



## Funk aims to increase member participation

INTERVIEW BY ANTHONY ZUCCARINI  
PHOTOS BY SARAH KOHNLE

**L**isa Funk got into this whole thing to be a voice. As the new MSTA president, Funk's goal is to elevate every voice from Missouri's classrooms.

"I want to continue to be a voice for teachers in the classroom," she says while on lunch break at Bolivar R-1 Middle School. "I know not everyone likes to be in leadership positions, but they each have a lot to say and information to share. I want to be a voice for Missouri teachers and deliver those voices to our legislators and others across the state."

For the last 23 years, Funk has been compelled to be in leadership roles to help educators. And now as president of MSTA, she feels this is as good a time as any to build on her commitment.

"This isn't about myself," she adds. "I'm in it to represent teachers of the state and members of MSTA. I want to listen to different views and represent them."

*In addition, she wants to win back respect for educators.*

"I will strive to help teachers receive the respect they deserve," she says. "What most people seem to overlook is that teaching makes all other professions possible. I think the public, as a whole, sometimes doesn't understand that teachers have to put in long hours. The public perception is that we work 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and

have our summers off. That's totally false. Teachers are here for the students. We want to give our best everyday, and we want to continue to strive to do that."

As for MSTA, Funk has a goal to continue working with the strategic plan.

"We have made some positive changes in our organization due to the strategic plan we developed in the last year," Funk says. "I want to continue to use that to enhance and grow our organization."

The strategic plan was developed by MSTA to better assist the organization toward its goals. The plan is reviewed regularly and consists of desired outcomes, strategies, tactics and departmental action plans.

### How long have you been at Bolivar Middle School?

I've been at Bolivar for 23 years, always as a sixth-grade teacher. At first I taught a block class for the middle school. I had roughly 25 to 30 students in the morning for English, reading and social studies. Then the students would leave and travel to their encore classes, and I would have a new group come in during the afternoon. Now I only teach English Language Arts and reading.

### Are you originally from Bolivar?

Technically, yes. I'm originally from Morrisville, which is very close to Bolivar. There are three school districts in the area of my childhood home. Growing up, I remember the school buses for all three districts would drive by on our road because we lived right on the border.

### Did you always have a dream of being a teacher?

I did. There were several teachers who were inspirations to me and encouraged me to become a teacher. The first was my very first teacher in kindergarten. Cathy Sheehy was my kindergarten teacher at Morrisville. She was a very kind and caring teacher, and was frequently a delegate to MSTA's convention. I got to see her later when I became part of MSTA. Another teacher who was influential to me was my third-grade teacher, Janice Yarbrough, but unfortunately I don't have a clue where she is today. I haven't seen her since I was in school. I remember, though, she made learning fun. She made us think we weren't learning even though we were. There were lots of hands-on activities. We used to have a "Fun Friday," which was a day that we would cook or do things out of the ordinary to practice the skills we had learned. Those were the first two teachers who stand out as my influences, but there were more mentors who came in junior high and high school. I loved school from the time I started. I have two younger brothers, and I'd come home and teach them like they were my students. I liked to play school at home, but my mom said I always had to be the teacher.

### What prompted you to join MSTA?

All through high school I was very active. I wasn't one to sit back and enjoy the ride. I always wanted to be in a leadership role. I went to college at Missouri State University, which was Southwest Missouri State University back in those days. When I went to college I became active in several organizations. Wordy Buckner was in the education office at Southwest Missouri State University and I remember through his encouragement, and through the encouragement of Sharon Terry, his secretary, I joined S-MSTA. They were

both in charge of S-MSTA at that time. So, I joined S-MSTA and I held officer positions as a student at SMS. In addition, I attended every state convention since I was a sophomore in college. I bleed MSTA.

### What advice would you give a new teacher?

Ask questions, look up to your mentor teachers, and don't feel like you have to do everything alone. All of us were new once, as well, and had it not been for the veteran teachers giving me advice I would have struggled, as well. Use those veteran teachers. They have been there and probably faced the same things you are now. Reach out and ask. It's okay.

### What issues do you think will be hot in 2014?

It's still going to be a fight to protect our teacher tenure and our right to due process. We will continue to fight to keep our own retirement system. PSRS is a great retirement system, but we'll have to fight to keep it. We also will need to continue fighting to take education decisions away from billionaires who have nothing to do with education in the first place. School staff and teachers should have all the say, not large money and those without the students' best interest in mind. Common Core will continue to be challenged as well, along with the ability to provide necessary technology in the classrooms. As we prepare for the new testing that accompanies Common Core, technology will probably be the biggest issue. At Bolivar we continue to align our curriculum with Common Core, but the technology for testing is still a challenge for us.

### Is there anything about you that you'd like to share?

I've been married for 22 years to my husband, Jeff. We have three children: Zachary, 19, a sophomore at Missouri State University majoring in education (he wants to be a vo-ag teacher); Caleb, 15, a sophomore at Bolivar High School; and Aubrey, 5, a kindergartner at Bolivar Primary School. We are very active with them. They are the joys of our lives! My husband and I are active in the band boosters at Bolivar as presidents. Although my husband isn't a teacher, there are several teachers (and MSTA members) in his family. Most of our downtime is spent participating with all our children in their activities. Besides those activities, I enjoy sports, reading, NASCAR, and I'm a huge Cardinals fan. I have two brothers. One brother is a teacher at Morrisville who is also an MSTA member. My parents and my other brother work on the family dairy farm where I grew up. I am fortunate to have a very supportive family who has supported me throughout my positions in MSTA. I started out as a CTA president and worked my way up through the Southwest Region board. I was the first Legislative Impact Committee vice chair, and then moved over to state board and served several years there before pursuing the offices. I've been extremely active in MSTA. When I told you I bleed MSTA, I really do bleed MSTA! ●

