



CSU student assistants prepare to unionize

Andrea Valadez
Editor-In-Chief

About 20,000 student assistants at all 23 California State University (CSU) campuses are coming together in a historic vote that would create the largest undergraduate student worker union in U.S. history. The vote started on Jan. 25 and is running until Feb. 22.

The motion would have student assistants join the CSU Employees Union (CSUEU) which represents 16,000 CSU support staff. If student assistants were to join the union, opportunities would open for the student workforce to negotiate for better pay, sick leave, reduced parking rates and better hours with the CSU.

Student assistants who worked from May to December in 2023 are eligible to vote. They will have already received an email from the American Arbitration Association to their student emails, with all the information needed to cast a vote.

“The CSU needs to recognize that student assistants are an essential part of how they run their campuses and that the work we’re doing is really important to keeping a campus going,” said Leah Baker, a recent computer science graduate from California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB).

When Baker began working with technical support services in the IT department in January 2022, she was being paid \$15.50 an hour. Even though she was being paid 50 cents more than state minimum wage at the time, her quickly escalating job duties outmatched her paycheck. In August 2023, she transferred to the network services branch of IT, which handles internet maintenance on campus. By the time she graduated, Baker was being paid \$16.50 an hour and “scraping by” on her student assistant income.

“Student assistants play a vital role on campus and in the [Otter Cross Cultural Center] (OC3),” said OC3 Director Rudy Medina.

“Our university would not be able to function without student assistants ... however, students are now more than ever struggling to meet their basic needs.”

Because the CSU is a state entity, it is subject to state minimum wage laws, not county laws. In Monterey County, the minimum wage is the same as the state, at \$15.50 an hour. CSU students are also not allowed to work more than 20 hours a week during an academic session.

“The Student Assistants’ primary role is that of a student and not a traditional employee,” according to Timothy Yeung, a lawyer for the CSU who wrote to the administrative judge overseeing the student assistants’ case.

Yeung’s statement, however, contradicts Baker’s lived experience as a student worker at CSUMB.

“I had to ask for 25 cent raises every semester, and for the job I was doing, it was not even close to the market rate,” she said. The average hourly rate for a starting IT technician in Monterey County is about \$25 an hour, according to the Monterey County Human Resources Services.

“Over this last summer, a lot of the computers on campus got replaced and we upgraded the computers to Windows 11. I did a lot of the footwork for that. I replaced almost

every computer in the library by myself.”

Baker continued, “I was doing work that unionized staff were doing (only) for much, much less. And we’re seeing that more and more across the campuses.”

“Student Assistants are voting to build their union so that they can have a voice at work, for better pay and working conditions,” said Khanh Weinberg, communications officer for the CSUEU. “[Students] want to hold CSU management accountable to the CSU mission, which is advancing equity and opportunities for students to have a good future.”

The CSUEU’s monthly membership dues are 1.2% of an employee’s gross salary and are automatically taken from the employee’s paycheck. Weinberg says student assistants would not be required to pay this fee until their first contract is won.

Despite the CSU’s stance that student assistant work is fundamentally different from that of traditional employees, “the California State University respects the rights of workers to unionize,” said Hazel Kelly, a CSU spokesperson in an emailed statement. “Should student assistants elect to unionize, the CSU looks forward to engaging with them as we do with our other union partners.”

The union vote comes at a time of unrest in the CSU, following the week-long CFA strike that was cut short after a tentative agreement was reached on day one of the strike.

“Almost every sector of the CSU’s workforce is not happy with them,” said Baker. “The professors aren’t happy. The Teamsters aren’t happy. The students aren’t happy. Something is fundamentally wrong with how [the CSU] is treating their workers if every section of their workers is going on strike or unionizing.”

Winter Formal Ball

Read about the 2024 winter formal here!



Sip and Swap

Otters came together to swap clothes and talk fashion.



Game Girl Advance

This week, GGA is reviewing Like a Dragon!



Did you have a ball at winter formal?

Nicholas Zuniga
Staff Writer

As a part of welcome back week, students arrived at the Otter Student Union (OSU) ballroom on Jan. 26 dressed to impress for the annual Winter Formal Ball at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB).

At least 200 to 300 attended, crowding the ballroom with gorgeous gowns and boisterous mingling. Students were provided opportunities like getting free caricatures illustrated and taking photos at a booth.

There were gaggles of attendees who showed off their moves on the dance floor. The DJ played many throwback songs like “Party in the USA,” by Miley Cyrus, “Baby,” by Justin Bieber and “Just Dance,” by Lady Gaga. In addition to the many songs from the 2010’s era, current hits were also played, such as “Rich Baby Daddy” by Drake.

“I really enjoy dancing,” said second-year Emi Magoña. “I really like just dressing up and having fun with friends sometimes. [My outfit] is giving a mix between pseudo-Victorian goth and pirate. Honestly, I just kind of threw together what I had - I love goth fashion.”

For those who weren't dancing, there were beverages, sweet treats and tables, which were perfect for those who sought a more intimate evening, or for those resting and rejuvenating from dance-induced-exhaustion.

“I really wanted to hang out with my new roommate, I felt

like coming out here with her would be a really nice way for us to connect,” said Agostinea Puccia, a third-year student.

The event began to slow down around 10 p.m., but that was just the beginning of the after-party hosted by student musician Pak Joko and his crew. The rapper and his crew set up speakers and lights near the Visual and Public Art buildings, and had several dozen students dancing (and moshing) to some of his songs like “Boat out in indo,” and “Mongolian Beef.”

“I’m performing tonight because it's my last semester at CSUMB, and more importantly, music is what I wanna do in life,” said Joko.

For some students, Joko was the main attraction of the night. “I did not want to go to the ball, I just wanna see Pak Joko,” said third-year Valerie Morales.

Joko also featured an upcoming rapper “Chi Chi” in his show. “The energy was amazing. Pak Joko putting me on was a really big thing. I appreciate all of the fans and everyone coming out. Be on the look out for me. Stream ‘Thanksgiving Special,’” said Chi Chi, a second-year student.

By the end of the evening, students left the OSU/VPA building with high spirits, tired eyes and high heels in hand.



PHOTOS BY SAMANTHA HUTZ



The Lutrinae is a weekly campus newspaper covering CSUMB and its neighboring areas. Here at *The Lutrinae*, our goal is not only to educate and inform the public, but to entertain, to spark creativity, to encourage diversity of opinion, and to build a sense of community on campus and with the neighboring cities.

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CSU main retirement plan to divest in big oil

Oscar Daniel Jimenez Iniguez
Staff Writer

Around this time last year, State Senator Lena Gonzalez, along with other state senators, introduced Senate Bill (SB) 252 Public Retirement Systems: Fossil Fuels: Divestment. This bill would prohibit public employee retirement funds from investing in fossil fuel companies as well as liquidating all investments in those companies on or before July 1, 2031.

The bill specifically targets the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) and the California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS) who currently have around \$15 billion invested into the largest fossil fuel companies around the world such as Shell and Chevron.

Currently, the California State University system, including California State University, Monterey Bay, offers CalPERS as its main retirement plan to eligible faculty and staff, including professors.

After SB 252’s introduction, it was successfully passed through the California State Senate and ordered to the California State Assembly. It was later referred to Tina McKinnor, chair of the Assembly Committee on Public Employment and Retirement committee on June 6, when she decided to not hear it out, delaying the bill to this year.

CalPERS is the second largest retirement fund in the United States with an investment portfolio of over \$483 billion covering over 2 million retirees. CalSTRS is the third largest fund with over \$327 billion in assets.

As California aims to become less reliant on fossil fuels with similar notable bills prohibiting investment and requiring disinvestment into coal companies for these public employee retirement funds, it comes as no surprise that the state has been turning its attention to one of the biggest contributing factors to climate change - oil.

Despite SB 252 failing to pass in 2023, calls for CalPERS to divest in big oil have been fueled for years by climate change activist groups and state worker organizations. There has been immense pressure for the pension to make long-term changes to its investment portfolio.

During a November board meeting, CalPERS announced the “CalPERS’ Sustainable Investments 2030 Strategy,” where they laid out the intentions to create a plan to have a net zero portfolio by 2050 as well as an exit plan for “companies without credible net zero plans.”

During this meeting, there was also a commitment made to invest over “\$100 billion toward climate solutions by 2030, and [accelerate] the transition to a low-carbon economy through more selective investments in high emitting sectors.”

While this new plan has been praised for acknowledging the issue and looking into solutions, it has also been criticized for its lack of transparency in the timeline of dates and actions it plans to take. The strategy does not highlight any specific criteria for those “companies with credible net zero plans,” as a part of the investments it plans to exit from, as well as the companies they plan to invest billions of dollars into.

With SB 252 getting a second opportunity to become law this year, there is a lot to be decided, especially regarding who CalPERS invests in for the future.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimates that without new policies, by 2050 there will be a 50 percent increase in global greenhouse gas emissions “primarily due to a 70 percent growth in energy-related CO2 emissions.”



COURTESY OF RAWPIXEL



Working together to create a sustainable campus

Chris Hamilton
Staff Writer

California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) has big plans in the coming years - complete campus sustainability by 2030.

On Thursday, Jan. 25, CSUMB’s Sustainable Events Working Group held a discussion on how to create a more sustainable campus. The event was hosted by Jeff Rensel, director of the Otter Student Union (OSU) and co-chair of the Sustainable Events Working Group in the OSU.

The university designates three “core goals” to be achieved by 2030:

Some 2,030 trees planted, 90 percent of waste diverted from landfills and carbon neutrality.

In addition to its core goals, CSUMB hopes to “enhance and develop a campus culture of sustainability,” according to the school’s 2020 Campus Sustainability Plan.

Thursday’s meeting focussed specifically on what students can do to plan sustainable events on campus and was an opportunity to “discuss actions [organizers] can take toward campus sustainability and to educate them about the opportunities to integrate sustainability into events,” said Rensel.

In line with creating a culture of sustainability on campus, according to Rensel, “when we talk about sustainability, collective action ... is key.” Collective action refers to the necessity of participation by all parties in order to reach CSUMB’s sustainability

goals. This includes the administration, faculty, staff and of course, students.

According to Rensel, the goal of the Sustainable Events Working Group is to “focus on making sure that people know they are able to do a sustainable event on campus and that we’re going to help them to do that.”

One resource available to students when organizing events for clubs or other organizations is the Sustainable Events Blueprint (SEB).

The SEB aims to “provide access to resources for anyone doing an event on campus to make it more sustainable and to help with the process of planning an event,” according to Rensel.

The checklist addresses many of the various aspects involved in planning events at CSUMB with recommendations on how to ensure the sustainability of the event. Categories addressed in the SEB include the marketing, energy usage, transportation, food and waste impacts resulting from an event.

Also included are guidelines promoting diversity and inclusion in events. The addition of these social dimensions reflect CSUMB’s recognition that “the impacts of environmental destruction and pollution disproportionately affect already marginalized communities,” as stated in its 2020 Inclusive Sustainability plan.

In addition, student organizers were encouraged



ILLUSTRATION BY ZOE KAPP

to complete the Sustainability Pre-Event Checklist (SEB-C). The SEB-C is a 31-question assessment analyzing the sustainability of an event. Upon completing the assessment, the event will receive a rating of Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum, ranking its compliance with the SEB and certifying it as a sustainable event.

As of fall 2023, this questionnaire is embedded within the event planning process in 25 Live, however at this time there is no requirement to complete this checklist when planning the event.

Additionally, there is not yet a specific incentive for organizers to comply with the checklist, though they are encouraged to use their sustainable event designation as an advertising point.

According to Rensel, while the actions suggested in the SEB to make an event more sustainable are quite simple, “we need to make sure that everyone is aware [of these actions]... so that we can continue the efforts and meet our goals.”

Students barter at the Sip and Swap

Max Guerrero
Staff Writer

Students shared soothing, warm beverages as they exchanged items Wednesday morning, Jan. 24. This Sip and Swap was hosted by Associated Students (AS), who provided coffee and hot chocolate as the rain came and went.

Students had the choice to swap their items – in many cases, clothes – with each other, or donate them to the Basic Needs Hub. “Personally, I wanted to see a lot of student donations, and we did! We collected a lot of clothing to donate to the Basic Needs thrift corner, which I’m beyond thrilled about,” said Gaby Weedon, AS vice president of external affairs.

Bartering encouraged students to engage with each other and bond over similarities in taste. “From the style of clothing a student has to the taste of fashion, this builds a lot of potential friendships!” said AS Senator of Basic Needs Carl Esguerra.

Jourdan Garnier, a third-year student, attended the Sip and Swap, eager to make a donation. “[I have] a bunch of clothes that I’ve been meaning to offload, and I wanted to support a campus event.” Garnier appreciates “how willing Otters are to help each other even if there’s no immediate gain, it’s just the best part of campus culture.”

“Our goal for Sip and Swap was to put on a fun event for students where they could find some cool new additions to their wardrobe and feel more engaged with others in the community,” said Weedon. Organizers hoped to spread awareness to the student body about the Basic Needs thrift corner.

Any remaining items donated at the Sip and Swap will be available at the Basic Needs Hub in Building 12.



Amber DiMassimo (left) and Gaby Weedon (right) posing in the Otter Student Union.



Third-year Jourdan Garnier picking clothes to take home from the swap.

PHOTOS BY SAMANTHA HUTZ

February horoscopes

Maxwelle Tartaglia
Staff Writer



ILLUSTRATION BY ARIANNA NALBACH

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

In February, Aries, dynamic and creative energies guide your focus toward career ambitions and life plan goals. As you navigate this ambitious period, seek connections that may enhance your professional path. With the upcoming New Moon on Feb. 9, it may be a good time to initiate new plans and projects that align with your long-term goals. Remember to balance your focus on achieving success with the joy of exploring fresh ideas and engaging in new activities, finding energy and excitement in both aspects of your life.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Taurus, this month brings a renewed focus on your ambitions. You may find yourself with a strong desire for new experience, so consider pursuing exciting opportunities in both your personal and professional life. As the month progresses, the spotlight will shift toward creating and boosting meaningful connections with loved ones.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Gemini! Your focus turns toward communication and intellectual pursuits, allowing you to express ideas with clarity and engage in meaningful conversations. This month may bring heightened mental energy, creating opportunities for learning and networking. Relationships may intensify, leading to deeper connections, and financial matters could be a focus, offering a chance to resolve issues. You may also want to take the opportunity to be introspective. Take the time to reflect on your own thoughts and feelings.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

This is a social and collaborative time for you, Cancer. As the month progresses, a growing sense of self-worth influences your interactions, fostering personal growth. Intense and passionate connections in your closest relationships may characterize the month. At the same time, a heightened focus on financial matters may lead to opportunities for financial betterment. Embrace this period as a means to reinforce your financial foundation and foster meaningful bonds.

Leo (July 23 - Aug. 22)

In February, Leo, a focus on your daily tasks and responsibilities is on the rise, blending with your ongoing creative endeavors. As you balance work and personal expression, expect a boost in your energy and motivation, particularly in handling demanding projects. Considering the Quarter Moon on Feb. 16, your magnetic presence in your work and daily life may attract recognition and success particularly around this time.

Virgo (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)

Virgo, you can expect a continuation of January with your attention still turned toward a more domestic lifestyle. You can expect to find yourself focused on family matters and domestic responsibilities, providing a grounding force in your life. You may find motivation for home improvements or family-related projects. The beginning of the month could spark fresh starts in your home environment. Despite external demands, it is important to remember to nurture your emotional well-being.

Libra (Sept. 23 - Oct. 22)

Libra! This February brings a continuation of positive energy. Your ability to make favorable impressions remains strong and you may feel a surge in your ability for self-expression. As the month progresses, family and personal life may also begin to claim attention, offering opportunities for creative improvements at home.

Scorpio (Oct. 23 - Nov. 21)

In February, Scorpio, your attention remains on practical matters, especially related to money and resources. You may gain a focus on clear thinking about finances, helping you make informed decisions. Moving forward, communication takes center stage, enhancing your ability to express yourself and assert your needs. Around the middle of the month, expect increased social interactions and effective communication, creating a favorable environment for positive connections and potentially meeting new people.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)

Sagittarius, this month you will likely experience a strong focus on your environment and expressing new ideas. At the beginning of the month, take the time to be introspective. Use this time to explore notions of an ideal living situation. Be cautious of intense discussions around the middle of the month, and try to keep your focus on preserving your peace.

Capricorn (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)

In February, Capricorn, focus on your finances intensifies at the beginning of the month as you navigate uncertainties, considering the New Moon on Feb. 9. Around the middle of the month, you may face some challenges that require a practical and rational approach to money matters. Be on the lookout for a potential romance around the middle of the month, as well!

Aquarius (Jan. 20 - Feb. 19)

Aquarius! It is your month. You may feel a heightened focus on your possessions and self-worth. Your communication is strengthened at the beginning of the month - take this opportunity to express emotions compassionately and articulate feelings more easily. Be wary of financial issues around the middle of the month and have caution when making decisions.

Pisces (Feb. 20 - March 20)

Pisces, it is time to introspect and reflect! Pisces individuals are urged to embrace introspection during Aquarius season, delving into aspects of themselves often overlooked. Communication may come easier to you than usual, making it easier to express your beliefs and ideals. Engage in open discussions about usually avoided topics at the beginning of the month, fostering a better understanding of your own thoughts.

You’re missing out on Ryo Ga Gotoku Studio

Samantha Hutz
Staff Photographer

Over the winter break and the Lutrinae’s hiatus, I took the opportunity to delve deeper into a franchise I briefly wrote about in our 2023 Holiday Buyer’s Guide: Like a Dragon, from Ryo Ga Gotoku Studio. The series first appeared on my radar with the announcement of Like a Dragon: Infinite Wealth releasing on Jan. 26, so I took the chance to prepare myself by playing 2020’s Yakuza: Like a Dragon.

Truth be told, the idea of jumping into a long-running series with eight mainline titles and even more spin-off games, all with varying degrees of accessibility to Western audiences, was an intimidating prospect. I highly recommend entering the series where I did, as Yakuza: Like a Dragon served as a soft reboot, switching out former protagonist Kazuma Kiryu with our new hero, Ichiban Kasuga. Alternatively, Yakuza 0, a prequel set in the 1980s, requires little existing knowledge.

To explain Like a Dragon to the uninitiated American gamer is simplest with an analogy; consider how the Grand Theft Auto series satirizes American society using the medium of a third-person shooter with high-speed driving mechanics. What could be more American than guns and cars? Yakuza: Like a Dragon similarly satirizes Japanese society with its most culturally distinct gaming medium: the Japanese Role Playing Game. RGG Studio places its characters in strikingly accurate recreations of locations like Dōtonbori and Kabuki-chō, presented as an overworld environment filled with random combat encounters and hidden loot.

Like a Dragon’s dramatic main storylines coexist alongside off-the-wall side missions creating a unique and deeply engaging world to explore. In one main mission, Ichiban might find himself uncovering the secrets behind a grisly murder, and five minutes later fight an escaped circus chimp driving an industrial excavator. RGG Studio executes this kind of contrast



so masterfully that it heightens both extremes without compromising either one.

Yakuza: Like a Dragon’s main questline follows an ex-con forced to start his life over at age 40 from rock bottom, coming into contact with fellow residents of Japan’s “gray zones,” the homeless, sex workers, immigrants and many others. Ichiban aspires to be a hero for those in his community, and mourns the loss of the honor once held sacred by his former Yakuza comrades. When the people of Injincho come under attack from the reactionary conservative movement “Bleach Japan,” Ichiban and friends follow the threads of a political conspiracy all the way to the executive branch of the Japanese government.

Historically, the series has for years come under

criticism for its lack of representation for women and certain other marginalized groups - recent releases have sought to course correct this issue. What it truly excels at, however, is representing the ways people find themselves trampled underfoot by mainstream society; how anyone can be failed by the systems we put faith in and be forced into the margins of the social order.

While longtime fans of Like a Dragon squabble over the game’s pivot to turn-based mechanics or change in protagonist, coming into the series’ latest entries with fresh eyes can truly let you appreciate RGG Studio’s efforts to tell a story and the message within. I for one am beyond excited to see how Like a Dragon: Infinite Wealth explores the Japanese-American cultural exchange and the tourism industry with its first venture beyond Japan and into Hawaii.

What are your thoughts on the CFA strike?



Helene Marie Kristensen
Contributing Writer



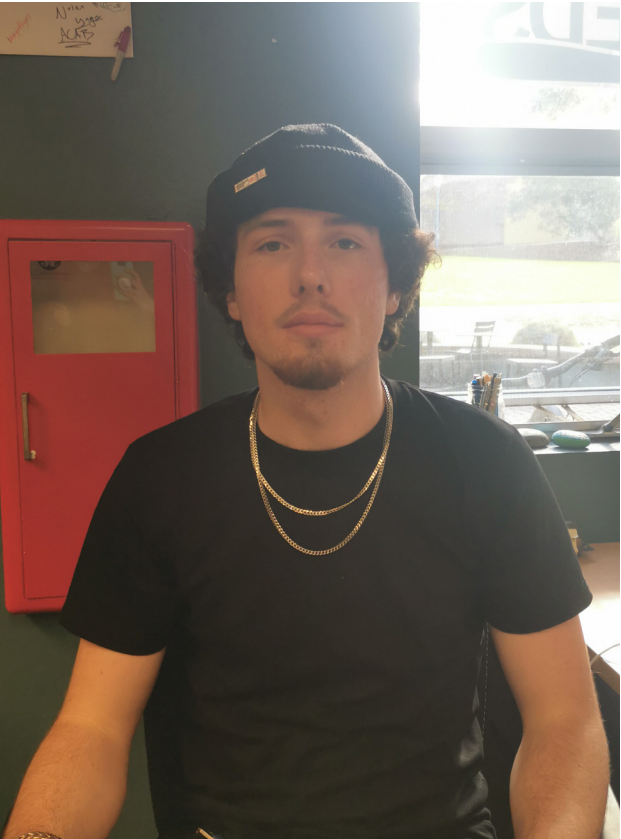
Phillip Yang
Marine Science
Third-year

“I think it's a pretty good thing that [they went on strike]. I feel like professors aren't getting paid enough for the work they do.”



Collin Galoardo
Visual and Public Arts
Third-year

“I don't know much about this other than they need more pay. Students are paying more in tuition. That's all I know. I am glad they came together to change the outcome across all the CSUs.”



Nick Alesandro
Business
Third-year

“I know some information about it. I stand with the teachers and faculty [that were] striking. I [was] disappointed to see [many] of my professors holding classes during the strike.”

Upcoming Events

Monday, January 29

The Service Learning Institute (SLI) is hosting a community partner fair from 12-2 p.m. in the Main Quad! Come out and network with various community organizations and find the right fit for your service learning.

Monday, January 29

Basic Needs, the Otter Student Union (OSU) and Second Year Experience (SYE) have teamed up to host Glow in the Dark Yoga! Starting this week, Otters can come to the OSU ballroom from 5:15-6:30 to participate in a relaxing yoga class; register on MyRaft.

Tuesday, January 30

In partnership with the Helen Rucker Center for Black Excellence and SLI, El Centro is hosting a spring carnival! Come out to the west lounge of building 12 from 12-2 p.m. to participate in interactive carnival games, enjoy refreshments and pictures with Monte!

Tuesday, January 30

SYE is hosting a time management workshop from 7-8 p.m. to give student tips on creating an effective Google Calendar and more! Register on MyRaft and learn how to maximize your time and stay organized.

Wednesday, January 31

Come out to the Main Quad from 11-1 p.m. for this semester’s Otter Showcase! Hear from over 75 clubs and organizations and consider joining!

Thursday, February 1

Are you interested in studying abroad? Attend this online informational session from 2-3 p.m. to learn more about the process and scholarship opportunities. Registration on MyRaft is required.

Thursday, February 1

It’s time for the 38th CSU Research Competition! This year's undergraduate and graduate research competition will take place at Cal Poly SLO in April. Join this informational session from 3-3:45 to learn more; register on MyRaft.

Friday, February 2

The Super Smash Otters Club is hosting an ultimate items tourney! Come down to OSU room 508 from 6-10 p.m. to join in on the fun.

Puzzles Page

SUDOKU

In order to complete this Sudoku puzzle, you must fill in the square so that each row and column contain the numbers 1 - 9, with no repetitions within the 9x9 grid and outlined 3x3 grid.

	6	5	7	3				
		1	2			5		6
						8	3	
		7	6		2		4	
			5					8
2								
6								
7						2		
	1		4		8		7	5

WORD SCRAMBLE

Can you unscramble these winter-related words to uncover their true meaning?

gdirfi

nmaonws

radzizbl

frcas

eetsl

ngidedls

sotrf

lceci

senitmt

cietlsso

ANSWERS:

6	3	8	1	5	3	9	6
4	1	5	2	9	8	3	4
7	6	9	7	2	4	8	1
3	2	9	8	1	7	5	4
5	4	9	2	3	6	7	8
1	8	7	9	4	5	2	3
8	3	4	6	2	9	1	7
2	9	1	7	5	4	6	3
9	7	5	1	8	3	4	2

Frigid, snowman, blizzard,
scarf, sleet, sledding, frost,
icicle, mittens, solstice

