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Unity Results in Victory at Bradken

On March 22, 2021, about 150 members of USW Local 6943 began a strike against Bradken, Inc., which produces locomotive, rail and transit components and assemblies, as well as mining, construction, industrial, military and general steel castings at facilities in Atchison, Kan., and St. Joseph, Mo.

Local 6943 President Gregg Welch said that like many other locals, his has been challenged with soaring insurance costs and underfunded pension issues, but has always engaged with the company in finding solutions.

“These are very important issues, and the foundation of our local has been to be a voice for our members with the employer,” he said. “In this round of negotiations, the company proposed a new and dreadful management rights clause, so our members demonstrated their resolve that they intended to keep that voice and maintain our seat at the table.”

On April 5, 2021, members of Local 6943 ratified a new, three-year agreement that maintains this all important voice.

“You never want to be on strike, but if you must, you can’t have it go much better,” Welch said. “From the incredible solidarity of our members and the overwhelming support of our communities to the moment when the company asked, ‘How do we end this strike?’ It makes me proud.”

Let’s Hear from YOU! USW@Work is published four times a year and we need the submissions for the Summer 2021 issue by July 13, 2021. Please submit them to D11news@usw.org.

Also include a telephone number or active e-mail address in case we need additional information. We will try to include all submissions and we reserve the right to edit information in order to fit the allocated space.

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USW REPORTER

SOLIDARITY WINS USW Local 11-418 Ratifies New Contract

Bargaining a contract is always a situation that presents many challenges, but bargaining during the current pandemic was a new experience for the bargaining committee at Local Union 11-418 in Cottage Grove, Minnesota. Due to COVID-19, the start of negotiations were delayed as the parties were trying to work through the logistics of how bargaining would proceed.

Prior to starting negotiations with 3M, the local union committee along with Sub-District Director Brian Ecker focused on how to effectively engage the membership in the process. The bargaining committee attended the USW District 11 Collective Bargaining Conference which gave the committee the tools to prepare proposals and analyze the proposed language from the company. Engaging the USW Strategic Campaigns, New Media and Communications departments also played an important part in the negotiations that started in June 2020, and concluded with two days of voting and a successful ratification by the members on April 13, 2021.

When the company came to the negotiating table with over 100 proposals, the local union knew they needed to stay focused and push back to achieve success. Starting with

placing a billboard near the 3M corporate headquarters asking for a Fair Contract, the local union got members to participate in several informational pickets outside the workplace. When the USW New Media department helped the local union start a texting program, over 60 percent of the members signed up. The message was clear to 3M that the essential workers at Cottage Grove deserved a fair contract.

"The solidarity of the local union and the leadership of the local union bargaining committee was so important during months of negotiations," said Sub-District Director and lead negotiator Brian Ecker.

Local union Vice President Justin Recla said "the membership at local 11-418 is so appreciative of the guidance of Sub-Director Ecker and the leadership of the USW International Union for their support during these negotiations. On behalf of the local union, I want to thank the locals of the 3M council and all the local unions that supported our fight for a fair contract."

USW Secretary-Treasurer John Shinn, who chairs the USW Chemical Council said, "It's clear the company came to the bargaining table with the intent on forcing us to accept a bad agreement by making this process longer and more costly than necessary. What they failed to consider was that the members of this union will never back down from a fight."

"Getting our USW departments engaged from the start was so important in these negotiations, and the valuable tools they have to assist our local unions is something that needs to happen at all negotiations" said USW District 11 Director Emil Ramirez. "The local union needs to be commended for the solidarity they sustained throughout the bargaining process."



2021 UPCOMING EVENTS

- ▶ **MINK:** June 5-11
- ▶ **Virtual Collective Bargaining Conference:** July 27-28
- ▶ **WOS Conference:** August 26-28
- ▶ **District 11 Conference:** August 29-Sept. 1
- ▶ **Ruttger's:** September 19-24



Arrival of Spring Brings Change, Promise of New Jobs

Congratulations to all of the newly elected USW local union officers and grievance committee members who were elected in local union elections in April. Our staff is looking forward to partnering with you on many important issues that face our union.

I also want to thank those officers and grievance committee members who just completed their term and chose not to run for re-election or were unsuccessful in the election process. Throughout District 11, there are a number of long-term local union leaders who have decided to retire, and I personally want to say that your leadership over the years has been greatly appreciated by our union.

In my last Director's report, I spoke of how ambitious infrastructure investments will create jobs in District 11. We now know that President Biden has proposed a \$2 trillion investment in infrastructure. Here in District 11 and across the country, USW members are ready to be a part of the largest

job growth since The New Deal. The American Jobs Plan has the potential to put millions to work.

Whether it's iron ore mined in northern Minnesota or palladium and platinum mined in Montana, the USW miners in District 11 will play a critical part of the success of the American Jobs Plan.

The iron ore will enable the nation to make the steel needed to build solar power stations and wind farms, helping the country achieve energy independence, and it will facilitate the construction of communications systems that bring broadband service to parts of the U.S.—including areas of District 11, that are now going without.

Lastly, by now, each local union should have received notifications for the District 11 Women of Steel Conference scheduled for Aug. 27 and 28, 2021, and for the District 11 Conference scheduled for Aug. 29 through Sept. 1. Both of the conferences will be held in Kansas City, Mo.

Local 9460 Holds Candlelight Vigil for Workers Memorial Day

Members of USW Local 9460 held a candlelight vigil in Duluth, Minn., for Workers Memorial Day on April 28, 2021, remembering especially health care workers who have lost their lives during the ongoing pandemic.

"Workers Memorial Day is a time for us to honor those who lost their lives on the job," said Deanna Hughes, president of Local 9460 which represents members at Essentia Health, St. Luke's, Ecumen Lakeshore and Lake Superior Community Health Center. "This pandemic showed very clearly how vulnerable frontline health care workers are."

More than 2,900 U.S. health care workers died from COVID-19 in 2020 alone. Many of these cases involved concerns over adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), highlighting the need for a renewed commitment to worker health and safety.

"We all have to be more proactive moving forward," she said.

Workers Memorial Day takes place annually around the world on April 28.



It is an international day of remembrance and action for workers who have been killed or have suffered injury or illness on the job.

In 1989, the AFL-CIO declared April 28 "Workers Memorial Day" to honor the hundreds of thousands of workers killed and injured on the job every year.

April 28 is significant in the U.S. because it is the anniversary date of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, and when the Occupational Safety and Health Administration officially formed in 1971.

"Coming together in unity to mark this solemn occasion dedicated to workplace



health and safety built a tremendous amount of solidarity," said USW District 11 Director Emil Ramirez.

"Throughout the course of the pandemic and its many hardships, our members have faced every challenge together," he said. "In every case, our unity and solidarity have prevailed."

Iron Range Steelworkers Rally Support for Easton Pfeiffer

Members of USW Local 2705 at Hibbing Taconite know from experience that we are strongest when we Steelworkers stand together, and right now, eight-year-old Easton Pfeiffer needs all the strength we can provide.

Easton, whose father Derek is a production truck driver at the mine and mother Samantha is a registered nurse at Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital, is fighting neuroblastoma, a rare cancer that develops from immature nerve cells found in several areas of the body and most commonly impacts children. Symptoms of neuroblastoma include fatigue, loss of appetite, fever, and there may be a lump or compression of tissues in the affected area.

During the course of his treatments, which have included many rounds of radiation, chemotherapy, immunotherapy, multiple surgeries and stem cell transplants, Easton and his family have stayed positive and are even inspiring others into action.

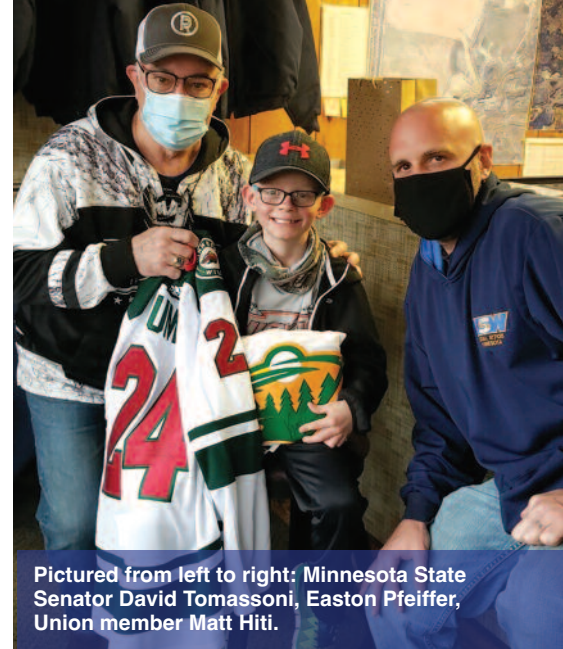
Each day for a week, members of Local 2705 collected donations as workers entered and exited the jobsite. One-by-one, nearly everyone who had the opportunity to contribute did so.

Led by the Women of Steel Committee and Chair Jessica Rootes, efforts to support the Pfeiffer family brought Easton's fight and Local 2705 attention from the local news. Rootes and others volunteered to take up collections for the Pfeiffer family at the gates of the mine.

The Mesabi Tribune ran a feature story about Easton's courageous battle that showed the community coming together, including a visit from Minnesota Vikings tight end Kyle Rudolph, and support from local athletic clubs and businesses. As a player with the Greenway Hockey Association, Easton's been invited to summer hockey camp with the University of Minnesota (Duluth) Bulldogs.

Rootes said that the experience has helped build unity and solidarity within the local and throughout the community.

This included fellow union brothers Matt Hiti, Mark Blagoue, Chad Tardy, and Shawn Oles who wanted to put a smile on Easton's face. They were able to have



Pictured from left to right: Minnesota State Senator David Tomassoni, Easton Pfeiffer, Union member Matt Hiti.

a Minnesota Wild Jersey signed by left wing Kirill Kaprizov. Unbeknownst to them, Minnesota State Senator David Tomassoni had the same idea and had a second Minnesota Wild hockey jersey signed by defenseman Matt Dumba. Together, they presented Easton with both jerseys as personal gifts.

USW members who wish to support Easton can send donations C/O Derek Pfeiffer, United Steelworkers Local 2705, 115 W. Lake Street, Chisholm, Minn., 55719.

Labor Community Remembers Wilbur Wilson

Earlier this year, the USW lost a tremendous activist and leader when Local 310L retiree Wilbur Wilson passed away from complications of a stroke at age 65.

"It was an honor to serve the union with Wilbur, and we are sad to report that the labor movement has lost a great voice," said USW District 11 Director Emil Ramirez. "We wish his wife and family our deepest condolences."

Wilson began his lifelong career with Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in 1973 and was a very proud union member of the United Rubber Workers and United Steelworkers. He retired in 2005 with 32 years of service.

Local 310L President Steve Vonk said he was grateful for Wilson's leadership during a difficult time.

"After the strike in 1994 and merger between the URW and USWA in 1995, Wilbur was instrumental in bringing our membership back together," he said. "We wouldn't be here without him."

Local 310L Treasurer Emily Brannon called Wilson a one-of-a-kind champion of the labor movement.

"He stayed active and kept fighting for working people 15 years after retirement," she said. "Wilbur was a tireless

mentor to the next generation and was always eager to educate."

Wilson was President of the Local 310L SOAR chapter, a USWA Union organizer from 1994 to 2005, and he was proud to bring joy to children by being Santa Claus at the Local 310L Christmas parties.

"Every once in a while, someone comes into your life who changes everything," said Local 310L Recording Secretary Chris Tague. "Wilbur was one of those people for me."

Politics was another arena that energized him. He spent countless hours canvassing, knocking on doors, staffing phone banks and talking with anyone he could about the candidates he believed in most.

He encouraged everyone to vote and be involved with national, state and local elections. In 2000, Wilson was one of the Iowa state delegates to the Democratic National Convention.

