In life and in organizing, the longest odds make for the sweetest victories. Given what they faced, the election victory of nearly 700 Atlanta Gas Light workers April 19 and the creation of Atlanta Local 1997 is like biting into a fresh-picked peach on an August afternoon.

When the drive began, it had so much against it. Deep in the right-to-work South in a state with one of the lowest union densities in the country, members were spread between 23 service centers from Rome in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains to Savannah on the Atlantic coast, more than 350 miles away. A previous union had been decertified and four subsequent organizing attempts had failed.

"It was always going to be hard," said Assistant to the International President for Membership Development Ricky Oakland. "We had some things going our way, but no one thought this was a sure thing."

What they had, Oakland said, was a platoon of volunteer organizers who had no quit in them, a strategy to make use of them and organizers, led by Fifth District Regional Organizing Coordinator Joseph Skinner, who would walk through walls to get it done.

"From the first meeting to the last house call, we executed it perfectly," Oakland said.

Rebirth of a Union

Until 2004, most of AGL’s gas technicians, troublemen, appliance repairmen, pipelayers and meter readers were members of the Teamsters. Steve Galloway, a 30-year veteran AGL field specialist, was a chief steward and sat on the negotiating committee for three contracts with the Teamsters. But he supported the decertification and, when the IBEW tried to organize the utility in 2006 and again in 2012, he sat it out.

"I didn’t think our previous representation was doing anything good, and I was skeptical about anyone new," he said.

But in the summer of 2015, Southern Company — the second-largest utility company in the U.S. — announced it was buying AGL. The takeover was completed in 2016. AGL workers were making less than union utility workers in Georgia — in some cases up to $10 less an hour. After the merger, Galloway said, things got worse.

They were switched to a Southern health plan that cost more. Pensions were changed. Bonuses at AGL were $10,000 lower than at Southern subsidiary Georgia Power.

The IBEW has 12 contracts with Southern Company subsidiaries, and each one provided better pay and benefits than AGL.

Nearly 700 Atlanta Gas Light Workers

Join the Brotherhood

Organizers Joe Skinner, Doug Williams and Jimmy Flynn celebrate after the votes were counted with AGL workers and V.O.C. leadership, including Ronnie Smith, Timothy Jackson, Marcus Green, Wavers Smith, Ed Leland, Kristy Rounds, Robert Barber, Thomas Stores, Colin Smith, Gary Smith, Justin Gardner and Raeshaun Martin.
EDITORIALS

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majority in Congress that can hold this president accountable. And you better believe that put downward pressure on wages and benefits. Right-to-work legislation. By 2016, unions went from representing 14 percent of all Wisconsin employees to under 10. Never come after private-sector unions. Only four years later Walker and the Wisconsin GOP went ahead and passed

etc. to do their jobs and fairly represent every employee. They force agencies to renegotiate union contracts to squeeze as much out

For Kennedy, collaboration and respect for the right of government employ-

tives to do their jobs and fairly represent every employee. They force agencies to renegotiate union contracts to squeeze as much out of federal employees as they can while making it harder for union representa-

tives to do their jobs and fairly represent every employee. Federal unions have never been just about themselves. They have tackled issues such as sexual harassment, health and safety problems and protecting whistleblowers. They have helped our federal government become a more efficient and productive workplace, and that is in the interest of every taxpayer. Without unions, federal employees have no voice at work, and no way to improve their workplaces. These orders are not just an attack on the rights of federal workers, including members of the IBEW's government branch. They are an attack on the rights of all working people. Because when you take away the voice of one set of workers, every working person suffers. Just look at Wisconsin, where Gov. Scott Walker initially defended his attack on state workers by saying he would never come after private-sector unions. Only four years later Walker and the Wisconsin GOP went ahead and passed right-to-work legislation. By 2016, unions went from representing 14 percent of all Wisconsin employees to under 10. And you better believe that put downward pressure on wages and benefits. The Trump administration has already racked up a record of hostility to private-sector unions and workers’ rights as well, from appointing union-busting judges to federal courts, to overturning rules protecting workers from wage theft. Trump's latest actions are a reminder of how important it is that we vote this November and get a pro-worker

government by cutting taxes on corporations and the rich. When they’re done, the every-
day worker will pay all the taxes and have no say in the decisions that affect our lives, giving all the power to the rich and corporate elites and leaving us with a gutted government. Democracy is the only equalizer between the powerful elites and the rest of us, and we must not allow their agenda to take our freedoms from us. This November, union mem-
bbers must get off our backside and vote our paychecks, our families and our country.

Robert Wentworth, Local 445 member
Battle Creek, Mich.

Giving Thanks for an IBEW Career

Thirty-seven years ago, I was bartending and not really sure what I wanted to do with my life. I was sure I didn’t want to travel the normal road most women took at the time. I was an athlete, a biker, an academic, more than a little rough around the edges. I was inducted into Local Union 445 in 1982. I owe my life, my successes, my prosperity, my integrity and my moral compass to the mentorship of the IBEW members who’ve crossed my path. No, it is not for everyone and it is misleading to believe that everyone is cut out for the sacrifice of blood, sweat and tears required to make a successful journeyman. But for those successful individuals, the world is your oyster. Thankful for the opportunities made available through the IBEW.

Lori Valdez, Local 445 member
Cheyenne, Wyo.

Solidarity Wins

Responding to “Law Repealing Bank Rules Opens Door to Another Great Recession,” Page 8 of this issue: We brothers will survive through thick and thin. I truly believe that we will survive and prosper through whatever our country goes through as long as we stick together and fight for our common ground. In brotherhood everyone wins.

Zach Leute, Local 113 apprentice
Colorado Springs, Colo.
Nearly 700 Atlanta Gas Light Workers Join the Brotherhood

By this time, some of Galloway’s colleagues, including Joey Leach, Mike Strange and Justin Gardner, had reached out to the IBEW to try again. This time, Galloway signed on to help.

When Galloway was called into a meeting with the company, she already had, common tactics nearly as old as the union movement. Exelon told the formerly virulently antiunion company, “We could say, ‘Only if you vote for us, we comfortable with this number? Do we push on and try for more, call the election or ball?’ For Skinner, it was close. “It did not feel good. I told my wife, according to these numbers we should lose. I had not won a campaign with less than 65 percent of the cards. We’ve been close, but didn’t win,” he said.

The Final Push

In many ways, the campaign was like others. The company held captive audience sessions; the volunteers organized meetings off-site to answer the misinformation from those sessions. The company, which had worked to decertify the IBEW in the past, did not change. “The truth is we had some potential unfair labor practices charges that we could have filed, but instead we called Ricky [Oakland], who talked to President Stephenson, who called Southern Company CEO Tom Fanning,” Skinner said. Not long after, Skinner received a call from AGL CEO Bryan Batson with a pledge that the company would stay neutral. It was like uncouling a spring, he said. “Supporters didn’t fear retaliation. Even nonsupporters’ attitudes changed to, ‘Well, it may not be so bad. At the end of the day, the company has worked with us before,” Williams said.

The Win

By March, the campaign was 11 months old, and new cards were slowing to a trickle. “That can happen in any campaign. It can happen when you have 30 percent of the workers signing cards, or 80 percent or, like it did here, 61 percent,” Skinner said. “Then you have to ask, are we comfortable with this number? Do we push on and try for more, call the election or ball?” For Skinner, it was close. “It did not feel good. I told my wife, according to these numbers we should lose. I had not won a campaign with less than 65 percent of the cards. We’ve been close, but didn’t win,” he said.

The stabilizer organizing committee, Skinner said, had no doubts. “I was 100 percent sure,” Leach said. “They were scared and said, ‘I won’t sign a card, but I promise you I will vote yes.’ But these are guys I grew up with. We are all 25, 30, 35-year employees. When they give you their word, I trust these guys.”

Skinner, Flynn, Juarez, Williams and Oakland had to decide they would trust Teamsters and had fought the IBEW in the past, did not change.
Nearly 700 Atlanta Gas Light Workers Join the Brotherhood

continued from page 3

time, the cards with the National Labor Relations Board and move to a vote. Oakland recommended, and Stephenson approved, following the model used so successfully at Baltimore Gas and Electric last year. The goal was personal visits to all of the nearly 700 households, which is only possible by sending in dozens of International Office organizers and representatives from the Fifth and Tenth Districts — something Membership Development calls the Strategic Winning Action Team.

“Life just changed for 700 families, and you never want that feeling to end.”

— Fifth District Lead Organizer Doug Williams

Stephenson even approved sending Oakland, Juarez and other senior members of the International Membership Development Department to make those personal connections during the final days.

“It is a significant investment of time and money, but the reward was within reach,” Stephenson said. “The future of 700 families was in the balance. The volunteer organizers had done thousands of hours of work leading up to the vote. It is moments like this that the IBEW was created for. Of course, we were going to do whatever it took to help them bring their campaign home successfully.”

More than two dozen came in all, driving hundreds of miles from apartment buildings in Atlanta to isolated home-steads in the farmlands outside Valdosta.

When the election was over, the data wasn’t quite right: it underestimated their victory by a single percent. On the day of, several dozen people who — for whatever reason — did not sign cards, went and voted for the union by 62 percent.

“I get up at 3:30 in the morning to go to work. I was sure that we were going to lose, and was in bed trying to go to sleep,” Leach said. “Skinny texted me as soon as he heard the results, and I called them at 11:30 am the next day.”

Williams, like Flynn and Skinner, is already out on new campaigns — including another subsidiary of Southern Company. The win was still a moment to savor.

“There are some long calls and meetings, but mostly it is the day-to-day being there,” Williams said.

As Skinner said from the beginning, this victory is a sweet moment, but it was never the goal. The goal is a contract, and that is the next step.

“It is now that the leaders of Local 1997 and they will decide what they want in their contract, and we will help them get there,” Williams said.

For Juarez, the victory, following close on the heels of the BGE win, tells her that an on-site team laying the foundation supported by a large team arriving just before the vote is a plan that has legs.

“The V.O.C. is what makes this work. After the petition they need a lot more support, but it is their work through-out that 12 months that makes it possible,” Juarez said.

Leach sends the love back the other way.

“Without the organizers, none of this would have been possible. It got frustrating and I quit 100 times. Next day, they’d call me back,” Leach said. “I know their wives. I know their kids. There was never a time when they didn’t pick up the phone, calm me down or cheer me up when it got frustrating. I just can’t say enough about them.”

Victory, Oakland said, is contagious.

“A win like this, in the South, sends a message: the plan works,” Oakland said. “And we had the people in the fleet division and at the call center asking if they could join in. We had to tell them, ‘Not this time, but get busy. Start the conversation, and we will be there when you are ready for us.’”

Southern Company has 34,000 workers and, with this contract, the IBEW will represent nearly 90,000, which means the plan still has room to grow, Oakland said.

“When a company understands that an IBEW-organized workforce is good for business, and our members get pay and benefits that make a permanent difference for them and their families, we have a map and a destination,” Stephenson said. “Get ready for a lot more stories like this.”

Off-Broadway Play Raises the Curtain on Local 3’s Electchester

On a brief break from cutting and removing fallen trees after Hurricane Sandy, Local 3 volunteers pose at “Harry’s rock,” a memorial to Electchester’s legendary founder and late local Business Manager Harry Van Arsdale.

“I feel it’s a love letter to Electchester and the spirit of community that Electches-ter is,” said Mark Plesent, the theater’s producer and artistic director. “We didn’t sugarcoat the conflicts, but the ideals of Electchester shine through.”

Steeped in union Brotherhood, Electchester is a unique, tight-knit community that thousands of New York Local 3 members and their families have called home for nearly 70 years.

“This spring, an Off-Broadway play immortalizes their home, its rich history, traditions and shared values as well as the modern tensions that accompany change. It’s not all roses, but at the same time it is,” said journeyman inside wireman Joe Proscia, who has lived virtually all of his 60 years in Electchester and inspired one of the play’s characters. “You don’t see anything like this. If you were 10, you wouldn’t be able to rest, because people would be bringing stuff over. You’re not just living the Brotherhood or Sisterhood on the job, you’re bringing it home with you.”

“Alternating Currents,” premiered in April at Local 3’s union hall before moving off-Broadway in May, with additional performances held in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Staten Island. It is the third of The Working Theater’s “Five Boroughs/One City” plays exploring the nature of community. The theater company has produced plays for and about working people since 1985.

The 90-minute play tells Electchester’s story through the eyes of newsworthy electricians Elena and Luke, an interracial couple, as they weigh the rewards and challenges of their new home. A narrator and three other cast members provide perspective as they rotate through a wide range of characters.

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Embodifying those ideals on stage is the legendary Local 3 leader who first envisioned the community.

“Our union’s come a long way since the days of lockouts and brawling in the union hall,” the character of Harry Van Arsdale Jr., the local’s late, beloved business manager, intones from a podium. “But we’ve got more work to do, and if we don’t all pitch in, it’s not gonna get done. I’m here to tell you, a union’s not just wages and hours. It’s Brotherhood. It’s looking past our superficial differences. It’s the vehicle for a better life. If we all stick together — help raise our brothers up — there’s no limit to what we can achieve in this world.”


Elena: I like the idea of a neighborhood. You know, of all the places I’ve been, I never lived in a neighborhood.
A Living Legacy

A larger-than-life figure in Local 3 and the greater New York City labor movement of the mid-20th century, Van Arsdale championed integration and civil rights while tirelessly fighting for workers and unions. His renowned integrity, humility and compassion won hearts and minds. The play pays homage to a gesture he made wherever he went, handing out small cards that said, “Be kind. Everyone you meet is putting up a hard fight.”

In 1949, inspired in part by a housing project for unionized garment workers, Van Arsdale proposed Local 3 build its own community of affordable, comfortable homes for electricians.

One year later, the local broke ground on a site rich with irony: the former Pomonok Country Club in Flushing, Queens, where anti-union titans of business spent leisurely afternoons on the golf course. The first section of what would become 2,500 cooperative housing units in 36 brick buildings and two 23-story towers opened to residents in 1951.

Local 3 purchased the 103-acre site with assistance from the Joint Industry Board of the Electrical Industry, a partnership that continues today. Both the local and JIB are headquartered in the six-story office building that anchors Electchester.

The massive bowling alley under the complex is called “JIB Lanes,” with a bowling pin substituting for the “I” in the logo.

In a scene with main characters Luke and Elena, right, actors rehearse on the set of The Working Theater’s “Alternating Currents” before a performance at Local 3’s auditorium in Electchester.

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Electchester residents, despite scenes that made some of them uneasy. “When people see race or ethnicity being portrayed on stage, there are going to be moments when they feel uncomfortable,” he said. “Most of the reaction from the community was positive.”

In a magazine interview, they found a clean, safe, friendly neighborhood unlike any other in New York City. “People have an infectious pride about the remarkable variety of community activities they offer,” he said. “At the same time, changing demographics and values — and recent pressures on unions in this country — threaten many of the things that longtime residents cherish about their community.”

They also got to know residents of the Pomonok housing project across the street, where noise, drugs and violence are an unending source of stress for its neighbors. The play conveyed the project’s troubles, but also its humanity.

Within Electchester, the team observed that “microaggressions” seemed to be at the root of most conflicts — comments or actions that aren’t intended to be racist but feel that way to others. Present, the producer, recalled an exchange during a full-bodied portrait of Electchester’s annual street fair. He welcomed us with open arms,” Plesent said.

In a scene with main characters Luke and Elena, right, actors rehearse on the set of The Working Theater’s “Alternating Currents” before a performance at Local 3’s auditorium in Electchester.

“Alternating Currents” explores the fissures while celebrating the community’s solid foundation of unity and good will. Those values shine when characters exuberantly tell newcomers Elena about some of Electchester’s many activities.

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Electchester isn’t immune to the friction and misunderstandings that come with change. Yet the bonds among residents are still strong. “I believe that all actors’ Equity members with Broadway, off-Broadway, regional theater and TV credits.

“All in all, it’s a pretty honest portrayal of the community and its challenges,” said John T. Kelly, a journeyman inside wireman and active Local 3 member who lived in Electchester with his wife, Grace, in the 1970s. Since then, they’ve lived less than a mile away. “We chose to live in Queens,” he said. “This is the most culturally diverse community in the United States, and Electchester is part of that. Everybody’s different and nobody’s different. That’s our strength.”

Ericson grew up in Electchester. “My life was influenced and shaped by my exposure to the diverse Electchester community,” he said. “I believe that quality, affordable housing is a key element of a strong and secure society; and I am sure that was what Harry Van Arsdale Jr. was thinking in 1949 when he envisioned Electchester. Congratulations to The Working Theater on their production of Alternating Currents.”

Proscia, the near-lifelong resident at the heart of the character “Sal,” served as tour guide for the theater team. “He welcomed us with open arms,” Plesent said. “That spirit, his caring for the community, I think that all comes through in his character.”

After seeing the show on opening night, Proscia had mixed feelings. “It started out good and positive, and then midway it kind of went on a sour note, and toward the end there was a silver lining,” he said. Then again, he acknowledged, that’s a lot like life itself.

His love for Electchester is palpable. His father, who was an electrician at The New York Times, moved the family there when Proscia was a small boy. Today he lives in one of the two towers, with his 85-year-old mother and a 92-year-old cousin in the other.

Despite his overnight shift as an electrician at Manhattan’s Javits Center, Proscia trades hours of sleep for community service, from his unpaid role as Local 3’s vice president to the mammoth job of organizing Electchester’s annual street fair. He is ebullient about all it, even remembering wind storms and blizzards for the camaraderie that followed: In a blink of an eye, dozens of Local 3 members turning out with chainsaws, shovels, toolboxes — whatever the situation called for — and getting to work.

In the play, Sal exudes Proscia’s energy, forever looking out for his neighbors, extolling Electchester’s opportunities, juilgating volunteer jobs and encouraging Elena and Luke to do the same.

“I work the graveyard, and I’m at the half every day for my union duties,” Sal says. “Plus I got the scholarship drive, the blood drive. You don’t hear me complainin’, and you know why? I love all of it.”

For the past decade, The Working Theater has collaborated with Local 3, starting when Business Manager Chris Ericson — Van Arsdale’s grandson — commissioned the theater group to produce short plays about sexual harassment for a union conference. When it came time to pick a setting for the Queens chapter of the five-borough series, Plesent said Electchester was the obvious choice.

“You’re not just living the Brotherhood or Sisterhood on the job, you’re bringing it home with you.”

Electchester resident and Local 3 Vice President Joe Proscia

Sharing stories about Harry Van Arsdale, who proudly spent the last 35 years of his life in the neighborhood he’d built, Kelly said he believes his late friend and mentor lives in one of the two towers, with his 85-year-old mother and a 92-year-old cousin in the other.

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Take Our Jobs to Mexico? Massachusetts Members Fight Back

Sens. Elizabeth Warren, Ed Markey and other Massachusetts political heavyweights joined hundreds of IBEW members on the state’s South Coast May 12 to rally against the outsourcing of more than 520 local jobs to Mexico.

On April 20, Philips Lighting announced without warning that it was closing its Fall River, Mass., plant and shifting its operations to Monterrey, Mexico. Within days, Fall River Local 1499 leaders and Second District officials mobilized members of the IBEW, Teamsters Local 25 and other unions to rally outside Philips’ facility in protest.

“Philips is claiming they’re moving to Mexico to optimize production, but let’s call this what it really is — a decision to pay low wages to foreign workers,” said Local 1499 Business Manager Rui Pacheco, who only found out about the planned move the day of the company’s official announcement.

Second District International Vice President Michael Monahan said the North American Free Trade Agreement has made such moves too easy. “Since 2001, the United States has lost more than 500,000 good-paying, mainly union manufacturing jobs, with health insurance and retirement plans, thanks to NAFTA,” Monahan told the rally. “The U.S. minimum wage is 12 times higher than it is in Mexico, where labor and environmental laws get skirted and corporations are allowed to exploit workers in ways that the United States does not allow.”

Of the 160 workers affected, Local 1499 represents 97, who have an average of 32 years of dedicated and loyal service to the company, Pacheco said. “More than once, our workers have accepted concessions to keep their jobs in Fall River, and this is how they’re repaid?”

“If the plan can’t be stopped, the closure of the southeastern Massachusetts plant would happen in stages from now through early 2019. But the company and local officials seem to be treating the closure and move as done deals.

“We’re not going down without a fight,” Monahan said.

Fortunately, IBEW members are not sitting back. At a May 7 press conference, Fall River Mayor Jasiel Correia said unions have “been showered with $187.4 million in stock buybacks.” In late April, another letter to White, signed by two-thirds of the state’s senators, noted that the Philips plant was a small but important part of Massachusetts’ economy, where manufacturing accounts for 10.1 percent of its economic output and 7.8 percent of its workforce. Fifty-two members of the Massachusetts House signed a similar letter.

Even more support for the workers came in letters from Massachusetts’ Attorney General Maura Healey, Treasurer Deborah Goldberg, and Auditor Suzanne Bump. Republican Gov. Charlie Baker has remained largely silent on the issue, though his office says it has deployed a “ cps.

In Fall River’s city council passed a resolution that called on Philips to consider the impact that the company’s decision would have on its workers and their families, not to mention the area’s overall economy.

Pacheco hopes that the controversy over the closure will force other corporate leaders considering similar moves to give greater thought to such ideas. “Even if they can’t protect our jobs,” he said, “maybe they’ll protect someone else’s jobs. Until then, we’ll do everything we can to keep these jobs right here in Fall River.”
IBEW joins ‘Just Transition’ Task Force for Coal Workers

La FOE se joint au groupe de travail sur « la transition équitable » pour les travailleurs du charbon

D ans le cadre de la transition du Canada vers l’énergie sans char- bon, la FOE a été sollicitée pour joindre le groupe de travail créé par le gouvernement de Trudeau pour venir en aide aux travailleurs et aux communautés qui dépendent du charbon.

Le groupe de travail fait partie de la promesse du gouvernement canadien en vue de réaliser progressivement les combustibles fossiles d’ici 2030 pour rendre la transition équitable. « Cette aide est dirigée vers les personnes qui dépendent de l’industrie houillère pour gagner leurs vies estimées à environ 3 000 personnes travaillant soit dans une centrale alimentée au charbon ou dans une mine de charbon selon la Fédération des travailleurs de l’Alberta. »

« Nous mesurons l’importance de cette prés- ence du terrain qui sera fort précieuse dans cette transition, » mentionne William Daniels, président international de la FOE. « Nous possédons les compétences nécessaires à accompagner les travailleurs dans leur transition vers une autre source d’électricité. »

Le groupe de travail consultera les groupes intéressés, y compris les gouvernements des provinces et territoires, les syndicats, les entreprises autochtones ainsi que les entreprises et soumettra un rapport à la fin de l’année pour présenter ses recom- mendations au gouvernement fédéral.


La FOE représente environ 2 000 membres dans le secteur du charbon, représentés au sein de cinq sections locales: local 77 à Fredericton, Nou-veau-Brunswick; local 254 à Calgary, Alberta; local 1007 à Edmonton, Alberta; local 1938 à Halifax, Nouvelle-Écosse et le local 2067 à Regina, Saskatchewan.

Ayant négocié des possibilités telles que la formation, la relocalisation et la retraite anticipée, Ross Galbraith le gérant d’affaires du local 37 et membre du Comité Exécutif International, fait observer que le local possède de bons antécédents en matière de minimiser les impacts négatifs de telles transitions.

« Il va manquer que toutes les possiblités ont été explorées pour protéger les intérêts de nos membres, y compris le remplacement de combustible, » énonce Galbraith. « C’est l’avanan- tage d’avoir une convention collective et une bonne relation avec l’employeur. »

La section locale 2067 représente des membres dans tous les aspects du processus de production d’électricité à partir du charbon, y compris les mines et la capture et le stockage du carbone, un procédé qui contribue à réduire les émissions.

En plus d’avoir des inquiétudes au sujet de perdre une source d’électricité de base fiable, le gérant d’affaires Jason Tibbs annonce que ces quelque 500 mem- bre travailant dans l’industrie seront sûrement ébranlés par cette transition.

« Nous sommes rassurés d’appren- dre que le groupe de travail comprend un représentant de la FOE, notre voix sera entendue, » dit Tibbs. « J’espère que le gouvernement va s’apercevoir qu’il y a plusieurs différentes options lorsqu’on parle d’environnement. »

Au mois de mai, le groupe de travail a fait sa toute première visite en Alberta. Sous la gouvernance du Nouveau Parti Démocratique, la province a commencé sa propre transition il y a un an. La province a présenté un plan d’action au gouver- nement fédéral, mené par le parti libéral. Le gérant d’affaires John Birgel du local 254 a assisté à la réunion. Il s’est basé sur l’expérience du local, il a fait remarquer que plusieurs politiques de transition ont été utilisées, même si certaines nécessitent un ajustement; comme la prestation de retraite qui peut pénaliser quelqu’un ayant une disposition relative à la retraite antici- pée dans leur régime de pension.

« Nous étions les premiers à le faire, nous avons investi beaucoup de temps et d’argent pour obtenir la meilleure informa- tion possible, » informe Birgel. « Nous travaillons fort pour que cette transition se fasse dans les meilleures conditions possible, mais ça ne sera pas facile. »

Birgel confie qu’il y a eu beaucoup de collaboration, y compris le local 2007 et la fédération des travailleurs de l’Alberta, qui ont demandé la réalisation d’une étude sur les retraites prévues s’achever cet été.

« On évite de dire que nous avons tout fait correctement, mais notre préoc- cupation première est le peuple, beau- coup de bon travail a été accompli ici, » assure Birgel.
Right-to-Work Vote Means Hot Summer Showdown in the Show-Me State

Missouri voters will still have their chance to repeal the state’s recently-passed right-to-work law, but Republican state-mimeganons warn the vote will come this summer instead of during November’s general election.

Former Gov. Eric Greitens signed legislation passed by the GOP-dominated General Assembly that moves the vote on Proposition A to Aug. 7—the date of the Missouri primary—instead of Nov. 6. A “no” vote would override the right-to-work law passed by the Legislature and signed by Greitens early last year. Greitens resigned his position June 1 amid an impeachment investigation by the state House and potential criminal charges, but it does not impact the legislation.

Last year, the IBWE and its labor allies collected about 325,000 signatures to put the issue on the ballot—nearly three times more than required by Missouri law. Sensing that momentum, right-to-work supporters opted to hold the Proposition A vote earlier to minimize working families’ impact on a race with national implications.

“In November, we have a very highly contested election that may decide control of the United States Senate,” said Tim Green, a former state legislator and now director of governmental affairs for St. Louis Local 1 and the Electrical Connec-

The bill’s supporters argue that an increase in the standard deduction to $14,000 for an individual and $28,000 for married couples filing jointly will make up the difference.

“Maybe that’s true for the average taxpayer, and maybe it isn’t. We will see. What is certain is this Republican Con-

sion. It is urging voters at the end of the election cycle to vote no on Proposition A, Business Manager Frank Jacobs said.

Green said Proposition A needs to be defeated decisively. The larger the “no” vote, the less likely right-to-work proponents will bring the issue up again.

“I’m sure those special interest groups won’t go away very easily,” Green said. “Hopefully, a strong defeat of this measure will help.”

The deadline to register in Missouri for the August election is July 11.

Repeal of Tax Hike on Union Members and Traveling Workers Stalls

A bill to repeal a new tax on union dues and unreimbursed job expenses has stalled in the Senate, a significant financial blow to many working families and union members.

The bill, sponsored by Democratic Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, would reverse a little-publicized hike in the 2017 tax bill. Until last year, taxpayers who itemized their return could deduct a portion of their union dues and other unreim-

The nation’s largest banks, whose risky investment schemes were largely responsible for the worst global economic crisis since 1929, are expected to reap bil-

“The banks took massive risks in search of enormous profits, and when they got into trouble, it was working people who paid the highest price,” said International President Lonnie R. Stephenson. “One in four of our construction members were out of work after 2008. People lost their jobs, their homes; marriages crumbled, all so these bankers could make a few extra dol-

Even with Dodd-Frank rules in place, the banking industry’s profits have soared. Now they are expected to sky-

rocket. “This is not a bill that benefits consumers. It is a big-bank bonanza,” Rep. Al Green, a Texas Democrat, said during the House debate.

Thirty-Three House Democrats voted with all but one Republican in favor of the bill. Among those who stood firmly against it was Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, who said it passed “in the economic security of ‘hand-working American people’ at risk.”

“It rolls back key safeguards for American consumers. It opens the door to lending discrimination, and it potentially threatens the stability of our financial sys-

While union dues are no longer deductible, Keyser said, membership dues to join the anti-union Chamber of Commerce still are.

Casey’s bill attempts to right at least part of the inequity, bringing back the tax deduction for job expenses and union dues and making it available to more people.

Traditionally, only the 30 percent of taxpayers who itemized their return could take advantage of the mortgage interest, state and local taxes and job expenses deductions, among others.

But since the tax bill eliminated or capped those deductions, Gardner said he expects less than 10 percent of taxpayers will bother itemizing their return this year.

Casey’s bill simply adds a line to the standard 1040 form so that 90 percent of American taxpayers use so all union members would have access to those deductions, including many who weren’t able to take advantage of it before.

MISSOURI working families rally at the state Capitol after turning in signatures forcing a right-to-work referendum.
Another IBEW Win in the South

Terry Waters and his fellow Frontier technicians in southwestern Alabama and western Florida weren’t upset with their employer or working conditions. They did, however, think they could do better.

That’s why they turned to the IBEW and Pensacola, Fla., Local 667 for help. And it paid off.

The Frontier workers’ bargaining group was certified by the National Labor Relations Board in March of last year and ratified its first agreement on April 18, adding 26 new members in a part of the country with a reputation for being notoriously difficult to organize.

“When we are in Alabama, and not only did they want to join a union, they hung together for 15 months to do so,” said Robert Prunn, an international representative in the Telecommunications Department. “That proves what [International President Lonnie R.] Stephenson has said all along: ‘We can win in the South.’

Everyone involved in the successful effort — including Prunn, Local 667 Business Manager Dale Cope and Fifth District International Representative Clay Leon — gave Waters the lion’s share of the credit. He’s nearing retirement after working 37 years in telecommunications, including for companies that preceded Frontier’s takeover of his division. But in an act of solidarity, he was determined to improve conditions for his colleagues before he left.

Waters had plenty of help from his co-workers. But convincing them of the need for a union was “an easy sell.”

“To be honest with you, the company has always treated us well,” said Waters. “But we have noticed that when some of our people were sent to different parts of the country to work because of storm damage or whatever, they would come back and say, ‘Man, a lot of guys we worked with were union and they were awed.’

So, Waters and the other employees did some research. They learned the union-represented employees had contracts that included a grievance and arbitration system. Those contracts included guidelines on how to handle layoffs in a telecommunications industry that continues to downsize. They realized such protections would be nice to have in Alabama, a right-to-work state that allows employers to hire and fire employees at will.

Pay overall was competitive within the industry, but they were frustrated Frontier would not agree to a written wage scale. Employees with the same level of experience received different levels of pay, with no explanation from the company.

“We’ve never had a seat at the table to negotiate health care or retirement or any other benefits,” said Waters.

Waters said he contacted the IBEW because it has a long-standing relationship with Frontier. A representative from the Department replied to his email within minutes, he said.

Waters and the rest of the Frontier employees voted 23-4 for representation, but the nearest telecommunications local was more than two hours away. Local 667 was just 45 minutes to the south, but it is a construction union. Cope’s role primarily has been finding work for his construction members. He said he knew he and Leon — who also comes from a construction background — would need some help securing the contract. Prunn made several trips from the International Office in Washington to speak with the Frontier workers and lead negotiations.

“My attitude was, if I can help the cause and bring our brothers into the labor movement, I’ll welcome them with open arms,” Cope said. “We’ll do what we can.”

The newly-organized Frontier employees agreed to a four-year contract that guarantees them a voice on the job. Among the items addressed were seniority, short- and long-term disability, just cause for discipline, grievance and arbitration.

The vote to approve was 22-0 with five employees not voting. The newly-organized Frontier employees work out of the Alabama cities of Atmore, Camden and Monroeville and Molina, Fla.

“After all the hard work you put into it, when you have a unanimous vote like that, you really feel good,” Cope said. “The message came across and they clearly understood it. It was such a great pleasure to work with Robert. I learned a lot and it’s helped me become a better business manager.”

Leon, who previously served as business manager at New Orleans City Local 210, noted the main responsibility for a construction business manager in negotiations is to find work for his or her members. They normally aren’t involved in negotiating items like seniority, and they’re usually dealing with several different companies at once.

That’s why having someone with a telecommunications background like Prunn was crucial, he said. So was having an engaged potential membership led by Waters.

“I’m sorry we didn’t get him into the IBEW earlier,” Leon said. “He’s a very sharp guy and just a credit to the industry. He would have been a great leader for us.”

In the end, that teamwork led to a win in the South.

“This win is especially rewarding to me,” Stephenson said. “A group of employees determined to make things better for themselves and their families came together and our staff and a local business manager stepped up when they asked for help. It doesn’t get much better than that. I want to thank everyone involved and welcome our new brothers and sisters to the IBEW.”

Phoenix Couple Rides Cross-Country for Cancer

Colleen and Rich Scheid grew up in northern Indiana, but the two journeymen inside wiremen didn’t meet until 2004, when they were working at the Pastoria Energy Facility near Bakersfield, Calif.

On one of their first dates, they went on a hike together,” Colleen said. “I love exercising. When I found someone else who loves it as much as I do, I fell in love pretty quickly.”

They married in 2007 and endurance training was part of a shared exercise regimen that included bicycling. They wondered what it would be like to ride across the country.

Earlier this year, the couple started their journey, which they’re using to raise money to fight childhood cancer and bring researchers in the field together.

“When I get on my bicycle, I instantly have a smile on my face,” Colleen said. “It’s something about how you connect with the road, how you feel when the wind blows in your hair and your face. When you conquer hills, it’s such an accomplishment.”

Two flags are always present on their bikes: America’s stars and stripes and the IBEW’s logo on a blue field.

“Both of our fathers were IBEW members,” Rich said. “Very few days pass when we don’t tell each other, ‘Thank goodness for them and for getting us into the union at a young age.’

“We thank our lucky stars they got us into this line of work. It’s why we have all of this,” Colleen graduated from high school in northwest Indiana near Chicago. She was 19 when her family moved to Phoenix, and she wasn’t sure about a career when her father encouraged her to pursue an apprenticeship. She took his advice and now is a 20-year member of Phoenix Local 640.

Rich is a second-generation IBEW member, who followed his father into South Alabama cities of Atmore, Camden and Monroeville and Molina, Ala.

The Scheids biked 1,500 miles a month for the first year of their ride last year, and they are on pace for 2,000 miles each month this year.

“It’s so hard to believe,” Colleen said. “I was a little bit nervous about starting this, but it’s so rewarding to see the community of support we’ve received. It’s one of the coolest things I’ve ever done.”

The couple is riding across the country to raise money for childhood cancer research.

“People have been great,” Rich said. “It’s just such a cool ride, and they’re always coming and cheering us on.”

Rich is always the one bringing in doughnuts when Local 153 members were working on the Fourth Winds Casino in nearby New Buffalo, Mich., in 2007, for instance, he said.

“The guy always has a smile, he’s a good worker and he always has a story to tell,” Haase said.

Local 633 Business Manager Bill Haase has known Rich for about 17 years. He originally proposed to his board the local donate $153 to the ride because of the local number — that includes bicycling. They wondered what it would be like to ride across the country.

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There are very few who dale’s father stepped down as business officials. A year later he made a first of many, where he served on the Res-Workers Benefit Society. He was a dele-

later he started his apprenticeship, and in engineering in 1945 and immediately applied for more than 20 years. “Mike’s willing to keep up with the pace of retirements in and more resources into organizing just to keep up with the pace of retirements in the future of the IBEW,” he said. “Embrace new ideas. Do

Ten years later, though his health was failing, Van Arsdale made his final speech to the IBEW, on video, to the thou-
sands assembled for the 2016 convention. “One hundred-twenty-five years ago, electrical workers just like you and I founded the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers here in St. Louis. Now it is your responsibility, for you are the future of the IBEW,” he said. “Embrace the challenge. Embrace new ideas. Do not fear failure. Fear not trying. Echoing and living the words of Winston Churchill can only aid in the success of the IBEW never, never, never give up. I wish you all a successful convention and a bright future for the IBEW.”

The officers, staff and members of the IBEW extend our deepest condolences to Brother Arsdale’s wife, Phyllis, his daughters Pat, Susan and Jean, his 13 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren and to his friends and local y family.

A funeral mass was held at St. Nich-

olas of Tolentine at St. Paul’s, Queens, May 23. He was interred at Mount St. Mary’s Cemetery at 145 Willow Brook Avenue.

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The officers, staff and members of the IBEW extend our deepest condolences to Brother Arsdale’s wife, Phyllis, his daughters Pat, Susan and Jean, his 13 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren and to his friends and local y family. Ray, who knew Michael Richard for more than 20 years. “Mike’s willing to do the hard work. He won’t ask you to do anything he wouldn’t do.”

The Detroit native followed in the footsteps of his father when he was inducted into Local 58 in 1993. Active in his local, Richard served on committees including safety, bylaws and community services, as well as the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus. Prior to his induction, Richard served in the Marine Corps from 1987 to 1992, ris-
ing to the rank of sergeant.

In 2011, Richard was elect-
ed business manager, a position he held until his November 2017 appointment as an international representative in the Construction Department. He said that every pair of pants he’s owned, every meal he’s eat-

een and house he’s lived in was because of the Brotherhood has taught me to focus on

“Ten of the accomplishments I’m most proud of is increasing the number of women and people of color at Local 58,” he said. “The officers, staff and members wish Brother Richard all the best as he takes up his new position.

Richard says he’ll continue to cham-pion the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus, women’s committees and Reach out and Engage Next-gen Electrical Workers, the IBEW’s initiative to get younger members involved in the union.

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an elementary school teacher, he learned about the IBEW from a cousin who was a third-generation member.

“He was the first one to talk to me about IBEW. That’s what a third-genera-
tion is,” he said. “I was wrestling with being a broke college student or working for a liv-
ing, I chose to be an electrical apprentice.”

He never looked back. “I felt fairly strongly about it being the right path early on, with the wages and benefits, and understanding the comprehensive reach of labor unions — the idea that we’re stronger together than we are as individuals.”

Please join us in wishing Brother Threadgold the best as he takes on his new responsibilities.

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**RETIRED**

**Timothy D. Bowden**

After 38 years in the IBEW, Seventh District Regional Organizing Coordinator Timothy D. Bowden retired, effective May 1.

Bowden was an appointed International Representative in 1997 by then-International President J.J. Barry to be part of his commitment to organizing back into the heart of the Brotherhood. For more than 20 years, Bowden has been at the heart of that proj-

ect in the Seventh District and a trusted adviser to a generation of organizers.

Brother Bowden was born in Phoe-

nia and raised into a family of IBEW luminary figures. His father, Clyde Bowden, was business manager of Phoenix Local 387 for more than 30 years and chairman of the International Executive Council for 14 years until his retirement in 2000. Bowden’s uncle, Dee Bowden, was a career member of Phoenix Local 640.

“He didn’t have to tell you where he was: you knew. He was all action.”

— Seventh District Lead Organizer Craig Parkman

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**RETIRED**

**Rick Ellis**

Richard A. “Rick” Ellis, an International Representative in the Membership Development Department, retired on June 1 after 40 years of loyal membership in, and service to, his beloved union.

A native of Chattanooga, Tenn., Ellis is a proud third-generation unionist. His father and grandfather, who worked for the company where they lived, taught him the value of being in a union. “Being in a union is all about.”

Ellis noted that Tennessee and Georgia in particular have gained a reputa-

tion as political battleground states, leading to union gains. Ellis has also been a member of the International Office as an international representative charged with organizing specific to the outside line contracting industry.

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CEREA Award Recipient; Puerto Rico Storm Restoration

L.U. 15 (u), DOWNERS GROVE, IL — Greetings, brothers and sisters.

Local 15 would like to thank retired Bro. Wayne John, a recent award recipient, for his long-term service.

ComEd/Exelon’s Retired Employee Association (CEREA), sponsored by Local 15, recognized Bro. Wayne Johnson for his outstanding service to its members and presented him with a Service to Membership Award. Wayne is “one of a kind” and has been with CEREA from its beginning. He currently serves as secretary-treasurer of the organization.

CERA Pres. Thomas Turngren and Local 15 Pres. Dean Appel stated that no one is more deserving of this award. Wayne has helped countless ComEd, Exelon, Midwest Gen and NRG retirees and their families navigate through medical insurance, life insurance and pension plan issues. Wayne also works as a research specialist for Local 15.

Local 15 members assisted with storm restoration in Puerto Rico after Hurricanes Irma and Maria struck. Approximately 125 Local 15 members joined the more than 5,000 electrical workers assisting with the Puerto Rico restoration process. Members from Overhead, Heavy Hauling, Supply, Fleet and Clerical departed for Puerto Rico on Feb. 17 this year and returned on April 4. Our members worked flawlessly. For this we thank them and all the IBEW electrical workers involved for their assistance.

Sam Studer, P.S.

IBEW retired member Wayne Johnson (right) receives CEREA award presented by Local 15 Bus. Mgr. Dean Apple (left) and CERA Pres. Thomas Turngren.

Career of Service

L.U. 19 (i), AURORA, IL — On March 29 this year, Local 19 said goodbye to one of our retiring business representatives. Lisa Roscoe was the clerical business representative for the past 25 years. Her passion and dedication to the local and our membership have been second to none. We wish Lisa and her husband, Scott, who also recently retired as a business representative from Pipelifters Local 597, a long and relaxing retirement.

Tom Lawless, P.S./E-Board

Apprenticeship Graduates

L.U. 35 (u), HARTFORD, CT — Local 35 is proud to recognize the apprenticeship graduating class of 2018.


Congratulations to all the graduates on successfully completing their JATC apprenticeship. Graduate Phillip Drummond was recognized as outstanding apprentice.


Good wishes to all the graduates on their IBEW careers.

Christopher Brown, Training Dir.

Workplace Safety Champions

L.U. 37 (em,es,govt,i,se&spa), FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA — Members of Local 37 at NB Power’s Coleson Cove Generating Station celebrated an amazing achievement recently — 15 years without a single lost-time accident. On April 11 this year, Coleson Cove employees gathered together to celebrate their remarkable safety record.

It’s very clear that this team of over 500 people is committed to working safely and keeping their workplace safe. And that’s what it takes to achieve a major milestone like this. They are all true safety champions.

To commemorate the day, employees were presented with a framed copy of a group picture. [See photo below.] Undoubtedly it will always serve as a reminder of their achievement and that safety is what brings us home every day.

I’m proud of all Local 37 members for their continued commitment to safety and how they show it — by making safety their No. 1 priority in everything they do.

Ross Galbraith, B.M.

Political Action for Workers; RENEW Food Drive a Success

L.U. 45 (em,es,govt,lsk&spa), BUFFALO, NY — Our RENEW group held a food drive and volunteered at our area food bank. RENEW collected and delivered almost 350 pounds of food, then packed meals to be made available for children to eat on weekends.

Thank you to our volunteers: Jim Badaszewski, Dave Cole, Matt Gaiser, Kyle Gietler, Cole Huston, Tyler Kostrzycki, Brandon Romanowiski, Mike Sargente, Ken Scellicia, Adam Schwab and Scott Tyra.

Over the years we have had a decent working relationship with our elected officials, but at the county level we have recently had a majority that was not always labor friendly. This past November, we were able to help regain the majority in our favor. One item we lobbied for, and the Erie County Legislature passed, was a requirement that contractors performing work on Erie County projects of over $250,000 now must have apprenticeships that graduate at least 30 percent of their apprentices in the type and scope of work they are bidding on. Without the relationships we have with our legislative majority, this would never have happened.

We must continue to work to elect candidates who hold the same values we believe in, but to do this it takes...
time and money. We must volunteer at labor walks and phone banks; we must talk to our relatives and neighbors about the importance of voting in every election; and we must ensure we do what we can to help those candidates who help IBEW Local 42. Please be involved in the election process — our jobs depend on it.

Gregory R. Inglis, A.B.M.

California Edison Pony Driver bargaining is complete. SCE Planners: The National Labor Relations Board has finally ruled — and at the time of this writing, ballots were to be mailed on May 7.

Morongo: As of press time, a hearing was scheduled for an unfair labor practice (ULP) over refusal to bargain a union security clause. The tribe is now claiming sovereign nation status.

Davey Tree Service: Bargaining was completed for a two-year agreement that features a 2 percent wage increase in 2018 and a 2.25 percent increase in 2019.

Irvine Ranch Water District: General units continue to bargain, and the supervisors have been recognized, more sessions are scheduled at press time.

Alta Gas: Members overwhelmingly ratified a three-year successor agreement that features increases of 2.25 percent, 2.5 percent and 2 percent. The agreement was ratified by a 100 percent vote.

Siemens, Bear Electric and St. Francis traffic agreements are all due in June.


We are sad to report the death of the following brothers: Michael Dengler, Juan Villa, Kirk Williams, Enrique Arroyo Sr. Our condolences and prayers go out to their loved ones.

Live and safe — work and buy union.

Mitch Smith, P.S.

Annual Family Picnic — Sept. 22 at Union Hall

L.U. 51 (ctw,lt,bb,pt,ctb,bb,ukiow), SPRINGFIELD, IL — Mark your calendar! The local’s annual family picnic will be Sept. 22 at the union hall. This is always a great occasion for members to enjoy fellowship and camaraderie. Additionally, our RENEW Committee will raffle off an IBEW Local 51 neon sign and you must be present to win. Bring your kids and grandkids as they will enjoy the inflatables.

Sister Kristi Sullins, operations support representative working in Central Illinois, was recently selected by an Ameen judging panel to sing the national anthem at the company’s annual shareholders meeting. Additionally, she will perform our national anthem at the July 30 St. Louis Cardinals baseball game when the team takes on the Rockies. Congratulations, Sister Sullins!

On April 9 this year, Vistra Energy Corp., the parent company for TXU Energy and Luminant, announced it has completed its previously announced merger with Dynegy Inc. At the time of this writing, Vistra communicated that it will continue its fleet evaluation to find a savings, and try to improve the bottom line for each plant, but will not be making any rash decisions.

There is not a moderate Republican candidate currently in Illinois. They are anti-worker, right-to-work supporters, and their labor voting records prove it. In November, it is crucial to elect politicians who will stand with labor. If you have moved or are newly married, your voter registration may be invalid. Contact the hall if you need help registering to vote.

Karlene Kinaley, B.R.

Retiring Local 43 Pres. Pat Costello (left) presents gavel to newly sworn in Pres. Kevin Crawford (right).

From left, Local 55 retiree Ed Kooker, 50-year award recipient Butch Mahon, Bus. Mgr. Mike Sawyer and retiree Myron Green.

Years of Service Award; 2018 Officer Transitions

L.U. 55 (ctw,lt,bb,dk), DES MOINES, IOWA — Hello, brothers and sisters. We had a great Christmas party in early December last year. Approximately 200 members and their families attended. A lot of kids attended, saw Santa and had lots of fun.

Mike Brookes retired as business manager on Dec. 31 last year. Mike served two and one-half terms as business manager and achieved many accomplishments. He will be greatly missed!

Mike Sawyer was appointed business manager/financial secretary to fill the unexpired term of office. Bus. Mgr. Sawyer previously served as an assistant business manager, from 2008 until taking office as our new business manager. Let’s all wish him the best!

On Feb. 13, Bus. Mgr. Sawyer, retired member Ed Kooker and myself went to Albia to present Local 55 retiree Butch Mahon his 50-year pin. During his career, Butch traveled all over the country as a long-time, devoted member of the IBEW.

We now have around 1,100 members in our local, and it seems that we could use a few more members if you’re looking for work.

PAR Electric lost the Cost Plus contract with Mid America, but PAR is still doing bid work and just getting ready to start selling 27 miles of 345-kilovolt line near Ottumwa. Intren, a signatory contractor out of Unionville, IL, has now picked up the Cost Plus work for Mid America in the Des Moines metro area. Signatory contractor J.F. Edwards Construction has just picked up a large windfarm project near Everly, Iowa.

We also have a retiree breakfast the first Monday of each month at 9 a.m. sharp at the Triple Crown Buffet at Prairie Meadows in Altoona. Remember to work safely.

Myron Green, P.S.

Work Picture Strong

L.U. 71 (ctw,lt,bb,dk), COLUMBUS, OHIO — Our work picture remains strong with a few open calls remaining and our work picture remains strong.

Vote for the nonunion employer can only put us.

Local 71 is honored to be awarding years-of-service pins this year to a fine group of brothers. These award recipients include the following: For 50 years of service — Charles Bragg, James Carlock, Nelson Duncan, Isom Isom, Clarence Johnson, William Meese, Frank Miller, James Penkvaugh and Harold Pyle; for 55 years of service — Ernie Albrecht, Wesley Reeves and Allen Sailer; for 60 years of service — Fritz Ogrady; and for 65 years of service — David Fissel.

Local 71 just turned 64 in February, so these award recipients are some of the men who were fighting back in the early days for the working conditions, pensions and wages we all enjoy today. Let us never forget that and hopefully everyone of us reading this article today will live by the same principle: “To leave this trade better than how we found it.”

Happy Fourth of July, brothers and sisters!

Bryan Stage, B.M., P.S.

Retirees Honored at Luncheon

L.U. 81 (i), SCRANTON, PA — IBEW Local 81 held its 23rd annual retirees luncheon recently at Al Mia Amore Restaurant in Dickson City, PA. There were 12 new retirees: Eugene Arauz, James Berta Basta, Robert Bernatovich, Anthony Carito, Donald Kearney, Archibald Lafferty, James Page, Joseph Pohutsky, Nicholas Riggi, Richard Schraeder, Michael Schuler and John Zielinski. We had one member, Joseph McDowell, receive a 70 plus pin. Receiving 55-years pins were: Edward Bazsar, Michael Holmes, John McNulty and Robert O’Leary. Presented 50-year pins were: Joseph Davitt, James Doherty, Gerald Foley, Richard Kearney, James Langa, Gorge Lutz, Bradley Nash, James Ryan, Robert Timlin and John Walsh.

Bus. Mgr. Paul Casparro thanked everyone who came to the luncheon. He extended a special thank-you to those who received their 70, 55 and 50-year pins for all they have done for Local 81 to make it what it is today. [Photo at bottom, right.]

Mike Brust, P.S.

Volunteer Crews Aid Puerto Rico Restoration

L.U. 97 (i), SYRACUSE, NY — As of this writing our line rodeo team is preparing for the NSUJL Linemen’s Rodeo. The NSUJL, or National Sisterhood United for Journeymen Linemen, is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting families of fallen/injured IBEW line workers. We are also pleased to be a sponsor of this event. Good luck, team!

On our Brookfield property we are glad to report a long-term contract extension with general wage increases each year. It passed by an overwhelming majority. Thanks to all who volunteered to participate in restoration in Puerto Rico. We sent three separate
waves of restoration crews. When the crews returned they told stories of the devastation they saw, the teamwork they experienced, and the gratitude of the local people.

It is with sadness that we report the passing of former president/business manager Thomas Primero II. Tommy was stricken while assisting with restoration efforts in Puerto Rico. We’ll always remember his determination, tenacious bargaining, and dedication and service to the workers of our local and predecessor Local 137. May he rest in peace.

Dan Machold, B.R.S.

Annual Blood Drive & Wellness Event a Success

L.U. 103 (cs&i), BOSTON, MA — On April 10, Local 103 hosted its Annual Blood Drive & Wellness Event. More than 1,000 members and their families attended throughout the day.

Routine health screenings were offered that could uncover risk factors for chronic diseases. Since time spent at a doctor’s office often means unpaid time off the job, the event offers the convenience of completing these screenings at the union hall. The screenings included blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index, melanoma and hearing exams.

The event also serves as an important opportunity for members to give back through blood donation. “The IBEW Annual Blood Drive & Wellness Event is a great opportunity for our members to stay fit for work and give back to the community,” Local 103 Bus. Mgr. Lou Antenellel said. “This time of year, around the anniversary of the Boston Marathon Bombing, we are reminded how important it is to donate blood. The Red Cross is always in need of more donors, and at IBEW 103 we are proud to answer the call.”

Thank you to all who participated. We look forward to next year’s event.

Jimmy Fleming, P.S.

‘Welcome to New Members’ Contract Ratification

L.U. 111 (em&i), BLOOMINGTON, IL — Congratulations to our newest members from United Power Member Services Dept. These courageous workers made the move to organize last June, they certified in August, and began individually focus on building stronger cultures at their respective workplaces.

More than 35 attendees took part in a Volunteer Organizing Committee Education training session — with the theme “I’m Staying IBEW Strong” — conducted by Int. Rep. Tracy Prezeau. Participants learned how important it is to engage members and empower our workplaces against attacks that weaken our union.

Among other topics, Erin and Prezeau shared the history of “right-to-work” legislation. Many attendees were surprised to learn about the racist roots of destructive “right-to-work” proposals. The leaders noted that our union was built on fairness, equality and opportunity. “Our contracts were originally based on dignity, hope, respect and security, not material things,” Prezeau explained.

Our local also joined IBEW Locals 77, 483 and 69 along with our NECA partners to host its Safety Summit. The keynote speaker focused on how communication, leadership, accountability and morale affect safety results. Attendees learned how they can individually focus on building stronger cultures at their respective workplaces.

Lastly, more than 40 members attended shop steward training. Erin said: “These members are intelligent, passionate and committed brothers and sisters who are serving the membership each day. We should all thank these members who serve in this challenging role to promote the IBEW’s values.”

Marcy Craln, A.B.M.

Contract Negotiations

L.U. 229 (em&i), YORK, PA — Local 229 proudly celebrated its 100th anniversary on April 7 this year. We had a fantastic celebration that was well-attended, and all had a great time.

We were honored to have Int. Pres. Lonnie R. President Stephenson, Int. Sec.-Treas. Kenneth W. Cooper, Int. Vice-Pres. Michael D. Welsh and Gov. Tom Wolf attend and extend their congratulations to the local on this milestone. Thank you to the many IBEW locals that supported our event. Thank you to IBEW representatives, retired Int. Vice Pres. Donald C. Siegel, and nearby local union officers and agents, as well as Local 229 members and retirees for attending. All in attendance helped make it a wonderful evening. The Brotherhood is truly alive and well.

Local 229 is very busy with a couple hundred travelers working. We are into Book 2 for most calls. The work picture looks very good through 2018 and 2019. This year we have the ongoing Calpine gas-fired project, two new hospital projects ramping up, an expansion at Harley Davidson, a scheduled outage at Peach Bottom nuclear station starting Oct. 15, and numerous other nice projects. Traveling brothers and sisters can sign Book 2 Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. — all you need is a current dues receipt.

Matthew Paulus, B.M.

Local 229 celebrated its 100th anniversary in April this year.

IBEW MERCHANDISE

IBEW Initials Tie Tack $2.50
Gold-tone tie tack with cut-out IBEW initials. Features jewelry grade ball clutch and chain.

Ash T-Shirt $8.50
100% cotton ash colored t-shirt. Featuring left chest pocket, crew neck and blue IBEW initials.

Motorcycle Kick Stand Pad $3.00
Black motorcycle kick stand pad with white IBEW initials. Made of ABS plastic and great for use on any soft surface.

These items and more are now available at your IBEW Online store.

Local 197 congratulates recent apprenticeship graduates. From front row, from left: Pres. Mike Raikes; Keith Tay (NECA); graduate Josh Roig; and instructor Bernie Uszcienksi. Back row: graduates Dave Hines, Matt Schifferer and James Towle; JATC Dir. Renee Riddle; Seth Zeller (NECA); instructor Jake Knoblach; and graduate Tyler Walsh.
Local Celebrates 100 Years; ATV Ride a Great Success

L.U. 317 (L&t,lt&ik), HUNTINGTON, WV — Greetings, brothers and sisters. Local 317 recently celebrated our 100-year anniversary. The picture accompanying this article was taken at the 100th anniversary celebration and shows Bus. Mgr. James Gillette and retired Bro. Pete Boggs, who has 60 years with the IBEW. We also recently enjoyed our Annual ATV Ride with some of our sister IBEW locals this past May. There were plenty of food to go around for everyone to enjoy, and everyone had a great time. We would like to thank our brothers who did an amazing job preparing food for all in attendance at the ride.

At “the gate” of our local and then at the public planning board meeting, we were asked to sponsor a float to represent our local. We decided to go with a retro theme and build a float. The float was designed and built by many of our members, including the children of the members. The float was a big hit and won the ‘Best Union Float’ Award. We are proud of our members and the work they do to represent our local.

The business manager and I agree that growing energy delivery has added to our workforce with projects on the table. Outside work remains busy — and it is not by accident. We have been meeting all prospective builders at “the gate” of our local and then at the public planning board meetings, and we want to know one question: “Are you building this project union or not?”

We find that most builders are receptive and interested in learning the benefits of union construction. If we get his approvals. If you look hard at the photo, perhaps you can find the developer’s three guys somewhere on our 200 IBEW Local 363 members in attendance at the public meeting. There’s power in the union!


Strong Work Picture; Training & Job Fairs

L.U. 1 (L&t,lt&ik), CHARLOTTE, NC — As of this writing, the Carolinas have moved on from a cold winter right into summer and are looking forward to a prosperous season for our members. Work here is still booming. We are working close to 1,000 people across our 29-county jurisdiction and we are on the hunt for skilled electricians and would welcome travelers to stop in.

Education continues to be a focus. We have completed a third round of Forward’s Development Series, turning out 20 new graduates, and will be doing another course over the summer. We have participated in multiple job and career fairs this spring, including one sponsored by the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System, attended by over 4,000 high-school seniors. These have been great opportunities to let students who are about to enter the workforce know about the advantages of a career in the electrical trade. We are also partnering with our local workforce development board to find ways to ease the shortage of skilled trades people.

‘New Organizer Message’

L.U. 459 (cat,em,govt,lt,ru&ks), JOHNSTOWN, PA — A special note of appreciation goes out to Bus. Mgr. Paul Cameron for the opportunity to work for the members of Local 459 as their newly appointed organizer/business representative.

I am grateful for the faith and confidence given to me by my brothers and sisters, and excited to serve the local and its membership. I look forward to meeting Local 459 members in my travels throughout the state at the various district meetings. I am tasked with one of the hardest jobs in the labor movement today, which is organizing men and women to help them gain union representation.

The business manager and I agree that growing our local and supporting the labor movement is the only way to ensure our success for the future. We
Local 549 Bus.
Rep./Organizer
Barry Haxson.

I.B.E.W. Local 569 members build better communities. Photo by Timothy Dunker.

I.B.E.W. Local 569 members build better communities. Photo by Timothy Dunker.

IBEW Member Participates in ‘Fight for Air Climb’

L.U. 499, DES MOINES, IOWA — Local 499 Executive Board member Mike Buntz, line crew foreman from Des Moines, participated in the American Lung Association’s “Fight for Air Climb” on April 8 in remembrance of co-workers Bro. Jeff Sanders and Bro. Dave Shipp, who both passed away from lung complications.

Buntz raced up the steps of four downtown Des Moines buildings, totaling 85 floors with 1,276 steps. He accomplished the race in a time of 25 minutes 43 seconds, which placed him second in his age division, with an overall placement of 56 out of 939 climbers.

Buntz plans to participate in the event again next year and hopes to get more of his co-workers involved in the future. Thank you, Mike, for being a great example to fellow IBEW brothers and sisters!

Sarah Faber, R.S.

Local 499 E-Board member Mike Buntz, line crew foreman, displays helmet inscribed in memory of two deceased co-workers.

Apprentice Graduating Class

L.U. 545 (u), ST. JOSEPH, MO — The members and officers of Local 545 would like to extend congratulations to the apprenticeship graduating class of 2018.

The recent graduates are: D.J. Adams, John Blanchard, Nicholas Boys, Philip Ebereger, Spencer Richter, Adam Schermernhorst, Jacob Stock and Derrick Stith.

May your brothers have a long and safe career in the IBEW.

Brandon Osteen, R.S.

IBEW Local 569 members build better communities. Photo by Timothy Dunker.

Building Better Communities

L.U. 569 (mar,mt,ts,tskpa), SAN DIEGO, CA — Recently, over 100 IBEW 569 electricians and power professionals donated 500 hours toward Rebuilding Together San Diego (RTSD), a nonprofit that coordinates renovations of low-income homes and community facilities.

IBEW 569 replaced faulty electrical systems for a veteran, disabled seniors, and families in need, as well as two homes that provide housing counseling, and social services to 34 mentally ill, homeless and/or abused women. We are grateful for the outpouring of support from our members and the contributions of materials and resources from our signatory contractors. Together, we are strengthening our communities.

Come to the apprenticeship graduating class of 2018.

Rich Stith.

Richter, Adam Schermerhorn, Jacob Stock and Der-rick Stith.

We recently lost the following members: Bro. Jeff Sanders and Bro. Dave Shipp, who both passed away from lung complications.


Apprenticeship Graduates; Service to Community

L.U. 613 (em,Los,ots&amp;pa), ATLANTA, GA — In January, the United Way reached out to Bus. Mgr. Kenny Mullins with a request for our local union to help out on a project in an underserved area of Atlanta. Winston Taylor, with the New City Project, had a building that needed a lot of renovation for use as a youth center and therefore asked for partners to make improvements. Thanks to volunteers from Local 613, including its EMWC and RENEW programs, who have worked on the project over the last few months, it is great to say the electrical work is almost complete.

We are proud to be a part of the New City Youth Center. With the help of Mr. Taylor, our Local 613 organizing team is reaching out to the neighborhood and the schools in the area. The local is recruiting students and residents into the apprenticeship program. This facility also allows us to reintroduce ourselves and educate the community on the benefits of being part of the IBEW and organized labor.

James Williams, P.S.

Members Receive LLRI Awards

L.U. 539 (u), JAMAICA, NY — We would like to congratulate three of our members whose hard work and dedication were recognized by the Long Island Rail Road.

Local 539 LLRI electricians William Benkurt, Anwar Sheikh and Boris Katelevsky received special plagues in recognition for their innovative workplace contributions. These three members are responsible for new ideas and suggestions that will be put into practice by the Long Island Rail Road.

Darrell J. Blair, P.S.

Local 613 Outstanding Apprentice Award recipient Christopher Baker (second from left) with JATC member Tom Ross, Training Dir. Hank Humiston and JATC member Jose Solis at Seventh District Apprenticeship Contest.

IBEW Volunteers — Youth Center Renovated


Apprenticeship Graduates; Service to Community

L.U. 625 (c,les,em,ju,markml), HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA — Congratulations to Bros. Mitchel Scan, Tim Rees, Alexander Weltz, Adam Gilchrist, Kyle Walsh and Mike McDonald for completing their apprenticeship program and receiving their Certificate of Qualification.

We recently lost the following members: Bro. Stephen Dexter and Bro. Mark Vlagkas passed away in March, and Bro. Leigh Biggar in April. We applaud you going out to their families.

Our local had our hockey team play in the IBEW Local 396 Hockey Tournament in Metberou in Sydney, Nova Scotia, April 6, 7 and 8. There were 12 teams, and Local 625 finished fifth this year, unable to retain a back-to-back championship.

Our NextGen Committee took part in the Threads for Life “Step for Life” walk on Saturday, May 5, at Point Pleasant Park in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This is a charitable organization funded to help families affected by workplace tragedies. Local 625 donated $200 and had 15 members and families in attendance.

Ibid Wood, Organizer/B.R.

Strong Work Performance; Newly Appointed Officers

Local 625 (u), FORT PIERCE, FL — The past few months have been significantly productive and rewarding for our members. The local continues its support and dedication to the Puerto Rican Restoration Project. The people of Puerto Rico are very grateful for the efforts of the Brotherhood. With a large percentage of the island being restored, there is still much work to do.

L.U. 625 (u), FORT PIERCE, FL — The past few months have been significantly productive and rewarding for our members. The local continues its support and dedication to the Puerto Rican Restoration Project. The people of Puerto Rico are very grateful for the efforts of the Brotherhood. With a large percentage of the island being restored, there is still much work to do.

L.U. 625 (u), FORT PIERCE, FL — The past few months have been significantly productive and rewarding for our members. The local continues its support and dedication to the Puerto Rican Restoration Project. The people of Puerto Rico are very grateful for the efforts of the Brotherhood. With a large percentage of the island being restored, there is still much work to do.

Strong Work Performance; Newly Appointed Officers

L.U. 625 (u), FORT PIERCE, FL — The past few months have been significantly productive and rewarding for our members. The local continues its support and dedication to the Puerto Rican Restoration Project. The people of Puerto Rico are very grateful for the efforts of the Brotherhood. With a large percentage of the island being restored, there is still much work to do.
We’ve welcomed a new Clean Energy Center to our local! The station is nearing completion and is expected online June of 2019. The refueling outage at the nuclear plant was successfully completed. Many high-standard and first-quality man-hours from our members aided in the speedy return of the reactor to service.

Our former president, Mark MacNichol, accepted a position with the International Office as an international representative effective April 2. Thank you, Bro. MacNichol, for your leadership and dedication to our local; best wishes from the Brotherhood.

The Local 627 Executive Board at its April meeting made several appointments to fill vacated positions. Bro. Matt Jenkins was appointed Local 627 president to fill the unexpired term of office. Bro. Marshall Smith was appointed as vice president, and Bro. Rob Fenell as System Council delegate. Also, Bro. Fernando Salcedo was appointed press secretary.

Safety and solidarity always.

Fernando Salcedo, P.S.

Spring Events a Success; IBEW Service to Community

L.U. 697 (cas,mlntube), GARY AND HAMMOND, IN — The IBEW Local 697 EWMC hosted our fourth annual Charity Basketball Day on Saturday, March 24, and it was a total success. Bros. Mark Patrick, Dan Soderquist and Tony Patrick won the 3-on-3 tournament, and Bro. Mark Patrick also won the Hot Shot contest. All proceeds from the event went to help Bro. Chris Ortell and his family.

Local 697's Annual Awards Banquet on Dec. 9, 2017, included: Pres. Shall Smith was appointed as vice president, and Bro. Mar-shall Smith was appointed as vice president, and Bro. Rob Fenell as System Council delegate. Also, Bro. Fernando Salcedo was appointed press secretary.

Safety and solidarity always.

Fernando Salcedo, P.S.

Brotherhood & Solidarity; ‘Our Past, Present & Future’

L.I. 915 (ibmt), TAMPA, FL — A true testament of brotherhood within a local union was experienced at Local 915’s annual cookout and service-pin presentation. Approximately 200 sisters and brothers attended, ranging from those who paved the way to the newest members just finding their path.

The local is honored to have an 80-year service award recipient, Bro. Robert McDonald, although he was unable to attend the event. Twelve in attendance received service awards ranging from 45-year pins to 65-year pins. Additionally, 21 new members were sworn in. True solidarity was a highlight of the day, and everyone enjoyed the occasion.

Congratulations to all honorees, including the following brothers, for their loyal years of service: 65-year members Alfred Reid and Charles “Buddy” Wade; 55-year member Dennis Field; 50-year members David Adams, Robert Franz and B.J. Weeks; and 45-year members Bruce Barrow, Paul Carlisle, Kenneth Cyphert, Robert LaPierre, Glen Sanchez and Randy Tew.

Our local’s prestigious Brother of the Year Award usually goes to the sister or brother who exemplifies service within the local, our community and beyond. As a well-deserved honor, this year’s award went to Local 915’s RENEW Committee. Our future is in great hands.

Theresa King, R.S./P.S.

RENEW Committee members; 65-year pin recipients Alfred Reid and Charles “Buddy” Wade (center); and at far right, Bus. Mgr. Randall King.

At Local 915 cookout and awards presentation, attendees included: Pres. Michael Weeks (for left); RENEW Committee members; 65-year pin recipients Alfred Reid and Charles “Buddy” Wade (center); and at far right, Bus. Mgr. Randall King.

65-Year Service Award

L.I. 993 (catv,em&i), KAMLOOPS, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA — Retired Bro. Fred Dick recently received his IBEW 65-year service pin. Bus. Mgr./Fin. Sec. Glen Hilton presented Fred with the award at Local 993’s Annual Awards Banquet on Dec. 9, 2017, in Kamloops, BC.

Fred is a dedicated, loyal member of Local 993, and he is proud to be part of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Glen Hilton, B.M./F.S.

Local 993 retired member Fred Dick (left) receives IBEW 65-year service award, presented by Bus. Mgr./Fin. Sec. Glen Hilton at December 2017 Awards Banquet.

IBEW Training Opportunities; New Journeymen Welcome

L.U. 1015 (em), WESLACO, TEXAS — Being from Texas, we have big dreams that we are very proud of. We are helping more of our fellow brothers and sisters accomplish their dreams — success in obtaining that piece of paper which shows your name in bold print, your photo, and the word “journeymen.” For new journeymen, showing off to their families and friends brings a big smile to their face.

We call on all the men and women out there, who may have hesitated for a long time, to take that first step and allow us to help them advance by taking advantage of the best opportunity that IBEW Local 1015 has to offer — and that is knowledge gained through IBEW and JATC training and education.

Local 1015 would like to congratulate our new journeymen: Aaron Hutton, Jose Guadalupe Solis and Angel Castillo. We are also proud to welcome our first female apprentice, Bridgette Bickerson. Welcome to all!

We have started venturing into a new era and are keeping up with the electrical industry in the Rio Grande Valley. Planning ahead for our near future, and to fill the need for skilled electricians in this high-demand occupation, we are partnering with area high schools to offer students the pre-apprenticeship career path with IBEW Local 1015 after graduating high school.

Sergio A. Salinas, B.M.

Puerto Rico Power Restoration; Actively Engaged Membership

L.U. 1245 (catv,govt,lctt,o,t&u), VACAVILLE, CA — Twenty-six members of IBEW 1245 who work for the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) recently returned from a mutual aid assignment in Puerto Rico, where they worked around the clock to assist with the power restoration effort following last year’s devastating hurricanes.

“We interacted with the locals constantly ... and everyone we met was very helpful and appreciative,” said SMUD Line Foreman Ben Bassett, an 11-year IBEW 1245 member. “They saw that we were away from our own families in order to help their families out, and everyone welcomed us with open arms.”

Local 1245 is actively engaged in several critical pieces of utility-related legislation that are currently moving through the California Legislature. On Tuesday, April 17, several Local 1245 rank-and-file members came to the state Capitol to testify on behalf of these bills. At the end of the day, thanks in large part to the powerful presence and compelling testimony that Local 1245 members delivered, both bills passed out of committee and will be proceeding through the legislative process.

In Outside Construction, there is no shortage of work, only manpower. Local 1245 expects that will continue to be an issue, not only in our jurisdiction, but across the nation.

Rebecca Band, P.S.

Local 1245 members Levi Schoenmaier, Paul Duncan and Brent Sambell setting a pole in Puerto Rico. Credit: Sacramento Municipal Utility District.

Miami Fort Station Cooling Tower Project

L.U. 1347 (es,em,lu), CINCINNATI, OHIO — In North Bend, Ohio, directly across from the Indiana/Kentucky border sits Dynegy’s Miami Fort Generating Station, a dual-fuel powered generating facility. While some may believe that fossil fuel power plants are headed out the door, it is still just as strong and powerful as ever. Since its initial establishment in the early 1990s, Miami Fort Station has undergone many improvements.

This latest endeavor is one of the largest projects this site has ever seen. This multi-million-dollar upgrade to enhance the cooling tower has taken a lot of blood, sweat and tears, but it’s incredibly worthwhile for the viability of the station.

Our Local 1347 brothers and sisters working at Miami Fort Station are prepared for many more years of providing safe, reliable power for the Tri-State area for years to come.

Andrew Kirk, B.M./F.S.

The ‘B’ in Brotherhood  
L.U. 1791 (i&o), AUGUSTA, GA — The work outlook in Augusta is still very uncertain. Let’s all remember that the “B” in IBEW stands for Brotherhood. Let’s work together for a stronger Brotherhood, more standing together, more cooperation, more assistance on-site. Ryan (gas inspector, Tisdale) and George St. Amant — members Bro. Ryan Steinhaeusler and Bro. George St. Amant — were two of the first responders who assisted at the site of a tragic traffic accident that involved a bus carrying team members of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League’s Humboldt Broncos.

Will Salters, B.M./F.S.  
**“Humboldt Strong” Volunteer First Responders**  
L.U. 2067 (b.m.), REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA — Friday, April 6, 2018, will never be forgotten in the province of Saskatchewan. Early that evening, at the junction of Highways 35 and 353 in the province’s northeast, tragedy struck.

A bus carrying members of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League’s Humboldt Broncos was struck by a tractor-trailer unit, ultimately causing 16 deaths and sending over half of the passengers to the hospital.

Volunteer first responders — including IBEW Local 2067 members Bro. Ryan Steinhaeusler and Bro. George St. Amant — quickly arrived at the scene, providing care and lifesaving assistance on-site. Ryan (gas inspector, Tisdale) and George (electrical inspector, Tisdale) are members of the Tisdale Volunteer Fire Dept., and were two of the first to arrive at the accident site.

The IBEW Local 2067 leadership offers condolences to the families and friends of those who suffered loss, best wishes for recovery to those who survived, and immeasurable gratitude to the first responders who assisted on-site.

Locally 2067 understands it is impossible to fill the void for the families who have suffered such immense loss. We also recognize that survivors and first responders may never fully recover from the mental and emotional trauma, though physical injuries may heal in time. “No amount of money will make anyone involved whole,” Bus. Mgr. Tibbs stated. “We donate what we can, but we make a real difference with our thoughts, prayers, and by showing support in the communities.”

To read more, see article on Local 2067’s website at: https://ibewbetw7.com/2018/04/11/humboldt-strong/
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WHO WE ARE

DC Member’s Path from Prison to Redemption

N

ine years ago, Washington, D.C., Local 26 member Teon Plater was in darkness. He had made some poor decisions, terrible really. No one died, but he hurt people. He’d been charged and he was paying his price: 72 months buried behind high walls and barbed wire.

As his term was ending, a work detail came his way. Like all the others, he wouldn’t be paid, but he would earn something more precious: fewer hours spent behind the walls, freedom a little bit closer. He’d done every detail that came his way until then, both as a way to get faster and as a way to keep a promise to himself, a difficult path he had chosen to get through this whole thing.

“Most of the time in prison, if you are not in a gang, you will be put in a gang. They volunteer you. I stayed on the humble path instead,” he said. “And they respect that. A lot of time, from what I understand, they are so weary of being in gangs themselves, they revere and respect you when you are part of that. The constancy is what they respect. So, they said about me, ‘He’s hands off.’”

But this opportunity was different: it was farming. For Plater, black men in this part of the country, they don’t farm voluntarily. Too many of their ancestors farmed involuntarily.


But he agreed because he felt that was the humble way, and it was a decision that began his journey out of his own darkness to a career giving light to others.

The farm detail meant working for Bernie Fowler Jr. Fowler was a farmer, and as Plater and he crossed paths, in his own darkness. The recession tipped his development company deep into the red, his marriage was over and his daughter was fading deeper into heroin addiction.

Fowler saw hunger of all kinds: deep, soul-searching hunger and empty-stomach-on-the-way-to-school hunger. So he rented some land, planted a crop he would rent his friends in the sheriff’s department for the work, and they are in talks with state and local officials to expand to four more locations.

“So many guys have said the same thing to me: working in the fields was like a church with no walls. My conscience was speaking to me. The fields are talking to me. I can think about my choices and turning it around,” Fowler said. “That is the secret sauce we are spreading, how to start feeling human again.”

The vastness of the sky doesn’t bother him anymore.

“Since 2016, I told Bernie I wanted to go back inside. I still go through times where it is hard to gear down that protective coating,” Plater said. “But Fowler listened like few other people Plater said he had ever met. And Fowler’s commitment to feeding the hungry, to the possibility in Plater, convinced him to stay. That first harvest, Fowler, Plater and five other inmates pulled 189,000 pounds of potatoes with their bare hands from that rented field on Serenity Farms.

“The farm is aptly named,” Plater said. “Standing in the field, you would put your hands in the dirt and you forgot your problems. It just goes out and integrates into the farm. You feel refreshed, even though you put in work. It feels clean even though you sweat and got covered with dirt.”

When Plater’s term was up, Fowler asked him to join the board of directors, representing the inmates, a position he held until this winter. And then they started talking jobs. Nearly a quarter of inmates return to prison within three years. The best way, research shows, to prevent recidivism is to keep them employed.

Plater wanted to be a trainer, but he told Fowler he was unsure about his prospects. In 2012, southern Maryland was little improved from the depths of the recession. But Fowler had planted seeds of his own. When his real estate business was flourishing, he cut rent in one of his buildings so the owner of a World Gym could stay open. Fowler called in a favor.

When the three met, the owner told Plater that, “If Bernie says you are OK in his book, that’s enough for me.”

“The day he got out, he started work,” Fowler said.

While working at the gym, he started to work with the wife and children of Tony Scott, vice president for service at Mona Electric, a signatory contractor with Washington Local 26. They became friends, and Scott gently, but persistently, began to offer Plater some advice: join the union, get a trade. Protect your family.

“On several occasions he talked to me about coming into the union. He said he would be willing to take me on at Mona,” he said. “I had a profession. Training. It was low stress. You can do it forever. But I needed a trade. One day, something clicked: Personal training is working with energy. Farming is working with energy. Being an electrician, the root of all of it, is working with the energy.”

Plater went down to the local hall in the fall of 2016, signed up and Mona pulled his name. He is now a residential technician, taking classes and waiting for his number to come up to join the construction apprenticeship.

Today, Plater is a changed man. He is married to Shalantae Hawkins. They have a 4-year-old son, Tyree, and a 1-year-old daughter, Aria. He spends his little free time continuing to volunteer at the farm, helping Fowler raise needed funds and extolling the virtues of the program to anyone who will listen.

And Farming4Hunger is growing and changing too. Instead of taking children to the Farm, they take the farm to the them, Fowler said. In May, they announced a partnership with Prince George’s County, just outside Washington, to build and run an urban farm, and they are in talks with state and local officials to expand to four more locations.

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“The same way a seed needs to be in the darkness — in the dirt — the same way a child needs to be in a womb, in the darkness, to germinate and grow, go through the pains of maturation, it is the same way in the farm,” Plater said. “You are in the darkness and you put yourself in the dirt and something magical starts to happen. The earth absorbs that darkness and it turns it into something wonderful.”

The Electrical Worker was the name of the first official publication of the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in 1893 (the NBEW became the IBEW in 1899 with the expansion of the union into Canada). The name and format of the publication have changed over the years. This newspaper is the official publication of the IBEW and seeks to capture the courage and spirit that motivated the founders of the Brotherhood and continue to inspire the union’s members today. The masthead of this newspaper is an adaptation of that of the first edition in 1893.