

# LOCAL 506 UNION NEWS

Volume 65, Issue 9

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Thursday, September 11, 2014

## Health Care Issues on The Front Burner For 2015 UE-GE Negotiations

*By Gene Elk, UE-GE Conference Board Secretary*

Last month, I had the pleasure of speaking to UE Local 506's members on the subject of healthcare. This appears to be a huge issue for both UE members and members of the other CBC unions, (Coordinated Bargaining Committee of GE Unions) which will be a hot topic in 2015. At the request from the 506 officers, I decided to write this article outlining some of my thoughts on negotiations and this issue.

In UE, we are actively preparing for contract negotiations and later this month, we will be passing out contract surveys to all UE-GE members nationwide to collect members' ideas, thoughts, and priorities. On November 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, UE and the CBC unions will convene in Evendale, Ohio to discuss bargaining goals and strategies for winning a fair contract. Also, in late November and December, the National Union, along with our local, will put together our union's bargaining demands for negotiations to be held next year.

From speaking with the leadership of UE locals, as well as other CBC unions, it's very evident, even before we distribute and evaluate bargaining surveys, that health care will be a key issue in next year's negotiations. There are two separate prongs to our health care fight – 1) pushing back against GE's attack on post-65 health care benefits for retirees, and 2) our fight to make substantial improvements in GE health care benefits for active employees.

GE has made it abundantly clear that it will propose eliminating post-65 retiree health care benefits in our 2015 National Agreement. Many of you are aware that the Company has already announced its plan to discontinue that benefit for non-union salaried employees who have not already been placed on the post-65 plan effective January 1, 2015. This comes despite the fact that GE's cost to provide retiree health care benefits

has been steadily declining in recent years. There is absolutely no justification for GE's decision to break its long-standing promise to provide life-time medical benefits to its retirees, other than to rake in greater profits at the expense of long service employees. We plan to strongly fight this serious attack on future retirees.

It should also be obvious to almost all members that health insurance for active employees has been seriously eroded by the benefit plan GE demanded and extracted in 2011. GE dumped much of its responsibility for administering these benefits into our laps by forcing us to wade our way through HRAs, FSAs, HSAs, EOBs and WageWorks and use the Internet to get our health care claims paid, all while we're paying more for insurance and getting far less in return.

After GE finally responded to our recent health care information request, the data UE received strongly shows that the Company has shifted much of its health costs onto our members. From 2011 when most members used Health Care Preferred (HCP) and GE Medical Benefits (GEMB) until 2013, GE has paid out 10% less in hourly employee health care claims for Production Employees (GEHB). Prescription drug claims paid by GE also declined by 11% during that same period, while employees' pharmacy out-of-pocket pharmacy costs rose by the same 11%. Employee costs for prescription drugs increased even though the average annual number of prescriptions for a GE family declined from 25.4 in 2011 to 23.3 in 2013.

To make matters even worse, the data acquired by UE strongly suggests that the high out-of-pocket costs is causing many members to go without needed medical services. Hospital admissions declined 14% from

*Continued on Page 2*

2011 to 2013. During the same period, emergency room visits declined 12%, outpatient radiology utilization was down 11%, and specialist visits declined a whopping 21%. During a recent meeting with GE workers from a different union, I asked about their experiences with GE's new health insurance and was told, "We just don't go see the doctor anymore."

UE is now compiling additional data to determine the exact amount of dollars that we are paying for health care in deductibles, co-insurance, and weekly health insurance since GEHB went into effect on January 1, 2012. The initial data shows that under the relatively modest deductibles in the old GE plans about 15% of us paid the full deductible, but now 55% of all hourly GE workers nationwide are paying out the full deductible which ranges anywhere from \$800 to \$4000 per year, depending upon how many dependents and what plan option you selected.

As we get closer to negotiations, UE will be providing detailed educational information to support our fight to retain health care benefits for future retirees as well as to make substantial improvements for active employees. I anticipate a tough fight on these issues and we're going to need the active participation and support of our entire membership to force GE to do the right thing on health insurance.

## AA Meeting Schedule

**Where:** Building 6, Room 150  
Conference Rm.

**When:** Thursdays  
1<sup>st</sup> Shift - 12:00 noon  
2<sup>nd</sup> Shift - 7:30 pm  
3<sup>rd</sup> Shift - 3:00 am

## Change of Address Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Local \_\_\_\_\_

*Return To:* The Union Hall  
3923 Main Street • Erie, PA 16511

## Recalls Continue

The company is still recalling employees who were PLOW'D and this is certainly good news. Long term employees know and understand that employment is based on orders and although we don't have a crystal ball as to what the future might be, we're happy that people are being called back. We should never take for granted what might happen, but should always be hopeful that things will continue to improve.

Right now, there is still internal recalls taking place, so this process takes time and we keep a very keen eye open so that people are brought back according to class, code, and more importantly, seniority. Many employees have multiple classes that they may be entitled to and we want to make sure all bases are covered. We are hopeful, that in time, everyone will be recalled.

## General Election

With the general election looming right around the corner, I'm sure people are anxious to put this behind us, so we can concentrate on the 2015 national contract that is must closer than many might realize. This upcoming contract will certainly be a challenge and it will be very important that the members have clear minds, be focused, and get ready for what lies ahead.

You've all had the opportunity to review the statements and qualifications of all of those who are running for office and since the "**Members Run the Union**", you get to decide who will represent you for the next two years. Here are the people who have committed themselves to lead you and remember, if you don't vote, then you shouldn't complain.

## Help Still Available

Just a reminder, that if you're having problems of a personal nature and need to talk to someone, call **Keith Eller** at 875-4327. He has and continues to be a very fruitful source when it comes to helping employees deal with personal situations.

You can rest assured that your issue is kept at the highest level of confidentiality. We want to thank Keith for the many folks that he has helped and hopefully, he will continue to service those in need for many years to come. Thanks Keith.

# SUPPORT YOUR UNION VOTE

**Thursday, September 18, 2014**

**6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.**

UE LOCAL 506 UNION HALL • 3923 Main Street • Lawrence Park

## MEET THE CANDIDATES

### BUSINESS AGENT (Vote for One)



**Frank X. Fusco**



**Terry Gigax**



**Steve Hyzer**



**Brian Okicki**

### PRESIDENT (Vote for One)



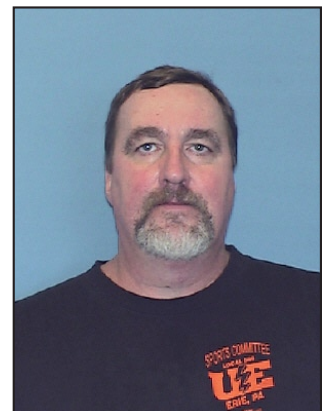
**Scott Duke**



**Mike Michaelson**



**Scott Slawson**



**Roger Zaczyk**



**CHIEF PLANT STEWARD (Vote for One)****Leo Grzegorzewski****Mike Hayes****Randy Houle****V.P. REC. SECRETARY****Michael Ferritto (Unopposed)****Dave Chadwell Sr. (Unopposed)****TREASURER****SERGEANT AT ARMS (Vote for One)****Jeremy Burick****Jess Fellows****Andy Pius****Joe D. Smith**

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER AT LARGE (Vote for Three)



**Todd Bernat**



**Les Burrows**



**Todd Johnson**



**Roy King**



**Craig A. Krol**



**Matt McCracken**



**Paul Rapela**



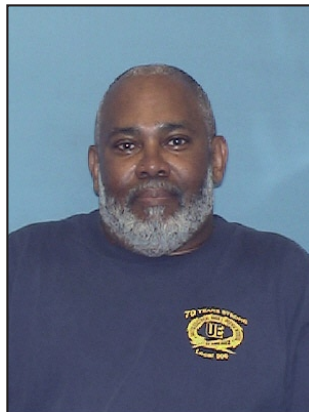
**Steve Rogers**



**Donna Shiamone**



**Tom Skwaryk**



**Ricky Steele**



**Jason Trayer**

# VOTE – SEPTEMBER 18, 2014



**TRUSTEE (Vote for One)****ALTERNATE TRUSTEE****Donald Cornelius David S. Korynoski****Mike Rudzinski (Unopposed)**

## What's Next?

As you may have read in the Erie Times News on September 9, GE sold the Appliance Division based in Louisville, Kentucky to Electrolux. This was one of the company's oldest businesses, which it tried to sell six years ago, but never transpired because of the worldwide recession. For those of you who are new to GE and may have only a few years, you need to understand the relevance of this sale and the possible impact it could have on UE.

This is an IUE plant and employs thousands of union employees, which may very well change the dynamics in the upcoming 2015 negotiations now that they belong to another employer. With

the announcement that the Fort Edwards Plant will be closing and the newly built plant in Texas, **you must pay attention to everything that the**

**company does.** You should understand that GE isn't shy about getting rid of businesses which they deem unprofitable and even others that have made them billions.

This company is readjusting and is heading in new business directions such as jet engines, power turbines, oil industry equipment and even areas we may not even know about. One thing you can be sure of is this, if it has no monetary value, then GE doesn't want it. **That includes us, so you better be prepared and get united.**



## TO AVOID DELAYS ON ELECTION DAY

Please make sure you have your Membership Card with you when you come to vote.  
If you've lost your union card, see your steward or stop at the Hall before Election Day.

# Unity and its Importance

*By B.A. Wayne Burnett*

What a world we live in today. As I recall the 911 tragedy where thousands of lives were lost, billions of dollars in property destroyed, three different states attacked almost simultaneously and the shock that many of us felt when it happened to us. I also recall how for the first time in many years, that we all seemed to forget about matters that really became insignificant because, "The United States of America" was under attack.

Isn't it amazing how we can put our personal issues on the back burner when we are confronted by outside forces that jeopardize us all. Our attackers on that day didn't target a particular group of people or cared about your race, creed, nationality, sex, and didn't care whether you were rich, poor, young, old or whatever. It's very obvious that all they wanted to do that day was kill Americans, even at the cost of losing their own lives.

As much as I hate to say it, they were united in doing what they set out to do. I also want to point out that those brave men and women who were on United Flight 93, the plane that went down in our own state, who became united once they found out the reality of what was taking place. They didn't think about who was on that plane or what background they came from.

They realized that their decision would cost them

their lives, but never realized how many lives they would save. This goes for the many fire fighters, police and other brave individuals who sacrificed their lives to save others. In unity, there is strength and even a small group of unified people working together can overcome large groups that are divided.

This is why unity is so important brothers and sisters, because together we stand, but divided we fall. As we continue to move forward, it is more important now than ever, that we move in unity and to be a help to each other and not a hindrance. This union was built on that principal and all you need to do is read

the preamble of the Constitution and By-Laws of UE Local 506, you would have a better understanding of the importance of unity.

There's a lot at stake coming our way in the near future, and to even remotely think that not being unified will accomplish the goal of obtaining the American dream and caring for our families could be a set back to what

it took decades to achieve. To go into any situation on your own only sets you on a course of possible disaster and may even lead people to think that you are in it only for yourself. So, brothers and sisters, I appeal to you to unite and stay united so that all those who paved the way and who may have passed on, can rest, knowing that the path they laid, was not in vain.

**UE United  
We Stand  
Past Present  
Future**

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**SUPPORT YOUR UNION**

**VOTE**

**Thursday, September 18, 2014**

**6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.**

**UE LOCAL 506 UNION HALL • 3923 Main Street • Lawrence Park**

## Regional Safety Conference Overview

Recently 5 Safety Coordinators, some management personnel, and for the first time ever, a Safety Monitor attended the Region 3 VPP conference in Pittsburgh, Pa. A Safety Conference is just what it sounds like, and for 3 days, the event was focused entirely on safety. Our keynote speaker, **Ken Thomas**, an Army Ranger, who was involved in the “Black Hawk Down” mission, delivered a message of “fight as you train – train as you fight”, which translates well with the shop floor work we do. To achieve greatness and build quality locomotives, you need outstanding leadership.

Next there were breakout sessions where individual companies presented their Safety programs and spoke on Safety issues. This was a good way to gauge the differences or similarities we may have when it comes to safety.

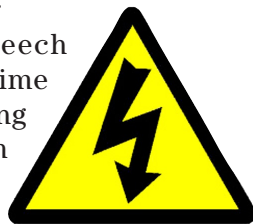
I attended one class called “The Active Shooter Phenomena”, which had nothing to do with typical workplace safety but was an in depth session on actual workplace “Active Shooters”. Even though it was not what I expected, I learned a lot and hope we never encounter this situation at GE.

Once you attend a class, you get the opportunity to see all the latest safety products displayed in the vendor area brought by different companies. If you see products that may be beneficial, contact information can be exchanged for future use.

It ended with a closing speech by **Cliff Mendi**, who is a 2 time Olympian Kayaker. As a young man, Cliff worked in construction and while jack hammering into a floor, he hit three buried power cables that sent 30,000 volts throughout his body. It literally blew out his kneecaps and shoulder killing him, but he was revived by medics. Cliff not only shared his experience but relayed how his workplace accident totally forever changed his life.

Brothers and Sisters, in closing, I am thankful for UE 506's continued support in the safety program, and just remember, that just one thing brought back from an Safety Conference could save my, your, or someone's life.

Thanks and God Bless,  
**Van McClearn**



## UE Local 506 Election Day Van Schedule

**- SEPTEMBER 18, 2014 -**  
**Vans will be available:**

**You must punch out if using van transportation**

<b>BUILDING 7</b>	<b>BUILDINGS 2, 6 &amp; 5</b>
7:15 AM	7:45 AM
10:15 AM	10:45 AM
1:15 PM	_____

2<sup>ND</sup> SHIFT RUN AT 3:20 PM


<b>BUILDINGS 10/26</b>	<b>BUILDING 12/20</b>
8:15 AM	8:45 AM
11:15 AM	11:45 AM
1:45 PM	_____

2<sup>ND</sup> SHIFT RUN AT 4:00 PM and 5:00 PM

<b>BUILDING 18-C, 42, 18T</b>	<b>BUILDING 60/63</b>
9:15 AM	9:45 AM
12:15 PM	12:45 PM

2<sup>ND</sup> SHIFT RUN AT 5:00 PM

## OCTOBER 2014

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 R.A.G.E. MEMBERSHIP MEETING 618 MEMBERSHIP MEETING	9	10	11
12	13 Columbus Day 	14	15	16	17 YOUNG ACTIVIST CAUCUS 3:30 P.M. AT HALL	18 UE EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING 9:00 A.M.
19	20	21 E-BOARD MEETING	22 TRAIL OF TREATS 5 to 8:30 MILLCREEK MALL	23 MEMBERSHIP MEETING NEW OFFICERS SWEARING IN TRAIL OF TREATS	24 R.A.G.E. BOARD MEETING	25
26	27	28	29	30	31 HALLOWEEN 