MTA confers awards, honors at Annual Meeting

Saturday’s business session opens on an inspiring note.

Pres. Anne Wass opened the session by recognizing Anita Thompson, the 2010 ESP of the Year, who was honored in April at the annual ESP Conference.

The next honoree was Teacher of the Year Jae Goodwin.

"I didn’t get here by myself," said Goodwin, recalling teachers who have mentored her.

Goodwin told the delegates about a DESE committee meeting she attended where the topic was attracting more teachers to leadership positions. One young teacher said she had given up her date night to make the time to lead in her district, a notion Goodwin defined as “Wrong with a capital ‘W’.”

When a superintendent at the meeting asked what she could do to encourage teacher leaders, Goodwin replied, “Pay her, recognize her in the community and take away some of her mundane responsibilities so she doesn’t have to give up her date night!”

Goodwin closed by holding up a cherished gift from one her mentors, a glue stick. As a parent, she had been surprised when the mentor, who taught Goodwin’s daughter, sent a letter home pleading for basic supplies such as glue sticks.

Goodwin said she wondered how it could be that her taxes did not cover such basic needs? She realized she did not understand enough about what a teacher’s job entailed and under what conditions. She urged delegates to tell their stories in their community, the media and at the State House.

"Find your inner Norma Rae. Stand up and speak your mind. Teachers are in a unique position. We can make a difference. We have an obligation to educate the public not just our students."

Anne Wass presented the MTA President’s Award to AFT Massachusetts Pres. Tom Gosnell. Both were elected to head their unions in the same year, Gosnell said, and he spoke about their work to build stronger ties between the associations.

"The bottom line in life is humanity," Gosnell said, citing Wass’s reputation for decency and strong personal relationships. "One can be a strong, capable leader and still have all of the human dimensions so important to all of us."

Two were honored with MTA’s Friend of Education Award: Robert F. Antonucci, president of Fitchburg State College, and Peter Meade, president and CEO of the new Edward M. Kennedy Institute.

“If it were not for public education, I wouldn’t be standing here today,” Antonucci said during his acceptance remarks. "All of us together make it happen and I’m proud to be part of the team."

Meade spoke about the role his Irish immigrant parents played in his education. “America had a great promise and they knew it was tied to education,” he said, listing some of the many teachers who influenced his path.

Teachers need never doubt that they can be strong advocates for children, said Meade. “You proved that the second you set foot into the classroom.”