



THE ACCORD

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

UAW AMALGAMATED LOCAL 2145 NEWSLETTER

March 2010

From the Editor to You



Well here we are with the second issue of your union newsletter. I was very happy with how the first issue came together, but the goal is ongoing.

This publication is meant to keep you informed and hopefully bring to you a better awareness of what this whole “union thing” is about. For many it is simply a name given to a “behind the scenes organization” you may not even think much about until contract negotiation time. But I want to stress to you that there is something much bigger and stronger than that, whose sole strength depends on your knowledge and participation.

This newsletter is taking it’s first “baby steps” toward what I hope, and believe, could be a truly powerful tool for you. If the union’s strength comes from knowledge, let this publication inform you. If it comes from participation, let this publication guide you to where you can start if you’ve not already made your commitment.

As this project is still in its infant stages, let me ask your indulgence as pieces come and go, finding their proper fit within these pages. As this is currently a quarterly newsletter (for now), it occurred to me a puzzle that you have to wait three months for the answer to is not terribly beneficial. So (for now), the Sudoku and other puzzles are out so we can focus on more important pieces. Eventually, a monthly or bi-monthly edition is envisioned, and at that point the games may return.

Some of the other plans for future editions include:

- Exploring the MLA - What can we learn from this book we are given every few years?
- Familiar Faces - Who are these people within the

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Remember

Regular monthly General Membership meetings are held every 3rd Thursday of the month in the Steketees building 5th floor @ 5:30pm. Stop in to actively participate in your union membership!

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union and how do they contribute personally and professionally.

- Union History - They say it is hard to know where you are going if you don't understand where you've been. See the first of this multiple-part series on the next page!
- Interviews, news for retirees, chances for you to participate in fun events, and more surprises to come.

In addition to this, I would like to proudly announce the newest addition to the Accord staff: **Amanda Sivins** has joined us in this grand endeavour! From what I have seen so far, I have no doubt her enthusiasm and sharp, to-the-point style will add much to your newsletter. Please join me in giving her a grateful welcome. If you have any ideas you wish to convey to the newsletter and are unable to email to our address below, please feel free to see Amanda.

So again - welcome to Issue Number Two! May your stay be enjoyable and informative!

-- Ryan Vanderstelt, Editor

Union Rewind

A Brief History of the Union

by Darlene Vanderstelt

I have a job to come to each day, one that I like. . . a lot. It's not perfect, there is a lot of stress, I sometimes have to deal with very unhappy people who want to take their frustrations out on me, and keeping up on all the latest changes can sometimes be a challenge. But I've been in the workforce now for nearly 40 years and know that any job will have its moments. However, this is the first time I have belonged to a union and I have been a proud member of Local 2145 for nearly 12 years!

Times are tough right now and jobs are scarce. Our country has experienced hard times before and we will again. But the one thing I know for sure in my employment today, is that I am not alone. Being a union member affords me a greater sense of security and I see the difference that working with union backing affords me.

Did you know the first union was organized in the United States in 1792 by cordwainers (journeyman shoemakers)?



Apparently, the struggle for the working man and woman has, literally, been going on for over 200 years here in the United States. The first union contract for Local 2145 was ratified on March 22, 1980.

The struggle to establish unions, especially in the early years, came at a very high price. People that came here from Europe basically were working as indentured servants, meaning they repaid their passage to America by working for years without wages. People worked 14–16 hour days at hard labor, many times without enough to eat while being forced to live in squalid conditions. Children were also forced to work and many were not afforded an education. Over time, people decided enough was enough, and the struggle gained some urgency.

Workers sought fair pay for their labor, a sense of human dignity with better working conditions, and well-being for their families. In the 1800's, it was a dangerous time to be a union organizer. People were tried in court, sentenced, some were hanged, others were jailed for lengthy periods of time, still others were beaten and sent back to work in the same poor conditions they were trying to correct. However, in 1840, President Van Buren issued an executive order establishing a 10 hour work day on government projects.

Oddly enough, severe types of retaliation against union organizers was still going on in the 1930's and 1940's. There were many notable people along the way who continued the fight and eventually, mainly by electing union supporters into government office, unions began to be established. It took many years to get us where we are today, and it was through the sacrifice of people who just wouldn't give up. We reap those benefits and we must remember that those coming after us will, hopefully, be able to enjoy the benefits of our union as well. The efforts of the many people who persevered in the decades before us cannot be forgotten nor their efforts and sacrifices taken lightly.

President's Corner

This issue: Know Your Rights!



Weingarten Rights: What they are and why they matter to you!

The Vital function of a committeeman is to prevent management from coercing employees into confessions of misconduct. This is especially important when a supervisor experienced in interrogation techniques questions a worker.

The NLRA's protection of concerted activity includes the right to request assistance from union representatives during investigatory interviews. The Supreme Court declared this in 1975 in *NLRB v J. Weingarten, Inc.* The rights announced by the Court have become the known as the Weingarten rights.

Union members should know the advantages of having a committeeman (steward) present at an investigatory interview. They are:

- SERVE AS A WITNESS TO PREVENT A SUPERVISOR FROM GIVING A FALSE ACCOUNT OF THE CONVERSATION;
- OBJECT TO INTIMIDATION TACTICS OR CONFUSING QUESTIONS;
- HELP AN EMPLOYEE TO AVOID MAKING FATAL ADMISSIONS;
- ADVISE AN EMPLOYEE, WHEN APPROPRIATE, AGAINST DENYING EVERYTHING, THEREBY GIVING THE APPEARANCE OF DISHONESTY AND GUILT;
- WARN AN EMPLOYEE AGAINST LOSING HIS OR HER TEMPER;
- DISCOURAGE AN EMPLOYEE FROM INFORMING ON OTHERS; AND
- RAISE EXTENUATING FACTORS.

Weingarten rights apply only during investigatory interviews. An investigatory interview occurs when: (1) management questions an employee to obtain information; and (2) the employee has a reasonable belief that discipline or other adverse consequences may result.

Not every discussion with management is an investigatory. A conversation can change its character, however. If the supervisor's attitude becomes hostile and the meeting turns into an investigatory interview the employee is entitled to representation.

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

The following rules apply to investigatory interviews:

* THE EMPLOYEE CAN REQUEST UNION REPRESENTATION BEFORE OR AT ANY TIME DURING THE INTERVIEW (PER MLA ARTICLE 9.4.1).

* When an employee asks for representation, the employer must choose from among three questions;

1. Grant the request and delay questioning until the union representative arrives;
2. Deny the request and end the interview immediately; or
3. Give the employee a choice of:
(A) having the interview without representation or
(B) ending the interview.

• If the employer denies the request for union representation and continues the meeting, the employee can refuse to answer questions.

Just Remember, if you feel the meeting is leading toward discipline or could affect your job, say the following:

"IF THIS DISCUSSION COULD IN ANY WAY LEAD TO MY BEING DISCIPLINED OR TERMINATED, OR AFFECT MY PERSONAL WORKING CONDITIONS, I REQUEST THAT MY COMMITTEEMAN OR OR UNION REPRESENTATIVE BE PRESENT AT THE MEETING. WITHOUT REPRESENTATION, I CHOOSE NOT TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS!"

THIS IS YOUR RIGHT UNDER WEINGARTEN!



Did You Know...

Plastic shopping bags were introduced just 25 years ago. Today, U.S. consumers go through approximately 100 billion of them each year, requiring about 12 million barrels of oil to produce. Reusable bags can save energy, but only if they're used frequently enough. You have to use a typical reusable shopping bag 11 times to have a positive impact on energy consumption.

Source: Milliman

Guest Article

Funding the Family - The Future is Now

(This article provided by Tamika Foster and highlights some programs aimed at enriching the lives of working families)

Work & Family Care Fund

The UAW-BCBSM Family Care Fund is a negotiated benefit for BCBSM represented (union) employees. The fund allows reimbursement up to \$1,500.00 per contract year (September through August) per eligible employee for qualifying expenses for direct dependents. The fund covers certain regulated and/or licensed childcare (e.g. latchkey, day care, emergency back up), adult/elder care expenses and adoption fees.

Reimbursement application must total \$50.00 or more to process. The only exception will be in the case where there is less than \$50.00 left in the annual \$1,500.00 reimbursement balance for the contract year.

This information is outlined in your Master Agreement under Letter of Understanding (LOU) 20.8. Also, this information and the forms can be found on Blueslink under Benefits, then Work & Family Program.

Applications for reimbursements with original receipts must be postmarked no later than 60 days (October 31) following the end of the contract year (September 1 through August 31) for which reimbursement is being requested. Blue Cross Blue Shield will issue checks, up to the maximum of \$1500.00 per employee, per contract year, for qualifying expenses. Payment will be made on the employee's paycheck from Blue Cross Blue Shield. Payment will be made within two pay periods of receipt of the completed application provided all information is complete and verified. All funds are taxable. All applicable taxes will be withheld from the employee's paycheck from Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Question:

If my spouse and I are both union employees and we work for Blue Cross Blue Shield, can we both claim the \$1,500.00?

Answer:

Yes. This is for all represented (union) employees of Blue Cross Blue Shield. Each of you may claim the \$1,500.00, respectively.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Tamika Foster, UAW Local 2145 Financial Secretary, via email at tfoster@bcbsm.com.

Website: www.worklifeexpress.com

Username: blue

Password: lifeline.



VCAP

What is VCAP?

The acronyms stand for Volunteer Community Action Program. It is a volunteer program that allows each union member to make modest contributions each month to help union supported candidates. These candidates should share the same views to help improve and enrich the quality of working families' lives. Per Article 5.6.1 of the Master Agreement, the contributions are payroll deductions with written permission from the employee. The deductions will occur the first pay period of each calendar month.

If you do not wish to contribute through payroll deductions, you may purchase VCAP tickets. Each year every represented (union) member is encouraged to sell tickets to other represented (union) members. The members may sell them to family, friends, neighbors, and they may belong to other union organizations, i.e., Teamsters, UCFW, etc.



Every December, Region 1D will have a drawing for members that contributed monetarily to the Community Action Program. These contributions could have been through your payroll deductions or purchasing a ticket. The grand prize has been cash in the amount of \$10,000.00. There are other prize cash incentives as well. January of this year, our Local has a drawing for the members who have sold the tickets and members of our Local who have purchased tickets for a chance to win. The cash prize for our Local winners this year was \$25.00. Below is a list of our winners who contributed in 2009.

Agnes Barker (Retiree)	BCN
Billie Jo Dudley	BCN
Renee Darling	BCN
Diane Burkholder	BCN
Shauna Bagin	BCN
Leigh Ann Panzer	BCN
Steve Archer	BCBSM
Alicia Haggerty	BCN
Tammy Ferguson	BCN
Marge Osowski	BCBSM

Bowl for Kids Sake

Join the Blues Caring Crew for the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Grand Rapids annual Bowl for Kids' Sake on Friday March 19, 2010

Big Brothers Big Sisters helps match mentors with children in need of positive support and role models, and provides an array of services to families. You can read more about Big Brothers Big Sisters at dablodgett.org

You are invited to form teams that can include family members, children, and friends, Our goal is to form 20 teams of 5 bowlers per team, with a total pledge goal of \$75 per bowler. The target goal is \$7500, which will directly support Big Brothers big Sisters of Grand Rapids. Bowlers will receive free pizza, free shoe rental, and two-and-a-half hours free bowling.



For registration information, see the flyers posted in your respective breakout areas or in the lunchroom on the 5th floor.

Familiar Faces

SANDRA SMITH: Recently-Elected Kent County Democratic Party Chair

Sandy resides in Wyoming and been a resident of Michigan for 24 years and an active Democrat over 40 years. She believes in a strong, unified and voter-centered political party. She is the first African American to be elected to this position in Kent County.



She began her political involvement as a teenager working on a phone bank for Robert Kennedy's campaign in Kokomo, Indiana. She has been active in various roles some of which are as follows: 1st Vice Chair Kent County Democratic Party, Precinct Delegate, Michigan Democratic State Executive Board Member, Michigan State Central Committee, Executive Board Member of the Michigan Democratic Black Caucus and Michigan Democratic Women's Caucus.

Sandy has been employed for 24 years by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM). She is an International appointed Cooperative Process Coordinator for BCBSM-UAW Local 2145.

As a UAW member she also holds the following positions: Chair of the Civil Rights Committee and Community Action Program (CAP) Delegate. She is Chair of the National Advisory Council on Civil Rights (NACOCR) & President of the Region 1-D Regional Advisory Council on Civil Rights (RACOCR).

On behalf of the Accord Newsletter staff, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new UAW Local members.

Welcome to Local 2145!

- George M. Rios
- Bruce A. Spears
- Jennifer A. Eacker
- Sarah G. Mowery
- Derrick T. Vargo
- Katherine M. Adams
- Rachelle L. Davis
- Jennifer K. Pullen
- Jacqueline K. Proctor



Comments...Suggestions...Story Ideas? Contact Us!

We are looking for newsworthy articles!

If you have something you would like to see in *The Accord*, send it to us at:

AccordNews@yahoo.com

(If it looks a little different than last issue, it is..."technical difficulties" you might say...)

All articles are subject to approval, review, and editing. Articles must be submitted to the email address above.

No handwritten articles will be accepted.

Know Your Stewards

Hi Members!

JUST WANTED TO INTRODUCE OUR UNION STEWARDS. WE HAVE A COUPLE OF INTERESTING TIDBITS AND SOME AWESOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR LOCAL!!

THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS WILL HOPEFULLY BE INTERESTING AS WE START TO SEE MORE OF MEMBERS BAND TOGETHER AND BECOME MORE UNITED!

- Amanda Sivins

JUST A SMALL THOUGHT TO LEAVE YOU WITH BEFORE YOU READ ON...

“A worker has no chance at fair treatment standing alone against the wealth and power of his employer or corporation...”
- Chief Justice Oliver Holmes Jr. (1841 - 1935)

Steve Archer

Steve has been with BCBSM for over 20 years. He has over 14 years of experience with our local 2145 holding various positions, and a year with the local 2256 in Lansing. During his time with our local some of the positions he has held are

- Job Security Technological Change Committee Member for UAW Local 2256 from 1990-1991
- UAW Local 2145 Financial Secretary from 1992-1995
- UAW Community Action Program (CAP) Delegate from 1992-1995 for Local 2145
- Delegate representing Local 2145 at the 1992, 1993 and 1995 UAW National CAP conferences in Washington DC
- Was first appointed Local 2145 Joint Programs Coordinator by the Director of UAW Region 1-D from 1993-1995

Some thoughts on what Steve would like to see for our future:

“I believe we have a phenomenal Grievance Committee in our unit here at BCBSM. Moving forward, I'd personally like to see faster filing of and resolu-

tion for grievances resulting from violations of our Master Labor Agreement. We've made great strides in trying to work jointly with our management counterparts. However, when those efforts fail, we need to act boldly and swiftly. I'd also encourage more involvement from any UAW represented employee who is interested in actively participating in the business of our Local. We could use help with our Local Union committees. Committees are great places to become active with our Union. I'm very proud of the Union membership we have here in Grand Rapids and in our other offices statewide from Marquette to Portage.”

Donna Rozman

Donna has been with BCBSM for 16 yrs. She has been involved with the union for nearly 14 of those years. She started off as a Guide in 1994-95 then became an Alternate Steward in 2000, taking a position as a Steward later.

A couple thoughts from Donna for us as UNION members to keep in mind:

“In the next few years I would like to see the union become stronger. Unions no longer have the respect and power they once had. Companies are doing what they can to bust unions and the workers don't seem to care. We have to work harder to win back that respect of our members or suffer the consequences.”

Ed Spang

Ed has been at BCBSM for 4+ years. He has been involved with the union for 12 years between the UAW (3 years as a alternate steward) and the RWDSU local 386. He held many positions within that local including Department Steward, Chief Steward, Executive Board Rep, Contract negotiator, and a United Way co-chair.

One of Ed's goals -

“I want a mutually beneficial contract negotiation during my next term. I would also like to educate my brothers and sisters on their Master Labor Agreement. It is only a benefit of the MLA if it is used by the local members. An unused benefit is a wasted one the company will try to remove from the next MLA.”