Our District 4 Education Conference was held on August 23-26 at Caesars in Atlantic City, NJ. There were well over 400 Local Union delegates in attendance and by the time you add all the staff, guests and instructors, the number exceeded 500. This was the first time since COVID-19 restrictions began that we have been able to gather together in person for an event like this.

We were fortunate to have a wealth of guest speakers from within USW to address our delegates at the plenary sessions. Secretary-Treasurer John Shinn and International Vice President Dave McCall came in from Pittsburgh while National Director for Canada Ken Neuman made his way from Toronto. Directors Bob McAuliffe of District 10 and Gaylan Prescott from District 12 traveled in from Pennsylvania and Colorado respectively.

Half-day plenary sessions were held each of the first two days of the conference. The delegation heard from New Jersey AFL-CIO President Charlie Wowkanech on the first day and New York AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento on the second day.

There was a panel discussion about the ATI strike. Local Union Leadership and Staff spoke about the struggle against the employer and the tactics used to achieve an acceptable agreement. We also heard how their solidarity within as well as the support from other unions and USW locals kept their moral high and contributed to their victory.

Another part of the program that was very well received was a presentation on suicide prevention by Dr. Kelly Posner of the Columbia Lighthouse Project. During her presentation, Dr. Posner asked for those in the audience who had been impacted by a suicide to raise their hands and more than half the hall had their hands raised. Dr. Posner explained how using the Columbia Protocol can help prevent suicides among the people in our lives. For more information, you may visit their website at www.cssrs.columbia.edu.

We also honored our outstanding activists throughout the District. Awards were given by each sub-district director to those who went above and beyond in their work with the Union. Awards were also given for Rapid Response and Safety and Health. In addition, a special Lifetime Achievement award was presented to John Scardella for his many years working for the health and safety of our members.

This year’s “Multiplying Good” Jefferson Award was presented to Mayra Rivera from Local 8198. Mayra was recognized for her work in bringing help and support to victims of Hurricane Maria as well as for building alliances with community groups to bring aid and safety training to the community after multiple natural disasters in Puerto Rico.

Each of our standing committees gave reports on what has happened in the past year as well as plans for the future. These included Women of Steel, Next Gen, Civil and Human Rights, Organizing, Education, Rapid Response, Safety and Health and the Veteran’s Council.

Finally, we had SOAR President Bill Pienta present charters to two new chapters in District 4. Our thanks to Local 1357 in New Bedford, MA and Local 9265 in Albany, NY for sponsoring these new SOAR chapters.

After each plenary, delegates attended classes to give them the skills needed to perform their duties as officers and stewards. These included Financial Officer Training, Grievance Handling, Negotiating in the Public and Private Sectors, Health and Safety Training, Civil Rights and Local Union Officer Training. There were also classes on labor history, as well as legal issues in Collective Bargaining and Social Media.

Masks were required for everyone’s safety at both the plenary sessions and the classes. I’d like to thank everyone for complying with this requirement. It resulted in a very well attended conference where people felt safe and at which there were no reports of anyone contracting COVID. Thank you to all who helped to make our Education Conference a huge success!

Conference photos on page 4 of this insert.
BUFFALO  JIM BRIGGS, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

A  dvanced levels - a problem both in terms of safety and work/ life balance. Several employers have approached the international for assistance in dealing with this labor shortage. This has given us an opportunity to turn a disadvantage into an advantage in bargaining power. We have been successful over the last several months in securing agreements with several employers relative to this labor shortage. Specifically, where we have raised the new hire rate in many of our facilities to be competitive in the new hire wage structure, we have raised existing employees’ wage rates (mid-contract) to help with retaining current employees as well as offering employee initiatives for recruiting new employees.

As always, I want to thank all of the local union leaders for their commitment and hard work. Each of you is in the front-lines for preserving our livelihoods. Again, my sincere appreciation and help.

SYRACUSE  JIM VALENTI, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

The Syracuse Sub-District has moved full speed ahead in our local union training initiatives. We have conducted eight training sessions at our Syracuse training facility as well as individual local union halls. Our local unions held their election of officers earlier this year, and unfortunately for many of these new union leaders, organizing efforts in the WNY area. We encourage all our brothers and sisters to actively and aggressively participate in organizing the unionized workforce in District 4.

On October 11, 2021 Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) addressed Steelworkers from Local 4601 in Olean, N.Y. to call on Siemens Energy to do right by their employees and sell their 88-acre complex to another manufacturing company that will create jobs to offset the loss of over 350 Steelworker jobs by the closing of the Olean manufacturing site. Senator Schumer stated that “The whole community depends on this plant and Siemens has an obligation not to pull the rug out from this community.” We thank the Senate Majority Leader for his continued support of Steelworker family.

In closing, as we approach the holiday season, we wish all of you and your families a happy Thanksgiving. Be safe as we enjoy and celebrate activities of the season.

EDISON  MICHAEL L. FISHER, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

I’m glad to report that the members here in the Edison Sub-District are keeping in step with the business of the Union, with in-person negotiations, and arbitrations, etc. along with other activities.

Recently, members at Express Scripts/Cigna (USW Local 4-380) were able to ratify a new agreement, which called for significant improvements in the first year, notably an hourly rate adjustment of $1.25 in the first year of the agreement, and a ratification bonus of $1,500.00. That contract being settled, Local 4-380 then turned to training, and participated in a recent Level One Shop Stewards Training session.

In our Sub-District, we are seeing more and more opportunities for members to come together, including Executive Board, and General Membership meetings being held in person, with member attendance on the rise. Local Union President Robert Tapp also recently ratified a favorable contract proposal which maintained Health Insurance costs at current levels - one of the major issues the Local Union had fought for at the bargaining table. In New York City recently, USW Members from the Edison Sub-District rallied with Union members from South America, who are in the United States protesting the labor and human rights record of the giant Tobacco Company Phillip Morris.

While other contract settlements are being reached, we would like to thank the Edison Staff for keeping the work of the Union moving forward.

MILFORD  STEVE FINNIGAN, SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTOR

We are pleased to announce on October 12 we are relocating our office to 9 Industrial Road, Suite 104 Milford, MA 01757. Our new office in addition to the offices for the staff has over 2,000 square feet which will be utilized for training and education. In the upcoming months we plan to have shop stewards training, financial training, which will include training for trustees, safety and health training. In addition, the LM Conference and Presidents meetings will no longer be held at hotels, it will be on site at our new facility. As soon as all the equipment is installed and the furniture for the training area arrives we will start scheduling the training for our local unions.

If there were any doubts about the need for a training area, the recent Next Generation Level 1 training held in Milford put those thoughts to rest. We had over two dozen Steelworkers attend this important training that will educate and motivate our next generation of union activists. The class, led by Staff Representative Brigettte Womer and District Next Gen Coordinator Brian Callow, was very well received and lays the groundwork for future involvement.

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BUFFALO, NY – Angelle Gregoire, Local 3992
SYRACUSE, NY – Dan LeClaire, Local 649
MAINE – Lee Drouin, Local 449
NEW JERSEY – Fredrick Johnson, Local 4-438
MILFORD, MA – Israel Rodas-Torres, Local 1702
PUERTO RICO – Mariel Cruz, Local 6871
RAPID RESPONSE – Dave Dellisola, Local 12012
SAFETY & HEALTH – Daniel Dunlap, Local 135L
LIFETIME HEALTH & SAFETY – John Scardella

The Women of Steel (WOS) attended the District 4 Educational Conference where a WOS Breakfast was held to provide all in attendance with a taste of what the regional councils have done over the past year. Each Council Chair spoke to a specific project that their council took on. Contact information was provided and a call for those locals who have female membership to have a Women’s Committee in place.

Director Del Vitale and Assistant to the Director David Wasiura addressed the attendees expressing their commitment to the program and stating that District 4 has one of the best Women of Steel programs in the USW.

During registration for the conference the Western New York Council did a 50/50 raffle and a basket raffle to benefit “Project Mona’s House.” The event raised $1,070.00

Project Mona’s House is a program of Ramp Global Missions, a Christian Humanitarian organization that helps those experiencing homelessness, orphaned, and those exploited through Human Trafficking. Project Mona’s House exists to shed light on this terrible crime, restore those who have been victimized, and prevent it from ever happening again through education, and legislation.

DISTRICT 4 CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

Recipients of the Activist Awards for 2021

2021 DISTRICT 4 ACTIVIST AWARDS

BUFFALO, NY – Angela Gregoire, Local 3992
SYRACUSE, NY – Dan LeClaire, Local 649
MAINE – Lee Drouin, Local 449
NEW JERSEY – Frederick Johnson, Local 4-438
MILFORD, MA – Israel Rodas-Torres, Local 1702
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RAPID RESPONSE – Dave Dellisola, Local 12012
SAFETY & HEALTH – Daniel Dunlap, Local 135L
LIFETIME HEALTH & SAFETY – John Scardella

District 4 Women of Steel Chair Cecilia Gilligan, Local 9625 SOAR Chair Priscilla Marco, Local 1357 SOAR Chair Donald Rei, District 4 Director Del Vitale, Assistant to the Director John Shinn, SOAR President Bill Pienta, Local 9625 SOAR Chair Priscilla Marco, Local 1357 SOAR Chair Donald Rei, District 4 Director Del Vitale, Assistant to the Director John Shinn.
Mayra Rivera has been the President and Women of Steel Coordinator for Local Union 8198, which represents municipal employees in Ponce, Puerto Rico, since 2011. In 2013, she led a redaction of the workforce sector affected more than 1,500 family-supporting employees, some USW members, with layoffs or 20-30-hour work weeks.

This was Rivera’s first fight. She organized protests, got the attention of media, and stood up for working people and their families, eventually taking legal action and seeking justice in court. In 2015, Rivera created her first food delivery campaign for hundreds of parents who in many cases did not have any salary because of the reduction in their work hours. Later on, when Hurricane Maria devastated all of Puerto Rico in 2017, including Rivera’s own family farm, she started an emergency fund to bring supplies, support and hazard education to Southern Puerto Rico. In 2018, Tony Mazzocchi Center (TMC) coaches arrived in Puerto Rico to conduct health and safety training for USW members and the community and Rivera served on the board.

Rivera has continued the work of TMC ever since, traveling all over Southern Puerto Rico as part of a specialized Rapid Response group of TMC for hazard relief and education. When disasters, like hurricanes and earthquakes strike, not only does she bring donations, PPE, food, and supplies from the USW, FEMA, the Red Cross and other charities to the community, but she also talks to the multitudes of people about what to do when they need help.

Rivera leads at least one hazard preparation and response training a week. TMC reaches different communities across Southern Puerto Rico, bringing water filters, lamps, LED lights, and batteries. She has also built a strong partnership with community leader Carmen Pacheco, who helps Rivera secure donations and supplies to distribute to the community.

Much of Puerto Rico’s community has not recovered from Hurricane Maria, and many of them have not yet regained their functional capacity to harbor and support communities in their own towns. Rivera is still helping to rebuild communities and to bring relief and support to those affected.

When asked about the labor movement, Rivera simply said, “I love it. If it wasn’t for the USW, I wouldn’t know the people I know now. I wouldn’t be doing the work I do now.”

For her commitment to standing up for working people and for supporting her community through natural disaster, Mayra Rivera is the 2021 USW Awards Jefferson Award winner.
CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Importance of Civil Rights

Since America declared its independence, people of all races, creed, colors, religions, sex and national origins have contributed to the material success of America. Many have given their lives for the ideals of America’s independence and freedom.

Yet many Americans continue to be denied equality under our laws and the “pursuit of happiness” enunciated by the Constitution of the United States.

As union members, it is our obligation to work towards the day when every person enjoys the liberty and benefits of true equality. Throughout the years the USW has fought for the fundamental rights and human dignity of workers. We have a duty to seek the rights, freedoms, and the principals of equality for all.

USW-Protocols Regarding Discrimination Complaints

We as union members, elected union officials and union representatives must take all filed complaints seriously—whether written or verbal.

Any complaint filed should be in writing on a form (520), which is available through the International Union. The form (520) shall be submitted to a member of the Local Union Civil and Human Rights Committee. the Local Union Recording Secretary, the USW Civil and Human Rights Department, the District Director, and the District Civil Rights Coordinator.

The Local Union Civil and Human Rights Committee shall consult with the Grievance Committee to determine if the complaint alleges a violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

If yes: The Grievance Committee shall handle the complaint.

If it is determined that the Human and Civil Rights Committee will process the complaint. Please note that Form 520 is for internal use within the union.

The Local Union Civil and Human Rights Committee shall attempt to investigate and seek to resolve the complaint.

The committee should inform the district coordinator of the status of the complaint and forward a status report to the Civil and Human Rights Department.

Any complaint not resolved satisfactorily may be appealed to the District Director, who may take additional actions in an effort to resolve the issue.

In the event that the complaint is still not resolved the complainant may submit the matter to the International Civil and Human Rights Department for review.

The Local Union President or Civil and Human Rights Committee Chair may contact the District Director, Civil and Human Rights Coordinator or servicing Staff Representative for assistance during any part of the investigation or resolution process.