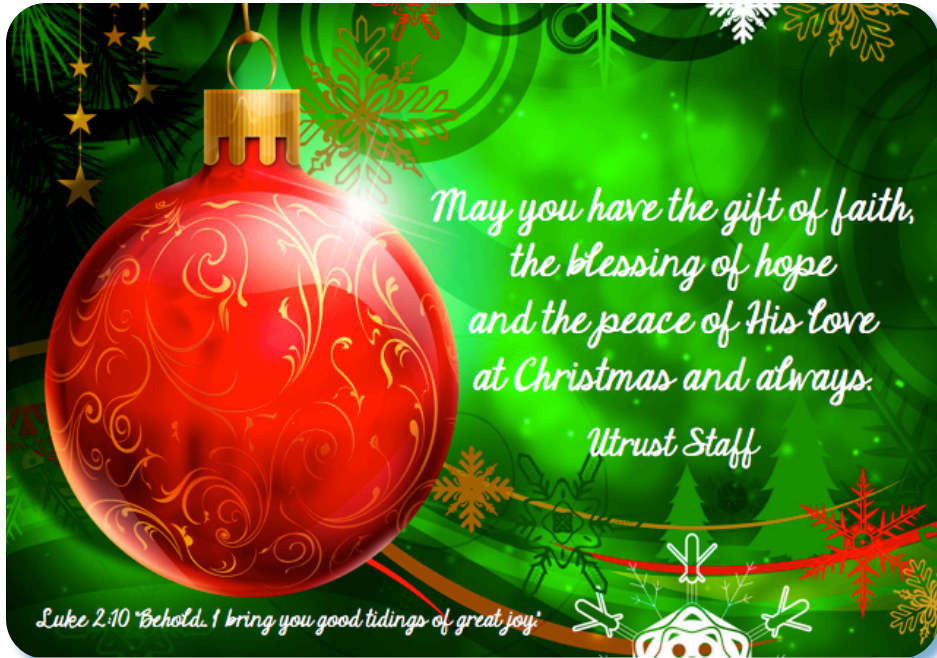


News U Trust

APPRECIATING, DEVELOPING, AND SUPPORTING SCHOOL STAFF



Favorites *Member Appreciation Dinner* **Things**

We recently enjoyed the annual Utrust Member Appreciation Dinner and recorded your responses to this question: 'What is your favorite thing about coming to this dinner each year?' Your top answers were:

5. Getting to go to Nashville and see new places
4. The cool venues where we meet and eat
3. How well organized the evening always is
2. Great food---eating things we don't usually eat
1. The opportunity to fellowship with each other

For the next installment of Favorite Things will you please click [here](#) and respond to this question:

What is your favorite thing about using themes in the EAP?

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Favorites *Things*

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In the Spotlight

David Jones



David Jones of Hancock County is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Utrust. Jones was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 1986. He served as the vice-chairman for several years. In 2005, he became the first at-large representative elected by the membership, and has served as chairman of the board since 2007. Jones is the only at-large representative for Utrust.

During the time he has served as a trustee, Utrust has returned millions of dollars to its member school districts, implemented an annual member appreciation event, changed trustee selection from appointment to election by the membership, purchased its own headquarters, developed the Employee Appreciation Program, created and implemented the Five Star Award for employee management and established the Charles Bridwell Award for Excellence in Unemployment Management and established a Mini Grant program to fund small projects in schools that

make a big difference.

David Jones has been a solid and strong contributor to the success of Utrust since it's inception," Dr. Dan Tollett, trust administrator said. "He has provided excellent leadership and has enthusiastically supported every improvement in the program. He has helped to build a strong and effective Board of Trustees, I don't know how we could have a more effective chairman than David Jones," Tollett continued.

Jones has served on the Hancock County Board of Education since 1980 and held the position of chairman for over 12 years. He also serves on the Board of Trustees of the Tennessee Risk Management Trust. He served on the Tennessee School Boards Association Board of Directors for ten years and as president in 1999. In addition to his commitment to Utrust Jones is former chief of Sneedville Volunteer Fire Department and has also served as chairman of the deacons at First Baptist Church of Sneedville.

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How to Keep Your Unemployment Costs Low

By: Dewey Branstetter, Utrust Staff Attorney

Utrust has a vested interest in helping school boards keep unemployment costs low. Why is that? Because Utrust pays your unemployment claims. It benefits all the systems in our program when unemployment costs can be minimized. Most unemployment compensation claims are legitimate and cannot be avoided. We all want employees who lose their jobs through no fault of their own to receive the benefits to which they are entitled. Utrust has discovered, however, that a significant number of unemployment compensation claims can be avoided by adopting better employment practices. Here are a few suggestions.

1. School systems in Utrust have already taken the most important step in keeping unemployment compensation costs low: joining Utrust. Utrust has paid out millions more in unemployment compensation claims for its members than our members have paid in premiums to Utrust. So, being a member of Utrust is the number one way school boards can save money on unemployment compensation claims.

2. A second way to save money on unemployment compensation claims is to be certain that your system does not non-renew employees at the end of the year that you know will be employed for the next year. This practice continues to cost school boards millions of dollars each year and there is absolutely no benefit to this practice. It is bad policy. Don't do it.

3. A third way to save money on unemployment compensation claims is for your board to adopt a policy that non-certificated employees will be paid for a specified number of days in each school year. When school is dismissed for bad weather or other emergencies, these employees continue to be paid and are, therefore, not eligible for unemployment compensation. This practice also permits the lowest paid employees in your school system to be able to pay for food and other living expenses during such emergencies without having to rely on unemployment compensation.

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4. Paying employees competitive wages is a fourth way to save unemployment compensation costs. Although the amount of money available for employee wages is largely out of the hands of the school board, we mention it because leaving a school system for a better paying job is one of the main reasons that school systems lose employees. Too often, employees leave their jobs with the school system for jobs that pay more, but the new, higher paying job does not end up being a long-term job. When that happens, the school district finds itself paying unemployment costs for the school system employee who voluntarily quit for a better paying job that the former employee then loses. It isn't fair, but it happens.
5. Ensuring that employees feel valued and appreciated is a major factor in retaining school district employees. Even when a system cannot pay competitive wages, there is no reason why the school system cannot ensure that their employees feel valued and appreciated. Utrust established the School Employee Appreciation Program in order to help school districts do a better job of recognizing and expressing appreciation to employees. Not only are employees who feel appreciated more likely to continue their employment in the school district, but they will also have higher morale and be more productive employees. Try it-- it works!
6. Another reason why some systems have high unemployment costs relates to the use of "temporary employees". School districts sometimes enter into arrangements to hire a large number of temporary employees in a construction management project. While there may be benefits to this approach, there are also liabilities, and the liabilities may not be apparent until it is too late. As an example, the school system assumes liability for injuries which may occur to these temporary employees. Temporary employees are less likely to be well trained and may not be aware of safety procedures. Some of the most

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- costly Worker's Compensation claims in Tennessee have been the result of injuries to temporary employees of school boards. Further, when the job is completed the temporary employment ends. The result is that these temporary employees immediately become eligible for unemployment benefits and can continue to draw unemployment until they find other work.
7. Another major cause of unemployment claims is outsourcing or contracting out of certain services. When this occurs, an entire staff of bus drivers, custodians, food service personnel, etc. are terminated, which results in major unemployment compensation charges. If your board is considering outsourcing services, please consider the unemployment costs in your calculations. Try to negotiate an agreement whereby the company that will be providing the services agrees to hire the majority of your staff members who are currently providing the service.
8. Letting employees know what is expected of them is a major factor in job satisfaction. Every employee, regardless of their position, needs to have a job description and understand the expectations and standards that they are expected to meet. It is grossly unfair to expect an employee to meet standards or expectations that have never been set out for them. Periodic evaluation -- at least annually -- gives the employee's supervisor an opportunity to compliment the employee for work done well and to set expectations in areas where improvement is needed.
- Utrust hopes that you will consider these suggestions. Follow this advice and we are certain that not only will your unemployment costs decline, but also that your system will have happier, more productive employees.