

Charlotte Shindler

Convention 2017 Speech

It has been my honor to serve as your President this last year. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I don't do this job alone, we have an amazing staff and the most supportive board of directors; but most important, we have all of you, the members. I think it's time to give all of you, a round of applause.

You are the first responders in your chapters, the boots on the ground. You are the ones that who take the little complaint and prevent it from ending up in court as a big problem. You are the first face that new union members see, you are the real person that goes with our union. I want to thank you for that.

When I ran for the office of State President, I said I wanted to give all of you a stronger voice, not only in your union, but in Olympia. Just like a quilt, we are a collage of many pieces, many perspectives many needs, wants. I have been able to visit close to 70 chapters. As I have visited with many of you and listened to your concerns I have been reminded many times that we become stronger when we hear from everyone, so this past year we held listening tours around the state.

On one of my visits I went to Wenatchee, it was a beautiful day. Zone 10 was having a zone picnic and I had the opportunity to talk to several people. (there are great people from Wenatchee, if you are from zone 10 please raise your hand. You guys are fun, I'm sure lots of you are fun, they were really fun).

I was talking to a gentleman there, we were having a great visit, he was telling me about his family, his job and about being in the union. George came up and said, "do you know who she is". He looked at George and said 'yes she is Charlotte, and George said, "no she's your state President". I said to George, that's just at title". That's not who I am, I am here to serve you, to serve the members.

Through polling, PSE heard that you wanted more training and more professional development so to achieve this, PSE has hired an Education and training manger, Tom Krabbenhoft. Tom has gone out and listened and gathered information. We offered our first trainings during the LTE this year. I am happy to report that we had over 400 members attend. If you were at the LTE would you please stand? We really appreciate your dedication and support to our union. Your willingness to come, get extra training and to learn new skills. As much as that training helps. I think networking with your friends is the most important part.

Communication is key. We must deal with the little things before they become great big issues. If you call the Auburn office you get my home and cell numbers. Don 't be afraid to call. When I decided to provide my home number, I said to my husband, "are you sure you want me to do that? He said if you are going to do this job woman, you are going to do it right". My husband is as shy, as I am loud. He has turned into a great personal assistant. He relays messages, tells you where I am at, gives you my cell phone number and is very supportive. I really appreciate his efforts to help me be your President. He is right, if I am going to do this job, I am going to do it right.

We recently had a big win in Olympia with the signing of the McCleary Bill that will finally meet the responsibility, the paramount duty, of the State of Washington; to completely fund public education. We also had the Paraeducator bill signed this year that we have worked on for six or seven years. This legislation will set Para-educators standards. I am very proud to announce that PSE has two people on the

professional standards board that will assist in establishing these standards. Laura Rogers and Lauren Sickle, would you please stand.

This legislation will provide the professional development that we need to better serve our students and enable us to be the best Para-educators we can. This will also finally provide the acknowledgement for the vital role we play in education. We are a contributing force. I have to tell you, I only fought for 16 years to get this passed. Doug Nelson, our Government Relations Director has fought for 21 years. Because of all this effort, we can participate in the state insurance program. Access to this insurance is going to make a big difference in the lives of our members.

PSE was instrumental in starting a new national recognition for classified employees, it's called the RISE award; which stands for Recognizing, Inspiring School Employees. This is a national award that was presented in Washington DC. Five people from across the country received this award. Only five, and I am proud to tell you that PSE has one of those five people, Jaime Manchester, from our Davenport chapter. Jamie works at Sprague-Lamont and she recognized that students in rural communities were not able to keep up because their families did not have access to technology. Jamie took it upon herself to write grants to get Chrome books for all her students. Afterward, she taught them how to use them. These students are at a disadvantage if the first time they touch a computer is when they are testing. After Jaime's efforts, Davenport scores went up. Having the exposure and learning ahead of time, made it easier for the students and removed the anxiety about sitting down to a computer for three hours.

Beth Fesser who is from the Deer Park transportation department went with me to Olympia a few years ago, we were fighting for insurance. She wasn't sure she really wanted to do this, she had the tools, we knew she could do it but she didn't like it. After she spent time in Olympia, her confidence grew and she knew she could make a difference. Since then she came back again and again. Beth then decided to join the legislative council and in 2015 Beth was our Legislative Member of the year. Beth was not afraid to step out of her comfort zone and try something new to advocate for her fellow union brothers and sisters. Be like Beth, be willing to step out of your comfort zone. You might find something you enjoy, you may find your passion. Beth had her voice heard. How many of you have called the hot line? How many of you have gone to Olympia or gone to our legislative conference? If you have, thank you. You cannot get money for your wages unless the state passes it down to your school district, thank these people for their efforts. They have fought for your raises for the past few years.

Our union is currently under attack, you heard about the Janice decision and the possible right to work. We are going to need every one of you now more than ever. We must stand together, we must be strong to protect workers rights and we must have everyone's back. My goals are the same this year, as they were last year, which is to listen to the members, to increase communication, to educate, activate and empower our members to be the best individuals they can be; in the union and their personal lives. I will continue to go out and meet you in your chapters, and at your zone events. Please give me about a month's notice because I schedule out quite a bit. If you have an emergency like we had in Mill A, I'll drop everything and be there.

This year the Board has taken huge steps and has completed some professional development. We came together in March and created new goals for our union. We want to keep our union strong during this difficult time because we recognize we are a union family and we know that it is going to take each and every one of us.

At this time, I would ask you to applaud our Board of Directors for giving their heart and soul to fight for you. When you think about it, don't we all just want to touch lives and makes people's lives better. I do. The best thing I know about a union is the sense of family; that we have each other's backs.

I have a friend Lauralynn who, was very instrumental in getting me involved in the union. A year ago in March, her husband had to have a heart transplant. It was devastating. She came back to school in the fall to find out the district has cut her work hours to three and ½ hours per day. Do you know what that means? It means no insurance. She was then, not only the sole bread winner but her husband has just had a heart transplant and they were now without medical insurance. When I heard about this, I gathered three other Para-educators and went into the superintendent and said, "you can't do this to her". His reply was, "well we had to make the cuts somewhere". My coworkers and I volunteered to give Lauralynn and extra hour, or extra half hour our work day, which would bring her up to five and ½ hours. The Superintendent said to me "you don't need to do that, she only needs ½ hour", my reply was "excuse me, when you mess with one of us, you've messed with all of us, she has to make a living". It was a privilege to tell Lauralynn that her hours had been restored and that she would have insurance. As she was crying and hugging me, suddenly, she pulled back and she said "Charlotte, why'd you do that"? I told her, that I let the Superintendent know that you can't attack one of us without attacking all of us, we stand up, we are a union family. That one event changed the whole attitude about union in Roselia. I let everybody know that we would not stand for their decision to willing to cut her hours when she needed them so desperately. Roselia, is a strong union. After this event, our membership demographics went to 93% active members, granted it's a union of 17 but we are very active.

I believe we all work in education because we love children and see them in our future. These children remind me of a story of a young boy named Shawn. Shawn came to Roselia in the second grade with a bright orange shirt on, our school colors were orange and black. Across the front of his shirt it said, "aren't you glad I'm not your kid". My first thought was "how sad is that". I determined then and there, despite that he was a little a stinker, I was going to love him. Because we are so small, in Rosalia, I got to see Shawn almost every single day. Over the years, I watched him go in and out of foster care. Then he seemed to get it together, and then suddenly, he seemed like he didn't have it all together. One day I pulled him into my office and I said, "hey buddy I keep seeing you go in the principal's office, what's going on". I gave him some granola bars and some water and said, "you want to tell me now". He said "Ms. Shindler, I'm homeless, I've been homeless for 2 months, my parents kicked me out, I've been couch surfing, nobody knows. I'm not getting enough to eat because when I stay at peoples house I don't want to be a burden". Well after I was don't crying and hugging, him I hooked him up with services and we found a place for him to stay on a permanent basis. He went on and didn't go back to the principal's office. I'm proud to tell you he graduated, he got married and has two little boys off his own. He is a certified welder is the perfect definition of a great dad.

Now I want to challenge you to remember the Shawn's and also my story. This is hard for me to share. When I was 11 years old, my mother died. After her death, my home life was no longer safe and anything but happy. I hated the weekends and being away from my safe place, from school. I could always get an extra hug from the ladies on the playground. I didn't know at the time they were paraeducators, they were just trusting adults. The lunch ladies put a little extra food on my plate because I was losing weight. When a teacher or paraeducator gave me an extra hug, they filled my cup because it was empty just like Shawn's cup. They helped me endure this difficult time in my young life.

So now, my request of you is to remember the Shawn story, remember me, remember the Laurlynn story, reach out touch a union member, make their life better and please love a child each and every day. You can make a difference. I don't think those paraeducators knew what they did for me. I didn't realize what I did for Shawn until he told me. We are a union family, thank you for giving me this opportunity.