

Making It Happen!



NFFE 1450

December 2018

Volume 2, Issue 8



Happy Holidays

*"They remind us that where free unions and collective bargaining are forbidden, freedom is lost.
They remind us that freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction.
You and I must protect and preserve freedom here or it will not be passed on to our children."*

-President Ronald Reagan, Labor Day Speech at Liberty State Park, September 1, 1980

www.nffe1450.org
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NFFE: Serving the People Who Serve America

Dennis T. Murakami, President – NFFE-1450

This message could be called a state of the union but in addition to being laughably pretentious, it would reflect, acceptably in our current cultural environment, an outsized ego which is not acceptable to this president.

We have accomplished much since January when my tenure as your president began. Both at the national level and locally, NFFE has worked endlessly to improve both the union as well as working conditions for our members. The two objectives are wedded to the core. Improving the union, through the work of its officers and stewards, inevitably results in providing better services to our members so that our members, who do the work of HUD, may better serve the American public.

The single characteristic common to nearly every HUD employee as well as other federal employees that I've met in 27 years of working at HUD is that of public service. Every person believes in serving our country.

Federal employees, alone among civilian workers in America, take an oath of office: "I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God." (5 USC 3331).

Every act that we perform after we step through the portals which initiate our duties is aligned with our obligation to defend the Constitution and its derivative rules. The following is a sample of achievements in the past several months:

- We defeated an effort to violate federal statute by decimating the ability of unions to work on behalf of employees.
 - We defeated an attempt to truncate the due process requirements for removing a federal employee which would have allowed federal workers to be terminated at will.
 - We have successfully enforced the disability rights of numerous employees in ensuring that how or where employees performed their jobs reflected each person's unique needs.
 - We successfully qualified employees for hardship transfers.
 - We obtained a waiver of HUD's claim for reimbursement for a significant amount of money that accrued as a result of HUD's mistake.
 - We defeated disciplinary actions wrongfully imposed upon members.
 - EPPES ratings have been changed to more accurately reflect the quality of work done by members.
 - We worked directly with local politicians and the Secretary to successfully ameliorate potentially dangerous encounters experienced by Santa Ana employees transiting the HUD office.
- NFFE and its attendant duties are created by federal statute. A portion of what your union has done, as intended by law, to more effectively represent our members follows, below. These are novel initiatives:
- We have moved to a team-oriented approach to strengthen the services that we provide.
 - We are continuously investigating different communication avenues to keep our members informed of issues and events.

(Continued on page 8)



Table of Contents

Page	
1	NFFE: Serving the People Who Serve America by Dennis T. Murakami, President
2	Michelle Simmons writes about NFFE
3, 4	Life Under the Sea with Greg Harrick
5	Self-Defense Demonstration with Toulou Thao
6	Halloween Potluck
7	Our newest Steward Jamie S. Rodney
	Comments from Members
9	Farewell
	New Members
	Suggestions, Feedback & Requests For Assistance
10	NFFE Contact Information

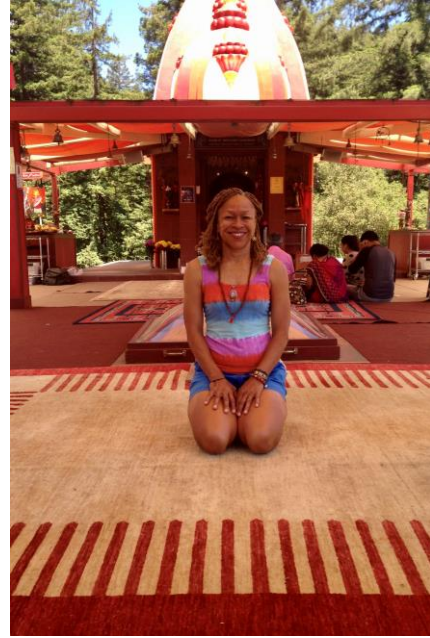
2019 Membership Meeting Calendar (4th Thursday of the month)

January 24
February 28
March 28
April 25
May 23
June 27
July no meeting
August no meeting
September 26
October 24
November 28
December 26

Newsletter Editors:

Toulou Thao – Communicator
San Francisco
Janie Lopez – Chief Steward
Las Vegas/Reno
Greg Harrick - Photographer

Making It Happen!



Michelle Simmons (Retired)

15 years of federal service as an Environmental Protection Specialist
10 years with HUD as environmental management and compliance subject matter expertise to assisting HUD Programs and Grantees with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance

HUD's mistake resulted in my receiving a notice of the overpayment of my salary in the amount of \$11, 500.00.

There are many reasons to analyze your retirement benefits. One could be considering a career change or moving into the private sector. Engaging in a retirement analysis provides an opportunity to consider Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) benefits into one's departure from federal service. One never really knows with absolute certainty what the future holds. There are numerous scenarios which could come into play and prompt a decision to transition to a different venue to render public service and optimally express one's subject matter expertise.

It was upon undergoing a retirement analysis and benefit estimate in January 2017, when I received notification that my insurance benefits had been miscalculated by HUD when I transferred from another federal agency.

HUD's mistake resulted in my receiving an overpayment of my salary in the amount of \$11, 500.00. The Treasury/Fiscal Services human resources specialist who uncovered the mistake advised me to submit a request for a waiver of the presumed debt, since I had no means of knowing the debt existed until the retirement analysis was conducted. HUD denied the waiver request. Because of HUD's actions, I contacted NFFE 1450 for support in navigating through the appeal process and HUD's decision to initiate the debt collection process.

(Continued on page 8)

Life Under the Sea with Greg Harrick



Greg in action in his diving gear

Over 25 people joined NFFE's Lunch-And-Learn on September 12th, 2018, to hear Greg Harrick share his adventurous journeys under the sea. In recognition of Greg and his work in exploring life under the sea, a seafood-themed lunch was served.

Born in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, Greg attended high school and college in Massachusetts and graduate school in Texas. Greg held various management positions before joining HUD-CPD. He began diving in 2004, and has performed more than 328 dives. He has dived in various locations across the globe including Egypt, the Philippines, Hawaii (Oahu, Kona, Maui), Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Mexico, Monterey, Carmel, Big Sur, San Diego and the Channel Islands. He is certified for Open Water, Rescue, Dry-suit, Advanced Nitrox, Advanced, and Extended Range/Technical diving.

Greg shared his love for diving and the fun he has experienced while navigating under the sea. He also explained the technical requirements for safe diving and how the recent search and cave rescue operation that took place in Thailand saved the life of an entire youth soccer team that had gotten trapped in a cave due to heavy monsoon rains.

NFFE thanks Greg for this great presentation. Special thanks also go to Keith Dixson for assisting and making sure that there were no technical difficulties during the presentation; Sue Sheftel who organized a lunch of shrimp ceviche, lox and bagels, and Pepperidge Farm goldfish; and Cornelia Kidney for the gummy fish dessert!!

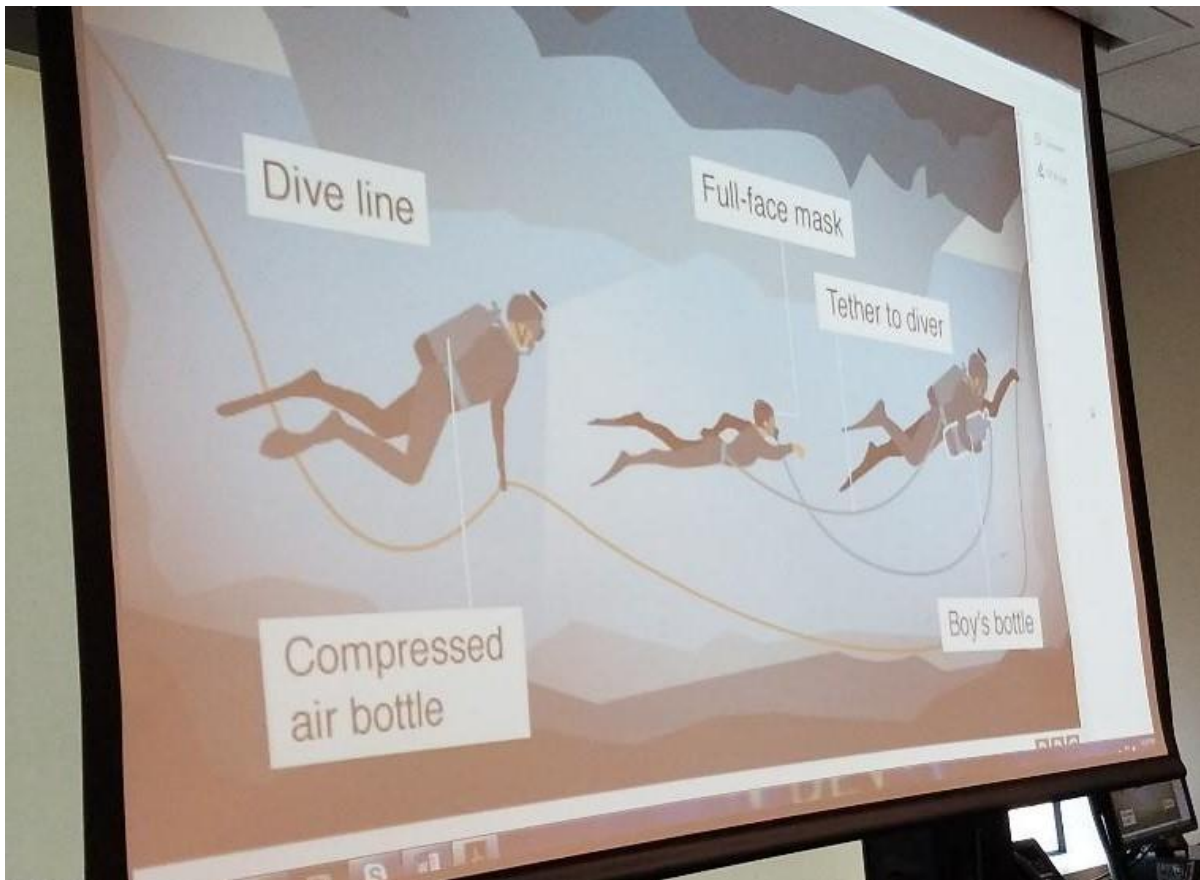
What people have to say about Greg:

- “Hi Jacque Cousteau...I mean Greg, 😊 Sorry I wasn't able to stay for your entire presentation yesterday, but what I did see and hear was totally engaging and exciting!!! Way to go!!! 😊” – Anna Dennis
- “Good Morning , Toulou. I enjoyed Greg's presentation very much and wish him well on his future dives. Thank you for arranging everything.”
- “Thanks, Toulou. Greg gave a great presentation.”



Above: Greg Harrick – During his presentation on Sea Diving

Below: Greg explained how the Cave Rescue of the Youth Soccer Team in Thailand was carried out



Self-Defense Demonstration

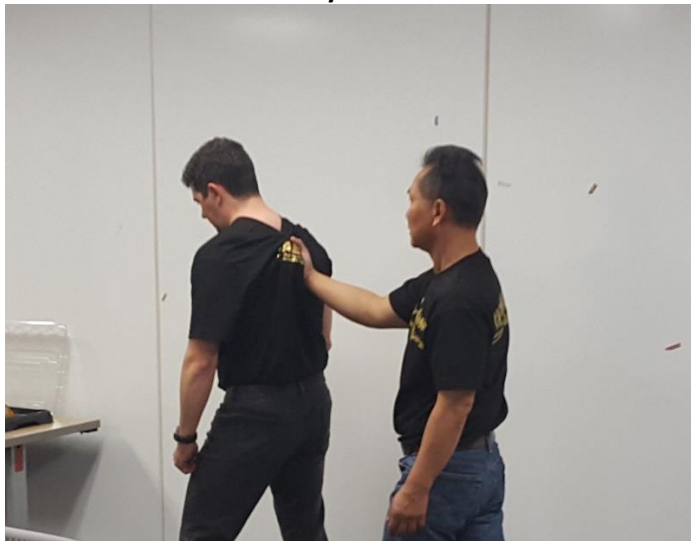
October's Lunch-And-Learn



Above: With the assistance from Greg Harrick, Toulou showed how to break free from an attacker when being grabbed.

Below: Greg Harrick demonstrated how to free himself from an attacker when being grabbed from behind.

– Photo by Anna Dennis



Halloween Potluck – Oct 31, 2018 – San Francisco



Above from Left to Right: NFFE members Sue Sheftel, Cornelia Kidney, Connie Casto
Below from Left to Right: Managers Angela Corcoran, Shannon Bergman & Larry Ferguson,
with NFFE member, Greg Harrick



Welcoming our newest Steward



Jamie Sofia Rodny, J.D.

Steward – HUD Los Angeles

213-534-2460

Jamie.S.Rodny@hud.gov

Jamie Rodny graduated from the University of California, Davis School of Law in 2011. Immediately afterward, she began working at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a Presidential Management Fellow (PMF). As a PMF, Jamie worked in the Intake, Enforcement, and Program branches of the Office of Fair Housing & Equal Opportunity (FHEO). She also did a rotation in Multifamily, where she created an auditing system to find out how properties use HUD funding to determine whether there was any misuse. Ultimately, Jamie was offered a fulltime position as a Lead Equal Opportunity Specialist in the Enforcement Branch where she investigates complaints of discrimination to determine whether a violation may have occurred under the Fair Housing Act. Jamie loves being a federal investigator in FHEO, where she primarily conciliates complaints in order to reach a positive resolution. Jamie is also very passionate about her family, two-year-old son, and is a photographer, singer, pianist, dancer, and loves to dance Zumba.

Comments from members

“Thank you very much, Sue and Toulou, for providing so much helpful assistance to me over the past almost 2 years during some very trying times.” ---Anonymous, August 24, 2018

“I’m glad I became a dues-paying member so I can be more involved in the fight against tyranny” – Anonymous, August 29, 2018

Continued from page 2: Michelle Simmons

Throughout my federal career, I maintained my status as a paid union member. I never thought I would be in a position where I would need Union representation. It took a year and a half for HUD to reverse its decision, and a federal judge to ultimately dismiss the case. The local and National NFFE team provided representation. During the 16 months' appeal process, motions and counter-motions were filed, and my wages were illegally garnished in an attempt to collect the debt--after a judge had ordered the debt stayed until decided upon. However, through each action, response and teleconference regarding my case, Team NFFE-1450 was steadfast in providing representation and support. Had I retained a professional attorney, the cost would have far exceeded the amount of debt. I can speak from experience and affirmatively state that the amount of Union dues I consistently paid throughout my federal career was well worth the monthly expenditure. To Sue Sheftel, Ken Einbinder, Jan Thompson, and Dennis Murakami: I appreciate your unwavering support during the grueling process of getting to HUD's decision to grant the once denied waiver and the ultimate dismissal of the salary overpayment case.

My Biggest Takeaways:

- (1) Don't underestimate the value of Union membership benefits. Although representation is provided to all employees, considering the length of time I needed Union representation, being a long term NFFE 1450 member added familiarity to the synergy of my working with the NFFE team.
- (2) the most efficient means of knowing if your benefits are correctly assessed is through a retirement analysis. Mistakes are made during initial hiring and agency transfers. The salary overpayment issue I faced was not the first for HUD or other agencies. It's never too early to know your benefits were calculated accurately to prevent problems that could occur at retirement; Or God forbid if one meets an untimely death, if a benefits calculations error is left undetected, it could become an issue for one's family with which to deal.

Best wishes and may we all live long and prosperously,

Michelle Simmons

Continued from Page 1: Serving The People...

This ongoing effort has resulted in a new website; newsletters, all-member email blasts as well as local office communications.

-We have opened a NFFE Helpline for Los Angeles and Santa Ana to improve our responsiveness to members. The Helpline may be expanded to other offices.

-We are moving to business-oriented approach in managing our resources such as considering time and expenses in holding a meeting, etc. This is a management metric common to the private sector but has yet to be adopted by HUD since decisions involving personnel are not considered to be an accountable cost.

-We are engaged in a continuous effort to improve the knowledge and practice skills of the union's officers and stewards. This helps to ensure that we, but mostly the agency, adhere to the laws affecting employees. And, we are strengthening the advocacy skills of our officers and stewards to help the agency remember that America remains a government of laws.

-We are deliberately engaged in succession activities in anticipating NFFE's future.

-We are implementing new strategies for reaching out to all employees to demonstrate the benefits of joining NFFE as well as to emphasize that a group wields more influence than a solitary person. The result is that we are gaining new members and increasing our numbers beyond our losses due to promotions, retirements, and other factors.

NFFE is your union. We prosper when members are supportive and involved in our collective efforts to benefit employees, HUD and, therefore, our country.

Farewell

Thank you to the following members for their past support.

Jackie Perry
John Berg

Geraldine Hensen
Diana Harmon

Linda Acker
Shannon Knight

Welcome to our newest members

Pamela White
Eric N. Mcgarity
Janet Smith

Michael E. Huff
Shannon Joachimstaler

Sandra Chavez
Cheryl Hamilton

FEEDBACK, SUGGESTIONS or REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

LET US KNOW HOW WE ARE DOING. NFFE 1450 is doing a _____ job.
Please provide comments or look into the following matters:

Name/Contact Info if you want us to get back to you:

Email Your Comments to:

Dennis Murakami at Dennis.T.Murakami@hud.gov
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