

Newsletter of the AFL-CIO

Central New York Labor Council

Serving the Mohawk Valley since 1882

July-August 2013

Because activities at the Labor Council typically wind down a bit in the summer months, starting this year, the July and August issues of the newsletter will be combined into a single summer issue.

Welcome back! UFCW rejoins AFL-CIO

After 8 years in a move to restore unity to the labor movement, the United Food and Commercial Workers have reaffiliated with the AFL-CIO. This increases the ranks of the AFL-CIO by well over a million members. Said UFCW president Joe Hansen: “The need for unity became paramount after the 2010 elections. The attacks on workers brought the UFCW into direct strategic partnership with the AFL-CIO and the entire labor movement. Our shared campaign revealed a dynamic and revitalized AFL-CIO and made it clear that it was time for the UFCW to redouble our efforts to build a more robust and unified labor movement.”



His words were vigorously echoed by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumpka who added “Today’s decision by the UFCW to unite with the broader labor movement is great news for workers living in the ‘new normal’ of the low wage economy—working women, young part time workers, retail workers, immigrant workers and so many more. A stronger, more unified grassroots movement of working men and women is exactly what’s needed to raise wages for workers and rebuild an American middle class. Together we are stronger—it’s as simple as that. Together working people have a stronger voice and the power to defend their rights on the job. Together we have a stronger



voice in the global economy—the power to counter the excesses of CEOs and the ravages of inequality.”

When originally formed in 2005, Change to Win included SEIU, UNITE HERE (garment, hotel, and restaurant workers), UFCW, United Farm Workers, Laborers, Carpenters, and the Teamsters. Since then UNITE HERE and Laborers have rejoined the AFL-CIO and the Carpenters have disaffiliated with Change to Win. The AFL-CIO’s Trumpka has repeatedly stressed the need for unity in the labor movement and the CNY Labor Council has lived by that. Even before this week’s momentous news, the UFCW locally has had a strong presence in the person of Labor Council secretary and Labor Agency board member Smantha DiRiso. When asked for a comment on the news, Frank Deriso, president of UFCW Local One said “It’s long overdue. You can’t be a strong labor organization with splinters in it. We’re glad to be back.” The council has been and will continue to work with all members of organized labor because the name of the game for all workers is UNITY.



Distinguished Service Award Dinner

Get your nominations, reservations, and advertisements in to the Council ASAP!

Our sixth annual Distinguished Service Award Dinner will be held on Friday September 13, 2013, at UFCW, Local One Headquarters, 5911 Airport Road, Oriskany, NY. The Award Dinner is designed to recognize local union members and labor activists who have worked hard within their locals or within the community to advance the cause of working men and women. Right now it appears that there will be 11 recipients who are selected by their own locals for this prestigious honor. We look forward to a wonderful evening of good fellowship and solidarity on the 13th.

In addition to the awarding of the Gompers medals, we are using this occasion to collect non-perishable food items and money for the Veterans Outreach Center. Both



are of course greatly appreciated but keep in mind that food banks generally are able to purchase much more food per dollar than are regular consumers. So a monetary donation can have a greater impact... and it's much easier to carry. ;=)) See you there!

IBEW & friends pour at Saranac Thursday to benefit the local United Way

Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. To understand the truth in that statement, just look below.



Sporting brand new tee shirts that display the United Way's "Live United" mantra and that shout out union pride on the back, members of IBEW Local 43, headed by Council President Pat Costello, were joined by some good friends to serve beer at Saranac Thursday. This was the second labor effort this season at these popular Thursday events that raise money for the United Way. Just like any good union, the United Way is dedicated to bettering the lives of the people it serves. So this pairing of union members and a fundraiser for the United Way



is a "marriage made in heaven." In fact, the Council is proud to be a partner with the United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area and works closely with the United Way in many of its outreach activities. Partnerships such as this help to better the lives of all who live in the Mohawk Valley.



United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area

If you've never helped with "pouring" at a Saranac Thursday event, consider doing it the next time your local or the Council is on the schedule. It's loads of fun and it couldn't be for a better cause.

Another Heart Run/Walk Union Award

Congratulations to the Laborers International Union of North America, Local #35, for having the most team members in the union team category of America's Greatest Heart Run and Walk for 2013. The LIUNA earned the right to possess the Sam Marchio Memorial Trophy for one year and have its name permanently engraved on it. Also, the LIUNA will have its name permanently engraved on a plaque housed at the Central New York Labor Agency. Pictured on the facing page are some of the LIUNA team members.



Back row: L-R, Robert Daley, recording secretary; Rob Ruggerio, vice-president; Dan Wellington, president; Carmen Nicotera, Jr., business manager, secretary treasurer. Front row: L-R, Francis T. Roy, union team competition chairman; Joseph DiFillippo, executive board member; Robert Ritter, executive board member; Tom Christman, executive board member.

Labor Quotes of the Month

"At Costco, we know that paying employees good wages makes good sense for business."

"We pay a starting hourly wage of \$11.50 in all states where we do business, and we are still able to keep our overhead costs low."

"An important reason for the success of Costco's business model is the attraction and retention of great employees."

"Instead of minimizing wages, we know it's a lot more profitable in the long term to minimize employee turnover and maximize employee productivity, commitment and loyalty. We support efforts to increase the federal minimum wage."

Costco CEO & Founder Craig Jelinek

Minimum Wage is NOT a Living Wage

In the understanding of many, a minimum wage is the lowest hourly wage needed to keep a person out of poverty and able to live a reasonable life. Unfortunately, that is a huge misconception. Depending on the cost of living in an area, minimum wage workers are often earning below the poverty line and therefore forced to utilize social services in order to survive. The term "working poor" is unfortunately often all too true. You can go to an MIT website (<http://living-wage.mit.edu>) to get a better sense of the difference between minimum wage, which seems pretty arbitrary and is very much influenced by business and industry lobbyists arguing against it, and a living wage that will provide a reasonable life for an individual or

family without accessing social services. Here in Oneida County, the minimum wage of \$7.25/hour is sufficient to keep an individual above the poverty line but still nearly \$2/hour short of a living wage. Add one child to the mix and things change dramatically. The current minimum wage keeps a family of one adult and one child pretty much at the poverty line. The minimum would need to increase to just over \$20/hour to provide the resources to afford food, housing, medical expenses, childcare, etc. Here in the Mohawk Valley, a living wage for a family of two (adult and child) needs to be over \$20 if they are to survive without adding to the county's social services costs.

It all makes you wonder why politicians in this county have worked so hard to attract businesses like Walmart to the area and provided them with huge incentives to come without negotiating a *quid pro quo* that insists that they pay something approaching a living wage.

Wouldn't it be better if the same amount of energy was spent trying to attract a business like Costco that pays decent wages and benefits? Here's a simple comparison to consider. It involves employees with comparable responsibilities at Wendy's, Walmart, and Costco and can be found at <http://finance.yahoo.com/photos/worker-pay-photo-1375804516554.html>.

Wage per hour: Wen-\$7.35; Wal-\$9.40; Cost-\$22.80.

Hours per week: Wen-40; Wal-35-40; Cost-40.

Benefits: Wen-none; Wal-Qualifies/can't afford; Cost-Health insurance, 401K.

Recently the Washington DC Council passed a statute requiring big box stores with over a billion dollars in global sales to provide a starting wage of \$12.50 per hour. This is certainly a reasonable wage given that DC is one of the most expensive cities in the country. Not surprisingly the largest retailer in the world, owned by arguably the richest siblings on the planet, has balked and threatened to pull out of the DC area. Walmart has said the average wage in its DC stores is \$12.78. This figure, however, is suspect given that it excludes part-time wages that are surely low and includes wages of supervisors who are the company's best paid hourly employees.

So why does DC matter? Well, find me a county or city without a Walmart in it or nearby. Consider then the effect of their anti-living wage, anti-worker approach to doing business. Is anyone surprised that a cycle of poverty exists? Then, think about what you are supporting when you shop at a Walmart. 'Nuff said.

Unions, workers and community agencies work to help Mohawk Valley flood victims

Storms and floods this summer had residents of area towns and villages reeling as basements filled, homes were damaged or ruined, and property was washed away. Probably Mohawk, Herkimer, Oneida, and Clinton were hardest hit but no local community was completely spared. In times such as these, neighbors help neighbors and folks who were spared get to assisting those not so lucky. Much of the help was coordinated through the newly formed Herkimer & Oneida Organizations Active in Disaster (HOOAD) in cooperation with local governments, the United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica, the Utica Chapter of the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and the CNY Labor Agency. In addition, local unions, countless individuals, and numerous community organizations and church groups have stepped up to lend a hand. The best way for anyone still in need of assistance or advice is to call the United Way at 315/733-4691. Someone there can direct you to the service you need.

The governor's Upstate Flood Recovery Program can provide significant funds to aid in the recovery effort. Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente recently announced that the deadline has been extended to September 3rd. Check the county's website (www.ocgov.net) for specific details. A United Way Telethon raised nearly \$200,000. All the money raised goes to agencies that deal directly "in the trenches" with victims of the flooding. The Salvation Army, with assistance from the Labor Council (special kudos to NALC member Billy Ganey), delivered hundreds of clean-up buckets to victims of the flooding. New York State United Teachers provided relief to its Oneida, Herkimer, and Madison county members affected by the flooding in the form of a small monetary grant. Applications are still being accepted. Members should check the NYSUT webpage or call the Utica office for information.

The list goes on and on. Members of Laborers International, IBEW, Plumbers and Pipefitters, and others have been out checking roofs, wiring, plumbing, etc in homes and businesses affected in this disaster. Thanks go out to so many others whose names we don't know but who have selflessly stepped forward to help their neighbors.

That's the beauty of the Mohawk Valley... people care for and help one another.

Rescue Mission... An agency worth supporting

Every day, every week, every month, every year, like clockwork, the Rescue Mission of Utica quietly goes about its business of changing lives for the better by helping individuals overcome

Rescue Mission of Utica

Reaching Out... Changing Lives

hunger, homelessness, addiction, and disabilities. A tabulation of some of its work demonstrates the level of need in upstate New York and the extent of the help the Rescue Mission provides.

Look at some of the assistance provided in 2012. Nearly 150,000 hot meals served. Almost 1500 food boxes (equalling about 90,000 meals) delivered to shut-ins and poor families. Over 16,000 meals provided through the community meal program. Nearly 19,000 nights of care to homeless men. Add to that 6500 nights of care to nearly one thousand men in the Addictions Crisis Center and nearly 4000 nights for men in the mission's single room occupancy housing. Religious services, academic and job skills training, instruction in financial



management, and distributed thousands of items of clothing to those in need. The mission also used/distributed over 180,000 pounds of food to the hungry.

If anyone is looking to make a difference by volunteering time, money, or energy, consider the Rescue Mission of Utica (www.uticamission.org).

Upcoming Events

LIVE UNITED 

United Way Campaign Kick-off - September 17

5-7PM at the Stanley Theater, Utica

United Way Labor Kick-off - Time & place TBD

COPE Candidate Interviews - 9/4-5 and 9/16-17-18

Check out the new Labor Council web page...

cnylc.org

Next Labor Council Meeting:

September 26 at **6pm**, 287 Genesee Street, Utica

Join us if you are able.