other locals out there, Curtis said, "While history is important, we have to find a way to move our association forward in a positive way today." Christine said our success comes down to three things, "persistence, continual communication, and positive collaboration."