opioid deaths in the U.S. and Canada are at epidemic levels, ravaging communities across regional, ethnic and socioeconomic divides. But no industry suffers higher rates of addiction and death than one of our own: construction.

“This is something that has hit our industry especially hard,” said International President Lonnie R. Stephenson. “I want every one of our members to know that the IBEW is committed to doing everything we can to help any of our brothers and sisters who are suffering. No one is alone in this fight.”

Every day across the U.S. more than 130 people die from opioid overdoses, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The numbers are proportionally similar in Canada, where, like the U.S., the crisis is fueled by a combination of factors, including reckless doctors, profit-hungry pharmaceutical companies and more.

“There’s an individualistic culture in Canada and the U.S. that says, ‘I’ll do my thing and you do yours.’ We deal with things in private,” said Jim Watson, an international representative in the Education Department who runs trainings on mental health and addiction. “For something like this, though, we need to start talking.”

Since 1999, sales of prescription painkillers have skyrocketed 300%, according to the Midwest Economic Policy Institute. And since 2012, more than 259 million opioid prescriptions have been written — enough for every American adult to have their own bottle.

Of course, opioids can be safely taken and help a lot of people in pain. But too often, they’re misused. And for anyone in construction, it’s a near perfect recipe for addiction.

Few occupations are more physically demanding. The injury rate is 77% higher than the national average, according to MEPI, so it should come as no surprise that substance abuse is nearly twice as high as the national average.

On top of that, construction workers only get paid if they show up, so pain medication is as common on the job as hard hats and tape measures. Home rest or physical therapy doesn’t pay the bills.

In Ohio, construction workers were seven times more likely to die from opioids than the general population.

The trade industry is no stranger to the opioid crisis.

It’s hard to avoid the topic of addiction in a construction site. It’s been a crisis in the trades for some time, including the electrical industry, which has its own unique challenges.

Every contractor deals with pain in some way, whether physically or mentally. It’s part of the job. And when you add opioids to the equation, you have a recipe for disaster.

Fighting addiction in the trades is not an easy task. But with the right resources and support, it’s possible to overcome the epidemic and make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters.
Replacing Stigma with Solidarity

I'd like to use this space this month to talk to you about an issue that hasn't always been the easiest to bring up: addiction. Every one of us knows someone who's struggling with addiction, whether it's alcohol, tobacco or drugs, prescription or illegal. Sometimes we dance around the subject, but we know when it's there. Our two nations—and the construction industry, especially—are in a crisis. Many prescription painkillers and their illicit sister-drugs are laying waste to families and communities, and the construction industry is far and away the hardest-hit.

Members of our trades are at higher risk of injury on the job. And when your paycheck depends on you being at work, it means sometimes you take a few extra Advil and work through the pain. Unfortunately, it also means some turn to stronger prescription medicines. But doctors and drug companies aren't doing enough to warn folks about the dangers of some of these opioid-based painkillers. Some of these drugs can be used safely, but without the proper supervision, it's way too easy to develop a problem.

And that problem is killing people, including some of our own sisters and brothers. As your president, there's no part of the job I take more seriously than keeping you safe. Usually that means fighting for tougher standards at OSHA or making sure that you're able to speak up on the job when a supervisor asks you to do something unsafe. But this opioid problem is harder to tackle.

So, I want to say that the IBEW is here for you. There is no shame in seeking help if you're suffering. Talk to your steward or business manager if you think you might have a problem. We want to help—to keep you safe.

It's why we're devoting resources to finding qualified treatment programs and working to make sure they're available in our health plans. We're working with North America's Building Trades Unions to address the opioid issue across the entire union construction industry. Some of our locals are developing trainings and programs that can be shared across our two countries, and we're encouraging every local to adopt an employee assistance plan for members and their families.

But most importantly, we're not going to be silent about the danger of opioid addiction any longer. Stigma and shame have kept people from seeking help for far too long, and at the IBEW, we're going to be leaders in replacing shame with solidarity.

I want each of you to learn the warning signs of addiction and then look out for them in your co-workers and in yourselves. We owe it to one another, because having each other's backs is what union brotherhood is all about.

Persistence Pays

In my 33 years in the IBEW, I've had ups and downs, wins and losses. But when my time in the Brotherhood is done and I think of my proudest moments, near the top will be the day the 1,400 members of Baltimore Local 410 signed and ratified their first contract. I think Lonnie will agree with me on this one.

When we started the organizing drive four years ago, I was still Fourth District vice president. Baltimore is an important American city, one of the largest in my district. The four previous losses at BGE were painful, both for us and for the men and women who had worked so hard, only to fall short.

So, the decision to commit to the fifth drive was not an easy one for former International President Ed Hill, for me or for Special Assistant to the President for Membership Development Ricky Oakland. What convinced us was the passion and commitment of the men and women who wanted to be our brothers and sisters. When we told them they would have to take the lead organizing themselves, that we couldn't do it from outside, they didn't just accept; they insisted. I can't tell you how many times I heard, "This is our campaign."

And they proved it. Day after day, in the heat of summer and the cold of winter, they were outside worksites holding signs and answering questions or walking up the driveways of nearly every home in the unit. They were there to sign the cards, and they were there on election night, just like they promised.

And when negotiations for that first contract dragged past six months, they showed up again. They showed up at monthly local meetings, informal information sessions and wherever else they were called on. When the word went out that a shoe of solidarity was needed, they showed up in orange. When we needed them to make noise outside of a negotiating session, they made such a ruckus that company negotiators had to close the blinds.

It has been a four-year process since those leaders first approached us to arrive at this day. The membership had questions, but they never lost their resolve. Their reward is the protection of an agreement negotiated across a table with management. They got the respect that they earned, and no one can ever put them back where they were.

We may have had bigger election wins, but you made it. Stay strong and reap the benefits of being union.

More Than a Job

I am so glad that I was given the opportunity to become a member of IBEW Local 371 in 1970. It was one of the best decisions I ever made. I initially took a cut in pay from the electrical maintenance job I had at a plant where railroad cars were manufactured, but even as an apprentice, the wage caught up and surpassed the factory job in a couple years or so. An older fellow who had been employed at the rail car plant advised that I'd be sorry and construction work would starve me to death. Boy was he wrong! That plant has now been shut down for many years, but as a retired IBEW member, I have been enjoying all the benefits of early retirement since I reached age 60. I shudder to think where I'd be if I had stayed with the first employer.

Paul D. Clary, Local 371 retiree Huntington, W. Va.

A Sense of Belonging

I am a proud 40-year veteran of the IBEW. I have enjoyed a living wage, great health care and now a comfortable pension. Belonging to a brotherhood is a great feeling, knowing that your brothers and sisters and the IBEW have your back in and out of the workplace. Thank you, Long Island Local 25 and the IBEW!

Charlie Foote, Local 25 retiree Long Island, N.Y.

Union Strong

Unions are one of the last hopes we have for promoting safety, keeping wages decent, protecting retirement, etc. Unions represent workers better than politicians do.

Jeff Briddick, Local 702 member West Frankfort, Ill.

Welcome to the IBEW

Congratulations to Local 410 [at Baltimore Gas and Electric]. It was a long-fought battle, but you made it. Stay strong and reap the benefits of being union.

John Hawkins, Local 1900 retiree Washington, D.C.

[Ed. Note: See story on Page 5 of this issue.]
$6.5 Billion Pa. Cracking Plant Puts a Region to Work

One of the largest projects in the IBEW is finally underway north of Pittsburgh.

After years of rumors, planning, permitting and approval, the Shell Pennsylvania Chemical project on the banks of the Ohio River in Beaver County is rapidly taking shape.

The $6.5 billion project will take the bountiful natural gas from the Marcellus and Utica shales and pump out trillions of tiny, transparent polyethylene beads, the building block of countless consumer and industrial products.

At the moment, Beaver Local 712 has more than 350 members on site, but by the start of next year, peak demand for our members will reach 1,000 and continue at that level for more than 21 months.

“We haven’t had a job this big since the Beaver Valley nuclear plant 40 years ago,” said Local 712 Business Manager Frank E. Telesz Jr.

The plant is the first of its kind outside of the Gulf Coast and is only possible because of the meteoric growth of U.S. natural gas production since horizontal fracturing — better known as fracking — was introduced just over a decade ago. Twenty years ago, next to no natural gas was produced in the Ohio River Valley.

Today, it accounts for nearly 30% of the national supply.

If it were a country, the region including parts of Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia would be the third-largest producer of natural gas in the world behind the rest of the U.S. and Russia.

And unlike the Gulf Coast, where most cracking plants are today, it is less than a day’s drive to nearly all the companies that use polyethylene beads to pump out car parts, medical equipment, consumer goods, food containers, sporting goods and much, much more.

And there are no hurricanes.

“This is the kind of job the IBEW was built for. We are the only place to find that skilled wiremen and apprentices to do it right, do it safely and do it on budget,” said Construction and Maintenance Department Director Mike Richard.

Local 712 has about 450 members and, like many locals, nearly everyone is working.

There is both a need and an opportunity for travelers, Telesz said.

“They are running staggered daylight shifts and started a second turn,” Telesz said.

The contractors are especially eager, he said, for veterans (12% of the current workforce) and women (15%).

“Most of the petrochemical plants on the Gulf Coast have been built, at least in part, nonunion. We have been pitching Shell on the value of working with the IBEW. Now is our time to deliver on that promise,” he said.

The scale of the project is nearly unprecedented. Just during pre-work, Shell built two heavy haul bridges, relocated a portion of a highway and moved 7.2 million cubic yards of dirt.

The Horsehead zinc smelter on the site was demolished and the concrete from its foundation was recycled into a 400-foot retaining wall.

The heart of the plant is the “cracking” tower, which heats the natural gas liquid ethane to nearly 2,000 degrees, strips off hydrogen atoms and breaks it down into a smaller molecule, ethylene. The ethylene is then cooled in the 4-million pound quenching tower that was recently installed by one of the largest cracking plants in the country, known as the “Mother of All Cranes.”

“Ethane is to the chemical industry what flour is to bakers,” said Steven Redrick, chief executive of the Mid-Atlantic Technology, Research & Innovation Center at a recent energy conference.

MATRIC estimates that there could be as many as 25,000 permanent jobs in plastics and related manufacturing just in this region.

A study sponsored by a regional development company found that the Ohio Valley could support up to four more ethane cracking plants equal in size or larger than the Pennsylvania plant.

“We could become the new Gulf Coast,” Telesz said.

In March 2018, then-Ohio Gov. John Kasich announced a stepped-up investment commitment by Thailand’s PTT Global Chemical and South Korea-based Daelim Industrial Co. Ltd. for a proposed cracking plant in Belmont County, in the heart of Utica’s “wet” shale gas area. Community leaders are hoping for a positive decision by the end of this year on a project that could be worth up to $10 billion.

The company has already spent more than $50 million on engineering and design work for the project, and a final decision is expected sometime this year.

Then, in November 2017, China Energy Investment Corporation and West Virginia officials signed a memorandum of understanding outlining a staggering $14 billion investment commitment in natural gas industries that would span two decades.

“It is hard to even fathom what that amount of investment in this region would mean,” said Third District Business Development International Representative Ed Hill Jr. “There is nothing to compare it to.”

However, in the shadow of the trade war launched by the Trump Administration, the Chinese conglomerate’s first visit to the region was canceled last summer.

“I would take it more as a sign of the potential value of the resources in this region rather than, say, clearing space on my calendar to get a job,” said Hill.

In his annual report to Congress last year, Energy Secretary Rick Perry recommended that a new ethane storage and distribution hub be built in the region, further cementing the region’s new reality as a near-permanent jobs center in the U.S.

“I have not been as excited about a prospective project with anything I’ve done before, including in Texas, as I am about this,” Perry said in an interview with the Washington Examiner.

“Everybody in this Brotherhood knows how many and what kind of jobs are available on the Gulf Coast. I want people to understand that the game is changing,” Hill said.

In fact, the Pennsylvania petrochemical plant was one of the very first projects targeted by the Business Development Department nearly a half decade ago.

Local 712 is the home local of Hill’s late father, former International President Edwin D. Hill.

“Jobs will be changed and careers will be made with all the work we are going to see in this region for people who have seen hard times and need a break,” Hill said. “There is now real opportunity for people here.”
Building trades on substance abuse disorders and the stigma surrounding them. The event’s organizers called for naloxone to be available at all job sites. Sometimes referred to by the brand names Narcan and E Volk, naloxone is a potentially life-saving drug that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. Snow says he carries it with him all the time. It’s part of his decision to be open about his addiction and recovery, to let others know they’re not alone.

“I’m here to say it’s OK, that there’s a way out,” Snow said.

Breaking the Stigma

But the way out is often blocked. There are structural issues that push people into addiction, like a lack of paid time off or a culture of working through the pain, but the stigma associated with an addict can be just as damaging. “Just because someone’s addicted, it doesn’t make them a bad person,” Snow said. “If someone was walking around with cancer, we wouldn’t judge them or shun them. We need to treat addiction like that.”

Once certain painkillers take hold, the stigma of addiction surrounding not just substance abuse, but mental health in general, often makes recovery even harder.

“We have these things that we hold in secret and keep quiet about, and it’s hurting us,” Watson said. “We need to educate ourselves and our leaders on how to deal with this.”

Watson noted that suicide rates are higher for those with addiction issues and a report from the Centers for Disease Control found that those in construction and extraction have the highest rates of male suicide. Opioid use is associated with a 75% increase in the likelihood of a suicide attempt, according to the Addiction Center.

“There’s no way to talk about addiction without talking about suicide too,” Watson said. “We have to talk about all of these issues.”

Talking about sensitive issues like addiction, depression, suicide, and other mental health issues isn’t something that comes easy to most, especially men, Watson said. And construction is overwhelmingly a male profession. Furthermore, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, men die by suicide at a rate three times higher than that of women.

“It’s a testosterone-driven culture. Men don’t talk about emotions or pain,” Watson said. “There’s this belief that, ‘if I’m emotional, then I’m not a man.’”

Watson, who sits on the Canadian Labour Congress’ Labour Education Advisory Committee, says he spends a lot of time at his trainings creating a space where members feel safe enough to talk openly about their situation. The trainings have received good reviews, he said.

Stephenson has appointed Construction and Maintenance Department Director Mike Richard to serve on North America’s Building Trades Union’s opioid task force. Currently the task force is gathering data and best practices from the U.S. and Canada and is working on an actionable plan that it can recommend to the NABTU general presidents, Richard said.

“We have members dying and suffering through addiction, and we have a moral obligation to do all that we can,” Richard said.

The task force has also developed vetting guidelines for treatment centers. “Not all treatment centers are the same or even effective,” Richard said. “A lot are just in it for the money, and the treatment of our members is too important to leave to chance.”

In June, Stephenson participated in a panel hosted by the Kennedy Forum, an organization that works on mental health care issues. The panel was part of a day-long event and focused on combating mental health stigma in the workplace.

“Addiction can creep up on anyone, and every IBEW member needs to know that substance abuse is first and foremost a health issue that must be dealt with,” Stephenson said. “And dealing with mental health is part of that.”

MEPD’s report on the opioid epidemic in construction focused on the Midwest, which suffers from some of the highest rates of misuse and death. Its recommendations for addressing the issue, however, can be applied across the U.S. and Canada.

Among them are providing health insurance that covers substance abuse and mental health treatment, encouraging alternatives to opioids like physical therapy and anti-inflammatory medications for certain injuries, providing at least two weeks of paid sick leave and updating policies to include regular drug testing but not immediately firing those who test positive.

Watson says most locals have employee assistance plans that offer assistance to those with substance use issues. However, many only cover about six visits. And depending on the availability, a member might have to take off work to attend.

“We think it’s been one-size-fits-all and we need to individualize it, to look at it from a multifaceted point of view,” Watson said. “Thirty days might be enough for some, but not for everyone.”

“It Takes a Tribe”

In Syracuse, N.Y., Local 43; Philadelphia Local 50; Providence, R.I., Local 99 and Vancouver, British Columbia, Local 213 all offer naloxone training to their members and in some cases for family members too. Local 213 offers it along with a session on mental health. Local 99 includes it with CPR and awareness training on the symptoms to look for in someone who might need help.

For Local 43, the training was part of a comprehensive program they developed with an area hospital. Business Manager Al Marzullo said they’ve put about 150 apprentices through it so far as well as held a training for the general membership and their family members, which was well attended.

“I didn’t know how the training would be accepted, but our apprentices and members were ecstatic about it,” Marzullo said. “Their eyes never left the screen during the presentation.”

For Marzullo and the local, it’s personal. They had a second-year apprentice die last year.

“This job is hard enough, but the hardest thing is to see a 26-year old apprentice in a casket and look his parents in their eyes and give my condolences,” Marzullo said. “At that point, I knew we had to do something. We had to get out in front of it.”
Local 99 provides rehabilitation services and an anonymous support group, says Alvin Reyes, the Reach Out and Engage the Next Generation of Electrical Workers representative. RENEW, along with NextGen in Canada, is the IBEW initiative to get more young members involved in the union. Those services are provided with support from RENEW, reflecting the joint commitment between the local and the chapter, Reyes said.

“This crisis has impacted us all,” said Reyes, who is also Local 99’s membership development coordinator. “We let our brothers and sisters know that we’re a family and we do not abandon them, especially in a time of crisis.”

RENEW/NextGen has an important role to play, said Tara Goelling, director of Civic and Community Engagement. According to MEPI, 66% of those who misuse pain medication are between the ages of 18 and 34 years old.

“This is an opportunity for RENEW,” Goelling said. “Its role is to address issues that affect young members, and with the right education and tools, chapters could really be the bridge between their members and the locals.”

In the Tenth District, International Vice President Brent Hall wanted to get in front of the issue and held a session on opioids at last year’s annual progress meeting for leaders in Arkansas, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

“The opioid crisis in our four states is at epidemic levels, and we would be naive to believe we do not have members that have or could get trapped in this dilemma,” Hall said.

Other districts have taken similar steps or are planning to engage members and leaders on the issue at upcoming meetings.

At an international level, the IBEW has supported and will continue to seek common-sense legislative actions in both the U.S. and Canada to expand treatment options and seek solutions to the crisis. More research into alternative pain-management and non-addictive medications is needed, and lawmakers in both countries need to do more to take what is, in effect, legal heroin off the market.

But both Galvin and Snow stressed the importance of looking out for one another and knowing what to look for in a brother or sister who is suffering. Both say they’re glad to be able to play their roles as someone in recovery who can help others, including their IBEW brothers and sisters.

“Someone did it for me,” Snow said. “Part of staying clean and sober is giving back.”

Knowing that you have a support system there for you is incredibly important, Galvin said.

“It takes a tribe,” Galvin said. “If there weren’t people there to help me, I would without a doubt be dead.”

What is your local doing to combat opioid and other substance abuse issues?

Let us know and we may highlight it in a future Electrical Worker story. Email us at media@ibew.org.

Two Decades’ Effort Pays Off

First Contract Ratified by BGE Workers

A
ter four failed organizing drives and two years of negotiations, the more than 1,400 members of Baltimore Local 410 ratified their first contract with Baltimore Gas and Electric in late June.

“Congratulations to the Local Union 410 bargaining team, and welcome to the IBEW,” said Fourth District International Vice President Brian Malloy, announcing the conclusion of a 20-year campaign for the protection of a negotiated and democratically approved collective bargaining agreement.

The members of Local 410 now officially become members of the IBEW, the largest single-day growth of the Brotherhood in more than a generation, said Director of Professional and Industrial Membership Development (Amos) Jareas.

“I am extremely proud of the work of the negotiating committee,” said International President Lonnie R. Stephenson, congratulating Business Manager Eric Gomez, Vice President Ben Ferstermann and members Marvin Austin, Andrew Aizl and Mark Dill.

Stephenson and Malloy also thanked Fourth District International Representative Gina Cooper and Chuck Tippie.

“Chuck and Gina have dedicated themselves to this effort for over two years,” Stephenson said. “Their professionalism and tireless work on this agreement has made me proud. I can’t thank them enough for the job they do every day.”


Many of the workers wanted the protection of a contract, but wages were pretty good, and while the small company may have had its problems, many workers said it still felt like they were family problems that were either solvable or bearable.

The utility’s management at the time was also virulently anti-union and spent more than $50 million fighting off the first organizing drive in 1996. Union supporters were fired, threatened, transferred to units far from their homes and given the worst and least reliable trucks.

The IBEW filed dozens of unfair labor practice charges against the company in 1996, said former Utility Department Director Jim Hunter, who led that campaign as then-business manager of Washington, D.C., Local 1900.

“They scarred everyone,” said Bill Rial, a 25-year overhead line worker and member of the volunteer organizing committee. “We had over 600 cards signed in one election but got fewer than 400 votes. They smashed us.”

The next two organizing elections, in 2000 and 2010, had results that were similar.

But then the company was bought in 1999 by Constellation, which was acquired by Exelon in 2012. That “mom and pop” feeling began to fade away.

“The company was the last organizing campaign in [2010] is gone,” Fers- termann said at the time. BGE was also the only Exelon-owned utility without an IBEW-negotiated contract. Wages and benefits began to fall behind the other units, and BGE workers noticed.

“It’s not a bad company. Everything I have is because of my job at BGE, and I want them to do better,” Gomez said in 2017. “We just want to do better too.”

In 2015, more than two dozen BGE workers approached the IBEW to ask for another shot. They formed the core of a volunteer organizing committee, and the IBEW assigned two full-time organizers, Regional Organizing Coordinator Bert McDermitt and Membership Development International Representative Troy Johnson, to the campaign.

With the workers in the lead, and the support of then-Fourth District Vice President, now-International Secretary-Treasurer, Kenneth W. Cooper, they developed a campaign timeline. Starting in 2016, they would collect cards and hold meetings to answer questions. Then the IBEW would bring in dozens of volunteers to conduct a two-week blitz of site and home visits, phone-banking and a final push to collect cards. The target was an election scheduled for Jan. 11, 2017.

On the night of the vote, members of the V.O.C., Cooper, McDermitt and John- son gathered in the National Labor Relations Board’s Baltimore office to watch the three-hour vote count. In the end, the vote wasn’t close.

Three months later, Stephenson, Cooper and then-international represen- tative Malloy traveled to Baltimore Local 245’s charter to help the new union, Balti- more Local 410, chosen because it is the area code of the region serviced by BGE.

“I’ve been in the IBEW for 42 years now and I have never been as honored as I just was to do that,” Stephenson said that night, his voice cracking. “I have not had the pleasure or opportunity to sign a charter for a new local union. So, this was a big event not only for you but for me.”

A parade of Baltimore politicians attended the chartering celebration in March of 2017 including Rep. John Sar- banes, city councilor John T. Bullock and then-state delegate and Local 24 assistant business manager Corey McCoy.

There were hopes at the time of the charter that negotiations would go smoothly, Gomez said.

“It took about a year and half longer than I thought it would,” he said.

There were times, toward the end of negotiations, where the committee was meeting 15 hours a day, two to three times a week, Tippie said.

“The committee was very support- ive and active, coming up with ideas and arguments, looking up policies and procedures to assist the negotiating commit- tee. You cannot underestimate the sup- port of the membership,” Tippie said.

“[Their] patience, solidarity and hard work paid off in a strong agreement.”

Most importantly, Cooper and Tippie said, they are no longer at-ill-employ- ees. There is a grievance procedure to protect workers from favoritism and man- agerial caprice. Job bidding has been transformed to reward good workers and length of service, not just relationships with supervisors.

The on-call system was also reformed, honoring the utility’s responsi- bility to keep the power on while respect- ing workers’ family responsibilities.

“This is a great foundation, a great first contract,” Tippie said.

Gomez said the overwhelming approval by the membership was valida- tion of the long struggle and testament to the solidarity of the new members. Now, BGE workers can continue to provide the best service for their customers, confident that they’ve got paper on what they’ve been seeking since the mid-90s: a voice on the job that ensures good work is fairly rewarded and a relationship with manage- ment that puts BGE in a position to thrive.

“Now we’ve got nothing left to do but work for a living,” Gomez said.
ed by IBEW members, Nevada’s building trades unions hit a triple in the Legislature this spring, restoring prevailing wage and project labor agreement laws killed by the business lobby in 2015, and ensuring that apprentices from accredited programs fill a percentage of jobs at public construction sites.

“We came in focused on priority bills that would make Nevada stronger without costing the state money,” Las Vegas Local 357 Business Manager Al Davis said. “We felt confident that the governor would see the same benefits we saw, and he did.”

File those victories and a long list of other 2019 legislative wins for working Nevadans under “Elections Matter.”

Unions and social justice allies ran exhaustive campaigns to get out the vote last November. Their efforts sent twice as many Nevada voters to the polls as in 2014, when midterm losses shook the state’s labor movement. Anti-worker politicians and a governor who shared their agenda rapidly attacked workers and unions with punitive legislation.

Today, a pro-worker trifecta is in charge: a supermajority in the Assembly, a near veto-proof Senate, and a progressive governor unfraid to stand with labor. It is also the nation’s first female-majority legislature.

The results have been dramatic.

More than 20,000 public workers in Nevada finally have collective bargaining rights — the biggest victory of its kind in any state in nearly two decades. The state’s minimum wage is up. Many workers without sick leave are gaining a week’s worth. Costly penalties are in store for employers that violate equal-pay rules and other workplace protections.

More broadly, new laws tackle everything from pocketbook issues to government transparency, including better access to health care, lower prescription costs, an urgent increase in school funding that will also raise teacher pay, money for technical education, tax credits to spur affordable housing, same-day voter registration and sharper teeth in the state’s public records law.

In all, Gov. Steve Sisolak signed 636 bills by the mid-June deadline. One of the last was SB207, requiring building contractors to fill a percentage of public works jobs with apprentices from accredited programs.

The bill’s chief sponsor was Sen. Chris Brooks, a Local 357 member who brought his solar contracting business into the IBEW nearly 20 years ago. One of the state’s foremost solar experts and a staunch labor advocate, Brooks was elected to the Nevada Assembly in 2016, re-elected in 2018, then quickly appointed to fill a Senate vacancy.

His apprenticeship legislation stated that “a skilled construction trades workforce is essential to Nevada’s economic well-being” and that training on public projects is crucial experience.

Brooks also sponsored the PLA bill in the Senate and championed the Assembly’s prevailing wage bill. Notably, all three bills improving wages and opportunities for building trades workers passed without a single Republican vote.

It wasn’t for lack of trying. Via plane to Reno and rental car to Carson City, Davis made the case for the bills at the Capitol multiple times, often in tandem with the executive director of the southern Nevada NECA chapter.

After the crushing defeat in 2014, Davis helped establish a labor-management committee to cooperate on building trades legislation that would benefit both sides.

“It wasn’t just labor by itself,” Davis said, explaining the strategy he and his NECA partner employed. The two met jointly with some lawmakers and approached others one-on-one — those politicians at either end of the spectrum who’d be more receptive to arguments from business or labor, but not both.

In May, Davis was among labor and industry special guests as Sisolak signed prevailing wage (AB35) and project labor agreements (SB331) back into law.

“The bills I’m signing today are a demonstration of my commitment ... to ensuring that our economic recovery reaches every kitchen table in every working household in the state of Nevada,” Sisolak said.

The governor made good on his word, Davis said.

“Steve got up at his inaugural and told everybody what he was going to do — to return both chambers of the Statehouse to Democratic control. However, GOP Brian Sandoval still had two more years on his term.

Davis helped establish a labor-management committee to cooperate on building trades legislation that would benefit both sides.

“The 2015 law claimed that making it more difficult to form unions is a good thing,” Davis said. “The credit goes to us members, who responded to our ask to participate, to educate themselves on the issues and to vote for labor-friendly candidates — and to phone bank and knock on doors and get other voters to the polls,” he said.

Davis cautioned that the new laws alone won’t persuade members that their energy and effort in 2018 was worth it. “I don’t think they’ll fully connect the dots until we see the jobs that are created because of the legislation,” he said. “It all sounds good, but it doesn’t really mean money in your pocket yet.”

Meanwhile, he said, it’s critical for working people to keep members engaged heading toward 2020, when there’s even more at stake: the state lawmakers they elect will redraw the boundaries of Nevada’s legislative districts.

“We got severely gerrymandered in 2010,” Davis said, referring to the current district maps that hurt the interests of working people and paved the way to disaster in 2014.

“I think what’s been accomplished so far is great, but we need to keep our eye on the next 12 years,” he said.
With Election Approaching, New Contract Secures Gains for Federal Workers

The Electrical Worker | August 2019

Tracker gave the Conservatives a 35% round. Is it everything we wanted? No. But sense of working with us. "It was not friendly. With the Liberals in power instead of the old Conservative government. There was more flexibility and openness to Local 2228's proposals and none of the take-it-or-leave-it attitude shown in prior discussions.

"Typically, during the last 10-20 years, negotiations to the time of ratification would take two years," Cameron said. "When the Conservatives were in power, people a real sense of, "You better take this deal or we're going to legislate it on you." It was not friendly. With the Liberals in power, there was more of a sense of working with us."

"It's a gain to what we had in the last round. Is it everything we wanted? No. But we thought it was a fair deal that reflects the value and work of our members."

The federal election is expected to be extremely close. In late June, CBC's Poll Tracker gave the Conservatives a 35% chance of forming a majority government and the Liberals a 26% chance.

The Amundsen, a Coast Guard icebreaker and research vessel, docked in Quebec City. Some members of Ottawa Local 2228 are employed by the Coast Guard.

“This is another illustration of the respect our government has consistently demonstrated for Canada’s public servants," Treasury Board President Joyce Murray said. "We remain committed to our good faith approach to collective bargaining and hope to continue to reach agreements that are good for public servants and fair for Canadian taxpayers."
Wyoming Organizer Honored for Leading Local 322 Volunteers in Conservation Projects

Bruce Johnson, a Casper, Wyo., Local 322 organizer and avid outdoorsman, has been named the IBEW Conservation Steward of the Year for his leadership on volunteer projects protecting elk and their habitat. Presented by the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance, the award is given for exceptional efforts that bring union members together to donate their time and tradecraft to preserve the great outdoors.

Local 322 organizer Bruce Johnson, left, receives the 2019 IBEW Conservation Steward of the Year award from Walt Ingram, director of union relations at the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance. “Bruce is a dedicated conservationist and volunteer whose leadership helps us execute projects that benefit wildlife populations cherished by his local community and sportsmen across the country,” Alliance CEO and Executive Director Scott Vance said. “His commitment exemplifies the spirit of union solidarity and community service that drives the USA’s mission.”

Last July, Johnson rallied Local 322 volunteers to build a custom fence-crossing for elk herds entering a state feeding ground in western Wyoming at winter-time. An exterior ramp allows elk to jump down to feed inside the refuge, while the fence discourages them from leaving down to feed inside the refuge, while the ground in western Wyoming at winter-time. Volunteers to build a custom fence-crossing for elk herds entering a state feeding ground in western Wyoming at winter-time. Volunteers to build a custom fence-crossing for elk herds entering a state feeding ground in western Wyoming at winter-time.

As an organizer, Johnson has used Wyomingites’ shared enthusiasm for the outdoors to appeal to nonunion contractors and workers. His local sponsors an annual “Buck Contest,” with prizes for top deer antler racks, open to anyone in the electrical industry and immediate family.

“At age 47, it’s not something he had to do,” said Llauger’s reaction was like Llauger’s — recognizing right away it could be life-changing for him and other union brothers and sisters, it left to its up to its purpose.

“When Bedard learned of the benefit, his reaction was like Llauger’s — recognizing right away it could be life-changing for him and other union brothers and sisters, it left up to its purpose.”

N.J. Local’s ‘Good of the Union’ Commitment Bolsters Community

Members of Trenton, N.J., Local 269 put in long, hard hours during the week. But well-earned weekends aren’t just for relaxing; many members are also committed to provide variety of community service activities the local sponsors through its “Good of the Union” committee.

“Volunteerism is an extremely rewarding experience and it benefits all involved,” Local 269 Business Manager Stephen Aldrich said. “Knowing you have helped through simple sacrifice is its own reward.”

Bedard is an evangelist when it comes to urging Local 2320 brothers and organize new ones. One of her ideas is a short class on labor history.

“I want to remind our members of the hard work: it took to get us where we are today, and why it’s important to never forget your roots and to always fight for your rights,” she said.

“Bedard didn’t hesitate when she got wind of the program,” she added. “I wanted to be the guinea pig. I wanted to be one of the first people trying it out — to find out if it was too good to be true. It’s not. It really is that good.”

The flexibility of online learning allows her and Bedard to take full advantage of their free education. Classes fit their schedules, and there are no tiring commutes to and from school.

“‘Good of the Union' committee, which is now woven into the local’s fabric and regularly enhancing its reputation within the greater Trenton community.”

Learn more about the free college program and how to apply, go to www.unioncollege.org or call (888) 580-9009.

Free College, No Catch: IBEW Members Say Degree Program Hasn’t Cost Them a Nickel

With just four or five classes to go, Todd Bedard is on the verge of having an associate degree in business management — without accruing a penny of student debt.

Bedard, the president of Manchester, N.H., Local 2320, is making the most of the Union Plus Free College Program, which covers tuition and online course materials for active and retired union members and their families.

“I haven’t taken a dime out of my pocket. I haven’t opened my wallet; I haven’t given a credit card number,” he said. “I just filled out the financial aid paperwork. I thought it was going to be painful, but I think it only took about a half-hour.”

An equipment installer for Consolidated Communications, Bedard previously earned an associate degree in applied science for telecommunications when he worked for Verizon. His program now, through Eastern Gateway Community College, has the potential to open all kinds of doors.

“I have 21 years doing what I’ve been doing, and I want to see where a business degree can take me in the future,” he said, adding that he may pursue a four-year college degree and possibly an MBA.

“I tell everyone who will listen: If you’re not doing it, you’re losing money.”

— Student and Local 2320 President Todd Bedard

At age 47, it’s not something he had to consider if he hadn’t heard about the program, which marshals all available federal aid and grants on behalf of students, then fills any funding gaps the aid doesn’t cover.

Union Plus, in partnership with AFSCME, rolled out the benefit in 2018 with online associate degree and certificate programs, and is working to offer a bachelor’s degree by the end of 2019. Fields of study include advertising, cyber security, finance, hospitality, labor studies, marketing, criminal justice, teacher education and office management.

Bedard is an evangelist when it comes to urging Local 2320 brothers and sisters to enroll. “I’m annoying about it,” he said with a laugh. “I tell everyone who will listen: If you’re not doing it, you’re losing money.”

In Florida, journeyman inside wireman Lorraine Llauger is another IBEW member who can take a similar tale.

“Other- than my job, I’ve been doing, and I want to see where a business degree can take me in the future,” she said. “I wanted to be the guinea pig. I wanted to be on the first one people trying it out — to find out if it was too good to be true. It’s not. It really is that good.”

The flexibility of online learning allows her and Bedard to take full advantage of their free education. Classes fit their schedules, and there are no tiring commutes to and from school.

“My favorite thing is that I can be anywhere where there is Internet,” Llauger said. “The classes are broken down so they don’t give you too much work at one time. You’re not overloaded and you can go at your own pace, but you still have to be responsible and do the work.”

A single mother, Llauger enjoys studying alongside her son and daughter as they do their middle-school homework. She loves knowing they’re proud to tell friends that their mom’s in college.

Bedard squeezes in study time around family activities on evenings and weekends, and he doesn’t waste a minute during the workday.

“There are times when I have to plug in my work computer to do an upgrade and there’s 10, 15 minutes where I have to sit and let that happen,” he said. “Or I’m on the phone, on hold. And during my breaks.”

At those moments, he fires up his personal laptop to study, take quizzes and post questions and answers on student discussion boards. While that’s an obligatory part of the program, he said he gets a lot out of it. “I’m talking to people all around the country, many of them union workers. We’re able to share our life experiences.”

When Bedard learned of the benefit, his reaction was like Llauger’s — recognizing right away it could be life-changing for him and other union brothers and sisters, if it lived up to its purpose.

“As president, I wanted to be able to talk to my members about it firsthand,” he said. “I wanted to see if this worked in a day or so and haven’t looked back.”

To learn more about the free college program and how to apply, go to www.unioncollege.org or call (888) 580-9009.

N.J. Local’s ‘Good of the Union’ Commitment Bolsters Community

Members of Trenton, N.J., Local 269 put in long, hard hours during the week. But well-earned weekends aren’t just for relaxing; many members are also committed to provide variety of community service activities the local sponsors through its “Good of the Union” committee.

“Volunteerism is an extremely rewarding experience and it benefits all involved,” Local 269 Business Manager Stephen Aldrich said. “Knowing you have helped through simple sacrifice is its own reward.”

It’s that spirit that inspired the “Good of the Union” committee, which is now woven into the local’s fabric and regularly enhancing its reputation within the greater Trenton community.”

Coordinator by Guy Milliàno, the local’s recording secretary, the committee connects many Local 269 members with community organizations like Habitat for Humanity and the American Cancer Society’s annual Relay for Life.” Some members can be found collecting food for the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen or games, dolls and more for the U.S. Marine Corps’ “Top’s “Un.” Drive. As the winter holidays approach, the local raises money to help families of terminally ill children. Several times a year, it also sponsors blood drives to benefit the American Red Cross.

Local 269’s jurisdiction covers the Garden State’s capital city along with Bucks County, Pa., just across the Delaware River. It’s there that, for more than 50 years, members of the local also have taken part in the “Adopt-a-Highway” program managed by Pennsylvania’s Department of Transportation.

“We do it twice a year: in March and October,” said Local 269 member Marc Sciarratta, who has organized this road-side litter pickup activity ever since he completed his apprenticeship and became a journeyman wireman seven years ago.
Sciarrotta said, and IBEW members pro-
bags, gloves, signs and warning flags,
Transportation supplies the garbage
the Union“ Committee.
available to members of Trenton, N.J., Local 269, thanks to its busy “Good of
Roadside cleanup is just one of the many volunteer and charitable activities
state’s or province’s department of trans-
way, get in touch with your particular
es — who are required to get a certain
number of community service hours —
plus another 50 to 12 journeyman wir-
men,” Sciarrotta said. The project can take
a few hours to complete, he said,
“but the more people who show up, the
faster it goes.”
Three official highway signs mark both
directions’ starting points: a dark blue sign reading, “Adopt-a-Highway Lit-
ter Control;” a lighter-blue one bearing
the union’s logo and reading, “IBEW L.U.
269;” and a third that reads, “PennDOT
Thanks This 10-Year Participant.”
The volunteers typically find ordi-
nary, run-of-the-mill litter, Sciarrotta
said, such as beverage bottles or fast
food bags, along with the occasional vehi-
cle part like a mirror or hubcap.
“We’ll end up with anywhere from 75
to 100 bags of trash,” he said — about
two to three per volunteer. PennDOT retrieves the full bags, usually within a few days.
The entire cleanup process is a posi-
tive experience both for the local and for
PennDOT, Sciarrotta said. “We do our best,
and they’re happy with the work we do.”
“Our local’s commitment to serving
our community is a big part of what we do,
whether it’s cleaning up the highway,
building a house for a needy family or col-
lecting presents for kids whose parents
can’t afford them at Christmas,” Aldrich
said. “It’s also building schools and hos-
pitals or delivering electricity: We live in
this community, and we want it to make a better place.”
If your local is interested in adopting
or sponsoring a portion of a nearby high-
way, get in touch with your particular state’s or province’s department of trans-
portation.

How This Shipyard
Created a Values-Based
Commitment to Excellence — and Success
At a time when federal employees are dis-
engaged as lazy and a drain on taxpayer
dollars — especially by the president and his
administration — the working women and men
at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in
Kittery, Maine, have been quietly proving
themselves to be consummate profession-
als. And they’ve been doing it for years.
Now, they’re looking to share part of
their recipe for success with other ship-
yards around the U.S.
“Our members, and those of other
trades that we work with, have a take
of pride in their work. They always have,”
said Paul O’Connor, director of the IBEW
Government Employees Department and
former president of the Metal Trades
Council at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.
This isn’t to say that things were
always great. Like a lot of workplaces,
PNS went through periods of low morale
and productivity. But unlike a lot of plac-
es, those challenging times led to a great
success story.
In 2000, the shipyard needed a
change. Stagnation was setting in and
nothing they tried to improve things was
working — until they looked at the issue
a little differently.
“We were looking for a better way,”
said O’Connor, a member of Portsmouth,
N.H., Local 2071. “Our performance level
had peaked, and we were deliberating
what to do.”
Much of what they had tried was
schedule or process-driven, he said.
“For decades our shipyard would
crunch pick elements of these third-party
initiatives to grab the attention of our work-
force and shoehorn them into a rigid, indus-
trial hierarchy. And management always
maintained veto authority,” O’Connor
said.
“There was never workforce buy-in.”
So they shifted gears. They came
together and decided to try a different,
home-grown approach: no more third par-
ties; something based on values. What if
they focused on trust, dignity, integrity
and respect? And what if everyone — labor
and management alike — had input?
“Labor and management jointly cre-
ated an environment of trust, and our
workforce stepped into that environment
believing their voices could and would
make a difference. And that’s what hap-
pened,” O’Connor said. It wasn’t officially
the Code of Excellence, which hadn’t been
extended to non-construction branches
at the time, “but we utilized the same val-
ues-based philosophies.”
Of course, it wasn’t all smooth sail-
ing. They had to break down a lot of barri-
ers, between labor and management,
civilian and military, the day shift and the
night shift, engineers and trades. There
was skepticism. Was this going to be just
another flavor of the month? Something
else that management would jam down
their throats?
But they kept going — and listening.
And they took those concerns and used
them to form the basis of what became
the Declaration of Excellence, a document
that created a permanent relationship
based on shared values between labor
and management and between the vari-
ous trades on the yard.
“Labor and management together
created a Declaration of Indepen-
dence-type document that outlined what
the next 200 years on the yard should look
like from a cultural perspective,” said for-
mer Local 2071’s Business Manager Andrew
Perry, who also served on the Metal
Trades Council. “The groups who signed it
and all who have read it understand how
important dignity and respect are.”

“When you get the
relationships right,
the rest follows.”
— Government Employees Director
Paul O’Connor

Everyone, labor and management
alike, receives regular refresher training
and the Declaration is part of the new
employee orientation and the shipyard’s
technical manuals. Since its implementa-
tion in 2012, performance has improved
dramatically, with all nuclear submarine
overhauls being completed on schedule
and on budget.
They also established an ideas pro-
gram, co-chaired by labor and manage-
ment. The decision to accept an idea is
made jointly, with input from the employee
who made the suggestion as well.
“It’s a way to let people know we’re
really listening,” O’Connor said. “And two
of the ideas saved the shipyard an esti-
mates $5 million a year.”
Now in Washington, O’Connor is
working to take his experience at Port-
smouth and use it to develop an official
Code of Excellence across the four Naval
shipyards in the U.S.
“Much of the Code, and same for the
Declaration, could be incorporated any-
where,” O’Connor said. “They’re business
models based on values. When you get the
relationships right, the rest follows.”

Roadside cleanup is just one of the many volunteer and charitable activities
available to members of Trenton, N.J., Local 269, thanks to its busy “Good of
the Union” Committee.

### THE IBEW’s 2019 PHOTO CONTEST

**Enter Today!**
**Deadline: Oct. 1**

**1st Place: $200**

**2nd Place: $150**

**3rd Place: $100**

**Honorable Mention: $50**

Summer is here, and that means it’s time for this year’s IBEW photo contest. Last year’s winner, Vacaville, Calif., Local 1245’s Nicolas Rains, captured his co-workers on the job in extreme weather conditions, but you don’t need to find the extraordinary to win. Your IBEW sisters and brothers do extraordinary work every day — even on the most routine assignments.

Send us the photos that capture that spirit of excellence and togetherness, the foundations of what it means to be a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

**Photo Contest Rules:**

1. The contest is open to active or retired IBEW members only. The person submitting the photo must be the person who took the photograph. Members may enter up to five photos each.

2. International officers and staff are not eligible.

3. Photos MUST be submitted as digital files of at least 300 dpi, measuring 1,200 by 1,800 pixels at minimum, in color or black and white. Larger files of at least 2,200 pixels are encouraged.

4. All submissions become property of the IBEW Media Department.

5. Photo entries must have an IBEW theme of some sort, with IBEW members at work, engaged in a union-related activity or featuring subjects conveying images of the electrical industry or the union.

6. If members are featured in the photo, they should be identified. If large groups are pictured, the name of the group or the purpose of the gathering (e.g., a safety committee, linemen’s rodeo, a union meeting) can be submitted in place of individual names.

7. Photos previously published in IBEW publications or on the website are not eligible for submission.

8. Entries MUST be submitted electronically via the Photo Contest link on IBEW.org. Please contact the Media Department at media@ibew.org or 202-728-6102 with additional questions.

9. Up to 15 finalists will be selected and posted on IBEW.org for final judging by the public. The winners will be featured in a future issue of the Electrical Worker.
Florida Activists Fight to Fend Off Deregulation Threat

In Florida, IBEW members are mobilizing to help kill a proposed constitutional amendment that aims to deregulate the state’s investor-owned electrical utilities—a law that, if implemented, could disrupt the livelihood of thousands of electricians who work and live there.

“Energy deregulation has been proven to be bad policy,” said international President Lonnie R. Stephenson. “It’s a dangerous idea that drives electricity prices up, reduces service quality and puts highly trained union electricians out of work.”

Last year, a political action committee called Citizens for Energy Choices (CEC) gained approval to mount a campaign to place a so-called “energy choice” amendment on Florida’s 2020 general election ballot.

“It would dismantle the affordable and reliable current grid and industry,” said Fifth District International Vice President Brian Thompson. “All to give electric utility market profiteers a chance to gain a financial advantage. Deregulation risks leaving electricity customers without reliable and safe providers.”

Proponents of deregulation typically sway skeptics by claiming that customers’ ability to shop for low-cost power providers compete to offer better service at lower prices. But deregulated utilities also can more freely boost profits by charging customers higher rates.

Regulated systems must balance their right to make money with infrastructure and customer needs, justifying rate-hike requests before an oversight body.

“Energy rates in Florida already are among the lowest in the nation,” said Thompson, whose district includes the Sunshine State. “And we’ve got years of evidence that deregulation doesn’t work.”

Because of deregulation, thousands of jobs in the trades and other fields have vanished, with rates going up as infrastructure investments decline. Seventeen states and the District of Columbia have some form of deregulation.

“It didn’t work in California, and it’s not going to work in Florida,” said Ed Molsby, a Fifth District International representative who also serves as the state’s political coordinator. In the early 2000s, unregulated energy providers in California, such as Enron, manipulated the electrical grid to drive up prices. Statewide rolling brownouts and blackouts ensued, and IBEW members lost jobs by the hundreds.

In Florida, state law limits ballot summaries to 35 words, so one major challenge Florida’s IBEW activists face is revealing what CEC is leaving out of its summary. “It’s kind of vague, the way they’re describing it,” Molsby said.

Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody agrees. “This unclear language fails to disclose that the proposed amendment would require enactment of laws prohibiting investor-owned utilities from competing in a new, electric utility market,” wrote Moody, a Republican, in a letter to the Florida Supreme Court.

“A lot of people that traditionally oppose labor and the trades are on board with us on this,” said Thompson, noting that Florida’s Republican-majority House of Representatives and Senate also have problems with the measure. A brief filed by the state’s Chamber of Commerce complains that complexities in the proposed amendment’s summary violate current law and could leave voters confused.

The summary also omits how the proposed amendment seeks to eliminate existing storm recovery agreements and resources critical in helping to restore power after hurricanes and other disasters.

Before the amendment proposal can be included on the November 2020 general election ballot, supporters must collect more than 726,000 valid signatures from registered Florida voters by Feb. 1.

“For now, we’re trying to keep it off the ballot,” Thompson said. “We’ve got a lot of work to do, but the good news is we’re getting started early and we’re already out in front of it.”

In late June, Florida’s Department of Elections showed that CEC was only about 42% of the way toward its signature goal. And even if the initiative makes it onto the ballot, it would still need to receive at least 60% of the state’s popular vote before gaining ratification.

“We’re hoping we’ll have enough information out there to let people make an informed decision before then,” Molsby said. The main task for IBEW activists now, he said, is education and mobilization.

“It’s worked before. Using nearly identical ballot language, Citizens for Energy Choice tried to mount a similar constitutional campaign in Nevada, and in 2016, 73% of the state’s voters favored deregulation. But after the IBEW’s on-the-ground educational campaign, two-thirds of the electorate there rejected it last November.

“We can use Nevada as a playbook to come at deregulation with a good grassroots effort in Florida,” said Thompson, who has regular conversations with IBEW activists there.

“Our utilities are putting together a game plan, too,” he said. If the amendment was to pass, the electricity generation business for Florida Power and Light, Duke Energy and Tampa Electric—all IBEW employers—would disappear.

“We would lose jobs for sure,” said Thompson, adding that there also would remain uncertainty regarding power transmission and distribution.

“Electricity is a service, not a commodity that can be bought and sold to satisfy corporate greed,” said Stephenson. “We need all hands on deck in Florida to help voters understand this, before this dangerous amendment becomes a hard-to-repeal part of the state’s constitution.”

Visit farelectric.org to learn more.

Clock Ticking on Bill to Preserve Nuclear Jobs in Ohio

Hundreds of IBEW jobs in Ohio could be in serious jeopardy if the state’s Legislature fails to pass a bill to keep two nuclear plants open.

“This is not a political issue,” said International President Lonnie R. Stephenson. “We need this bill in Ohio because the impact of closing these plants would be catastrophic to the workers and their families and to their friends, neighbors and local communities.”

The measure is the Ohio Clean Air Program Bill (House Bill 6), introduced in January by Republicans Jamie Callender and Shane Wilkin. Among the bill’s proposals are provisions designed to help support carbon-free baseload energy generation at the state’s only two nuclear power stations—FirstEnergy Solutions’ Davis-Besse plant outside Toledo, and its sister facility, Perry, near Cleveland.

“Our sisters and brothers work hundreds of thousands of hours a year in these plants, providing the kind of carbon-free grid stability you don’t get anywhere else,” said Fourth District Vice President Brian Malloy. “Investing such a tiny amount in these plants and these workers will pay off many times over for the state of Ohio.”

Davis-Besse was the state’s first nuclear power station, a single-reactor facility that started operation in 1977.

If its Legislature fails to act, Ohio’s two nuclear plants, including Davis-Besse, above, could close, wiping out work for hundreds of IBEW members.

“About 400 IBEW members work there, with Toledo Local 8 providing construction and maintenance workers, along with members represented by Toledo Local 245 doing in-plant work and Toledo Local 1413 covering security workers. Coming online one decade after Davis-Besse, the Perry plant employs members of Paintsville, Ohio, Local 673, who perform construction and maintenance work there.

H.B. 6 calls for adding a modest $1 fee to the bill of every FirstEnergy customer in the state beginning in 2020. Most of that money would go toward helping sustain both nuclear plants, which have struggled financially in recent years due to plumping natural gas prices and energy pricing factors that disadvantage baseload generation.

“This is about jobs,” said Malloy, who noted that some of the funds raised by H.B. 6 also would benefit Buckeye State IBEW members by supporting job-creating solar energy generation projects, including five planned utility-grade solar farms. One of those is a 400-mega-watt American Electric Power facility in Highland County, set to be built in part by members of Portsmouth, Ohio, Local 57.

“This bill has been going back and forth in different versions for years,” said Fourth District International Representative Dave Moran, who testified in favor of the current measure during a May 22 state House Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing. (The IBEW’s Fourth District covers Ohio as well as the District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia.)

But interest groups for the gas industry like Americans for Prosperity and the American Petroleum Institute have been waging a full-bore battle against H.B. 6 and similar bills for a simple reason, Moran explained: “Allow the nuclear plants to close and gas would basically become the only game in town.”

The bill was approved on May 29 by the state’s full House of Representatives on a bipartisan 53-44 vote. “It was a big win for the IBEW,” Moran said. “But it wasn’t the end of it.”

Malloy agreed. “If you were to ask me a year ago if we could get a bill passed, I didn’t have a lot of hope,” he said. “But Local 245 Business Manager Larry Tscherne and Local 1413 Business Manager Brad Guettz never gave up. They kept it on the radar, which in turn kept me and other people focused on the issue.”

“Our local unions definitely stepped up and lobbied their representa-

tives. The members never let up. They know what’s at stake.”

In fact, IBEW activists across Ohio, in coordination with representatives of local and statewide trades councils, for months have made phone calls and attended key legislative hearings, Malloy said.

“We stressed that we are for ‘all of the above’: renewables, nuclear, gas,” he said. “We also stressed jobs, clean energy, and the devastation to communities if either of those plants close.”

In a July statement, FirstEnergy said it was “optimistic about the outcome” of H.B. 6, but without it, the closure threat lingered because the company remained unable to commit funds for Davis-Besse’s next scheduled refueling cycle. “Should we receive the long-term certainty that comes with an affirmative vote within this timeframe, we will imme-
diately reevaluate our options,” it said.

“If we don’t get this bill passed, both plants will close,” Moran said—Davis-Besse as early as next year, with Perry following suit in 2022.

As The Electrical Worker went to press, H.B. 6 had been sent to the Ohio Senate’s Energy and Public Utilities Committee for further consideration. “We have a lot of work left to do,” Malloy said.

Moran noted that Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine has stated that he is in favor of nuclear power and has generally signaled support for H.B. 6. IBEW activists have been hard at work, pressuring representatives from both political parties to support this job-saving bill and urging all of their Buckeye State brothers and sisters to do the same.

“No form letters or petitions, but one-on-one contact with the people that vote for them,” Malloy stressed. “It’s the personal touch that works.”

Moran said that Vice President Mal-
lloyd had himself personally contacted every local in Ohio. “We asked business managers from every branch of the IBEW to use their relationships with local politici-
ans,” he said. “We got a lot of support from every local so far. They are engaged because they know this affects all of us.”

Members in Ohio can visit...
The Electrical Worker  | August 2019

nuclear energy. Residents, fueled largely by persistent and storage of spent fuel that was sup-

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Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, bon-free nuclear energy and called for a

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nuclear reactors that we hope will come

port for the next generation of advanced

ergy at the DirecTV garage and call center in Boise. Thus far, results have been impressive.

Keyser was one of five witnesses called to testify before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environ-

ment and Climate Change, which is consider-

ng bills intended to help finally move forward the longstanding plans to allow Nevada’s Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository to accept spent nuclear fuel for permanent storage.

“We believe a permanent repository is necessary to ensure the public’s sup-

port for the next generation of advanced nuclear reactors that we hope will come

line in the near future, including small modular reactors,” Keyser said.

In 1982, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act directed the Department of Energy to

move spent nuclear fuel from temporary onsite storage facilities at commercial nuclear power plants and store it in a sta-

ble and lasting location. The department eventually designated Yucca Mountain, an extinct volcano in the middle of a des-

erat about 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, as its preferred site.

Delegates to the IBEW’s 95th Interna-

tional Convention in 1996 approved a reso-

lution in support of emission- and car-

bon-free nuclear energy and called for a

national nuclear waste disposal facility. Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, stores of Las Vegas Local 357 inside wire-

men worked alongside members of other building trades on and in the mountain, performing electrical maintenance on tun-

eling machines, wiring lights and upgrad-

ing fire prevention and alarm systems.

The actual process of transporting and storage of spent fuel that was sup-

posed to begin in early 1998 never got started, however, largely because of opposition from Nevada’s governors and residents, fueled largely by persistent myths and fears surrounding the safety of nuclear energy.

“We know that it’s safe. We know that IBEW members are in these facilities constantly. The high-water mark for indus-

trial safety is at these facilities,” Keyser said. “These are the types of family-sus-

aining careers that Americans are looking for and policymakers should support.”

Nearly 15,000 IBEW members work full time in more than 55 nuclear facilities, providing reliable base-load energy to com-

munities across the U.S., Keyser said. Thou-

sands more rotate through nuclear plants as maintenance and refueling support.

“We are the largest union in the nuclear industry,” said Keyser. “We repre-

sent most of the workers in nuclear gener-

ation. We have IBEW members doing core work, whether it’s in the plant operations, in electrical construction and capital improvements, and in the decommission-

ing of sites.”

Introduced in late spring, the Nucle-

ar Waste Policy Amendments Act (H.R. 2699) and the Storage and Transportation of Residual and Excess Act (H.R. 3356) are both intended to get the spent fuel stor-

age process moving again. The Spent Fuel Prioritization Act (H.R. 2955), introduced in May, calls for allowing the Department of Energy to begin construction of interim storage facilities in Texas and New Mexico to handle spent fuel from decommiss-

ioned reactors. That fuel is currently being kept in what were only meant to be temporary on-site storage facilities, a stopgap strategy that is costing taxpayers and utility customers millions of dollars.

“The opening of interim storage facilities would allow for the redevelop-

ment of shuttered nuclear plants,” Keyser said. “Many closed nuclear stations are ideal sites for future development of other forms of electrical generation, including renewables, due to the already existing electrical transmission infrastructure.”

If the myriad safety and political considerations surrounding Yucca Moun-

tain can be resolved, hundreds of IBEW electricians could find work installing and maintaining the facility’s lighting and alarm systems and as well as on con-

struction of buildings designed to accept canisters containing spent nuclear fuel.

“The IBEW would strongly prefer that Congress take action to open a per-

manent repository as soon as possible,” Keyser said, “but we recognize that pro-

viding authorization for interim facilities may be the best first step towards a nec-

essary comprehensive solution.”

Representatives from the nuclear industry, the environmental movement, the state of Nevada and the U.S. govern-

ment also offered testimony.
**My favorite part is getting people jobs, getting them raises and bringing in new contractors** — Kirk Groenendaal

Groenendaal said he was never going to stay a welder. He was forced to wait because there was no apprenticeship class after his senior year at Erie Local 56. His grandfather, Ed Sinnott, joined the local in the ‘30s and was both business manager in the ‘60s. Groenendaal’s cousins and uncles made up “half the damn local,” he said.

Now, after 44 years, he is about to be an IBEW electrician again. After a career hustling for the brotherhood, on Sept. 1, Groenendaal will relax.

When Groenendaal signed on in 1976 as a probationary apprentice, it was, he said, “the end of the peak;” that period in the IBEW's history where too many people thought the work, in his words, “couldn’t be done without us.”

“But the truth was, the attitude was widespread. But the ‘60s arrived and changed things. Like many of his generation, he topped out, got laid off and hit the road. But he always knew he wanted to follow his grandfather and do more than pay his dues. He became the youngest man on the executive board in 1983, he volunteered, and his offer was accepted.

But, Groenendaal said, while he was always ready to serve, he was never one to wait around. When that same business manager decided Groenendaal would run for the board again in 1987 — without asking him — Groenendaal told him he preferred to run for vice president. He ran anyway and won.

And he was never noncontroversial,” he said.

In 1982, Groenendaal became president, and when the order came from the International Office that every local needed a full-time organizer, Groenendaal voluntarily built himself.

Please join the officers and staff in wishing Brother Groenenda a long, healthy and airborne retirement.

**DECEASED**

Robert B. Wood

Retired Research and Education Department Director Robert Wood died in May at age 85. Brother Wood was born and raised in New Orleans and joined his hometown’s Local 39 when he was 19. He quickly gained a reputation for his craftsmanship and knowledge.

“He was extremely bright, extremely competent and extremely dedicated,” said Dale Dunlop, former executive assistant to International Secretary-Treasurer Jack Munich.

Wood joined the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve in 1952, topped out in 1957, made foreign within four years and began teaching the next generation of apprentices before his 30th birthday.

Then, Wood applied for the IBEW scholarship, supporting members seeking degrees in electrical engineering, then run by the Research and Education Department.

“He hadn’t heard back,” Dunlop said. “His business manager was coming to D.C., and he promised Bob he’d look into it.”

When the business manager asked what was up, Dunlop said, he was told then-Director Thomas Hanginan had something else in mind.

“He told the business manager that, instead of giving him the scholarship, they wanted to interview him for an open international representative position at the International Office,” Dunlop said. “Bob just impressed them.”

Wood was offered the job and moved his family to Washington in 1968. Two years later, he was promoted to assistant director and, two years after that, he replaced Hanginan as director.

He held the position from 1972 until retirement in 1994.

Wood did get the electrical engineering associate degree from Delgado Trade and Technical Institute, as well as a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial education from Northwestern State College.

When Dunlop came to D.C. in 1970, he and Wood shared an office.

“He was the brightest person in that building,” Dunlop said.

The Research and Education Department, in those days, was like the nervous system of the IBEW. It handled all the agreement research and comparative wage studies, supplied locals with data heading into negotiations and also prepared testimony before Congress, especially about illegal foreign trade practices.

Wood’s reputation spread, and he was appointed to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Advisory Committee and the Labor Department’s Trade Steering and Labor Sector Advisory Committees. He was also responsible for running the scholarship program that had inadvertently brought him to D.C.

“He could have done any other job in that building, but the leadership always wanted him there. It was a very important part of the operation, and they knew that Bob would always tell them the truth,” Dunlop said.

But the true measure of the man, Dunlop said, was not the high opinion of the people he reported to, but the respect and love he inspired in the people who worked for him.

“You look who got promoted in that building — directors and up — and so many came from his department. He never looked for praise for himself, but he was extremely good at getting attention, advancement and raises for his people,” Dunlop said. “He took care of his people. Those people in his department would do anything for him, and they would do anything for them.”

Brother Wood is survived by his wife, Bob Jr. and Mark of Jefferst, his wife, Pat, and his brother, Jim, who also served as a Local 62 member.

On behalf of the IBEW’s membership and staff, the officers offer our deepest sympathies to Brother Wood’s family.

**DECEASED**

HERMAN RAY HILL

Retired Seventh District International Representative Herman Ray Hill, a respected figure in Texas labor circles during 60 years of IBEW membership, died June 7 after becoming ill while attending the district’s Progress Meeting in San Antonio. He was 80.

“Somebody made the comment he was where he wanted to be,” said Seventh District International Representative Gary Buresh, who worked with Hill on the district staff and considered him a mentor. “He was with friends. I don’t think Ray ever missed a progress meeting unless he was sick, and he attended all the conventions.”

Born in Clarendon, Texas, Brother Hill moved with his family to Amarillo, Tex., in 1913 and stayed there the rest of his life. He worked in a grocery store and as a cotton picker and truck driver before entering the apprenticeship program at Amrillo Local 602 in 1957, eventually topping out as a journeyman inside wireman. He wasn’t long before he became a leader in his local union. Hill earned a seat on the examining and executive boards in 1965, became president in 1966 and was elected business manager in 1969.

Although he came up through the construction ranks, Hill quickly became familiar with all branches of the IBEW.

Retired Seventh District Vice President Orville Tate noted that Local 602 had members working in inside and outside construction, manufacturing, utilities and telecommunication. When he was taken off the rolls as a business manager, he was in charge of 35 bargaining units spread out across several hundred miles in west Texas.

“We serviced all that almost by himself,” Tate said. “He had just one assistant. He was very well-rounded. That’s why I hired him.”

That was in 1957, when Hill joined the Seventh District staff as an international representative and serviced locals throughout west Texas. Later in his career, he was in charge of training new stewards and business managers in the district and served as vice president.

“Ray was one of those people who took the time out and answered whatever questions you had,” Buresh said. “He made sure you understood why (the IBEW) did what it did and what it took to be successful.”

Hill also made a mark on labor and the construction industry outside of the IBEW. He was active in the Texas AFL-CIO from 1957-68 and vice president of the Texas Building Trades Council from 1972-83.

Tate said that allowed Hill to build relationships with contractors and other business groups, which helped avoid potential conflicts with management and IBEW partners.

“He was really popular around the state because of what he did with the electrical workers,” Tate said. “He just knew everyone. And when you know someone personally, you have a better chance to settle disputes before they get out of hand.”

Following retirement in 2002, Hill remained close to the Seventh District staff. Buresh said he was undergoing radiation therapy during a cancer battle for 19 years, but had been in good spirits recently, including when he showed up for the progress meeting.

But he fell ill at the meeting, Buresh said, and was taken to a local hospital, where he died a few days later. Hill is survived by his wife, Joan, four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Pat, and his brother, Jim, who also served as a Local 62 member.

In addition to his work for the IBEW, Hill served in the Texas Air National Guard from 1956-62, as a Democratic precinct committeeman in Amarillo and was involved in several charities during his career.

“He had a very good disposition,” said Tate, who spent time with him the night before he was taken to the hospital. “He did not fly off the handle easily and get mad. But he could get stern and be a little hard-headed, and that’s a good thing for the IBEW.”

The officers and staff extend their deepest condolences to Brother Hill’s family during this difficult time.
**LOCAL LINES**

**‘Welcome to Travelers’**

L.U. 8 (as,em,Jan,Mar,rt,sp,spa), TOLEDO, OHIO — The inside work scene in Toledo is strong with 100% employment and dozens of travelers helping us man our jobs. This will sustain us for the next several months at least, and perhaps longer as some projects have yet to break ground. We need welders and overhead crane operators especially and welcome the traveling brotherhood for good jobs in the Glass City.

Local 8 has secured a new and unprecedented written working agreement for the electrical supervisors employed by Day & Zimmermann at the Fermi Nuclear Plant. Previously, workers in those supervisor positions had become at-will employees, leaving them excluded from the parameters of the General President’s Project Maintenance Agreement (GPPMA) and proper representation.

The election of Local 8 officers recently concluded, with Roy B. Grosswiler re-elected as business manager and Eric Grosswiler as president. Other notables (and first time as officers) include: Vice Pres. Dominic Chamberlain, Fin. Sec. Ann Reek, and Treas. Perry Heister. Congratulations to everyone elected and best wishes in your leadership roles.

Please stay safe in all that you do and attend your union meetings.

Mike Brubaker, P.S.

**Festival & Family Picnic**

L.U. 16 (i), EVANSVILLE, IN — The 22nd Turkey Testicle Festival was once again held on the last weekend of April. It was a resounding success with over $31,000 raised for the year. This brings the grand total generated since its beginning to almost $310,000 for brothers and sisters in need.

Local 16 held its annual Family Picnic on May 19. Despite some challenging weather that morning, more than 320 people enjoyed great food, games, children’s activities, and the opportunity to renew old friendships. Two retired members, Donald L. Pyle and Anthony E. Russell, received pins recognizing their 65 years of service in the local. Retired member Vernon O. Seddon was acknowledged for his 70 years of IBEW service. Special thanks are due Carolyn Bittner and Sara Schapker for skillfully directing the kitchen and keeping everyone well fed.

Things have also been busy for the Political Action Committee. They have held a poker run, golf scramble, and raffles. Anyone interested in this great organization should come to the union hall on the second Tuesday of the month.

The IATF performed a neighborhood cleanup this spring. Thank you to all for making it shine!

Donald P. Beavin, P.S.

**Shop Stewards Training; Pension/Retirement Seminars**

L.U. 24 (es,jk,spa), BALTIMORE, MD — The local awarded service pins to those at the April union meeting, Bros. Santo Azzarelli and Richard Robbins were awarded their 60-year pins. Bros. Richard Jordan, Charles Klingelhofer and Bruce Parish were awarded their 50-year pins. Bro. Aaron Butcher received his 15-year pin.

On Tuesday, May 7, 27 members received Shop Stewards training put on by the International Office. This four-hour course covers all aspects of being a steward, from how to handle a possible grievance to the legal requirements that come with the job. I thank those who attended for getting involved.

The local held four retirement seminars for members over the age of 50. Three meetings were held in Baltimore and one was held on the Eastern Shore. Trustees, administrators and our Pension Fund consultants went over pension options as well as spousal benefits, retiree health care coverage and Social Security options. Members and their spouses attended, and dinner was served. The positive feedback was proof of how helpful these seminars can be when planning for the next phase of our life.

Thank you to all involved in making the seminars a success.

Peter P. Demchuk, B.M.

**Four Scholarships Awarded; 2019 Graduation Ceremony**

L.U. 26 (es,em,esg,js,mt), WASHINGTON, D.C. — Local 26 is proud to announce the four winners of this year’s scholarship award: Janiya Brooks, Sarah Byram, Sarah Donaldson and Molly Meador. Congratulations to all and stay tuned for further details in our next article.

Thank you to everyone who came out and enjoyed the Manassas, VA, picnic on June 22 and the fishing trip on July 13. The Maryland picnic will be Saturday, Aug. 24. The annual golf outing was June 3, with 550 golfers. Thank you to all who played, donated and volunteered. It was a successful event for a great cause, Dollars Against Diabetes.

Congratulations to the 2019 graduates of our JATC program and the “RT to a Upgrade” program. Graduation ceremonies were June 1 and there were 173 graduates. Best wishes to our new journeyman-electricians.


Sadly, several members passed away since our last article: John P. Mudd, Robert L. Simon, James C. Vitzher, Frank J. Thompson, Larry H. Cross and James T. Blanch.

George C. Hogan, B.M.

**Work Picture Update**

L.U. 38 (i), CLEVELAND, OHIO — Two-hundred Cleveland Building Trades members from multiple trades and over 80 IBEW Local 38 members came out with banners and signs at the grand opening of a new Menards store in Cleveland. The signs and banners were in protest to Menards not using a local workforce to build its new stores — and to educate the public about the company’s building policies. Many people beeped their horns in support as they drove by, and several people decided not to enter the store’s grand opening after learning about what Menards did. There have been multiple protests, and more are planned.

The work picture looks good for Cleveland. Over 100 IBEW members are currently working on the Rock-et Mortgage Field House (formerly the Quicken Loans Arena) expansion and renovation project. Members there are working for several different contractors including Einheit, Hizar, Speelman, United, and Lake-land Electric companies. More calls to the union hall for journeymen and technicians are expected for that job, as the project has to be completed before the opening of the Cleveland Cavaliers’ season.

The next phase of the East Bank Flats project on the Cuyahoga River will include apartments, cinemas and retail, and it is scheduled to start late this summer; Lake Erie Electric has the job.

Multiple other new projects are expected to start this fall.

Dennis Meaney, B.M./P.S.

**Trade Classifications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade Classification</th>
<th>Local Classification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alarm &amp; Signal</td>
<td>(es) Electronic Technician</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atomic Research Service</td>
<td>(fm) Fixture Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Operators</td>
<td>(govt) Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cable Splicers</td>
<td>(l) Inside</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cable Television</td>
<td>(It) Instrument Technicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>(lct) Line Clearance Trimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crane Operators</td>
<td>(bp) Lightning Protection Technicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical Equipment Maintenance</td>
<td>(mb) Maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electrical Inspection</td>
<td>(mo) Maintenance &amp; Operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical Manufacturing</td>
<td>(mow) Manufacturing Office Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Signs</td>
<td>(Mar) Marine</td>
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Efforts are made to make this list as inclusive as possible, but the various job categories of IBEW members are too numerous to comprehensively list all.
hard work and dedication to make this event happen. We also thank all of our event sponsors who generously donated.

Local 40 also held its annual fishing trip this summer, bringing the members together for a day out on the open sea — and demonstrating that the members are not just friends, but an extended family. The local thanks Bro. Frank Monzon, who each year has led the charge to organize and coordinate this event, making it the success it is.

Marc Flynn, B.M./F.S.

Celebrating Years of Service; Welcoming New IBEW Members

L.U. 46 (ac.tcu,em.gov,lttb,skl), HARTFORD, CT — July 2019 has been a busy seven months for members of Local 46. Several members are ready to advance to the next level of their careers, as the Apprenticeship Graduation was held Dec. 17 at Foxwoods Resort & Casino.

Those in attendance included: Eighth District Int. Vice Pres. Jerry Belaha; delegates from the Eight District office; Western Line Constructors Chapter NECA Exec. Dir./Chapter Mgr. Jules Weaver; and the Mountain States Line Constructors Apprenticeship & Training JATC board of trustees.

This state-of-the-art training center has: a large classroom (which can be divided) that features state-of-the-art technological teaching aides and can seat 250 homeless and hungry in the community. The building; and hands-on training equipment including the ability to expand and grow as needed. Future training equipment may include a back hoe, as works in progress to add more equipment.

The future is indeed bright!

Dwight Rose, Mbr. Dev.

Motorcycle Ride Fundraiser; Apprenticeship Graduation

L.U. 42 (cat.em.gov,lttkb), HARTFORD, CT — Hay- way through 2019 and things at Local 42 are as busy as ever. Our work picture is booming with both trans- mission and distribution working overtime. There is railroad and substation work as well.

Local 42 held its annual Dinner Dance/Apprenticeship Graduation on April 13. Congratulations to the class of 2019 apprenticeship graduates: Joseph Carasone III, Howard Duffy, Steven Wysocki and John B. Peacock.

Local 42 held its 45th annual motorcycle ride and poker run, to benefit the Bridgeport Burn Center Hospital. This year Local 42’s 50th anniversary, and we are planning a huge dinner gala/celebration to be held Dec. 7 at Foxwoods Resort & Casino.

Regrettably, we must report the loss of several Local 42 brothers: Howard Duffy, Steven Wysocki and retirees George Breede, Leo “Bobby” Faucher and John “Tummy” Bullock. We extend condolences to their families.

Derek Santa Lucia, P.S.

New JATC Training Center

L.U. 44 (cat.em.gov,lttkb,skl), BUTTE, MT — On April 26 this year, a grand opening was held for the new Stan I. Dupree Training Center in Helena, MT.

Those in attendance included: Eighth District Int. Vice Pres. Jerry Belaha; delegates from the Eighth District office; Western Line Constructors Chapter NECA Exec. Dir./Chapter Mgr. Jules Weaver; and the Mountain States Line Constructors Apprenticeship & Training JATC board of trustees.

This state-of-the-art training center has: a large classroom (which can be divided) that features state-of-the-art technological teaching aides and can seat up to 80 people; a large break room; an indoor lab building; and hands-on training equipment including a Three Phase Innovations scale-model Mobile Cabin- net transformer, training equipment that will help both the apprentices and journeyman linemen.

The Helena center currently has about 100 apprentices in the apprenticeship training program. Recent years have seen an increasing number of apprentices, making the old training center too small. JATC instructor Tim Newman noted that the old training center was 2,200 square feet, and the new facility is about 7,700 square feet, with the ability to expand and grow as needed. Future training equipment may include a back hoe, as works in progress to add more equipment.

The future is indeed bright!

Dwight Rose, Mbr. Dev.

Satellite Office Opens

L.U. 70 (lkkb), WASHINGTON, DC — In March of 2018, Bus. Mgr. Bill Tipton opened a Local 70 satellite office in Virginia. It has been more than a year now since that office opened, and we are still getting a positive response from the membership and contractors regarding the satellite location. It is a big help for our members who live in Virginia or go to work there. The new office saves those members a trip through traffic in Washington, D.C. The membership thanks Bill and his staff for the great job they are doing going into his fifth year in office.

George A. Embrey, B.R./Exam. Board

Locals 40 Golf Tournament co-chairs Dustin Little (at podium) and Tyler Lane (standing, left) welcome participants at the tournament reception in June.

Newly Elected Officers

L.U. 68 (l), DENVER, CO — Greetings, brothers and sisters. On Saturday, June 1, Local 68 held its election of officers and also elected delegates to the IBEW 40th International Convention.


The Local 68 Retirees Club held their last meeting before summer break with a presentation of IBEW service pin awards. Retirees were honored for IBEW service ranging from 50 years to 65 years. Awards were presented for a combined total of 770 years of service. Congratulations to all honorees and their families.

Warren Shill V.P.

Volunteers Serve Community

L.U. 50 (l), RICHMOND, VA — IBEW Local 50 RENEW members and the Executive Board participated in a volunteer event with Grace & Holy Trinity Church in Richmond on Friday, March 8, this year.

Every Friday, the church feeds between 100 and 250 homeless and hungry in the community. The church relies heavily on the college students from nearby Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) for many of its volunteers. Local 50 coordinated with VCU social work internship, Savannah Williams, planning the volunteer event. However, on the weekend of March 8, many of the VCU students were away for spring break. Our IBEW Local 50 volunteers assisted with preparing and serving food, washing dishes, and other cleanup, such as vacuuming and mopping. Our volunteers also assisted at the church’s Red Door Clothes Closet, which is open to all people in need, bringing donations of men’s clothing. They also

helped with the Friday distribution of personal care items, such as soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc.

RENEW Committee Chair. Dustin Saider said that he was “extremely proud of our local for the impact made in our community today.”

Thank you to Bus. Rep. Doug Williams for con- tributing information for this article.

IBEW Local 50 volunteers, joined by VCU intern Savannah Williams (center). Front row, Hunter Wells, S. Williams, Noelie Young; middle row, Brandon Coleman, Howard Ellis, Mark Flowers, Doug Williams; at rear, Dustin Saider.

IN SHORT

IBEW Local 46 aware in 89 new members at the New Member Orientation in May.

Noted Traditions of Excellence

L.U. 80 (lkkb), NORFOLK, VA — Local 80 is embarking on its 120th anniversary as of May 19.

Notably, one of our signatory contractors that has also stood the test of time will celebrate its cen- tennial in 2020. E.G. Middleton Inc. spans three genera- tions as a company, with the next generation learning the industry. Middleton’s reputation for per- forming quality work over the last 100 years in Hamp- ton Roads, VA, warrants satisfied repeat customers, and in some cases at the same location years later.

For example, 32-year local union member Bro. Simon Bettenger, who as an apprentice started his career at the Norfolk AT&T Building, is now general foreman for Middleton performing electrical upgrades for the same customers.

The current Norfolk AT&T Building project started in late May 2018 and includes installation of newelec- trical service and major, large-scale electrical upgrades. With all the major electrical system changes, a project of this size and complexity takes a total team effort.

Congratulations to Bro. Simon Bettenger and his crew of 10 electrical workers on performing their tasks safely and productively while keeping the origi- nal power and equipment online without interrup- tion. This project is scheduled to be significantly com- pleted this summer — just another reminder of superior leadership and quality IBEW craftsmanship at its finest.

Local 80 hosted its annual picnic on May 4. There was a good turnout, and everyone enjoyed the festivities.

Recent contract negotiations went well, and we secured a three-year contract.

We are continuing to organize new members in our shipyards, naval facilities and non-union shops.

We mourn the loss of member Paul Chapman, who passed away April 17, 2019. Our condolences go out to his family.

Will Morris, A.B.M.
**LOCAL LINES**

**‘Help Save a Brother’s Life’**

L.U. 90 (l), NEW HAVEN, CT — Greetings, brothers and sisters.

Work in our jurisdiction remains steady. A project labor agreement was signed with General Dynamics, for the new construction of the South Yard assembly building at the electric boat yard in Groton, CT. Various projects are underway at Yale University.

Our Local 90 membership outing is Sept. 7, at Camp Mountain Mist in Meriden, CT.

Sadly, one of our members is in need of a live kidney donor with type “O” blood. The member’s name is Clifford O’Connell. Bro. O’Connell has 29 years of service with Local 90. A dedicated family man, he has a wife, Andrea, and a daughter, Erin. Time is of the essence for Bro. O’Connell. The waiting list for a donor is five to seven years. His life is on the line! If anyone can help Clifford, please call the Hartford Hospital donor coordinator at 860-972-9918.

We wish all members and their families a safe and enjoyable summer!

John Bellemare, Pres./Bus. Agent

**IBEW Substation Journeymen**

L.U. 108 (ees,em,es,ict,mar,mt,rbt,ts,spa,spa18u), TAMPA, FL — Congratulations to our substation electricians who recently achieved journeyman status and are employed by Tampa Electric, an Emera company. IBEW Local 108 is extremely proud of these guys, who worked hard to achieve journeyman status as substation electricians. These men are a huge asset to the company as a whole. They have definitely raised the bar on professionalism in the industry. Congratulations, guys! We are proud of you.

Bruce Bailey, P.S.


Local 90 member Clifford O’Connell with daughter Erin.

**‘Powering Chicago’ — IBEW & ECA Serve Community**

L.U. 134 (catv,em,govt,i,mt,rtb,rts,spa&t), CHICAGO, IL — IBEW Local 134 and the Electrical Contractors’ Association of City of Chicago’s LMCC, Powering Chicago, continues to positively impact the community we serve. Just in the first few months of 2019, we’ve partnered with the Chicago White Sox to provide a unique, one-of-a-kind experience to families in need, and we’ve worked with Special Olympics to ensure this year’s athletes received their materials in time for the annual games.

Not only did IBEW Local 134 members and the Electrical Contractors’ Association of Chicago donate time and resources for the annual Rebuild Together Metro Chicago event in late April, but through our partnerships with the White Sox, we also were able to give four tickets and Sox gear to each of the 75 families who were impacted by the event. For the past 25 years we’ve made it an annual tradition to give back to those who help us, along with other union trades, through Rebuild Chicago.

Special Olympics has a history that dates back to the summer of 1968, when the first games were held in Chicago — so, it’s only fitting that we donated our Local 134 union hall’s space as a staging ground to hand out shirts to the 4,000 athletes participating this year.

Kevin Connolly, R.S.

**Political Action is Key**

L.U. 124 (ees,em,mc,arl,fs,spa,sp), KANSAS CITY, MO — In Jefferson City, MO, our state legislators have completed another session where only a few gains for working families were successfully passed. We did avoid a few anti-worker bills like reducing unemployment benefits, misclassification of workers, prevailing wage by county, and “right-to-work” by county. It is very difficult to stop all of the anti-worker legislation.

The simplest solution to this problem is to elect labor-friendly candidates. Please vote. One labor-friendly elected official on the Kansas side is Gov. Laura Kelly. She is working with a Republican-majority legislature trying to restore Kansas to a functioning state after the failed Brownback tax experiment. We wish her luck.

The Local 124 apprenticeship class of 2019 celebrated graduation and advanced to journeyman status. Congratulations to our newest journeyman brothers and sisters. In solidarity.

Steven Morales, P.S.

**Apprentice Graduates Honored**

Decatur, IL, Local 146 congratulates class of 2019 apprentice graduates. Front row: graduates Richard Kott, Tanner Miller, Tyler Murphy, Tyler Cotten, Adam Gensler, Brandon Bryant, Kevin Rhodes, Tom Tripp, Darren Allin, Allen Presley. Back row: Bus. Mgr. Josh Saps; Training Dir. Jason Drake; Robert Berry, JATC secretary/NECA; graduates Don Brown, Jon Burckhardt, Jon Kuester, Blake Davis, Jon Weddle, Alan Handy, Jacob Gough and Paul Grubb; Blain O’Connell, NECA; and Justin Martin, JATC chair/IBEW.

**National Rebuilding Day — IBEW Members Volunteer**

L.U. 164 (c,em,LoK), JERSEY CITY, NJ — On Saturday, April 27, Local 164 once again participated in National Rebuilding Day, a day of community service organized by Rebuilding Together, a national organization dedicated to helping homeowners stay safe, warm and independent in their homes. The organization assists those who cannot maintain their homes for themselves, including veterans, and also assists various community service-based nonprofit facilities.

Our members come out every year and give of their time to help with the Rebuilding Together project and serve the community. It is an amazing day of brotherhood and camaraderie.

It takes many weeks in preparation for the big day and doesn’t get done without the members. Hudson County is coordinated by Bro. Victor Baradacco Jr. Essex County is coordinated by Bros. Earl Rush, Bergen County is coordinated by Bros. Mike McCarthy and Warren Becker. But it doesn’t get done without the over 500 members who make it happen.


Warren Becker, V.P.

**New Contract Ratified**

L.U. 212 (l), CINCINNATI, OHIO — Bus. Mgr. Rick Fischer, Bus. Agent Chad Day and Pres. Jason Mishcke presented the terms of a newly negotiated 5-year contract at a special meeting May 14, 2019. The new contract, ratified by the membership, includes a raise of $10 over six years and institutes a new option for a NEP $425k plan. Our new wage starting June 3 will be $90.18 per hour.

Our work outlook remains steady with 60 on Book and five on Book 2. This summer, new work at CVG (Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport) and Amazon Prime Air will continue to keep us busy.

There is also speculation about a possible new Hard Rock Hotel, following Hard Rock International’s acquisition of Jack Casino and Turfway Park.

Our two Activate Health & Wellness Centers continue to be an important resource. They have helped our members save on the cost of routine visits, as well as prescription medications.

Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley spoke at our JATC facility. He announced a plan for all future solar work to be done at prevailing wage.

As always, I challenge you to get active. Our union is not a spectator sport!

Phil Bovard, P.S.

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Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley (at podium) speaks at Local 212 JATC event. He is flanked by Local 212 Bus. Mgr. Rick Fischer (back row, center, in blue IBEW shirt), Bus. Agent Chad Day (front row, in dark jacket) and others.
Apprenticeship Graduation

L.U. 234 (lmts), CASTROVILLE, CA — We here at Local 234 are pleased to report on another graduating class of apprentices. Graduation was held May 24. Our members who have truly distinguished themselves as graduates are: for Sound & Communication — Adrian Mendoza; and for Inside — Saby Cupples (overall Outstanding Apprentice for the five-year program), David Durbin, Ivan García-Ponce (Outstanding Fifth-Year Apprentice), Michael Gruber, Andres Laureano, and Patrick Ortiz (perfect attendance). These gentlemen, who are well prepared to follow their predecessors, will go forth as journey- men to build bridges, roads and schools, hospitals, businesses, and utilities, and also to replace our aged-out infrastructure, all of which we so badly need.

Our graduates received generous donations from electrical industry suppliers Milwaukee, Fluke, Ideal, Platt, and Klein. In addition, our Labor Management Cooperation Committee (LMCC) will send Sabyn Cupples to NTI this summer.

Also attending the celebration were our outstanding apprentices for each class and their guests. Those apprentices were as follows: 1st year class — Darien Rosbach, 2nd year class — Gilberto Espindola, 3rd year — Kevin Rategan, 4th year — Jeff Beers, and 5th year class — Ivan García-Ponce.

On behalf of our Local 234 members, their families, our staff, and all IBEW members, we extend sincere congratulations to the Local 234 graduates and to all graduating IBEW apprentices.

Stephen Slavicek, P.S.

JATC Graduating Class

L.U. 270 (lko), OAK RIDGE, TN — At this writing, our work picture looks very good. We are working several traveling brothers and sisters and expect to put many more to work in the next few months.

Local 270 recently hosted a fish fry for our retirees. We thank retired member Rick Berrong for catching all the fish that was eaten. We had close to 100 people in attendance and the event was a great success.

IBEW Local 270 congratulates our newest class of apprenticeship graduates on becoming journeyman wiremen. These recent Oak Ridge Electrical JATC graduates are top-notch and have a bright future in store.

We also congratulate Kevin Lawlor, an IBEW member and Oak Ridge Electrical JATC teacher, on his upcoming retirement. Bro. Lawlor has taught for 30 years and has passed down his knowledge to so many of our members throughout the years. He will be greatly missed.

Jake Lequire, R.S.

‘A Banner Year’

L.U. 301 (lirs&spa), MARTINEZ, CA — This year’s apprenticeship graduation dinner was held May 30.

That night, 12 inside wiremen and five sound and communication installers graduated from our apprenticeship programs. [Photo of banner, right]

Congratulations to our new journeymen and installers for their hard work, commitment and success. The recent graduates are: Michael Alvarez, Zachary Beason, Drew Crider, Gary Cruz, Walter Duran, Jeremiah Lesmeister-Neckel, Tyler Lightfoot, A.J. McNally, Patrick Murray, Jerick Page, Lenathan Pak, Bryce Perez, Ryan Roos, Lou Saephan, David Trowell, Isaac Westphal and Thomas Young.

We wish them all the best as they start a new chapter in their careers.

Melissa Vaughn, R.S.

Outreach to Community; New Contract Negotiated

L.U. 236 (lmts,gov,lon,rtb&l), ALBANY, NY — After a tough set of sessions, we have negotiated a contract that will carry us into 2022. A survey sent out to the membership revealed that focus needed to be changed within the IBEW to put more emphasis on the importance of quality products used in administration.

We made every effort to make that happen.

Our work picture continues to improve after a slow winter, with large projects such as Regeneron on the horizon that will provide a large number of electricians with work.

Our members continue to improve our community and the image of the IBEW through various committees. The Community Outreach Committee filed for nonprofit status to provide additional ability to benefit those who need it most. The RENEW Committee seeks to engage our youngest members in brotherhood and show them that we are more than just a place to provide a job; we are a place to provide a second family.

Thanks to everyone who has been a part of Local 236, and we strive to make it a better place for electricians to be every day.

Michael Martell, Exec. Board

Training Classes For A Technology Driven Future

L.U. 332 (lirs&lko), SAN JOSE, CA — In anticipation of the next major transition of our industry, IBEW Local 332 has made a valuable and significant investment in our ability to modernize our workforce by offering a series of classes covering current industry solutions using digital technology. The classes will range from a course in basic computer skills to advanced applications of Bluebeam, Revit, PlanGrid, and a variety of Microsoft office products used in administration.

In addition to teaching fundamental functions for each of these programs, all these courses will be taught from a field application perspective, increasing our workforce’s efficiency and productivity through better communication and collaboration methods.

While this is an important first step, there is a lot of ground we will need to cover, given rapidly changing technology in an evolving industry. Computers are now a pivotal foundation of how our projects are built and are largely steering the industry toward destinations that are currently unknown. The opportunity exists for our electrical workforce to take the reins and steer this trend in a direction that will benefit not only our current market share, but also our future prosperity.

Chris Doyle, JATC Sr. Instructor

Apprenticeship Graduates

L.U. 302 (lirs&spa), SACRAMENTO, CA — Local 302 held a combination Open House/Pin Party in early May to celebrate our new facility and to honor the Local 302 members (past and present) who made it all happen.

One of this year’s recipients was former Local 302 member Alan Aguirre. Another recipient was local member Timmy Beck. A great number of apprentices accepted their pins. Congratulations to everyone who helped made it all happen.

Celebrating Past, Present ... And a Bright IBEW Future

L.U. 340 (lirs&spa), SAVANNAH, GA — Local 340 held a combination Open House/Party in early May to celebrate our new facility and to honor the Local 340 members (past and present) who made it all happen.

One of this year’s recipients was former Local 340 member Karen Williams. She was honored for her contributions to the IBEW and for her dedication to the local union.

Local 340 has made great strides in recent years, and we are excited to see what the future holds for the Local 340 members.

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Local 270 congratulates new journeyman wireman graduates. From left are: Michael Ward, Derek Bunch, Bill Barber (apprentice of the year), Training Dir. Daniel Smith, Lori Duggan Weeks, Isaac Huling and Reece Hughes. Not pictured: Dalton Hamilton and Kadi Stephens.

Local 280 assisted with Oregon state Rep. Dan Rayfield’s parade float, which featured the “Polkaticans” band, for the Portland Rose Festival Starlight Parade.

Local 302 congratulates the recent apprenticeship graduating class.
Administration has now moved into its new location.

To be held at the Local 424 office in Edmonton on June 23, the ballot count was scheduled for the candidates who put their names forward. As this article went to press, the ballot count was 533.

The following brothers and sisters graduated on May 23: Inside graduates — Tyler Braher, Reese Colaneri, Jason Cymbal, David Duffin, Jacob Rippi, Garrett Robbins, Eric Sanford, Keith Schwyn, Charles Schonfeldt, Heidi Steiner, Kate Stiles, Jacob Rippi, Garrett Robbins, Eric Sanford, Keith Schwyn, Charles Schonfeldt, Heidi Steiner, Kate Stiles, and David Duffin.

Congratulations to all the graduates on successfully completing their JATC apprenticeship. Graduates Heidi Steiner (Inside) and Patrick Swejk (Telecom) were 2019 Apprentice of the Year Award recipients.

Good wishes to all graduates on their IBEW careers.

Rob Williams, R.S., P.S.

Ongoing Commercial Projects; Building Renovation Complete

L.U. 494 (em,govt,i,mt,rt,spa&u), MILWAUKEE, WI — Since 2000, recycling little aluminum tabs from the tops of soda cans has generated over $360,000 for the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Eastern Wisconsin Inc. Ronald McDonald House Charities is an independent nonprofit organization whose stated mission is to create, find, and support programs that directly improve the health and well-being of children. The organization provides a place to stay for families with hospitalized children under 21 years of age (or 18, depending on the house), who are being treated at nearby hospitals and medical facilities. Revenue from recycling these little bits of aluminum helps us keep families close to the resources they need to thrive. Selling pop tabs is easy! They’re compact, with a high concentration of recyclable aluminum.

Member James Turdo of Utilitech Electric and his daughter Jenna Turdo delivered 118 pounds of tabs to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Eastern Wisconsin’s tab toss booth. Thank you to all the Local 494 members who donated pop tabs to benefit Ronald McDonald House Charities.

John Z. Zapf, Political Dir.

Donation for New VFW Building

L.U. 640 (em,govt,m,rtts,spa&u), PHOENIX, AZ — The work outlook in Phoenix is still strong. We thank all of our traveling brothers and sisters who have helped us man our work throughout this boom.

Our organizers have been working hard to bring in new members and we have seen a substantial increase in our membership since January of 2018.

On Memorial Day, Local 640 was proud to present a $10,000 check to the VFW post members from Tolleson, AZ, to help them build a new VFW post.

[Photo at bottom, right] They have not had a place to call their own, and with land donated to build a post, we wanted to assist in keeping the construction project moving forward. We value our veterans and are going to do everything we can to help them.

Tim Wilson, B.R., P.S.

Members Ratify Contracts

L.U. 702 (as,c,catv,cs,em,es,et,govt,i,it,lctt,mo,mt,o,p,pt,rc,t,rtb,rtts,se,spa,st,t,u,uow&ws), WEST FRANKFORT, IL — On Saturday, June 1, newly toppled out journeyman lineman Brennan McCord won the T-H Marine FLW Bass Fishing League All-American Tournament on the Potomac River. This first-place finish came with a $10,000 check.

Local 640 Bus. Mgr. Dean Wine (front, center) and Pres. Delbert Hawk (front, left) present check to the members of VFW Post 6330.

Conclusion

At the Local 340 Open House/Pin Party in May. Attendees included former business manager A.C. Steelman (back row, second from right, in pink shirt) and current Bus. Mgr. Bob Ward (back row, sixth from right, in suit and tie).

With the help of Bob’s support and my family’s support, I was able to pull through this process with my head held high and a smile on my face.

Thank you to all."
Local 702 member Brennan McCord (third from left) displays his championship fishing trophy. With him are family members and friends, including his father Neil (left) and mother Keli (second from left), who are both Local 702 members.

$100,000 check and the opportunity to be a “spon- sored” fisherman for the next year. Congratulations to Brennan for this tremendous accomplishment.

Earlier this year, members at Vectren ratified a new three-year agreement with annual wage increases of 2.75%, 2.75%, and 3.0%, while our Ameen Illinois members recently approved a two-year contract extension that contained annual wage increases of 2.5% each year, but is contingent on the amend- ment/extension of Illinois Senate Bill 1652 from the 2011 legislative session.

Members at Tri-County Electric Cooperative ratified a five-year contract with annual wage increases of 2.5%, 2.5%, 3.0%, 3.0%, and 3.25%, while the IBEW negotiators, and our representa tion of IBEW representation. We are currently in negotiations, and our team is more than up to the task. It has been an exciting challenge and the workers deserve all the credit.

We participated again this year in the Dubuque Area Labor Management Construction Expo. The building trades unions came together to show over 400 high-school students the trades with hands-on activi ties. Our workstation included conduit bending and wiring up a junction box. We believe this promotion is not only good for the students, but it also gives them a look at what we do.

Lastly, we congratulate Don “Sarge” Rausch on his retirement. Don is a 44-year member and has been the local union treasurer for the last 37 years! It’s incredible to think about how many apprentices Don has trained over the years. At our May meeting, the local presented Don with a recognition plaque for his many years of service to our local.

David Becker, P.S.

Apprenticeship Graduates

L.U. 760 (Lutturt/spark), KNOXVILLE, TN — Local 760 congratulates recent apprenticeship graduates of the Electrician Training Academy at Knoxville (ETAK).

The recent graduates include: Zachary Beard, Tyler Collier, Adam Crawhörn, Philip Daugherty, William Gamble, Mitchell Jenkins, Rhonda Johnson, Clinton Jones, Abel Lupescu, Ryan Oakley, Christopher Phillips, Jacob Sercovich, Richard Smith, Wesley Smith, Austin Stinnett, William Watson and Joshua Welch. Additionally, five veterans were among the graduates: Billy Decker, David Farmer, David Fellows, Zachary Hawkins and Erik Hunt.

Graduate Rhonda Johnson had perfect attendance. David Farmer, outstanding graduate, obtained a 95.5 grade average. William Gamble and Wesley Smith are already pursuing training for the EPRI Instrumentation Level A exam.

Speakers at the graduation ceremony included: Local 760 Business Manager Tim Tate; Chaser Pendergraft, East Tennessee Chapter NCEA; Jack Rolling, Milwaukee Tool; Dr. Anthony Wise, president of Pellissippi State Community College; JCAT Chmn. Wayne Wojciechowski; and Local 760 Pres. Larry Cole.

Dr. Wise presented certificates to all graduates who have earned 45 semester hours of credit toward an associate degree. Sue Wojciechowski presented ETAK $990 to register each graduate for the 57 semester hours of “recommended” college credit with the American Council on Education.

Congratulations to all the graduates on achieving their new journeyman wireman status and keep ing the IBEW strong.

How to Reach Us

We welcome letters from our readers. The writer should include his or her name, address and, if applicable, IBEW local union number and card number. Family members should include the local union number of the IBEW member to whom The Electrical Worker is mailed. Please keep letters as brief as possible. The Electrical Worker reserves the right to reject letters for publication and edit all submissions for length.

Send letters to:
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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.

Local 702 member Brennan McCord (third from left) displays his championship fishing trophy. With him are family members and friends, including his father Neil (left) and mother Keli (second from left), who are both Local 702 members.

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Jason Leary, A.B.M.
Ontario Volunteers Make Life-Changing Journey to Guatemala

Five thousand miles from the building codes and safety rules of Ontario, Canada, the team of IBEW electricians had never seen anything quite like the dormitories for older students from a Guatemalan children’s home. Live wires draped from walls and ceilings; nothing was grounded; breakers were shot and overload protection was dangerously inadequate. Girls were even getting mild electric shocks in their showers.

Some of the kindest people they’d ever met were counting on them to fix it all in 10 days’ time. Not only were they determined to do that and more, each one paid $2,700 from his own pocket for the privilege.

Kitchener, Ontario, Local 804 retiree Jerry Wilson would happily do it again.

“One hundred percent of our people who went there felt so rewarded and fulfilled,” said Wilson, who pitched the trip to fellow members of the local’s retiree club. “We were all blown away by how much we accomplished in a short time.”

Wilson and his wife, Terry, were among 13 volunteers who made the April journey to Parramos, Guatemala, 60 miles inland from the Pacific coast.

The group included nine electricians — five retirees, three active Local 804 journeymen and one apprentice — along with three family members and a coordinator from the charity that arranged the trip, Friends of the Orphans Canada.

Their destination was Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos NPH, which translates to “Our Little Brothers and Sisters,” a children’s home and school that impressed its visitors beyond all expectations.

They were awed by the depth of the loving care, creative therapies and abundant learning opportunities for the vulnerable children — some whose parents had died, but most removed from troubled families.

They marveled at the radiant smiles and joyful spirits of people who had next to nothing materially.

“It was a life-changing experience to realize how little some people in this world have and how fortunate we are, basically because of where we were born,” said Local 804 retiree Neil Whittaker.

“Even though they didn’t have much, they were all happy, and they were immensely grateful for anything we did.”

Examples of the team’s challenges, from top, an original main panel, the switch for an outside light, a common type of wiring; and some of the many holes that had to be drilled through concrete walls and ceilings.

One highlight of her return was work- ing with her daughter and Wendy Whittaker on the sensory garden that she said is designed “to be very welcoming for chil- dren with special needs — lots of bright flowers for them to touch and smell.”

She found compassion and tender- ness everywhere she looked.

“The whole time we were there, we did not hear anyone being chastised or punished or ridiculed or made fun of,” she said, speaking both of patient growth-ups and the kindness young residents showed each other.

Although poverty and trauma were largely what brought them to NPH, “They were the happiest, happiest children and adults that I have ever had the pleasure of spending time with,” Terry Wilson said.

The group basked in its stay with two days of guided sightseeing, travel- ing to Mayan ruins and open-air markets and taking in the largest Palm Sunday parade in Central America. They spent evenings socializing with the home’s vol- unteers, sometimes led in song by Jerry Wilson and daughter Shannon Brinkman on guitars.

The gratitude as they departed was palpable. The girls gave them homemade bracelets and the boys presented a piece of artwork featuring the flags of Canada and Guatemala.

“There were tears,” Jerry Wilson said. “They thanked us for improving their lives. It felt good knowing that we left their home in much better condition than when we arrived.”