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# 21 NEWS

Editor: Gerald Kell [WWW.USW2-21.COM](http://WWW.USW2-21.COM) November, 2016  
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21 News is a periodic publication of USW (United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union) Local 2-21, 1201 Sheridan Road, Escanaba, Michigan 49829. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily that of the International Union, the Local 2-21 membership, or the officers of these bodies. The editor reserves the right to refuse any article that is detrimental to the Local Union or the USW. Article accuracy and content is the responsibility of the author.

## Important Information & Events

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

[www.freckmanandassociates.com](http://www.freckmanandassociates.com) (800) 331-3226

**Retiree Get Together** 1st Wednesday of month 10am - Union Hall

**Union Meeting:** 2nd Wednesday - 7 pm – Dinner 6 pm

**Steward’s Meeting:** 4th Wednesday - 3 pm at the Hall

**Welfare Club Meeting:** 1st Monday of the month - 7 pm at the Mead Rod & Gun Club

**Total Benefit Solutions:** Union Hall hours on the first two Wednesdays of each month from 9:30 to 3:30. Call 1.877.265.2212 to schedule an appointment.

## Committee Members

President	Steve Benoit .....	233-2529	399-4195
1st Vice	Chuck Way.....	233-2705	280-1698
2nd Vice	Bob Larson.....		420-2256
3rd Vice	Jeff Skorupski.....	233-2556	399-5472
Insurance	Gerald Kell.....	233-3135	869-7943
Comp	Ross Strand.....	233-2549	280-1494
Secretary	Brandon Stromberg.....	233-2714	284-1604
Treasurer	Guy Trudell.....	233-2534	399-9143
Hall Rental	Steve Kennedy.....		789-1933

## Master Contract

*Steve Benoit, President*

As you may have heard, we returned earlier than expected from negotiations. Industry standards go both ways and for the Company to expect us to give out of our pockets but not theirs is wrong. It is hard to imagine why we would give the Company money so they can continue to mismanage, spend unnecessarily and continue to disregard concerns of the Union that has been in place for years. We have tried to help this Company understand the challenges to some of their changes to no avail. Several of the concessions they’ve asked for will only cost us. How can we decide to further invest in the company when we don’t know how our investment will help us in the long run? Do we know how much will be sacrificed at the top? Do we know how this cost to us will help keep us running into the future? When they ask us to give up Sunday pay, we should ask, “Where are they going to be on Sundays?” At home with their family. When we are here working on a holiday away from our families, where will they be? At home enjoying the holiday with their families. Pyramiding is said to have cost the mills \$11 million; with approximately \$5 million of that being from Escanaba. The pyramiding issue can be solved simply by appropriately staffing the mill. Imagine if the Company would add 50 people to the labor pool. They would be able to pay these people straight time to fill the vacancies we’re currently filling at time and a half. They would have enough people available to up-train which would also help to fill vacancies. “Pyramiding” is a management problem, not a contract or employee problem. We



don't want to be here on our days off any more than they want to pay time and a half. The benefits that were bargained before us were because we value family time. People sacrificed this time with their families to help the company meet production goals but we expect to be compensated appropriately for it. What they want us to do now is not only sacrifice for the Company but also to continue sacrificing family time without proper compensation. They want us to fix the problem of understaffing by giving up the incentive we receive for being here on our day off.

Don't let fear and intimidation diminish your resolve to stand strong. Save the time you have with your family or the financial support you provide your family. I will tell you something that I found very interesting, if a mill were to close it is not going to close because of the benefits or wages you receive, it will be because of how the mill was managed or market conditions which are out of our hands. Stay strong, continue to speak out, it is your voice that matters. Thank you to all that engaged on the message board, Facebook and made calls while the negotiating committee was in Milwaukee. Please, if you are not on the message board please do sign in. I can tell you, your comments send a message and we are not the only ones watching. United We Stand, Divided We Fall. Solidarity For One, Solidarity For All.



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*Don't throw your hard-earned  
money out the window!*

*If you have vision insurance, come see us!*

## **Slogans and Signs!**

**Brandon Stromberg, Secretary/Rapid Response**

Since the 2016 election is just about over, I bet most of you are pretty excited for me to stop writing about the election. Well, at this time, I would like to formally announce my candidacy for President of the United States (POTUS) for 2024. I shall select Gerald Kell as my running mate. My cabinet will include, but is not limited to: Donna Dams for her love and laughter; Bryon Branstrom for his wits and heart; my daughter, Peyton, for the youth of our generation; Guy Trudell for the Treasury, and Bob Larson for our senior citizens. We can never forget about our elderly! I will need money, political standing, a strong organization, dark suits with red or blue ties, and a clever slogan. Something like, "Enhance America's

Greatness," or "Never Follow. Lead," or "American By Birth, Rebel By Choice", or "The schnozberries taste like schnozberries."

"What would you run your campaign on?" you might ask. Well, I'm tall, good-looking, and have great hair; that's a start! Okay, in all seriousness, we do what we can to elect the best candidate available, but what can we personally do to help our nation? Buy American! The US apparel market is the largest in the world. In 2015, the market was valued at \$343 Billion. Yet the US apparel manufacturing industry has declined by more than 80% in the last two decades. Buying American made apparel creates jobs, stimulates our economy, and has less impact on the environment than buying overseas. Check out *Made in the USA: The 30 Day Journey* [www.usa30days.com](http://www.usa30days.com). Buy Local! In 2010, there were 27.9 million small business in the US compared to 18,500 larger firms with 500 employees or more. When you choose to buy from smaller "Mom and Pop" businesses, you support local families and community. Support Unions! Look at any industry. The Union workplace will have higher wages, better benefits, and more safety programs compared to the non-union workplace. My personal belief is wages are tied to unionization. When union membership is higher, so are wages, and this is aside from any partisan thinking. The fact is that even non-union employees benefit from

union shops. Employers must compete with the draw of union shops therefore bringing up compensation in a non-union shop. Support workers' rights! We want good pay and benefits, but many workers do not have that. We can join in their fights and secure a better future for us all. What do you want in life? To have a good job, make a good wage, and/or to leave a healthy planet for yourself and future generations perhaps? Buying American made products, buying from local businesses, supporting unions, and all workers' rights is how we get there. If you can take away only one thing from this article, it should be ***Stomberg/Kell 2024***. Yes, there will be yard signs, and I'm taking suggestions for a slogan.

available in our Human Resources Department. They must be completely filled out by you and your doctor and returned in a timely manner. As always the laws governing the act are extensive and must be followed to have a positive outcome.

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[jerrysbodyshop01@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jerrysbodyshop01@sbcglobal.net)

**Jamie Sebeck**  
Owner/Operator

**18 Hour Information**

*Jeff Skorupski, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*

Clarification of 18 hour rule

There will be a vote at the hall on November 9th 5:30 A;M to 7 P:M concerning cleaning up the language on when a person and how often a person can work 18 hours. Below is the current language on the vacancy procedure and the proposed new language. Any questions or concerns let us know.

Rewording 18 Hour Rule

**Current Wording:** An employee can work only one 18 hour shift during consecutive 12 hour day rotations (i.e., an employee could work 12 hours Sunday, 12 hours Monday, 18 hours Tuesday and 12 hours Wednesday).

**New Wording:** Any shift over 16 hours, either voluntary or forced, would be considered an 18 hour day and would require a day off before working over another shift over 16 hour.

There was some concern over possibly working 19 hours for a safety meeting or the annual time change. The answer is 18 hours is a hard stop time under no circumstance at all can an employee work more than 18 hours.

**FMLA**

*Chuck Way, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*

The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), signed by President Clinton in 1993, is a federal law that allows eligible employees to take job-protected, unpaid or to substitute paid leave if the employee has earned it. Up to 12 weeks in a 12 month period is available. You are entitled to have your health benefits maintained while you are on leave as if you had continued working. Of course you still must pay your share of the premium. You may also utilize FMLA if a family member has a condition or health problem. It covers varying things such as serious health conditions, caring for a family member who is sick, care for a newborn, the call of a family member to active duty. The act covers these items much more in depth. Ross Strand and I have some of the answers. There is also a website under the US Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division. Verso Escanaba has the appropriate forms



## **Solidarity**

*Steve Benoit, President*

Thank you to everyone that came to the USW Hall for the pancake breakfast held on Saturday, October 29th to help one of our union members through a trying time. The day was a success indicative of our membership's commitment to solidarity. The Women of Steel held a bake sale selling a variety of cookies, bars, cakes, etc. which was also very successful. In addition to the numerous people fed at the Hall, we delivered approximately seventy meals to the Mill. Thank you to those at work who still supported the cause. Overall it was a great day with support from members *and* from the community. We are a Union that truly stands strong together.



**Joe Curran and Chuck Way really "embraced" the solidarity of the breakfast fundraiser.**

## **On the Job Training (OJT)**

The Company recently informed us that they are looking at modifying training. They are going to try On the Job Training (OJT) in some areas. OJT will utilize tasks that can be trained while two people are in the same control room (examples; computer work, slitter changes, etc.). This is going to begin in the E1 mill. We will be watching this closely so that it does not cause any safety issues or training issues. There is nothing contractually that can stop this from happening and this may help expedite our training in areas where the Company has dropped the ball on training. Please keep us informed if this begins in your area. Let us know the pros and cons so all of it can be addressed.

## **Safety Accountability**

Please remember that accountability goes both ways. We and the Company are responsible for safety. The Company has made it very clear that they will be holding our members accountable and we will do the same by holding them accountable. If your area has a hazard that has not been addressed and you have placed it in G3 be sure to contact a safety advisor so it can be addressed by the Union. Recently we heard Management personnel not wearing safety shoes as they came into the mill. Please address this issue with them to help keep them safe. If you need to run an audit of management on PPE, please do so. They should appreciate you calling them out on it.

Also remember that if you are involved in an incident/accident contact a union steward immediately, especially when the Company comes to discuss it with you. Recently, the company contacted a member at home after an incident to question them on what happened. Let Management know (especially if they contact you at home) that you will speak with them when you have a union steward present. If you would end up in a situation where they are asking you to perform a drug screening, please ask for a union steward, immediately. With a union steward there, we can assure that you understand your rights and that there is reasonable suspicion for you to be tested.

Safety is important in the mill and we need to watch out for each other every day. Inform your Union brother or sister if you see something they are doing that could cause them or someone else harm. Unfortunately, our minds are not always on our jobs for a variety of reasons. Be mindful of your surroundings, and push to eliminate or mitigate hazards in our areas by bringing it to management's attention on a regular basis.

## **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

As we approach the holidays, some of us start to feel depression set in and do not know where to turn. Remember you can always turn to our EAP program for help. The EAP program offers you visits to a local counselor or consultation with a professional over the phone. Freckman and Associates is our EAP Provider and they can be contacted at 1.800.331.3226. Please do not hesitate to make a call.



You may have noticed the Holiday Schedule for 2017 appears to have a misprint in regards to Christmas Day. Because Christmas Eve lands on a Sunday in 2017, both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are observed on that Monday which happens to be Christmas Day.

### Article 23

In case a holiday falls on Sunday, Monday shall be observed. Where July 4th, December 24th and/or December 31st fall on Sunday and July 5th, Christmas and/or New Year's fall on Monday, both holidays will be observed on Monday. It is understood this language will not apply to banking holidays. The employee must work the actual holiday in order to bank it.

### **Healthcare Meeting**

*Gerald Kell, Insurance Advocate*

The biannual Healthcare/401(k) Committee meeting was held at Hotel Mead in Wisconsin Rapids on Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>. This meeting is held to review several aspects surrounding our healthcare and retirement plans including utilization, performance, objectives, rate methodology and future goals. The meeting was attended by several Union, Human Resources, and Corporate representatives from the Wisconsin Rapids, Stevens Point, Luke, and Escanaba mills. The following is a brief breakdown of the topics that were covered. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

### **401(k)/Pension Plan**

- Representatives from Transamerica offered reports on the overall performance and transition of the Defined Contribution Plan (401k).
- With a litany of numbers and graphs, the overall outcome indicated that Indexing continues to outpace Active Managers.
- We requested a report on Managed Advice performance and/or enrollment and should receive one in November.
- Our August request to open up the PCRA Option was acknowledged and is now available.
- The most recent Defined Benefit Plan (Pension) filing shows it is 95.9% funded.

### **Healthcare Plan**

- Representative from BlueCrossBlueShield of Tennessee presented several reports and reviewed healthcare utilization from January - July 2016. These included High Cost Claimants, Emergency Room Use, Chronic Illness, Acute/Episodic claims, spousal utilization, age demographics, etc.
- These numbers are measured against BCBSTenn's benchmarking and show that we are comprised of an older group of covered claimants, with the average being 40.2 (includes all family members covered by the plan) with the benchmark being 34.9; also the percentage of Family Plans in our coverage is higher than benchmark; with a higher than average family size at 2.3 vs. 2.0.
- Our overall illness categories and prescription claims are pretty typical of most plans, but it's clear we need to get better at using our preventative care including cancer screenings, blood work, mammograms, prostate exams, etc.
- In addition to the existing My Blue Health Rewards Program, there will be a new healthy activity incentive plan through Virgin Pulse. It will provide opportunity for cash rewards and offers a wristband tracker for monitoring sleep, steps taken, etc. i.e. Fitbit.
- The Premium Reimbursement Option (PRO) rates should be available in December.

## THIS MONTH IN UNION HISTORY

-AFTER 14 YEARS OF LABOR BY 400 STONE MASONS, THE MT. RUSHMORE SCULPTURE IS COMPLETED IN KEYSTONE, S.D. - 1941

-MALBONE TUNNEL DISASTER IN NEW YORK CITY; INEXPERIENCED SCAB MOTORMAN CRASHES FIVE-CAR TRAIN DURING STRIKE, 97 KILLED, 255 INJURED - 1918



*Malbone tunnel disaster, 1918*

-UNITED STONE & ALLIED PRODUCTS WORKERS OF AMERICA MERGE WITH UNITED STEELWORKERS OF AMERICA - 1972

- THE UAW BEGINS WHAT WAS TO BECOME A SUCCESSFUL 172-DAY STRIKE AGAINST INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER. THE UNION TURNED BACK COMPANY DEMANDS FOR WEAKENED WORK RULES, MANDATORY OVERTIME - 1979

- SOME 5,000 PHILADELPHIA-AREA PUBLIC TRANSIT WORKERS BEGIN WHAT WAS TO BE A 6-DAY STRIKE CENTERED ON WAGES AND PENSION BENEFITS - 2009

- SOME 12,000 TELEVISION AND MOVIE WRITERS BEGIN WHAT WAS TO BECOME A 3-MONTH STRIKE AGAINST PRODUCERS OVER DEMANDS FOR AN INCREASE IN PAY FOR MOVIES AND TELEVISION SHOWS RELEASED ON DVD AND FOR A BIGGER SHARE OF THE REVENUE FROM WORK DELIVERED OVER THE INTERNET - 2007

## UNITED STEELWORKERS **PAC** POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Do you know that USW District 2 has a 94% active membership density? We are stronger in numbers. Let us proudly keep that number high, encourage membership retention and pursue expansion. You can help this effort by contributing the USW PAC fund. USW PAC makes it possible for our union to run the most effective, member-driven program in the labor movement; and, it is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from members like you. Federal law prohibits your dues dollars from being used for most political purposes, which is why our union has established the United Steelworkers Political Action Committee (USW PAC).



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