

FIRST LOCAL NEWS

Published by United Auto Workers Local 249—Kansas City, Missouri

March 2023

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International Union United Auto,
Aerospace and Agricultural Workers Local 249
8040 NE 69 Highway
Pleasant Valley, MO 64068



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Tonja Hargiss, right, joined Local 249 members Jill Johnson, Veda Seutter, Zach Hargiss at Our Lady of Mercy Feb. 10 to deliver roses to widows. Photo by Don Lehman.



Jean Hinson, Angela Mattivi, Julie VanDierendonk, Alicia Clark and Michaela Mynatt from VFW Post 5606 collected donations for disabled veterans at the February membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.



Local 249 members cast ballots in an election for members of the Election Committee. Members of the committee are responsible for conducting the election of union officers in accordance with the Constitution and local union bylaws. Photo by Don Lehman.



Local 249 Veteran's Committee Chair Dave Grant, left, presents a \$500 donation to Jessica Barszczak, the assistant manager of Fisher House at the VA Hospital. Photo by Don Lehman

First Local News

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UAW Local 249

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Team Solutions Bargaining Chair David Norris

Retiree Representative John Lowe

The Regular Membership Meeting of United Automobile Workers Amalgamated Local Union 249 is held on the third Sunday of each month at 2:00 p.m. in the local union hall, 8040 NE 69 Highway, Pleasant Valley, Mo. The Executive Board Meeting is held at 1:00 p.m. prior to the Regular Membership Meeting.

UAW-Ford Joint Programs

Apprentice Training

Cortez Bradley 816-459-2060

Benefits

Steve Hibbs, Derron Joyner and Jason Hartman 816-454-6333

Employee Involvement

Chad Troncin 816-459-1372

Darroyce Thornton 816-459-1490

Employee Support Services

Steve Chorbak 816-459-1226

Health and Safety

Ed Samborski 816-459-1210 • Terry Tharp 816-459-1407

Ulysses Bales 816-459-1605 • Joe Camper 816-459-5559

Dave Sambol 816-459-1223

Quality

Kelly Loveall and Jeff Wright 816-459-1232

Dealer Rep. Danny Mata

Job Sourcing and Production Standards

Jim Ryan and Todd Wyse 816-459-1466

Helpful Numbers

Quality Hotline 1-866-723-3937

Employee Health Services 816-459-1226

National Employee Service Center 1-800-248-4444

Blue Care 816-395-2700

Blue Cross PPO 1-800-482-5146

Preferred Care Blue PPO 816-395-3193

Child Care Referrals 866-327-7952

UNICARE Life Insurance 1-800-843-8184

UNICARE Medical/Disability Leave Claims 1-877-475-9652

Delta Dental (Active) 844-223-8520

Delta Dental (Retired) 800-524-0149

United Concordia Dental Plan 1-800-937-6432

Ford A,X,& Z Plan 1-800-348-7709

www.fordvehicleprograms.com

UAW-Ford Legal Services 800-482-7700

UAW-Ford TESPHE 1-800-248-4444

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MVP

MOST VALUABLE PATRICK



Making good on a promise to workers

By Ray Curry

President Biden promised to be the most pro-union President in our country's history. Two years into his first term, he has made good on his promise time and time again.

Under his leadership, Congress passed landmark laws like the Inflation Reduction Act, CHIPS and Science Act, and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Altogether they will create good paying jobs throughout the country, rebuild aged and crumbling infrastructure, and put our country in a position to win the jobs of the future.

Investments made by the President in American workers and manufacturers will strengthen our economy while improving our national security. Our country's stronger when we are less dependent on foreign nations for vital products and materials.

President Biden also fought for passage of the PACT Act which significantly expanded benefits and services for veterans exposed to toxins. He put the interests of working people over Big Pharma by reigning in skyrocketing prescription drug prices and made our tax code fairer by cracking down on wealthy tax cheats and having the wealthiest corporations pay their fair share. President Biden nominated, and the Senate confirmed, dozens of judges from diverse backgrounds who understand the struggles of working people. Under his leadership, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson became the first African American woman to serve on the Supreme Court. His groundbreaking student debt relief plan, if allowed to go forward by the courts, would significantly improve the quality of life and overall financial well-being for sixteen million Americans, including tens of thousands of UAW members and their families.

Remarkably, despite the worst pandemic in a hundred years, record high inflation throughout the globe, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and many other historic challenges, President Biden has managed to create millions of new jobs. Unemployment is now at the lowest rate since 1969 and gas prices are down sharply.

Yet as the President acknowledged, more work needs to be done. Congress should heed his call by passing the bipartisan Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. The PRO Act removes barriers that make it very difficult for workers to form a union and collectively bargain for better wages, improve working conditions, greater retirement security, and other benefits. Congress must also work with the President to ensure that future jobs and investments in electric vehicles, batteries and semiconductors are good middle-class union jobs. Finally, we urge the Senate to expeditiously confirm more judges who support workers' rights, defend civil rights, and protect access to health care.

We firmly agree with President Biden that the debt ceiling needs to be increased without conditions like it was three times under President Trump. We urge the House Majority to not play Russian roulette with our future and economy. Congress must not make it harder for working people to afford lifesaving medicine and retire with dignity. The most vulnerable in our society should not be made to suffer because of misplaced priorities.

Labor News From the World Wide Web

The Picket Line

Ford to build battery plant in Michigan

Ford Motor said on Feb. 13 that it planned to build a \$3.5 billion electric-vehicle battery factory in Michigan using technology licensed from a Chinese company that has become one of the most important players in the auto industry.

The plant, to be built in Marshall, a rural town about 100 miles west of Detroit, will be the latest in a growing list of new battery and electric-car factories that companies have announced in recent months. Ford expects to employ about 2,500 people at the plant and begin production in 2026.

The automaker said it would own 100 percent of the plant and make battery cells using technology and services from Contemporary Amperex Technology Limited, known as CATL. The company, the world's largest producer of batteries for electric vehicles, has 13 factories of its own in Europe and Asia but none in the United States. — *New York Times*

UAW: Ford battery plant to create 2,500 jobs

Ford Motor Company announced that they would be building a new LFP (lithium iron phosphate) battery plant in Marshall, Michigan, which will be a wholly owned subsidiary of the company.

"Ford got it right by building this plant right here in Michigan," says UAW President Ray Curry. "We supported the public investment into this facility as we know it will create good paying union jobs that will benefit the community and maintain strong wage and benefit standards in the auto industry."

"This facility furthers Ford's commitment to our members who make EV vehicles. Our members in Local 600 who produce the F-150 Lightning at the Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Dearborn, Michigan, will install the LFP batteries in the Lightning starting next year," says UAW Vice President and Director of the National Ford Department Chuck Browning. He adds: "Because of the foresight of collective bargaining, the UAW will be able to organize this new facility using a card check to prove majority interest."

"This facility will create jobs for 2,500 workers starting in 2026," adds UAW Region 1D Director Steve Dawes. "We look forward to working with the new workforce to organize the plant." — *UAW*

Ford to pay UAW hourly workers \$9,176 in profit-sharing

Ford announced Feb. 2 in its earnings report that its UAW employees will receive profit-sharing checks averaging \$9,176 this year. Checks will be distributed March 9.

That's up from \$7,377 for hourly workers in 2021, when supply chain disruption and pandemic-related issues continued to shut down plants.

The Ford profit-sharing formula is \$1,000 for workers for each \$1 billion in North American pretax profit. These are not bonus payments.

The profit-sharing check amounts are tied to a company's annual financial results for the prior year. Ford announced Thursday it made \$9.176 billion in adjusted earnings before interest and taxes in North America in 2022. — *Detroit Free Press*

UAW members ratify CNHI contract

UAW members at Locals 180 and 807 who work for CNHI have ratified a new contract, ending a strike that began on May 2, 2022. The agreement, which was voted on as an improved last, best, and final offer, provides wage increases, shift premium increases, classification upgrades as well as other improvements.

"UAW members at Locals 180 and 807 did the hard work to strengthen the hand of negotiators," says UAW President Ray Curry. — *UAW*



With Babies and Banners

By Erica Eckart

March is Women's History Month. This month we take a deep dive into the documentary movie called *With Babies and Banners*. This documentary is a first-hand account of the women's role in the Flint sit-down strike of 1937 which was a pivotal time in history for the UAW and known as "the strike heard around the world."

Most of us have seen the movie *Brothers on the Line* when we came through orientation here at Ford. This movie was a documentary about the beginning of the UAW, when the Reuther brothers came together to form the UAW at the big three. While the movie and history were powerful, it didn't give much information on the significant role that the women played during this time.

Picture a time when women were seen as nothing but housewives and mothers. They couldn't vote, couldn't have a say in their own lives at home, much less in a working environment.

They were allowed to work but were paid a significantly lower wage than men even though they were doing the same jobs. In the workplace, women were discriminated against. A common practice at GM was women only getting hired if they were pretty, as a result, management would exploit these women and hold their jobs over their head to get what they wanted from them.

On top of the discrimination against women, the company didn't provide much better for the men. Sure, they were paid more than the women but neither had benefits at that time. Sometimes they would work for two hours and go home, no sick benefits, no health and welfare programs, no unemployment benefits or anything. All those benefits were gained after the UAW was founded.

Before the sit-down strike, during the organizing process, GM had an actual policy where they would create suspicion in the wives about where their husbands were and what they were doing when in actuality they were attending union meetings. The company deliberately tried to cause division in the home lives of these men to prevent them from participating. "They would have done anything to cut down the union so it wouldn't get as strong as it did."

In one woman's account, she spoke about how her husband didn't

come home for two days. She found out there was a strike by hearing about it over the radio.

The women decided that they were going to join the strike just like the men and they began to organize. They brought food, clothes, coffee, and even brought their children and could be seen holding their babies up to the windows so their fathers could have a visit. They organized "the children's picket line" where they held signs that read "Our daddy strikes for us little tykes" which garnered national attention.

As the strike gained momentum, so did the women. They called a meeting with the women in the neighborhood and decided they had to do something. "We're going to have to form an emergency brigade to help our men." There were 50 women that signed up that night, all wives, daughters, sisters and even women who had no one, but believed in the cause, all ages ranging between 16 and 65.

Eventually they went from 50 to 400 women. At one point Nellie Besie, the LT. of the Women's Emergency Brigade could be seen riding around in a car with a microphone, yelling to the crowd "Women of the city of Flint, break through those picket lines and

come down here and stand by your husbands, brothers and sons."

As police started shooting tear gas into the buildings, women can be seen busting out the windows with baseball bats so that their men could breathe.

At one point the Women blocked a gate so that the police couldn't enter. They held the line by distracting the police with questions like "if it was your son or brother or father in there, wouldn't you want to protect them?". They stalled and held the line until they heard the solidarity forever victory song coming from the strikers. They had saved the situation. They stayed put until GM agreed to bargain. It was then that the UAW was born.

These women organized an emergency brigade to fight for themselves, their men, and to prove that they too could make a stand on what they believed in. They risked their lives to stand together and make a better way of life that we all tend to take for granted today. As the contract approaches, I encourage everyone to think about how bad it would be if we didn't have our union. Realize that everything we have can be stripped away if we don't stick together. Solidarity is victory and if the brave men and women of the 1930's can do it then we sure can.



Members of Local 249's Motorcycle Committee and other standing committees prepared to deliver Roses to Widows February 10 at the union hall. Photo by Don Lehman.

Local 249 delivers roses to widows

By Cecelia Davis

Roses are red, violets are blue, Local 249's Motorcycle Committee delivered roses to widows to show that they are loved too. February is the month known for love. It can be tough for many who have recently lost their significant loved ones. They may feel heartbroken, lonely, and in grief. On February 10th, the Motorcycle Committee decided to provide beautiful roses to widows around the community to spread warmth and kindness. And to also let them know that although they cannot replace their significant other's love, they can fill some of the loss within their hearts, with love from our ever-growing union. To remind the widows that Local 249 is here for them. That they are still loved.

On Friday, February 10th, Joshua Curtis, the chairperson of the Motorcycle Committee, and Co-chair Sarah Allen gathered their committee along with 37 other standing committee members in the rotunda of our local union hall as they waited patiently for the arrival of 750 roses delivered from Bloom Floral located in Kansas City.

Once the roses arrived, the volun-

teers jumped into action, creating a dazzling package that consisted of a fully bloomed vibrant crimson red rose, a sweet box of morsels, and a perfectly executed card expressing how much our local truly cares.

As our members were assembling the precious goods, they had to make sure they went over certain directions on how to deliver such a special gift. "It is important to take the time to listen,

give and show compassion; as a lot of time, we are the only ones they see during this time of the year," said Curtis "If you have sunglasses, take them, because there's a good chance you're gonna need them to hide a few tears."

The routes were then given out. As the members hopped in their vehicles, they spanned a radius within a hundred miles from the union hall.

They visited many nursing homes within the area and even made personal visits that family members and friends had provided addresses to.

"The outpouring of love and thanks the Motorcycle Committee received on Facebook, the numerous calls of thanks and appreciation that came into the union hall that day and the several thank you cards mailed in, definitely shows that we're doing something right," said Curtis. "I truly enjoy hearing from the membership,

with them saying, "that simple act, seriously made my grandma smile and lifted her up from a rough time she had been going through. God bless you all and the UAW Local 249. I want to thank the membership for believing in the standing committees and the work that we do."

This certainly had a great impact on both the giving and receiving end of this wonderful act. The Aspire Residents sent a pleasant card back to our local saying, "Thank you for all the beautiful flowers and candy. A garden of love grows in a resident's heart." We believe that just a single magnificent gesture in a dark time can help spark the light within a lost soul.

With time, it will blossom into a beautiful garden within that individual who can later share happiness to all that view it. Keep spreading the love, Motorcycle Committee.



Missouri and the Southern Farmers Tenants Union

By Gary Thomas

It was the winter of 1939. America was on the precipice of a world war. Workers were still struggling from the great depression and tenant farmers – primarily black tenant farmers – were being evicted from the farms where they lived and worked.

Up and down the Missouri Boot Heel, sharecroppers had their meager possessions lined on the side of the road. Sharecroppers don't own the land they work on; they give a part of what they grow as rent. This was a life of abject poverty and hard work. While sharecroppers were entitled to a portion of the crops they grew, the United States government also ruled that the tenant farmers were entitled to Federal Farm subsidies. This angered the landowners, who would rather keep the full subsidies and keep the workers in poverty. Facing mass evictions, 4,500 members of the Southern Farmers Tenants Union took to the roadside.

In a story all too familiar, landown-

ers didn't want to share the profits of their tenant's work. Instead, they reasoned, they could hire day laborers for far less, keep all the crop and the farm subsidies. The Tenants Union saw this as an injustice, after all many of those evicted would be the same day laborers the Landowners would hire. The union demanded a seat at the table and to accomplish this they took to the roadside.

Organizer and preacher Owen Whitfield recognized the need for government intervention and to get that, they need attention. A member of the union remarked to Mr. Whitfield that, if evicted, his family would have to live on the side of the road. That off-handed comment sparked the idea of

the roadside strike. Soon national news was speaking of the Southern Farmers Tenants union and their plight.

It worked! Roosevelt ordered assistance to those who "went out on the road" and first lady Elenore Roosevelt mentioned them in her nationally syndicated newspaper column.

"The winter which started out so kindly, has turned out to be a hard winter after all. Those of us who have a warm place to sleep, plenty of clothing and enough food are really not concerned, beyond a mild desire to see the sun now and then. However, I cannot help wondering about the sharecroppers' families in Missouri. I fear that human suffering is not confined to Europe these days."

On January 13, police declared the demonstration a threat to public health and forcibly removed the union members to concentration camps, scattering them around the bootheel. Conditions in the camps were just

as bad, if not worse. Police would constantly move union members to hide them from federal aid and end the strike.

In January 1941, two years after the roadside demonstration, the Farm Security Agency completed the construction of ten settlements around the Bootheel, with almost 600 homes, plus community buildings, wells, utilities and most importantly, land, proving that organizing gets the goods.

We may think sharecropping is rare in today's world. It isn't. As corporations buy huge swaths of land and equipment becomes more expensive, farmers who once owned their land are forced to sell and become tenant farmers. While many don't consider tenant's unions "real unions" because they lack an established hierarchy, this would be a false and dangerous assumption. Workers banding together to fight for their labor and their homes is the very definition of a union.



By Pat Hayes

Over the next six months, events will be coming at us thick and fast. Later this month, delegates from UAW locals across the nation, including from Local 249, will meet at a Special Bargaining Convention in Detroit to draw up proposals to guide the union's bargaining team in negotiations for new national contracts with the Detroit 3. Just six months from now, on September 14, local and national agreements with Ford, General Motors and Stellantis are set to expire.

Adding to the uncertainty, a runoff election for International President, International Vice President and Region 9 Director is under way. The deadline for ballots to be received is Feb. 28 with counting to begin on March 1. Only then, will members know who will lead negotiations for new 4-year contracts in the auto industry.

Two contracts will be negotiated. A national contract that covers wages, benefits, COLA, profit sharing and rules governing temporary and in-progression workers. The local contract sets rules about working conditions in the plant.

Sometime in the late summer or early fall, members will be asked to vote to authorize a strike at the local and national levels if necessary to win a fair contract. Voting to authorize a strike does not mean there will be one,

but it sends a strong message to the company that we are serious about the demands we are making.

With or without a strike, once bargainers reach a temporary agreement with the company, it will be presented to the membership for approval. Under the UAW Constitution, the membership is the highest body. Members have the final say. If members approve the temporary contract a strike, if one occurs, will end. If members vote down the temporary agreement, bargainers will return to the table to reach another – better – settlement.

Some preparatory work has already begun at Local 249 and other locals across the country. In October, forms to submit proposals for the national contract were distributed to members in the plant. All the proposals

turned in were reviewed by the local's bargaining committee and submitted to the International on Jan. 6.

We plan to distribute forms for members to submit proposals for the local contract in March.

Local 249's executive board has voted to trim expenses where possible to prepare for a possible strike. The union's Community Service Committee, which performs the important task of getting help for members and their families in time of need and plays a pivotal role in plant closings, strikes and layoffs is gearing up in case we are forced to walk off the job in September.

Right now, no one knows if there will be a strike or which company, if any, will be chosen as the target for negotiations. In 2019, General Motors was the target and UAW members were on strike for 40 days before ratifying the new agreement.

While no one can predict the future, there are things that members can do now to prepare for a possible strike. Save rather than spend that \$9,125 profit sharing check in case you need it to pay the rent or put gas in the car in the event of a strike. Don't

take on any new debt just now. Talk to other family members and draw up a plan to pay necessary bills and keep food on the table while you are walking the picket line.

A prepared membership is a strong membership. Union negotiators are only as strong as the membership that stands behind them. If we really want to win back what was taken from us, we must be ready for a fight.

In the event of a strike, weekly strike assistance is \$500 per week. The UAW Strike and Defense Fund also covers certain benefits such as medical and prescription drugs. Benefits not covered include: dental, vision, hearing and sick and accident.

To be eligible for strike pay and benefits, members must be in good standing on the day before the strike starts, on active pay roll at start of strike. Members laid off, on workers compensation or receiving sick and accident benefits are not eligible. Members must participate in the strike: picket assignments, strike committee, etc.

All dues paying members, including temporary members, are eligible for strike assistance.

Retirees observe Black History Month

By Natalie Wood

Our meeting started out with Chairman Mel Thompson, greeting our members with a prayer and acknowledgment of this being Black History Month.

Dave Grant our Veteran Committee Chairman announced they are holding a raffle for several guns. So be on the lookout for more information on this.

The UAW Local 249's Motorcycle Committee gave out a rose and chocolate to our widows for Valentine's Day. A committee member delivered to your home address. They call first to make sure you're home. If you did not receive a gift from this committee and you are a Widow, get with the Chairman Josh Curtis. They delivered within a hundred-mile radius.

Mel Thompson introduced a guest speaker Liz Gomorzak from Optum RX. She was there to answer any questions or concerns about your mail order medications. You must call in to make arrangements to pay your co-pay. For more information on Optum RX call 1-855-856-0537.

Mel Thompson introduced Dawn Henderson from BC/BS of Michigan. She was there for questions and concerns. It is time to call in for your 2023 Over the Counter (OTC) Product Catalog. Each Retiree and their spouse are entitled to 150.00 each per calendar year. The number to call to receive your catalog is 1-877-218-9951 or visit online at uawtrust.org/otcbenefit. If

you happen to call in your supplies and they are out of what you want, you can call later to get what you want within that calendar year.

Chairman Mel Thompson, reported that elections for officers for Retirees Committee are up and coming. If you are interested in being an officer of this committee, you must be elected. Please keep our current Retirees Guide, Robert Kim in your prayers. He is in the hospital.

Steve Hibbs our Benefits Representative and Tony Renfro our Local 249 President spoke on the Class Action Suit concerning the Asbestos in the plant. Kelley & Ferraro Attorney Counselor of Law had screenings at Local 249. Some people received checks because of the screening. Tony Renfro said it is safe to cash those checks. There may be future checks coming and cashing your checks now will not interfere with any future checks that you may be entitled too. Tony Renfro and Steve Hibbs said that they will request future screening for those who missed their appointments or just missed out all together for the screening for Asbestos. If you have any questions, please contact your Benefit Representative.

Vice Chairperson of the Family



Local 249 retirees meet each month to share a meal and keep in touch with old friends. The meeting is open to all retirees and a great way to stay active. Photo by Don Lehman.

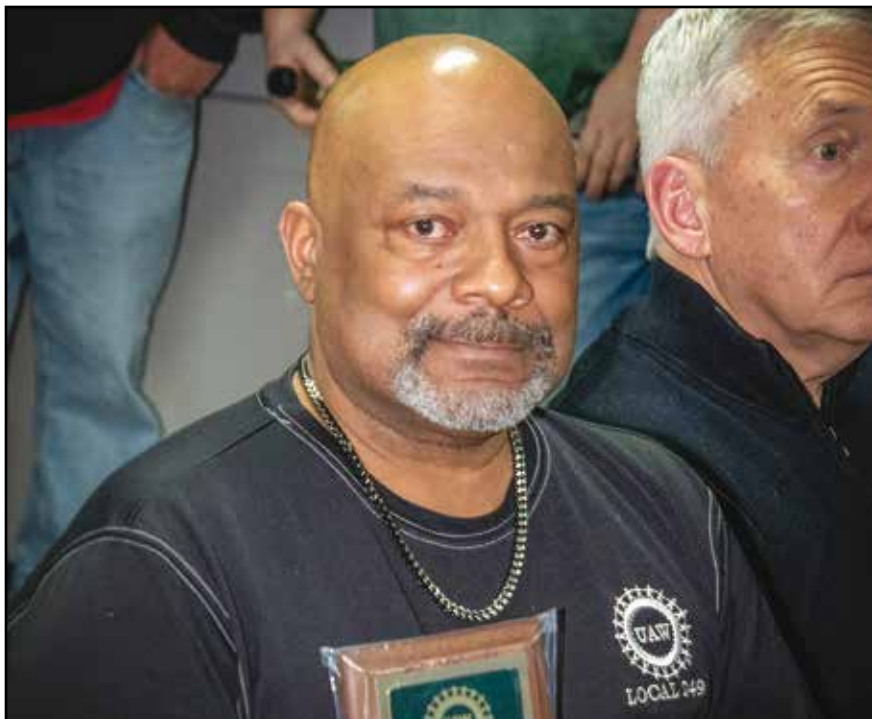
Auxiliary, Lorie Marin reports our anniversaries and birthdays. There were three birthdays and no anniversaries. We sang happy birthday to all.

Bill Parker our Service Officer reported that we had no recent retirees and a list of members that have passed on. Please keep the families of our members in your prayers. Some of the names may be a repeat from our January Retirees report. Our home going members are: Wanda Benefiel, Beverly Coffey, Hubert Dewey, Kylan Emmons, Charles Gines, Stanley Hammer, Troy Hammontree, Gerald Harris, George

Houser, James Kelley, Darla Kramel, Thomas May, Michael Reding, Allen Roach, Gwen Starkey, Benigno Torres.

We had a good turnout for our February Retirees meeting. The weather was cold and damp. There were 62 members and friends in attendance. Our lunch was catered by Grandma's Catering Service. Our March meeting will be on Wednesday March 15, at 10:30 at Pleasant Valley Community Civic Center on the lower level.

Bring a friend and come on out to our next Retiree Meeting for information, food and fellowship.



Tony Crawford, won the James "Frog" Moran Solidarity Award for dropping everything he was doing when he received a goodbye text from a coworker. Crawford brought him to a facility that would help him find a solution. Photo by Don Lehman.



Jacob Horvatic won the James "Frog" Moran Solidarity Award from the Education Committee for building power around a shop issue and standing up to a supervisor. Photo by Don Lehman.

Preparations under way for new contracts

By Jim Fisher

During the month of March our members will begin to see several significant steps take place for our preparation leading into September contract talks.

Beginning March first, the Federal Mediator will begin counting votes for the UAW International Board of Director's last two open positions of President of the UAW, and the final open position for UAW Vice President. These important results will finally tell UAW members across the country who will be leading our Union over the next four years, and who will be leading us into contract talks not just at Ford, but with General Motors and Stellantis North America as well.

As for Local 249 members during this election process, there was a significant increase in our voting totals. I would like to thank all our members who took part in this process.

March will also start the next steps in the International Contract process. The Bargaining Committee will be in meeting in Detroit with other UAW/Ford local leaders discussing the proposals submitted by members across the country. During these meetings leaders will work on finalizing these proposals and make the last proofreads to prepare them for presentation to the Inter-

national Negotiating Team. Towards the end of March Local 249 Leaders will attend the National Bargaining Convention to speak and vote on the proposals sent to the National Bargaining Team.

With all that said, in March there is still important work that remains to be done. In the next few weeks Local 249's Bargaining Committee will send out fliers across the plant asking for members to make proposals for the Local Agreement. Some new members may not know the difference between the two agreements.

The International Agreement covers topics such as pay, health care, job security, plant investments, seniority, attendance policy's, scheduling, and paid holidays. The Local Agreement covers the operating practices that are specific to KCAP and Local 249 members. Some examples of items covered in the Local Agreement are the calendar program, job bidding agreements, overtime equalization, stop button procedures, and shift preference agreements.

During March Local 249 eligible



Local 249 Bargaining Chair spoke about preparations for new national and local contract talks at the February membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.

members will also be receiving payments for 2022 profit sharing. In contract years we remind members it's a good idea to plan to set aside a little savings plan for September.

While any type of work stoppage would only be used as a last resort, we continue to see an increase in

unions and companies either negotiating to the last hour or having a work stoppage. In just the past few months UAW members have been on the picket line at several locations including John Deere, Case New Holland, and University of California Academic Workers.

2023 Charlie Suffridge Scholarship Contest For High School Juniors & Seniors

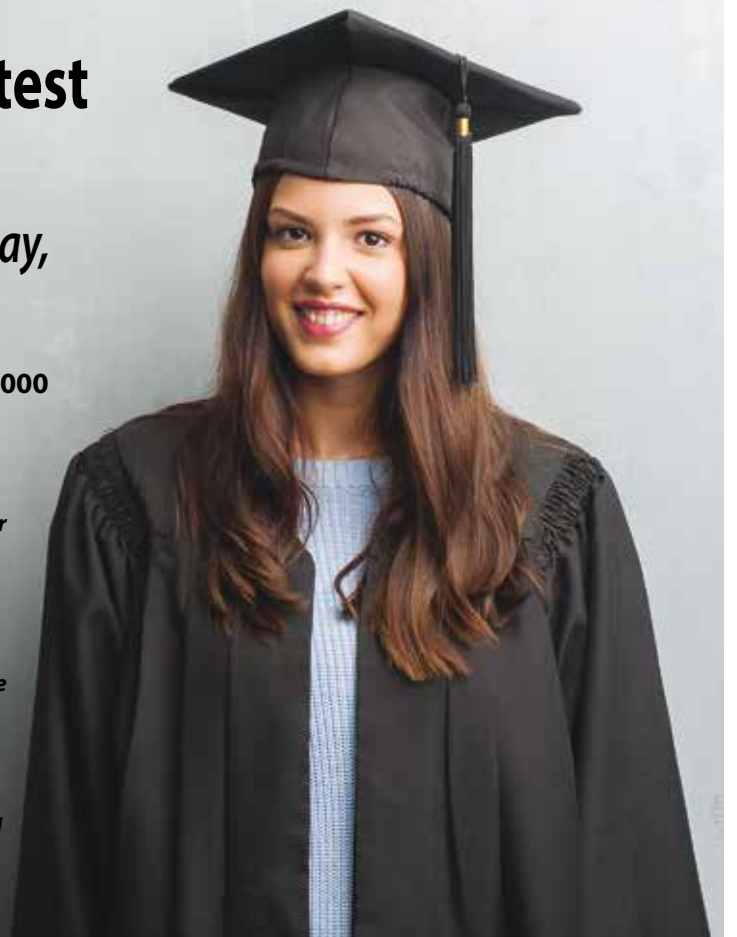
*Sign Up Now! Deadline for registration is 5:00 PM, Friday,
March 17, 2023*

1st Place – \$5,000 • 2nd Place – \$2,500 • 3rd Place – \$1,500 • 4th Place – \$1,000

Contestant must:

- Be a junior or senior in high school during the 2022 - 2023 school year.
- Be planning to attend a college, university, or trade school the following school year after graduation.
- Be a dependent of a member in good standing of Local Union 249.
- NOT be a winner of last year's contest.
- Contestant must turn in essay no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, April 28, 2023.
- Contestant must not use their name on the paper, but they must use their assigned code number. Name use will disqualify the contestant.
- Essay's must be between 800-1200 words.

Registration forms and essay topics will be available at the Union Hall Monday through Friday, until March 17, 2023 8:00 am until 5:00 pm.



Pulling back the curtain in Jeff City

By Tony Renfro

Something remarkable happened Feb. 16 in Jeff City. State Rep. Ben Baker, a Republican from Newton County down south of Joplin, introduced an amendment to a bill denying health care to children suffering from gender dysphoria.

There's nothing particularly astonishing about that, of course. After the election, Republican legislators all across the country suddenly lost interest in inflation and introduced identical bills on a range of hot button culture war issues. None of these bills will do anything to fix Missouri's crumbling roads or bridges, bring good paying jobs to our area or fix our last-in-the-nation public schools, but they will play well with culture warriors on Twitter.

What was truly remarkable about Baker and his amendment was what happened just after he introduced it and what it revealed about him, his party and the failure to address any of the real issues that face the people of our state.

When asked to explain the amendment by a fellow legislator, the proudly anti-woke Baker was caught on video spending a full two minutes staring dumbly at the papers in his hand, thumbing through the pages and wishing he was somewhere, anywhere else.

Finding no answers at long last he asked, "Can you repeat the question?"

You see, Baker, last seen posing with an assault rifle and a tactical vest to defend the nation against Chinese balloons had no idea – absolutely no idea – what was in his supposed amendment.

He didn't write it and he hadn't even read it before introducing it as his own on the floor of the House.

In those two uncomfortable minutes we learned Baker's amendment isn't really his. The reason he doesn't know what's in his own amendment is because it was written, like all of the amendments introduced by Republicans in the 22 states where they control both houses of the legislature and the governor's office, by operatives at the American Legislative Exchange Council. ALEC, as it's known, is funded by a secretive faction of ultra-rightwing billionaires.

These out of state billionaires don't drive Missouri roads. They don't worry the bridge will collapse under them. Their children don't attend the schools our children attend. That's why they don't care about crumbling infrastructure or failing schools.

All they want is lower taxes for

themselves and the end to the regulations that protect us from them. They're willing to destroy the things that matter to us in order to get what they want. To do that they pay an army of lawyers to write bills that keep the media – and us – focused on phony culture war issues instead of the economic issues that really matter. They also bankroll politicians like Baker to vote those bills into law.

The widely circulated video of Baker's embarrassing stumble in the state legislature pulled back the curtain on the reality of politics in Jeff City. The only question now is this: will we see what the video revealed for what it is and begin to take back our state or will we look the other way and allow Baker and the out-of-state ALEC billionaires who finance him to drag us down to a place we can't climb back out from.

Two decades of one-party Republican rule have put us in a difficult place. It will take time to rebuild our public schools and roads, but until we take back our state we will stay on the same downward trajectory that got us where we are now.



Local 249 President Tony Renfro spoke to the retirees Feb. 15 about the class action suit over asbestos in the plant. Photo by Don Lehman.

UAW Local 249 Fishing Tournament Calendar

April 23, 7:00am-3:00pm

Bass Tournament — Stockton Lake Stockton Park – RB Boat Ramp

May 21, 6:00am-3:00pm

4th Annual Kendal Bailey Crappie Tournament — Truman Lake Weigh in at Long Shoal Ramp

June 4, 5:30am-2:00pm

Bass Tournament — Truman Lake Long Shoal Ramp

July 16, 5:45am-2:00pm

9th Annual Wayne Pace Memorial Bass Tournament — Smithville Lake Crows Creek

Sept. 24, 7:00am-3:00pm

Bass Tournament — Lake of the Ozarks Drake Harbor

October 15, 7:00am-3:00pm

Fall Brawl Bass Tournament — Smithville Lake Crows Creek



GOP in a rush to silence your voice

By State Rep. Eric Woods

In 2017, the Missouri State Legislature passed a Right to Work bill, which was designed to significantly weaken the power of unions and the right of workers to organize and bargain. Shortly after, Missouri citizens came together to put a measure on the ballot - Proposition A - to repeal the law. Because of the hard work of UAW 249 members and many others, Right to Work was resoundingly defeated at the ballot box in 2018, and workers' rights were protected.

The repeal of right to work was made possible by Missouri's Initiative Petition process, which allows citizens to bypass the legislature and place laws and constitutional amendments on the ballot for a popular vote. Missouri is unique in that it is not only one of a handful of states that even allows for this, but getting a measure on the ballot is relatively simple, and passing a measure only requires 50% of the vote plus 1. Missouri Republicans are trying to change that.

The Missouri GOP is very annoyed by the fact that Missouri citizens keep voting to pass popular policies that they oppose (overturning right to work, increasing the minimum wage, passing ethics reform, legalizing marijuana, and more), and they're working overtime this year to make it more difficult to get initiatives on the ballot and more difficult for them to pass.

In Missouri we're allowed to both pass laws and amend the Constitution using this process, but over the years constitutional amendments have become more common because of fears that the GOP supermajority would simply vote to undo a law that they didn't like; they've done it before, and they would absolutely do it again. As a member of the House Elections and Elected Officials Committee, I've had a front row seat to the many ideas that Republicans are putting forward to silence your voice... and boy are there a lot of them. Here are a few examples:

- Using misleading ballot language to make you think you're voting on something else
- Increasing the number of signatures needed to put an initiative on the ballot
- Placing unnecessary and unconstitutional restrictions on who can collect signatures
- Vague language about what kind of ink needs to be used when signing a petition
- Restrictions on the font size and style on a petition form
- Requiring that amendments pass by both a majority of the popular vote and in a majority of State House districts

- Raising the threshold for amendments to pass to 60 or 67%

Some of these changes can be put into place by the legislature alone, but others will require a vote of the people. One proposed amendment which has passed the house uses misleading ballot language, sometimes called "ballot candy," to make you believe that you're voting for something that you're not.

The first line of this proposal says that you're voting to allow only United States citizens to vote on ballot measures. Sounds good, right? Except... that's already in the Missouri Constitution. By putting that line first on the ballot, they want to make people think that non-citizens CAN vote, and that the amendment will change that. None of that is true. The hope is that most people will only read the first line and won't get to the part that raises the amount needed for an amendment to pass from 50% to 60%. It's deceptive, it's malicious, it's misleading, and worst of all: it's intentional.

Whichever side of the aisle you



Missouri State Rep. Eric Woods joins nurses on the picket line at Starbucks to demand an end to short staffing. Woods represents House District 18 in southwest Clay County.

find yourself on, we should all be able to agree that the ultimate power of our government rests with the people. The Missouri Constitution gives the people the power to act through the Initiative Petition process when the legislature will not. This process has been used numerous times in the past to protect and support workers, and any changes will make it more difficult to fight back

the next time Right to Work rears its ugly head (and we all know that's only a matter of time). Missouri Democrats are leading the charge to protect the Initiative Petition because we care about your family, your voice, your rights, and your paycheck. Call your representatives, senators, friends, family, and neighbors, and tell them to oppose any changes to the Initiative Petition process.

Mo. House approves bill allowing felons to carry guns

The Republican-controlled House of Representatives on Feb. 9 voted 109-35 to advance legislation to make it legal for many convicted felons to carry firearms and empower the governor to essentially takeover the prosecution of violent crime in St. Louis city, among other provisions. The bill now advances to the Senate.

Under longstanding Missouri law, it is a crime for any convicted felon to purchase or possess firearms. House Bill 301 would restore guns rights to non-violent felons, but possession of firearms would remain a criminal offense for those convicted of violent felonies.

HB 301 originally contained a provision that would prohibit children from publicly carrying firearms without adult supervision. During committee, however, Republicans stripped it from the bill, claiming it would violate the Second Amendment rights of gun-toting kids. The move was opposed by Democrats, who argued it was one of the bill's few provisions aimed at actually preventing crime rather than

addressing prosecutions after crimes have been committed.

Another provision of the bill would give the governor the authority to appoint a special prosecutor who would have exclusive jurisdiction over most violent crime in St. Louis city, thus supplanting the elected local prosecutor. The special prosecutor would not have to be a city resident. This provision marks the latest effort by Gov. Mike Parson and legislative Republicans to strip authority from St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner, the only elected Black woman prosecutor in Missouri.

Not coincidentally, the same day lawmakers approved HB 301, the House Crime Prevention and Public

Safety Committee considered six separate, but similar, bills to strip St. Louis' municipal government of control over its police department and place the agency back under the authority of a state board controlled by the governor. The department had been under state control for more than 150 years until 2012, when 63.9 percent of Missouri voters approved a ballot measure restoring local control.

The bill is now headed towards the Senate. The bill allows the Governor to essentially override voters' elected prosecutor and, instead, appoint a special prosecutor. The bill does nothing to prevent crime, and Republicans stripped a portion that, originally, saw bi-partisan support to keep guns out of the hands of unsupervised minors in public areas. HB 301 disenfranchises St. Louis voters and their elected officials while doing nothing to prevent crime by addressing the root causes.



Local 249 Veteran's Committee members Demetris Camp, Chris Scott, Robert Hernandez, Tracie Chrisman, Hans Beebe, Daphne Beebe, Diane Bell, Dave Grant, Zach Pridgen, David Cox, Lou Davidson, Nathan Chrisman visited with veterans at the Kansas City Veteran's Hospital Feb. 14 and delivered a \$500 donation from the union to buy socks and coffee for patients there. Photo by Don Lehman.

Local 249 aids veterans at VA hospital

By Pat Hayes

Local 249's Veteran's Committee members mobilized in force Feb. 14 to visit patients at the Kansas City Veteran's Administration Hospital on Linwood Ave. The purpose of the visit was twofold: to assure hospitalized veterans at the facility that they were not forgotten on Valentine's Day and to deliver the union's annual \$500 donation to Veteran's Services to purchase coffee and socks for hospitalized veterans there.

Committee members Christopher Scott, Dave Cox, Michael Richardson, Diane Bell, Zach Pridgen, Louis Davidson, Dave Grant and Dave Hernandez went from room to room at the VA Hospital to spend time and share experience with patients at the hospital.

"Veterans experience mental health disorders, substance abuse disorders, post-traumatic stress, and traumatic brain injury at disproportionate rates compared to their civilian

counterparts," says Local 249 Veteran's Committee Chair Dave Grant. "At times, the civilian population can forget the personal cost to our service men and women. That's why this kind of veteran-to-veteran outreach is so important. We understand them because we know first-hand what they're going through."

The Kansas City VA Hospital, opened in 1952, is located on a 40-acre campus in eastern Kansas City. It provides care to more than 50,000

veterans each year. More than 200,000 Veterans live in the area served by the VA Kansas City Healthcare System. The hospital maintains 142 beds, which include 79 medical beds, 25 surgical beds, 10 psychiatric beds, and 28 domiciliary beds.

Kansas City's VA Hospital provides primary care and specialty health services, including mental health care, women's health services, prosthetics, eye care, treatment for spinal cord injury, foot care and programs to help veterans stop smoking and using tobacco.

"The hospital is a great benefit for area veterans," says Grant, "but there is no funding for things like socks and coffee. That's why we donate each year to the hospital's Veteran's Services Dept. to make sure that these basic

needs are met."

Local 249's Veteran's Committee is active year-round in supporting Kansas City's veteran community. UAW Veteran's Committees across the country represent the interests of all active and retired UAW veterans and their families. These committees are dedicated to advocating for the political and social concerns of all veterans.

In coming months, Grant says, committee members plan to cook a meal for the families of hospitalized veterans staying at Fisher House, a 16-suite, 14,000 square foot "home away from home," complete with a fully-equipped kitchen and multiple common areas located within walking distance of the hospital's main entrance. The House is staffed 24/7 by VA assigned personnel.