Dear [PSRP member]

How often have you felt like an unsung hero for all you do, every day, to keep your students healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged so that they may learn and thrive?

This spring, with the help of PSRPs across the country, AFT won a major victory: the creation of a federal award to honor the hard work and contributions – often unrecognized -- of paraprofessionals and school staff.

Of course, in the AFT, our PSRP members are *never* in the background. You always turn out; you volunteer in Get-Out-The-Vote campaigns at very high levels; you travel for Back-to-School organizing; you gather every year for spirited meetings that have become a legend in the union.

And now, the U.S. Congress has created an award – called the “Recognizing Inspiring School Employees” or RISE Award – to draw the attention of the public to your important work. Nominees will come from every state.

Currently, the U.S. Department of Education is tackling the details on how to apply for the RISE award. But it’s not too early to think about an extraordinary colleague who may have earned the honor of this recognition. The nominated classified school employee would have to demonstrate excellence in the following areas:

* Work performance;
* School *and* community involvement;
* Leadership and commitment;
* Local support; and
* Enhancement of image in the community and school.

These RISE awards will help us tell our story to parents and communities. We all know that non-teaching staff members are essential to the complex challenge of educating children. Now the public will be able to hear about it, too.

In solidarity,

[AFT Affiliate officer]