

Giving Back to Educators

Longtime CTA staff Dawn Basurto is
CSO's newest member

A short-term assignment with Oakland Education Association (OEA) has blossomed into more than two decades of service for Dawn Basurto as a dedicated member of CTA staff. Earlier this year, Basurto accepted a position in the Ontario RRC as a Uniserv representative, becoming the newest member of CSO.

How did you come to CTA and CSO?

In my experience, I have had the opportunity to learn about many different areas of CTA. My start in union work began at OEA. and what started as a short-term assignment turned into six years. A mentor encouraged me to continue at the Concord RRC as a Regional Resource Secretary and there I became involved with my staff union (CAS at the time).

Later, I moved to the Governmental Relations Department where I have been ever since, spending time in both the legislative and political units. In my previous staff union, I've had responsibilities as the secretary, area director, then president for several years. During this time, I also participated in the Harvard Trade Union Program and am currently the Secretary of the National Staff Organization (NSO), getting to learn about what's going on all over the country.

These experiences have deepened my passion to share my knowledge and give back doing this work. Everything is a learning lesson to prepare you for next thing. Over time, I've been grateful to have experienced many layers of CTA and feel that's given me a unique perspective to now contribute to CSO.



What do you love about advocating for educators?

That they know there's someone there for them, that will help them stand up for their rights and uphold the contract. I love it when I can help someone else to find their voice, to not be afraid to speak up and empower them to do for themselves.

What are you most proud of?

I'm feeling grateful for the opportunity to serve CTA members. It's important to me to do my best for them. CTA is a big world – I've worked with several departments and offices and with members in GR for 20-some years. I'm passionate about how ready I am to give back to educators.

Is there a quote or saying that you live your life by?

My youngest daughter, who was in college during the pandemic, made an Inspiration Board with affirmations – "You got this," "Be confident," "Let your light shine," to get through the harder times. She inspired me to surround myself with positive reminders – "Not every day's a bad day," "Brush it off" ... just giving yourself that extra boost and surrounding yourself with positive energy is important.



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Who We Are:

CSO Organizer is produced by the California Staff Organization (CSO), the union for professional, departmental and Regional UniServ staff who work for the 310,000 members of California Teachers Association. CSO affirms that Black Lives Matter and is committed to working to remedy the trauma of racism, white supremacy and police brutality within public education, CTA, CSO and society.

Comments/inquiries? Email WeAreCSOCommunications@gmail.com

Remembering our CTA/CSO Family

The CTA/CSO Family is mourning the loss of three dedicated union activists who passed since the last State Council meeting: CTA Board Member Jerry Eaton, Legislative Relations Specialist Jess Lima and former UniServ Staff Doug Appel. We asked CSO members to share their thoughts to help honor them. May their memories forever be a blessing.

Jerry Eaton

"Jerry always brought a great energy to the work, whether we were visiting prospective members at the California Virtual Academy in San Jose, or going classroom to classroom in Eureka, Crescent City or San Francisco. We visited hundreds of classrooms together. He listened and paid attention and made you feel like you mattered. At my school sites, he got a lot of teachers who didn't have a strong connection with the union to talk to us. He was passionate about the union. Once, he heard a non-member talking bad about the union and it made him really mad. But he kept his cool. He didn't let it get to him. When we heard of Jerry's passing, a lot of local teacher leaders reached out to me to express their sadness: Leaders he visited and helped when he was up here. He made them feel like they weren't alone in the work. We had many talks over the years about our families, contract negotiations, politics & religion. I will miss him." *Lathe Gill*



"Jerry and I became friends when he was a teacher and then local leader for Travis EA. He was always willing to listen, learn and be an advocate for someone. In those early years from local leader, working on release time for campaigns and eventually getting him to run for Vacaville school Board, Jerry realized there was a voice for him in CTA governance. That's the outside stuff. Really though, we were friends who bonded over cars, shared meals and talked about family and life. When I got my red Mustang, he went and got the blue one. Whenever he had questions about car culture, he'd call me up and check in. He loved talking about his family in New Zealand and adventures that awaited when he would retire. He would just call and check in on me and Jenn just to say hi. In fact, I was texting him at State Council and recently missed a call that went to voicemail just a few days before his passing. I regret not picking up that call. I'll miss him." *Mark DeWeerd*

"In Sonoma County, we have had three strikes in less than three years and Jerry Eaton was on the picket line every day for each of these strikes. CTA members knew they had the support of their CTA Board representative and, through his presence, Jerry helped maintain the solidarity and determination that has led to such significant progress for the members he served here in Sonoma County." *Mark Mitchell and Erik Olson*

"I'll always remember Jerry telling me how sorry he was about a difficult situation I was dealing with, and he felt badly that I had to continue to handle it. It was very kind, and he didn't have to take the time to tell me that." *Michelle Washington*

Jess Lima

"Jess was a wonderful and caring human being, so easy to talk to even if you just needed someone to listen. Jess always had a smile on his face when you saw him. He always supported and encouraged me, even when I didn't have confidence in myself.

The last time we spoke, he wanted me to know how proud he was of me, and I will always hold that near and dear to my heart. I hope I can continue to make him proud. We both loved hot sauce, the hotter the better :) He always had a stash at his desk. I will truly miss my friend it's still so hard to believe he is no longer with us, but I am comforted that he is here in spirit." *Dawn Basurto*



"Jess Lima: Hardworking. Dedicated. Funny. Bright. Silly. Helpful. Inquisitive. Selfless. Engaged. Gracious. Endearing. Generous. Caring. Knowledgeable. Happy. S. F. Giants Fan. Lover of Sea Shanties. Dog Enthusiast. Son. Brother. Uncle. Best Dad Ever to Reina. In our hearts forever." *Toni Trigueiro*

"I remember freezing my ass off in three feet of snow in the middle of snowstorm on the way to a bowling alley with Jess. He and I lived in Cambridge for a little bit while attending the Harvard Trade Union program and was like my 'little bro' hanging out and yes, learning and getting into debates about the labor movement across the world. More than anything, it was the quiet dinners, the fun nights out and chats that I remember. Oh yes, the big hugs – he loved hugs, whenever we saw each other out there in CTA land. He was a bright light and I regret not saying that more." *Mark DeWeerd*

Doug Appel

"I had the privilege of working with Doug for 10 years, six of those in Oakland. Doug was one of the first people to welcome me to CTA. Coming from SEIU, I was unfamiliar with CTA's rules of engagement. According to Doug, rules were made for breaking! Doug was a fierce advocate and organizer. His passion for worker's rights was infectious. All who knew Doug knew 'the look': eyes over the glasses, eyebrows raised and a smile on his face. I got 'the look' whenever I brought in a new problem. He was always willing to brainstorm solutions and ready for a new fight. We broke a lot of rules, challenged norms, facilitated change and enjoyed many fine wines, either in celebration or at the end of very long work weeks. He will be missed for his contagious laughter, childlike wonder toward life and a brilliance in advocating for the rights of all people. Rest in Power, Douglas H. Appel." *Becky Flanigan*



"Doug was hilarious. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of 'stuff' and I'm pretty sure he memorized the Ed. Code book. But what people missed sometimes, was that he was a sensitive guy and a big softy inside that matched the snarky union guy on the outside. Doug was actually my first CSO friend to welcome me to California and show me around. My first concert in the Bay Area was with Doug who took me to a Buddy Guy concert in San Francisco. Took the BART and everything. Then, we went around Lake Merritt and had food in downtown Oakland. He loved Oakland. Though his body was giving out on him in the later years, he still had that laugh – that's what I'll remember.

In all these passings, and there were more in the CSO world, it just reminds us to pay attention to one another. We're in the business of caring and connecting with people. That is the nature of our jobs, moreover, the nature of us who do these jobs." *Mark DeWeerd*