

# The St. Paul Union Advocate

127th Year, No. 6, Issue 5473

For union homes in Ramsey, Dakota, Washington and Chisago counties

January 2024

## Shop Union!

### AFL-CIO releases Holiday Gift Guide

Because solidarity never goes out of season, the AFL-CIO has released its annual Union-Made Holiday Gift Guide, available at [aflcio.org/MadeInAmerica/holiday-gifts](http://aflcio.org/MadeInAmerica/holiday-gifts).

The list includes union-made clothes, toys, sporting goods, games and food, as well as big-ticket items like union-made pianos and motorcycles. There are gift ideas for shoppers to make at home out of union products, and experiences like hotel stays and theater tickets.

Best of all, these gifts are made by workers who stood together for family-supporting wages and good benefits. Supporting union-made goods helps workers and communities across the U.S.

And if you're shipping gifts, consider sending it via a union carrier like the U.S. Postal Service or UPS.



Workers at seven local entertainment venues operated by First Avenue gathered Nov. 3 outside the flagship club in downtown Minneapolis to announce they had organized a union with UNITE HERE Local 17. The venues' CEO announced later that day that she intended to recognize the workers' union voluntarily.

Minneapolis Labor Review photo

## Event staff unionize at seven clubs owned by First Ave

Over 200 workers at First Avenue and six other clubs owned by the legendary music venue have formed a union with UNITE HERE Local 17, the Twin Cities-based hospitality union.

They are set to bargain a first contract after the company agreed to bypass the National Labor Relations Board process and voluntarily recognize the new union Nov. 3, just hours after workers held a public event outside First Avenue.

In a statement, Local 17 said workers looked forward to negotiations and called the organizing drive "a testament to the love the First Ave workers have for each other, their unity and their desire to make their workplaces better."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)

## ALL IN FOR STAFFING

### Allina's proposal to cut hospital staffing draws outcry from union members

By Michael Moore  
*Union Advocate editor*

Nurses and other health care workers took to the streets outside three Allina Health hospitals Oct. 26, protesting the provider's plan to cut services and reduce nurse and nurse-aid staffing by as much as 30% in some units, according to their unions.

"We believe this has nothing to do with the betterment of patient care and everything to do with the bottom line," Mercy Hospital nurse Venessa Soldo-Jones said during a press conference on the picket line outside United Hospital in St. Paul. "Nurses are not in this business for profit."

Two unions, the Minnesota Nurses Association and SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa,

### Inside

- Q&A with MNA's new executive director, Karlton Scott. **Page 12.**
- Planned Parenthood workers picket for first union contract. **Page 8.**

organized the informational picketing at United, Mercy and Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis.

Union members decried Allina for shutting down United's adolescent mental health unit and Abbott Northwestern's infusion care center, and they rallied against another round of benchmarking - a process in which the system aligns its staffing levels with comparable hospitals across the country - that is in the works at their facilities.

Health care workers said the process almost certainly will lead to lower staffing and higher workloads in many hospital



Nurses and other health care workers at United Hospital in St. Paul held informational picketing to protest planned staffing reductions by as much as 30% in some units.

Union Advocate photo

units - outcomes Allina should be trying to avoid in an already tight labor market, SEIU

Healthcare Vice President Brenda Hilbrich said.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)



[www.stpaulunions.org](http://www.stpaulunions.org)



## Go Figure

- 33%** Projected top wage increase, with cost-of-living adjustments, won by union workers at General Motors over a new, four-year deal
- 70%** Projected increase to GM's starting wage
- 9%** Wage increase Toyota announced it will give U.S. workers on Jan. 1, and at least five other non-union companies moved to raise their wages after the UAW settled with the Big 3



### Labor Voices: Kera Peterson

## Looking back on a year of historic gains for union members

As union members, we know working people are stronger when we stick together. That power was on display for all to see in 2023, as thousands of American workers collectively bargained for historic contract gains. These victories, both locally and nationally, serve as a hopeful reminder of the great things we can accomplish when we are united. Our movement is on the rise, and it gives us momentum as we look to expand on these gains in 2024, bringing more workers into our unions, pushing back against the companies that have exploited us for too long and continuing to reclaim our power as workers.

How big were the gains union members made in 2023? One analysis published by CNN in November found that nearly 900,000 unionized U.S. workers won immediate pay increases of 10% or more in the past year. Of course, CEO's didn't raise wages out of the goodness of their hearts. Union members organized and fought hard for everything they won at the bargaining table. For the 340,000 Teamsters who work at UPS, that meant showing the company – and its clients – that they were ready to go on strike. It's a threat that members of the United Auto Workers made good on. For roughly six weeks, the UAW's "Stand Up Strike" drew support from across the labor movement. Members of UAW Local 722 saw it firsthand on their picket line at General Motors' parts facility in Hudson, Wis. Big 3 workers stuck together, the public stuck with them, and they won a record contract to match their companies' record profits.

Our labor federation showed up to support local UPS workers and GM workers in these contract fights, and we are proudly doing the same for local union members in contract campaigns that remain ongoing. Public educators, transit workers and health care workers are pushing their employers for contracts that will address ongoing staffing shortages in their ranks, demanding competitive wages and benefits along with sustainable working conditions. Other workers are bargaining first contracts after organizing their unions at Half Price Books, the Science Museum of Minnesota, Planned Parenthood North Central States, Minnesota United FC and elsewhere. It's inspiring to be in solidarity with these workers as they claim a seat at the table and make their collective voice heard. It's an exciting reminder that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. That's what being in a union is all about.

With so many unions making headlines with contract gains, it's no surprise that non-union workers continued to organize their workplaces in 2023. And as we saw a year earlier, when a wave of Starbucks baristas unionized, many of the workers who

**“There are so many shared accomplishments to celebrate this holiday season, and the promise of many more in the new year.”**

– Kera Peterson



formed unions this year did so in industries where unions are rare, like the workers at Vertical Endeavors climbing gyms, event staff at First Avenue clubs and call center workers at Rove Pest Control. Allina doctors and clinicians voted to unionize to better advocate for their patients and their profession. And Delta mechanics, gate agents and flight attendants ramped up their organizing drive, moving closer to a historic union vote.

All of this is good news for the U.S. economy. When union members organized for better wages and benefits, it often creates a ripple effect in an industry, with non-union employers raising their own wages to avoid losing workers to their competitors. A rising tide lifts all boats, and the same rule applies to labor's political agenda. Minnesota's labor movement celebrated a historic state legislative session in 2023. Gov. Tim Walz and DFL majorities in the House and Senate passed new laws that will protect workers as they form unions and expand the rights of public employees to advocate for the people they serve. State lawmakers made historic investments in infrastructure and education, and they established a paid family leave program that will ensure no Minnesota worker is forced to choose between their paycheck and the health of their family.

There are so many shared accomplishments to celebrate this holiday season, and the promise of even more that we can achieve in solidarity in the new year. In this season of gratitude and reflection, I want to recognize the union volunteers who worked hard this year to help elect more than 20 labor-endorsed candidates in the east metro, from school boards to city council. And I also want to thank the members and leaders of the nearly 150 affiliated local unions who are committed to building a brighter future together with the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation. It is a pleasure and an honor to work in support of our shared goals.

– Kera Peterson is president of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO.

## Letters

- Send letters to: 353 W. 7th St., Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55102
- Email them to: [mmoore@stpaulunions.org](mailto:mmoore@stpaulunions.org)

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# Retail janitors launch campaign to win paid holidays in next union contract

By Michael Moore  
 Union Advocate editor

With sales for Black Friday, last-minute shoppers and post-holiday bargain hunters, it's a busy time of year for the union members who clean big box stores across the Twin Cities area. And they are working through it without holiday pay.

That's something members of Service Employees (SEIU) Local 26 intend to address in contract negotiations with cleaning companies, set to begin in the coming weeks, workers said during a virtual press conference before Thanksgiving.

"Us working during the holidays, it brings a lot of income to the stores and to our companies, but I wonder why they don't invest that money in us, the workers," said Local 26 member Deyanira Rodriguez, a janitor with Carlson Building Maintenance who cleans Target and other stores across the metro.

"We are the ones who are doing the job. We deserve more. That's the fair thing to do, and we are going to get it."

Local 26 called the press conference to kick off a contract campaign that will seek paid holidays, affordable health insurance and higher wages for about 700 retail cleaning workers in the bargaining unit.

Retail janitors' hourly wages begin at \$14.50. Local 26 President Greg Nammacher said most members of the bargaining unit earn \$15 per hour or less, and just 5% can afford to access the employer-sponsored health plan.

"Remember, it is these workers who were in the grocery stores during the pandemic when it was at its worst, when we didn't even know what it was, cleaning up the discarded masks and gloves," Nammacher said. "They were called heroes. It is time now to show it."

Union members will look to build on gains they have made since joining SEIU in 2016, after a historic, six-year organizing campaign facilitated by the Twin Cities worker center CTUL.

Before unionizing, retail janitors' wages began at just \$9.50 per hour, and worker complaints of wage theft - as stores switched cleaning contracts, or as contractors outsourced work to subcontractors - were common.

Now, retail cleaning workers are among nearly 8,000 members of SEIU Local 26 whose contracts are set to expire this winter. Earlier this year, these retail and office janitors, security officers and airport workers began strategizing together - and with members of other local unions who will be at the bargaining table this winter - about ways to leverage their collective strength for greater gains. The coalition unites about 20,000 union members in the public and private sector.

"We're not going to be silent anymore when many of the corporations in Minnesota made record profits during the pandemic," Nammacher said. "It is time all these workers in these different sectors are able to move forward."

For Rodriguez, that means being able to enjoy holidays like Christmas at home with her family without taking a hit on her paycheck, or getting premium pay on the holidays she does have to work.

"One of the things I remember about Christmas when I was a kid, it was so beautiful to welcome Christmas with a very warm hug within our family," she said. "Now, I would like to be able to offer that to our kids."



*Merry Christmas and  
 Best Wishes for a Very  
 Happy and Prosperous  
 New Year!*

A message from Saint Paul Steamfitters Pipefitters Local 455





# Walz puts infrastructure jobs bill on lawmakers' 2024 to-do list

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Gov. Tim Walz wants Minnesota legislators to send a \$1 billion package of infrastructure investments to his desk during the 2024 legislative session.

The governor floated the amount Oct. 23 after a tour of Saint Paul College, which is seeking funding to modernize its facility. The visit kicked off the Walz administration's statewide tour of local projects lawmakers are likely to consider for inclusion in the next bonding bill.

"Whether that's roads and bridges, clean water infrastructure, or investments in modernizing our state's higher education, a strong infrastructure plan creates jobs while helping ensure every community across Minnesota prospers," Walz said. "I look forward to hearing directly from Minnesotans about the local infrastructure projects that matter most to them."

Capital investments, Walz noted, also put tradespeople to work. Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council President Dan McConnell accompanied Walz on the campus tour, and representatives of several Building Trades unions attended a press conference afterward to show support for a robust bonding bill.

"The thing that's important to note is, in all of these projects, they will be constructed by union labor right here in Minnesota, creating good-paying, middle-class jobs," Walz said.

## Political uncertainty ahead

Bonding is traditionally a bipartisan priority in even-numbered years. The state's constitution requires support from a 60% supermajority in each legislative chamber to advance a bonding bill to the governor's desk.

That means borrowing for capital investments in 2024 will require votes from some Republicans. The party's leadership has in recent years tried to leverage those votes for concessions from the governor and DFL majorities on other, unrelated issues.

It took until October for lawmakers to finalize a bonding bill in 2020, as Republicans tried unsuccessfully to force Walz to give up his emergency powers.

After the Legislature failed to deliver a bonding bill in 2022, DFLers threatened to tap the state's budget surplus during the 2023 session, rather than borrowing for infrastructure funds. That would have eliminated the supermajority requirement - and, potentially, risked GOP-favored projects being left out of the bill.

Eventually, lawmakers passed a \$2.6 billion package that combined borrowing and cash funding with bipartisan support. It marked the largest infrastructure jobs bill in state history.

Still, McConnell noted that the state still has a nearly \$7.5 billion backlog of capital projects. He urged



Student leaders and administrators from Saint Paul College gave Gov. Tim Walz a tour of campus improvements included in the school's request for state bonding funds. Union Advocate photos

lawmakers of both parties not to turn infrastructure jobs into a political football, and to "support immediate, adequate and annual investments in our state."

## An investment in careers

At Saint Paul College, that means funding to repair and renew the campus' labs and academic facilities, making classrooms more flexible and services more accessible to students, college President Dee Dee Peaslee said.

She noted that many of Saint Paul College's students go on to careers in the same construction trades that would be needed to complete the project, should it be included in the infrastructure bill.

"We're proud of the fact that we train so many of the folks, the union laborers that are behind me, to go into these high-wage, high-demand jobs, whether it be in sheet metal, construction, pipefitting, plumbing or something else," Peaslee said.

State lawmakers will return to the Capitol for the 2024 legislative session Feb. 12, and they must adjourn by May 20.



Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades President Dan McConnell joined Walz on the tour of Saint Paul College. He called on lawmakers to support "immediate, adequate and annual" capital investments.

HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS!

A MESSAGE FROM

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Rep. Betty McCollum addressed UAW members in Hudson, alongside Local 722's Steve Frisque and the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's Kera Peterson. Union Advocate photo

### Big 3 strike ends as UAW makes historic gains

After five weeks on the picket line at General Motors' parts facility in Hudson, Wis, members of United Auto Workers Local 722 have a new contract that will provide historic pay increases and eliminate a two-tier wage system.

After joining the UAW's nationwide "Stand Up Strike" on Sept. 22, the 81 union members in Hudson kept their picket line up around the clock until union leaders announced a settlement with GM on Oct. 20, just days after reaching similar agreements with Ford and Stellantis.

UAW members voted in November to ratify the contracts. Together, they cover about 150,000 Big 3 workers.

UAW Local 722 President Steve Frisque said the new contracts make "significant gains, especially for our union's younger membership." Many recently hired autoworkers - who took their jobs after the UAW agreed to a two-tiered wage structure during the Great Recession - saw immediate raises of over 40%.

In addition to eliminating the lower tier, the new contracts include raises and cost-of-living adjustments likely to raise base wages by 33% between now and April 2028, when the contracts expire. Some workers will see their

wages increase by 160%, according to the UAW.

"Some of these kids making \$18 or \$19 per hour are going to go up to \$35 per hour," Frisque said. "It's life changing for these people, some of whom were working two jobs just to pay rent. Now they're going to be able to save for a house and put their kids through school."

Autoworkers will advance to the top pay scale in just three years under their new contracts - down from eight previously. "And everybody has a pathway to get there" now that tiers have been eliminated," Frisque said.

The UAW also secured commitments from the Big 3 companies to include workers at electric-vehicle and battery plants under the union's national agreements - and last month launched major organizing drives at non-union automakers in the U.S., many of which doled out raises in the weeks following the Big 3 settlements.

Local 722 members in Hudson will not soon forget the "outpouring of kindness, gifts, or solidarity in just walking the strike line with us" shown by members of the labor community during their strike, Frisque said.

"We accomplished what we set out to do," he said.

# Season's Greetings



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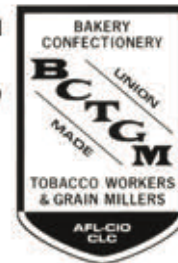
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# Happy Holidays!

Sending best wishes to our union family for a safe and happy holiday.

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**Holiday greetings to all union families!**

**Iron Workers Local 512**



## Workers at five Minnesota climbing gyms win organizing election with UFCW

Workers at five Vertical Endeavors climbing gyms in the Twin Cities and Duluth have won their union election, with over 81% voting by mail in November to join the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW).

The new bargaining unit brings together about 90 workers at the five facilities. They filed for a union election with the National Labor Relations Board in August, but workers saw their election delayed after Vertical Endeavors appealed – unsuccessfully – the eligibility of shift supervisors.

Union members said they organized to gain more control over their work environment, and to “make outdoor-industry jobs more livable for everybody who works in it,” said Suzie Miller, who works as a coach, route setter and counter-staff employee at Vertical Endeavors’ Bloomington location.

“We work really hard at our jobs, we’re all really passionate about it, and



Workers at Vertical Endeavors showed off their ballots during a mail-in union election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board in November. submitted photo

climbing means a lot to us,” Miller said. “So it’s important to us to work together

to make it an even better place to work.” That means higher wages and better

benefits, Bloomington worker Hailey Jarmon added.

“We unionized because we want better pay and health care, and a voice in the decisions that are going to affect employees and customers,” Jarmon said. “I hope that more rock climbing gyms unionize so standards are raised for how employees are treated. We deserve it.”

Two Minnesota-based UFCW affiliates, Locals 1189 and 663, teamed up to support the climbing workers’ organizing drive.

The locals said that workers at Nicros, a local company that fabricates custom walls and holds for rock climbing systems, intend to file for union recognition soon.

“We’re thrilled to welcome the first climbing gym workers to our union and look forward to helping them craft their first-ever contract,” Local 1189 President Jim Gleb said.

## Maple Grove workers among union members to file coordinated charges against REI

Workers at eight REI retail stores, including members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 663 in Maple Grove, took the unusual step of filing a coordinated, nationwide unfair labor practice complaint Nov. 15 with the National Labor Relations Board.

The workers accuse their bosses at Recreational Equipment, Inc., of break-

ing labor law through “bad faith bargaining, unilateral workplace changes that show a pattern of egregious anti-union behavior, emotional manipulation, and retaliation against workers, such as firings, changes to work schedules, and disciplinary practices.”

The charges were filed with NLRB regional offices covering each of REI’s eight

unionized stores. In addition to Maple Grove, they include shops in Chicago, New York, Cleveland, Boston, Berkeley, Calif., Durham, N.C., and Bellingham, Wash.

REI markets itself as progressive, but it hired Morgan Lewis, the notorious union-buster advising Amazon, to conduct an anti-worker campaign starting a year and a half ago, said Graham Gale, a

shop mechanic in the New York store.

“This decision made clear REI is more interested in fighting its own workers than having meaningful negotiations with us,” said Gale. “We’ve spent the last six-months in only a handful of sessions, and seeing little agreement, while re-educating the new lawyers on our long-held issues.”

– PAI Union News Service

# CF Fair Contracting Foundation



**Happy Holidays**  
*and*  
**Wishing All of the Labor Movement**  
**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS

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*Happy holidays to our union family!*

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*St. Paul Federation of Educators Local 28 is affiliated with Education Minnesota, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.*



# Union members picket hospitals to protest Allina Health's proposed staffing cuts

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

SEIU's 5,000 members who work for Allina are "worn out" from "four years of short staffing," Hillbrich said. But instead of providing a "soft landing" from the pandemic, Allina "has decided it needs to run productivity tests, benchmarking and other evaluations to justify and normalize the continued short staffing."

Allina hospital nurses, meanwhile, have been sounding the alarm about short staffing - and its impact on safety and patient care - for over a decade.

United nurse Ali Marcanti said Allina's plan for more benchmarking is especially troubling in the wake of an annual report, issued last month by the Minnesota Department of Health, that documented 572 adverse events in the state's hospitals in 2022, the second consecutive year in which adverse events increased. Twenty-one resulted in patient deaths, the highest total since 2006.

"Direct caregiver cuts are seen as an appropriate way to save money, but they always lead to increased patient injury and mortality," Marcanti said. "There are preventable patient injuries and deaths happening right now in Minnesota - in this hospital - because of chronic understaffing and subsequent failure to rescue."

Although the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted health systems in 2022, MDH also acknowledged workforce shortages as a factor that contributed to the increase in adverse events last year. "Staffing shortages both limit the number of hands available to assist with patient care needs, such as repositioning and mobility, and create backups in transfers of care across facilities," the MDH said.

Health care workers don't want to see pandemic-level staffing become the new normal, Abbott Northwestern nurse Jessica Sherlock said. But that's



MNA members rallied against staffing cuts, known as "benchmarking," at United Hospital.

Union Advocate photo

exactly what they fear Allina has in mind with this round of benchmarking.

"The pressure that these changes impose threatens to exacerbate our existing staffing shortages, pushing us all closer to the brink of quitting because of the moral injury that we take on every day," Sherlock said. "Furthermore, we're deeply troubled that these staffing changes could jeopardize our nursing licenses."

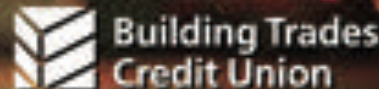
Union members asked supporters - including elected officials - to contact members of the Allina Health Board of Directors and ask them to put patients before profits by backing away from the plan for more benchmarking.

"Stand by our side and hold Allina Health accountable for what appears to be a race to the bottom in Minnesota health care," Sherlock said.

# Merry Christmas

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Planned Parenthood North Central States workers and their supporters held informational picketing outside the Vandalia Street clinic in St. Paul on Nov. 28. Union Advocate photo

## Union members picket, pressure Planned Parenthood to ‘quit wasting time’ in first-contract talks

By Michael Moore  
*Union Advocate editor*

Union members picketed Planned Parenthood health centers in St. Paul and three other cities before the clinics opened Nov. 28, ramping up pressure on North Central States executives to settle a fair contract that rewards the workers keeping reproductive health care accessible in Minnesota and four other states.

Informational picketing also took place at clinics in Minneapolis; Des Moines, Iowa; and Omaha, Neb.

Union members did not strike and were careful not to interrupt service at their clinics.

On the picket line, James Willging, a senior community organizer at the Vandalia Street clinic, said union members took pains in organizing the action “to ensure that we don’t interrupt patient care,” and to “differentiate ourselves” from other demonstrators that frequently target Planned Parenthood.

“Our union is unapologetically pro-abortion, unapologetically pro-worker and unapologetically pro-union,” Willging said.

Willging and other members of the union’s bargaining team went back to the table with management the day after picketing.

The two sides have held 33 sessions since negotiations began about a year ago on a first contract covering over 440 workers in the Planned Parenthood North Central States (PPNCS) chapter, which covers Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota.

Workers voted by a margin of 264-26 to join PPNCS United, an affiliate of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa, in July 2022.

The bargaining process hit an early speed bump last February, when PPNCS placed “final warning” notices

in the personnel files of all 14 bargaining team members. SEIU responded by filing charges of unfair labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board, alleging that the action was an attempt to target and intimidate elected union leaders.

The NLRB has not yet ruled on the charges. Meanwhile, two-thirds of the PPNCS workers originally elected to the bargaining committee have been fired, taken another job or stepped down from the committee.

That’s union-busting, PPNCS workers say. Health educator Jon Lutz, a member of the union’s contract action team, said frontline staff members who are dedicated to the organization’s mission deserve better from their bosses.

“Our employer has been ... targeting and retaliating against employees who are brave enough to say that their mistreatment of workers affects patients,” Lutz said during a rally outside a Minneapolis clinic. “We are here for workers’ rights, we are here for abortion rights and most of all we are here for our patients.”


No agreement was announced after the Nov. 29 talks. Economic issues remain the sticking points, according to Willging, who said PPNCS members would not settle for anything less than “fair, equitable and transparent wages” and affordable health insurance for workers and their families.

“We actually saw great progress as recently as the last session,” Willging added. “But we understand that the reason that’s happening is because there’s pressure on the employer, and we’re not willing to let up on the gas until we have a finalized first contract that we can deliver to our members that rewards the work they do.”

“They need to come to the table with strong proposals that we can realistically accept and quit wasting time. It’s time to get this contract settled.”

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

To all our union brothers and sisters and their families



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## Season's Greetings, Union Families!

*A message from the  
International Union of  
Elevator Constructors  
Local 9*



[www.local9.com](http://www.local9.com)





**Wishing all  
union members  
a happy, safe  
holiday season.**

*From the  
members of  
St. Paul  
Plumbers  
Local #34*



**HOLIDAY GREETINGS  
to all union families!**

**LiUNA!**

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**Construction and General  
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[www.local563.org](http://www.local563.org)



**Season's greetings to all union families!**

*— A message from Painters and Allied Trades District Council 82  
Affiliated Locals: 61, 106, 386, 681, 880, 1324, 1922, 1962, 2002*

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holiday season from the  
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## East Side Freedom Library offers History Day resources, mentoring through April

By Peter Rachleff

National History Day is an outstanding program in which middle- and high-school students – some individually, some in groups – undertake projects to take ownership of an untold story in American history. Every year, national officials decree a “theme” for the program. In 2023-2024, it is “Turning Points in History.” Student projects have taken the shape of story boards, documentary videos, interactive websites, dramatic performances and, yes, even essay papers. Students compete with peers at the same grade levels, and winners go on to compete regionally, statewide and even nationally. Minnesota students have distinguished themselves nationally with great achievements.

For 10 years, the East Side Freedom Library has assembled a team of History Day mentors, including retired teachers, college students, and other dedicated partners. During the pandemic, we learned to provide support remotely for those who are unable to meet us at ESFL, and now we can offer support to students across the state. For those students who can visit us, we have thousands of books, videos, works of visual art, musical recordings and union and protest buttons that they can

use as sources. We have also been very successful at identifying people who have participated in events that students are researching, and we can connect the students with them for oral interviews. It has been an outstanding learning experience for the students and a satisfying experience for the mentors. It has also been a way for us to excite students about labor history and for us to keep our rich labor history alive.

This year’s theme, “Turning Points in History,” is squarely in our wheelhouse, with potential for projects on immigration, labor, racial and gender justice and more. We will be encouraging young scholars to grapple with key strikes, elections and movements, especially in Minnesota but across our country if that is what catches their imaginations. Here’s just one example: Several years ago, when the theme was “Breaking Barriers in History,” four students from Cretin-Derham Hall decided to explore the history of Dolores Huerta and her role in organizing the United Farm Workers of America. They chose to make their final presentation a one-of-a-kind poster of Ms. Huerta with the slogan “Si Se Puede” (“Yes We Can”). It was a great work of art. One of our ESFL mentors had spent 25 years as a business agent in the

American Postal Workers Union, and the APWU was set to honor Ms. Huerta at their national convention in Pittsburgh that summer. He decided to bring all four young people to the convention, where they met Dolores Huerta and she signed their poster and posed for a photo with them! This experience changed their lives. They later donated their autographed poster to the East Side Freedom Library. It continues to inspire us and the young scholars who visit us.

We began our Saturday mentoring sessions, from 10 a.m. to noon, on Dec. 2, and we will continue through April. We are also happy to connect with students by appointments after school or at other times, and by Zoom. If you are the parent or teacher of a middle schooler or a high-school student who is undertaking a National History Day project, please send them to us. Tell your friends and family members. You can email me for more information at [peter@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org](mailto:peter@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org). We look forward to helping young scholars take ownership of the stories that deserve to be front and center in our history.

– Rachleff is co-founder of the East Side Freedom Library and emeritus professor of History at Macalester College.

## Happy Holidays!

Wishing you and your family a safe and happy holiday season from Roofers & Waterproofers Local 96!

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Local 96



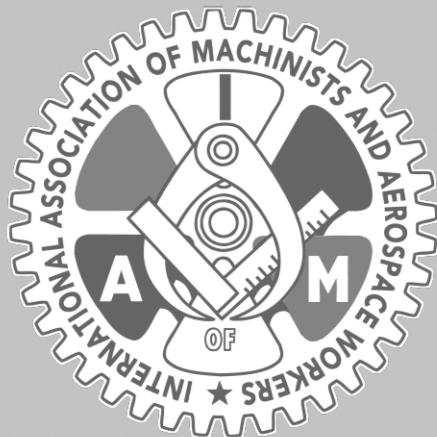
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union families  
a safe and happy  
holiday season.



Wishing you and your family a Joyous Holiday Season and a Prosperous New Year





**Labor Q&A: Karlton Scott**

*MNA's new executive director seeks organizing growth*

The Minnesota Nurses Association's search for an executive director last year brought a longtime organizer back into the fold.

Karlton Scott had worked as an organizer at MNA from 2013 until 2020, when he moved to Atlanta to support the Association of Flight Attendants' union drive at Delta. Now he's back in Minnesota, where he hopes to bring a renewed organizing spirit to the union of 22,000 health care professionals.

"We're hitting the ground running," he said in an interview with The Union Advocate on Dec. 5, a week after nearly 400 nurses filed for a union election at Essentia Health in northern Minnesota. Scott's interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**UA:** What is it about organizing that has led you to make a career of it?

**KS:** I was working on a campaign in Texas at HCA, the largest for-profit health care system in the world. We were in El Paso, and I was working with an older woman who, even though she was working at the most profitable health system in the world, she was crossing the border to Mexico to get her health coverage. When she won her election, won her union, she cried. And I think from there on I was hooked. I was looking at this woman my grandparents' age who was thanking me and telling me I'd changed her life.

**UA:** What's been your focus since taking over as executive director of MNA?

**KS:** Representation and building density. For us to build power, we've got to build density. After I left MNA in 2020, we were one of the few unions that have not grown. From there, we've had two (National Labor Relations Board) elections already. And we filed for a really big one last week, and actually today we're filing for another one with 100 nurses.

**UA:** If those elections are successful, how many new members is MNA poised to add this year?

**KS:** About 500, with many more campaigns in the hopper. And that's not including internal organizing



Karlton Scott

to build density - our membership went up that way as well. And if we stay on this pathway, we're definitely going to surpass that next year.

**UA:** There's been a lot of organizing energy, particularly in health care, since the pandemic. Is MNA tapping into that?

**KS:** That's the thing I was very surprised about. Everyone was organizing, and we should have been building density as well during that crisis. So many nurses were put into situations that were dangerous not only for patients but also for the nurses and their families.

**UA:** What pitch is MNA making to non-union nurses now?

**KS:** It's having a voice. So many facilities are making cuts, and they're putting more and more pressure on the nurses. One way to fight back is having a seat at the table where decisions are being made, and I think more and more nurses are realizing that. These facilities are moving away from being community hospitals and toward a corporatization of health care.

**UA:** MNA certainly has developed a reputation as a fighting union - at the bargaining table and at the Capitol. How does external organizing support that work union members are already doing?

**KS:** By organizing we are able to engage our members and the community about the corporatization of health care - the short staffing, the wait times, people waiting in the emergency room hallways, all of it. Unfortunately, they're running the hospitals like a corporation now. So we want to really engage the community about the harms of this model because they're the ones that are on the receiving end.

These hospital CEO's want to plead poverty and make cuts, but on the other hand they're giving themselves massive pay increases. We think they should be reinvesting that money in the hospital, meaning more charity care, more adequate staffing - more patient focused, not profit focused.

**UA:** What is it about working with nurses that's so rewarding for you?

**KS:** It's a personal thing. I come from a family of health care workers. My brother's a physician, my sister's a nurse and my mom is a social worker. It was always instilled in us to give back, making sure we're always there to help.

**Labor-ed course for high schoolers offers \$50 gift card, free lunch**

It's never too early to learn your rights on the job.

That's why the U of M's Labor Education Service and the state Department of Labor are teaming up

to offer free classes for high-school students on their rights, including why workers organize unions and how workers of all ages can advocate for themselves and others.

The "Youth @ Work" event is Saturday, Jan. 20 in St. Paul. All participants will receive a \$50 gift card and lunch. To register, call 612-625-2394 or email williac@umn.edu.

**SPRINKLER FITTERS**



**Holiday greetings from the members of Local 417!**

We encourage all union members to remember and appreciate our nation's service members, whose sacrifices prevent them from gathering with their loved ones during the holiday season.

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**Happy holidays to our extended union family!**



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**We would like to wish everyone a Happy Holidays and a prosperous New Year**

**Saint Paul Building & Construction Trades Council**



# First Ave workers organize with UNITE HERE Local 17

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"I think we're the best clubs in the Cities, so I want to be treated like we're the best," said Pauli DeMaris, who has worked at First Avenue clubs for 18 years.

The new bargaining unit brings together bartenders, servers and event staff who work at First Avenue and its two adjacent clubs in downtown Minneapolis, the 7th Street Entry and the Depot Tavern. Also included are workers at four other clubs owned by the company: the Turf Club, the Palace Theatre and the Fitzgerald Theater in St. Paul and the Fine Line in Minneapolis.

Members of the newly organized bargaining unit said they hope to negotiate fair pay and worker-friendly changes to the company's scheduling practices. Most workers at First Avenue venues earn minimum wage, making tipped positions - bartenders and servers - highly sought after among staff.

Despite working for the company for nearly two decades, DeMaris still works many shifts in positions that pay minimum wage with no tips. "Recently, there was a good month and a half where all my bar shifts were bad," said DeMaris. "It was like, 'Guess I'll wait to go to the grocery store.'"

"I'm organizing because I love this job," said Maddy Loch, who has worked as event staff at First Avenue clubs for a year. "I care so much about this place and about live music. I want to make First Ave better for me and my coworkers. I would love to not have to work three jobs."

Workers said they also want to bargain a contract that ensures better training protocols at First Avenue facilities. Currently, training is mostly informal, and new workers like Anna Harris, who started with First Avenue two years ago, described learning from club veterans on the fly.

"It feels like you're thrown into open water at the clubs," she added. "There's no training, and the expectation is to use your own resources to learn how to

swim. I want to be a strong swimmer, and that's why I'm unionizing. I really want the proper training to do my job effectively."

First Avenue Productions CEO Dayna Frank agreed to recognize the union voluntarily after about 70% of frontline workers signed union cards and agreed to have their photographs taken for a pro-union poster, which a delegation of about 40 workers delivered to management Nov. 3.

The following day, workers and community supporters invited the press to a rally outside the flagship club in Minneapolis. Hours later, Frank announced in a statement on social media that her company would recognize and bargain with the workers' union.

"Bargaining in good faith will require everyone to look at the challenges we face as a whole, and how we can strengthen our workplace, incorporate more perspectives, and ultimately move forward together," Frank said. "While this might be difficult, and will inevitably result in change, I am committed to working together to address those challenges."

Leaders of UNITE HERE Local 17, which represents more than 6,000 workers in hotels, restaurants and event spaces across the Twin Cities, credited the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) of Minnesota, a local resource center for service-industry workers, with increasing awareness among First Avenue workers of their rights on the job and best practices for exercising them.

Local 17 Secretary-Treasurer Sheigh Freeberg said the union will continue tapping into community support - including from the patrons and artists who frequent First Avenue's stages - as workers' contract campaign moves forward.

"This should be a sustainable industry for people to work in," he said. "It should and it can be better. That's our shared vision."

## Holiday Greetings!



to our union  
brothers & sisters



A message from the  
members of Local 1005

Wishing the  
season's blessings  
to our fellow union  
family and friends!



NALC  
Branch 28  
Saint Paul,  
Minnesota

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



International Brotherhood of  
Electrical Workers Local 23

May your days  
be healthy,  
merry and bright.



The officers and staff of the  
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Federation, the Saint Paul Labor  
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The Union Advocate newspaper  
send their solidarity and season's  
greetings to all union families!

[www.stpaulunions.org](http://www.stpaulunions.org)

Wishing You a Safe, Healthy  
and Happy New Year!



A message from the men and women of the  
Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council.

Building Minnesota with Quality and Pride.



Wishing everyone a safe,  
happy holiday season.

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# Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

## NOVEMBER 8, 2023

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation met in regular session on the above date and was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance by President Peterson at 6 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle, Beissel, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gale, Guertin, Hoerth, Hoppe, Luneburg, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Ryan, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Tastad-Damer, Varco and Wynn. Excused were Gibbons, Hill, Slattery, VanDassor, and Vanderport.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

President Peterson read the Code of Conduct. She will go over the Code of Conduct at the beginning of each meeting. The Code states: The AFL-CIO is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination and harassment. We ask all meeting participants to embrace our values of equity and equality and conduct themselves in this meeting consistent with those values. The RLF meetings that are held the Second Wednesday of the month will have a designee as the first point of contact for anyone who thinks they have experienced discriminatory, harassing or otherwise unacceptable behavior. President Peterson has assigned two designees as points of contact that will be announced at the start of each meeting. We urge you to contact him/her if you have any concerns. The designees are Bernadine Engeldorf, Secretary-Treasurer, and Perry Schmidt, Vice President.

## MOMENT OF SILENCE

President Peterson called for a moment of silence for union brothers Robert "Bob" DeRoy and Michael Lindholt.

## CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from AFSCME Local 8 and the Minnesota Nurses Association. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates in attendance.

## GUESTS

Justin Conway and Josiah Wollan, IATSE Local 745, gave an update on the campaign at Allianz Field to the delegation.

## MINUTES

**M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 13 AND OCTOBER 11, 2023, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY-TREASURER NOTES THERE ARE NO ADDITIONS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.**

## COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES NOVEMBER 8, 2023

COPE met in regular session on the above date and was called to order by President Peterson at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle, Beissel, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gale, Guertin, Hoerth, Hoppe, Luneburg, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, Mayer, McNamara, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Ryan, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Tastad-Damer, Varco and Wynn. Excused were Gibbons, Hill, Slattery, VanDassor, and Vanderport. Absent

were Lohmann and Naseth.

Items to come before this committee included:

- President Peterson gave a report on the elections.

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$200 CONTRIBUTION TO ALL 25 LABOR ENDORSED CANDIDATES FOR THE 2023 CYCLE.**

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$1,000 CONTRIBUTION TO THE ST. PAUL DFL.**

There being no further business to come before this committee, the meeting is adjourned.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

### NOVEMBER 8, 2023

The Executive Board met with those same members present who are duly elected to this board.

Items to come before this board included:

- **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Peterson reported on the annual Labor of Love-Sponsor A Family, Labor-Red Cross Blood Drive, Jean Jones Coats Initiative through the Saint Paul School system, the Holiday Party/Fundraiser being held after the December meeting at the IBEW Local 110 union hall, and participation in the Winter Carnival Grande Day Parade.

The notice of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation officer and board elections has been published in the Union Advocate Newspaper and the election committee has been established. Members of the elections committee are Jamie McNamara, Bob Ryan and Leah VanDassor.

- **ORGANIZING: UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS**

IAM Local 1833, Minnesota Nurses Association, SEIU Healthcare International, UAW, UNITE HERE Local 17 gave updates on their organizing activities.

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE AFT "READING OPENS THE WORLD" BOOK GIVEAWAY.**

There being no further business to come before this board, the meeting adjourned.

## REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Secretary-Treasurer Engeldorf reported on the financial status of the Federation as of October 2023. The report was accepted as read.

## REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

## Their holiday gift could save a life



The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation's nonprofit arm, the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center, hosted an American Red Cross blood drive Nov. 28 at the Labor Center. Organizers said it was the best turnout the annual drive has seen in recent memory, with 26 units of blood collected. There were five first-time donors, including Painters Local 61 member Megan Lockhart (L). All donors received a pair of elf socks, displayed in the photo by Julia Rocha. Also pictured is Roux Eversman of the Red Cross.

Union Advocate photo

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly and shared an election update. The next meeting will be on the fourth Tuesday of the month via zoom at 6:00 p.m.

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly shared an election update. The next meeting will be the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in person.

- Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. We supported UAW Local 722 in Hudson. We continue to work with Fare for All on food donations. If you would like to volunteer on Nov. 28, 2023, please register online. Our next meeting will be the fourth

Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

- Martin Hoerth reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. Our next meeting will be on the fourth Tuesday of the month via zoom at 6:00 p.m.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Peterson reported on unions organizing and contract negotiations, supporting and working with amazing local leaders and election results. The Saint Paul RLF endorsed 25 candidates for St. Paul City Council and various school board positions and, as of today, 20 of the 25 candidates won. Votes in three Saint Paul City Council races will go through the re-allocation process. Nominations for

St. Paul RLF officers and the board will be at the December meeting with the Holiday Party to follow.

## STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

- Michael Moore, Editor, Union Advocate Newspaper, reported that the advertising deadline is Dec. 6 for the upcoming Holiday Edition.

- Erica Dalager Reed, AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison, reported on the annual Blood Drive and the Holiday Party Fundraiser.

There being no further business to come before this delegation, the meeting adjourned.

Submitted by,  
**BERNADINE ENGELDORF**



## Let's get together, union members!

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's local labor assemblies bring working people and retirees together to exchange ideas and take action on issues that matter most in their communities. Assembly meetings are open to all union members who live or work in our four-county area.

### Chisago County Assembly

January 23, 6 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email [cnocerini@stpaulunions.org](mailto:cnocerini@stpaulunions.org)

### Dakota County Assembly

January 11, 7 p.m.

Dakota County United Educators, 6950 West 146th St., Apple Valley

### Ramsey County Assembly

January 23, 6 p.m.

Saint Paul Labor Center, 353 7th Street West

### Washington County Assembly

January 24, 6 p.m.

Washington County Gov't Center, Stillwater.



[www.stpaulunions.org](http://www.stpaulunions.org)



# HOLIDAY GREETINGS

*May the New Year be happy and healthy for everyone*



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