

# The St. Paul Union Advocate

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

June 2021

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Connecting union members in Ramsey, Washington, Dakota and Chisago counties.

## Teamsters take fight to Marathon as dispute enters fifth month

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Mornings are a congested, busy time at the main gate outside Marathon's St. Paul Park refinery. Semi trucks line up on both sides of the gate, waiting to cross a picket line held by Teamsters who, since January, have been holding out for a contract that protects local jobs and the safety of communities surrounding the refinery.

Local authorities have ruled no more than three members of Local 120 may picket an entrance to the refinery at one time, but dozens of Teamsters show up to the main gate anyway.

They take turns on the line, keep each other company and otherwise pass the time.



Ryan Bierman, a member of Teamsters Local 120 on strike at Marathon's St. Paul Park refinery, joins an ambulatory picket outside a Speedway station in Brooklyn Park. Bierman and three other union members followed a fuel truck from the refinery to the station.

Union Advocate photo

It's a slow-moving, but essential part of Local 120's campaign against Marathon.

It's not for everyone, though. Almost every morning since the work stoppage began, a handful

of Teamsters have volunteered for what's known as "ambulatory picketing."

They pick out a truck exiting the refinery, tail it wherever it goes and picket outside the facil-

ity as the truck unloads. When the truck finishes unloading, the picket comes down.

More often than not, those trucks end up at a Speedway.

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## St. Paul Building Trades call on consumers to stand up for local jobs, boycott Speedway

Union Advocate staff

The St. Paul Building Trades are leading a boycott of Speedway gas stations.

Unions launched the boycott March 28, looking to draw attention to the labor practices of Marathon Petroleum Corporation, Speedway's parent company at the time the boycott began, at its St. Paul Park refinery. Marathon recently began

shifting work from local contractors and tradespeople to contractors from out of state.

"Marathon's decision to replace skilled local tradesmen and women with out-of-state workers who clearly lack the same training and local experience suggests that the company has put profits over the livelihoods of local workers and the safety of

surrounding communities," said Joe Fowler, business manager of LIUNA Local 563.

"We ask Minnesotans to join our boycott of Speedway to tell Marathon they need to use the most skilled, safe and experienced refinery workers available. Those people are right here in town."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

## At the Capitol

## Legislature adjourns, but unions keep up pressure in advance of special session

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Minnesota legislators adjourned their regular session last month with the framework of a two-year budget in place, but the agreement merely sets the stage for another round of negotiations over spending and policy details.

That gives the state's unions one last opportunity to push their legislative priorities – like crisis relief, paid leave and protec-

tions for working people – as lawmakers scramble to finish their work in advance of a special session beginning June 14.

Several labor groups joined the state's largest labor federation, the Minnesota AFL-CIO, in a joint letter to Gov. Tim Walz and lawmakers as they began meeting in post-session working groups last month. The letter outlined measures – many of which have already passed in the DFL-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



Unions and partners in the We Make MN coalition staged a rally last month calling on lawmakers to fund public education and other critical needs.

Union Advocate photo



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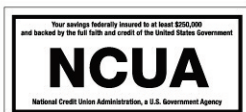
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# Letters

- Send letters to: 353 W. 7th St., Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55102
- Fax them to 651-293-1989
- Email them to: [mmoore@stpaulunions.org](mailto:mmoore@stpaulunions.org)

## Editor's note

### Beginning a 125th year

The first step in producing an issue of The Advocate is always the same: open the template and update the folio line beneath our nameplate on Page 1.

It's typically the least exciting part of the process, but not with this issue. As the folio shows, this issue begins our 125th year in print – a milestone that speaks to the strength of our local labor movement and the pride unions take in our paper, its legacy and its power to lift up working people's stories.

Those aren't things I take for granted. I am grateful for the support of our publisher, the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, and its affiliate unions, many of which helped us celebrate with an ad.

Above all, thanks to you, the readers, for your support, feedback and solidarity. Cheers to Year 125! – Michael Moore

## STOP DELAYING AMERICA'S MAIL



### Labor Voices: Erica Dalager Reed

## Stepping up to help feed families in our community – and beyond

I was first blessed to work with the USDA's Farmers to Families food box program as the executive director of a congregation in St. Paul's Midway neighborhood. The goal was to help people experiencing food insecurities obtain fresh food on a regular basis. The COVID-19 pandemic has been economically devastating to many across the U.S., and the Farmers to Families program offered free, fresh food to anyone who needed it. But it quickly became evident to me that, when it came to the distribution of mass quantities of food, organized labor was the best partner to have.

At each Farmers to Families food event, we give away a truckload of food containing about 1,300 boxes of food weighing 30 pounds each and 1,300 gallons of milk. At our first labor distribution event last October at the St. Paul Labor Center, the St. Paul Building Trades secured a forklift and operator. Other unions came with a pallet jack. And the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation recruited volunteers to help unload and distribute the food. All told, some 75 union and community volunteers joined the event.

We learned a lot that day. First and foremost, we saw that the need in the community was great. People were hungry. The line of cars down West 7th Street was endless. And everyone that came through was so relieved and grateful to be receiving food. The most-asked question our volunteers heard was, "When are you doing this again?" It was wonderful, in the darkest days of the pandemic, to see fellow union members safely and help our neighbors.

From that initial event at the Labor Center, our vision at the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center grew, and we saw an opportunity to help our neighbors in need across the state of Minnesota. We began securing trucks full of food for communities across the metro, as well as Duluth, Long Prairie, St. Cloud, Rochester, Mankato, Milaca, North Branch, Proctor, Hibbing, Virginia, Worthington, Winona, Eveleth, Mahanomen, Owatonna, Red Lake, Cass Lake, Monticello and East Grand Forks. Unions in North Dakota were able to host nine events throughout their state. Unions in Wisconsin, South Dakota, Arizona and Washington participated as well.

In all, our nonprofit has helped distribute over 60 truckloads of food, lifting up people in need in the east metro and beyond. Each food event brought together labor partners, union members, community members, churches and nonprofits, working toward the common goal of feeding people



in need. Time and time again, labor led the way, providing the space, equipment, resources, relationships and volunteers necessary to ensure each event was a success.

We saw people walk, ride their bikes and drive through the contactless distribution lines. Everyone was welcome, no questions asked. Despite our best efforts, some folks couldn't help but get out of their vehicles to offer up a hug, a handshake or a few tears. Many were overwhelmed by labor's generosity. Strangers to the movement became allies and partners, delivering food to neighbors, small non-profits, churches and group homes. If someone reached out with a need, labor was there to assist in delivering food.

Where do we go from here? We know the need is still great. One in nine individuals lives with food insecurities, and the pandemic has brought to light the inequity and inequality that so many experience. When another opportunity arises to serve our neighbors, I know labor will be there to answer to call. That's who we are! And at the same time we are serving the community, we are informing and educating the community about what our movement stands for – economic security, dignity, good benefits and living wages.

I am grateful to have been a part of this incredible opportunity. Working side by side with so many in the labor movement to bring about significant change in our communities and beyond has been a true blessing.

– Erica Dalager Reed is an AFL-CIO Community Services liaison with the St. Paul Labor Studies & Resource Center, the nonprofit arm of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.

**Editor's Note:** "Voices" is a forum for opinions from across the labor movement. It appears regularly in The Advocate. We encourage readers to respond to our columnists' opinions. To write a letter to the editor, see the upper-right-hand corner of this page. To inquire about contributing to "Voices," call 651-222-3787, extension 112. This column does not reflect the position of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation or its assemblies.

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**Erica Dalager Reed**, Liaison



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# Legislature adjourns, but unions keep up pressure in advance of special session

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controlled House – that unions want to see included in the final jobs bill.

“Working Minnesotans are hurting,” the letter said. “More than a year of pandemic-induced economic hardship, risks and sacrifice on the job, and civil unrest has exhausted workers and made existing racial and economic inequities even worse.

“Working people need their lawmakers’ help.”

Most of the demands would create or extend benefits for workers hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout, like enhanced unemployment insurance, pandemic pay for workers on the front lines and a “right-to-return” guarantee for former employees as the hard-hit hospitality industry continues to recover.

Hourly school employees have been fighting for years to change a state law barring them from access to unemployment insurance. But the fight took on new urgency when schools shut down in-person learning last year, leaving thousands out of work.

“The path is not closed yet, but the road is narrowing,” SEIU Local 284 Executive Director Kelly Gibbons said, noting that the statewide association of school boards is fighting the measure.

“These are usually jobs where it’s women and people of color working with the children, working day in and day out, and they have no work in the summer and can’t get unemployment,” said Gibbons, whose union represents 7,000 school support staff statewide. “This is just so discriminatory.”

## Making essential workers whole

Workers who could not stay home during the pandemic, meanwhile, aren’t giving up on their fight to secure emergency paid leave, including retroactive benefits, for hours lost due to the pandemic.

Many health care workers, janitors,



Kellen Sundet, 11, and Payton Del Rosario, 4, make signs at the We Make MN rally.

Union Advocate photo

educators, warehouse and other workers burned through their paid time off – and often took unpaid leave – after being exposed to the coronavirus, or to provide care for family members.

In a roundtable discussion with Walz, Minnesota Nurses Association President Mary Turner, a nurse in North Memorial Hospital’s COVID ward, said members of her union have lost 23 hours, on average, during the pandemic.

“Nurses didn’t bat an eye. We walked into the unknown – a horrible unknown,” she said. “We’ve had to face going to our job unprotected because we did not have the PPE we needed. We’ve had to put ourselves and our families at risk for over a year, and many have died.

“We’ve been there from the beginning, and we’re not leaving the front line. But we need justice.”

## Building back safely

Other priorities unions will push in advance of the special session include jobs-creating investments in infrastruc-

ture and recovery from civil unrest in St. Paul and Minneapolis last summer.

Although the Legislature typically takes up so-called bonding bills in even-numbered years, House DFLers have advanced a \$1 billion proposal to take advantage of historically low interest rates and ease uncertainty in the construction industry.

Minnesota’s Building Trades unions have backed the measure, and they are also pushing a new law that would require contractors at oil refineries – like the Marathon facility in St. Paul Park, where workers are sounding the alarm about safety concerns – to hire workers who have completed registered apprenticeships.

“More than 1,000 Minnesotans have called legislators to pass the refinery bill,” said Joel Smith, president of the Laborers District Council of Minnesota and North Dakota. “It is critical that lawmakers use this time to take action to keep refinery workers and nearby

communities safe by requiring the use of a skilled workforce.”

## School funding set

Although much of the Legislature’s work remains unfinished, the budget deal reached last month does offer certainty to public school districts and their employees, who had been bracing for layoffs this spring.

The \$52 billion biennial budget would increase K-12 education funding by 2% in each year. While that’s enough to prevent the layoffs many educators feared, Education Minnesota President Denise Specht said, it falls short of the sustainable investment public schools need and deserve.

“Minnesota schools should be a place where every student can succeed, no exceptions,” she said. “This budget should stem the tide of harmful local budget cuts, but educators throughout the state want to be able to promise their students and parents that their local school will have the resources to meet the needs of all students for years to come. We can’t do that today.”

The statewide educators’ union delivered a petition with over 20,000 signatures to lawmakers, calling on them to increase taxes on corporations and the wealthiest Minnesotans to make up for investment gaps over the last decade-plus that have left schools underfunded.

Walz initially included the tax hike in his budget, but it was left out of the final agreement, which, instead, would tap into flexible funding from federal pandemic aid to cover proposed spending increases.

“While we’re disappointed the education spending in the final budget deal wasn’t closer to earlier budget proposals from the governor and the House, we are hopeful the final budget will limit layoffs and allow some schools to rehire educators who have already been pink slipped,” Specht said.

# Union members to boycott Speedway, support local tradespeople

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Minnesota labor leaders urged union members to support the Building Trades’ boycott. Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bill McCarthy, the state’s highest-ranking labor leader, accused Marathon of turning its back on working Minnesotans.

“Generations of Minnesota’s union workers have safely operated the St. Paul Park refinery while providing for their families and supporting their community,” McCarthy said. “By bringing in underpaid and poorly trained workers from out of state, closing the doors to Minnesota’s union tradespeople, and going as far as locking out their operations workforce in the name of cost cutting, Marathon ... is putting the surrounding community’s safety at serious risk.”

A scathing report issued in April backed up those concerns. Drawing on interviews with experts and refinery workers, analysts from Good Jobs Minnesota North Dakota detailed Marathon’s failure to retain highly trained workers and maintain rigorous safety standards.

“Ultimately, we are concerned that failure to

adhere to rigorous safety standards could not only endanger St. Paul Park workers but also surrounding communities,” the authors wrote.

“Not only could the use of an inexperienced and poorly trained workforce increase the risk of a fire or chemical release, as detailed in this report, but it is unclear whether these workers would be prepared to properly use a hydrant to contain a fire, or personal breathing apparatus to protect themselves.”

The boycott is backed up by a digital advertising campaign and a new website where Minnesotans can sign up to join the boycott on Speedway. Learn more at [www.marathonfailsus.org](http://www.marathonfailsus.org).

Local workers are hopeful the boycott will pressure Marathon to do the right thing for local workers and communities.

“I was proud of what I accomplished at the Saint Paul Park refinery before management replaced people like me with out-of-state contractors,” said Jimmy John, a member of St. Paul Pipefitters Local 455. “Maybe Marathon just wants to hire cheaper labor, but these are dangerous jobs, and it takes a lot



Education Minnesota, LIUNA Minnesota and the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation support the boycott outside a Speedway in St. Paul.

Union Advocate photo

of training and experience to do it right and keep everyone safe.

“Minnesotans should send a message to Speedway and Marathon – don’t replace local workers who know how to do the job safely.”



## Book Talk: 'Union Made'

The East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul will host a conversation with author Eric Lotke about his newly published novel, "Union Made," at 7 p.m. June 1 via Zoom. The conversation will be livestreamed on the ESFL's Facebook page, too.

Published by Hard Ball Press, "Union Made" takes readers inside the world of service and retail employment, where diverse groups of workers are organizing for a voice on the job in coffee shops, taprooms, warehouses and beyond.

Lotke is an author, activist and scholar who has published work on criminal justice and prisoners' rights. Learn more about "Union Made" and the author at [ericlotke.com](http://ericlotke.com).

Find a full list of programming and events at the ESFL at [eastsidefreedomlibrary.org](http://eastsidefreedomlibrary.org).

## Support Letter Carriers' donor drive

For the second year in a row, the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) has canceled its annual Stamp Out Hunger food drive, when letter carriers collect donations along their routes.



Stamp Out Hunger is typically the nation's most productive one-day food drive of the year, and the need for food assistance remains great. That's why the Letter Carriers have turned their food drive into a donor drive, asking supporters to donate to their local food shelf in place of the food they would normally leave by their mailbox.

To participate, go to [nalc.org/food](http://nalc.org/food) and select your state. Choose a food bank in your area and make a contribution by mail or online.

## Labor Bowl is back to support LSRC

Not all strikes are bad news. Save the date for the 10th Annual Labor Bowl, a team bowling fundraiser in support of the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center, planned Aug. 16 at Sun Ray Lanes in St. Paul.

Bowling teams may reserve a spot in one of three shifts: 2 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Find registration information at [stpaulunions.org](http://stpaulunions.org).

Proceeds from the event support the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's nonprofit arm, which provides assistance to union members facing financial crises.

# Outside Amazon fulfillment center, workers demand tax fairness

By Michael Moore  
*Union Advocate editor*

**SHAKOPEE** – One week before Tax Day, Minnesota workers unfurled a "Tax the Rich" banner outside Amazon's MSP1 fulfillment center, a not-so-subtle suggestion to state lawmakers about how they might pay for investments in child care, paid family leave, education, infrastructure and other supports for working families.

Tyler Hamilton, in his fourth year working at MSP1, said he and others inside the facility could use a little support right now.

"Honestly, I'm tired," the Maplewood resident said during a press conference organized by local unions. "And I'm not just tired from working night shift, even though I'm a night-shift guy."

"I'm tired from working in this building behind me for over a year during the coronavirus pandemic and having to deal with all the stupid stuff Amazon does all the time – and they get away with."

Yet the pandemic has been anything but exhausting for corporations like Amazon and the wealthiest Americans. With stock markets posting record gains over the last year, the super-rich have consolidated even more wealth. U.S. billionaires increased their combined wealth by \$1.62 trillion, or 55 percent, between March 2020 and April 2021, according to an analysis published last month.

Inequality in the U.S., already sped up by corporate tax cuts in 2017, has shifted into overdrive.

"Evidently, those tax cuts don't go toward their workforce," Hamilton said. "It's really frustrating."

State and federal lawmakers have the power to restore some fairness to the system by holding notorious tax-dodgers like Amazon accountable, other speakers at the event in Shakopee said.

Mary Solheim, a child care provider from Maplewood, described a state of "chronic underinvestment in care for the children" of Minnesota's workforce – a crisis made worse by the pandemic, as frontline workers not eligible for essential care struggled to find care for their children after school buildings shut down.

Solheim was precise about where to pin the blame.

"We know there is enough for everyone to thrive in Minnesota," she said. "But for too long, corporations haven't paid their fair share."

Public school educators have seen chronic underinvestment firsthand too, said Kate Schmidt, president of Dakota County United Educators.

Meeting students' needs, she said, requires smaller class sizes, more access to counselors and other specialists, healthy meals and safe buildings. But instead of fully funding those priorities, school districts across



Tyler Hamilton is in his fourth year working at Amazon's fulfillment center in Shakopee.

Union Advocate photos



Chelsie Glaubitz Gabiou, president of the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, emcees a press conference calling on corporations like Amazon and the super-rich to pay more taxes.

Minnesota brace for layoffs every two years, a response to uncertain state funding.

"This year let's demand that our Legislature ensure the wealthiest among us pay their fair share," Schmidt said. "That's how we fund the future of our students, by ensuring every child has what they need to focus on all they can become, whether they are black, brown or white."

Octavio Chung, a union Laborer from Hugo, said improvements to the state's transportation system and other infrastructure are urgently needed. Corporate profits rely on getting products to customers, after all.

"Corporations like Amazon need to pay their fair share so we can address decades of delayed essential maintenance and upgrades to provide all Minnesotans with safe roads and bridges, more affordable housing and functional school buildings," Chung said. "It is long past time."

Debate over whether to fund these

and other priorities continues to play out at the Capitol in St. Paul, as lawmakers finalize details of a \$52 billion biennial budget agreement.

The deal does not include small tax hikes, proposed by Gov. Tim Walz and House DFLers, on some corporations and on individual income over \$500,000, or over \$1 million for married couples filing jointly.

But the budget has been bolstered by federal relief funds. That gives workers like Hamilton, who believes he contracted COVID-19 on the job at Amazon, some hope of seeing emergency paid leave to cover hours lost during to the pandemic.

"I was out of work for a month, the majority of that being unpaid," Hamilton said. "It's tiring having to work hard to pay your bills – 10-hour shifts, 12-hour shifts – only to be hit with something like getting sick and falling behind because we don't have paid family medical leave or paid sick leave like we should."



# Staff at two Twin Cities charter schools vote in union organizing elections

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Staff at two Twin Cities charter schools kicked off Teacher Appreciation Week last month by filing for recognition of their unions.

Teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff from Great River School in St. Paul and Hiawatha Academies in Minneapolis went public with their campaigns after filing signed authorization cards with the National Labor Relations Board, triggering the union-election process.

"We are all incredibly proud and honored to be working with the amazing staff, families and students who really make our school run," said Janiru Herath, a teacher at Hiawatha College Prep – Kingfield. "Through unionizing, we can have a seat at the table in which the decision-making process includes all voices."

About 70% of workers eligible for the bargaining units signed authorization cards, according to Education Minnesota, the union of 89,000 education workers statewide, which is supporting both organizing drives.

The bargaining units would bring together as many as 122 school employees at Great River and 202 at Hiawatha.

Employees at both schools pushed administrators and board members to recognize their unions voluntarily, hop-

ing to bypass the NLRB and get to work on first collective bargaining agreements that will strengthen their learning communities – but to no avail.

Instead, Great River staff members are scheduled to vote June 3 in person. Voting at Hiawatha will take place by mail, with ballots set to be counted June 8.

## A bridge to support students

In a discussion streamed live on Education Minnesota's Facebook page during Teacher Appreciation Week, Herath and other union supporters laid out their reasons for pursuing a collective voice at their schools. Each of the speakers said a union would increase staff members' power to advocate for themselves and their students.

Great River's Sarah Garton likened forming a union to building a bridge between staff and the school's administration, so the two groups work together better. That would only benefit students, Hiawatha's Tory Waggoner agreed.

"Students are the center of everything we do," Waggoner said. "By prioritizing the voice of the people who work most closely with them, we can improve student outcomes and increase the satisfaction of workers as well."

Growth at the schools has factored into workers' decision to organize, too. Since the school's founding in 2007, Hiawatha has expanded from a



single elementary campus into a network of one elementary school, two middle schools and one high school. Great River, a first- through 12th-grade Montessori school on Energy Park Drive, also has grown in recent years.

Great River teacher Nadine McNiff said growth is an opportunity "to expand what is working and improve what isn't," and a having a union will ensure staff members are part of that process.

"One thing that's really important is continuity and foundation," McNiff

said. "Especially through a time of growth and changes at Great River, a union offers support for those things."

Staff members at Great River, McNiff added, strive to create "space and structures that give students agency and voice." And what better way to model that work than by forming a union?

"Our hopes are that unionizing and having that consistency in place, having that stability in place, can really help with maintaining working conditions that can feel supportive to workers, so they can focus and really invest their energies and thoughts on connections with students," McNiff said.

## Unions gaining favor

Charter schools are publicly funded but exempt from some state laws in order to increase flexibility, autonomy and innovation.

Minnesota is considered the birthplace of charter schools, having passed a first-in-the-nation law establishing their framework in 1991. Now, 168 charter schools serve about 68,000 pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade students statewide.

Teachers at the Twin Cities German Immersion School in St. Paul formed the state's first charter-school union in 2014. Currently, Education Minnesota represents four bargaining units at three charter schools.

OPEIU Local 12 congratulates  
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## Trend continues as more local nonprofit workers take union drives public

Organizing among Twin Cities nonprofit workers continues to bear fruit.

Hastened by the pandemic, economic uncertainty and the uprising for racial justice last summer, unionization efforts have succeeded at more than a dozen Twin Cities nonprofits in the last year.

In the last two months, employees at four local nonprofit organizations – Beacon Housing Collaborative, FairVote Minnesota, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and MinnPost – won recognition of their unions after organizing campaigns sponsored by the Minnesota Newspaper and Communications Guild-CWA.

And workers at another local nonprofit, Headway Emotional Health Services, went public with a union campaign backed by Local 12 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU).

For many nonprofit employees, the appeal of forming a union isn't just greater say over their terms and conditions of employment. Workers also want a meaningful voice in organizations' decisions – and more power to hold them accountable to their own goals and values, like equity and inclusion.

In a press release announcing their union, Beacon workers said winning a collective voice is “the best and only path toward shifting the balance of power” at the organization and “creating opportunities for all Beacon staff to participate in organizational strategy and decision making.”

The press release also noted that turnover at the nonprofit has “particularly affected staff who identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Color in recent years, as well as staff in frontline service positions.” That runs counter to the organization's principles, workers added.

### Winning recognition – one way or another

Unlike employers in the private sector, where profit is the chief motivating force, nonprofit employers often hold themselves to a mission statement or set of stated values.

That means workers organizing unions in the nonprofit sector are, in theory, less likely to meet the well-documented resistance workers at places like Amazon have encountered. For many nonprofit employers, tactics in the anti-union playbook – threats, firings, captive-audience meetings and disinformation campaigns – would violate their own principles.

Appealing to their employers' values has helped several local nonprofit unions win voluntary recognition, in which management agrees to bypass the lengthy election process governed by the National Labor Relations Board and allow workers to collect signed authorization cards instead.

That's how FairVote Minnesota, an organization devoted to expanding ranked-choice voting, agreed to recognize its field organizers and regional organizing directors' union. “As a model for democracy organizations across the country, FairVote MN must consider us, the staff, in its mission to leave a historical impact in our state and beyond,” workers said in their appeal to management.

MinnPost journalists and business and support staff won voluntary recognition, too. On Twitter, union members listed three goals in organizing a union: more competitive wages and benefits, greater say in the organization's decisions and “making MinnPost a place that better reflects the community it serves.”

Beacon workers, meanwhile, reached a neutrality agreement with management that sped up the organizing process.

“The Beacon Union intends to bring transparent accountability to Beacon's publicly stated value of race equity, especially by implementing collective decision making and advocating for equitable salary and benefit structures,” union members said.

In what workers called a disappointing waste of time and resources, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits denied workers' request for voluntary recognition, hired an anti-union attorney and forced a NLRB election. Still, the union prevailed.

“We envision a workplace that sees staff as whole people with ideas, time, experiences and the multitudes we contain,” union members said in a statement after the vote. “We look forward to finally starting negotiations and bringing our vision of a truly equitable and inclusive workplace to fruition.”

### Seeking more say at Headway

Workers at Headway announced their union campaign with OPEIU Local 12 in April. The union includes therapists, case managers and administrative staff at the nonprofit, which provides emotional

health services in the metro area.

Although the campaign is public, union supporters have not yet approached Headway management about recognition, according to organizers, who say roughly 160 workers would be eligible for the bargaining unit. The union is hoping to drive public support for their campaign on social media. Organizers are asking allies to follow and amplify @HeadwayUnited on Facebook and Twitter.

“For years, we have been working hard to provide the best care to those seeking emotional wellness – often without meaningful recognition or material support from management,” the union tweeted. “We need to take care of us, too!”

“A union at Headway means we get a say in ensuring our workplace reflects our worth and our values.”

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## Metro Transit workers reject management's 'best and final' offer

Members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 voted May 17 to reject Metro Transit's "best and final offer."

The vote, in which 72% opposed the deal, shows "the members want management to get to the table and get this finished," Ryan Timlin, Local 1005 president, said.

The union planned to request additional bargaining dates.

Local 1005 represents over 2,300 Metro Transit workers in talks with Metro Transit. The two sides have agreed to a temporary extension of their previous agreement, which expired Aug. 1, 2020, as negotiations continue.

But frustration with the agency's plodding approach at the bargaining table – while transit workers continue to risk exposure to the virus – is at a tipping point among union members, bus operator Janea Scott said.

"We have put our families and our friends and ourselves at risk during COVID," Scott said. "I feel like Metro Transit and the Met Council really don't care about people like me out here working every day."

ATU members voted overwhelmingly in September to authorize their bargaining team



Members of ATU Local 1005 gather outside contract talks with Metro Transit at the Bureau of Mediation Services offices in St. Paul.

Union Advocate photo

to call a strike.

Since then, they have been pushing Gov. Tim Walz and the Metropolitan Council, which oversees Metro Transit, for answers about how the agency's COVID-relief windfall is being used to protect frontline workers.

Metro Transit's latest offer included wage increases of 2 percent in the first year, 2 percent in the second year and 2.5 percent in the third and final year.

But management has refused to discuss the union's list of about 20 non-cost items, including sev-

eral safety issues. Timlin called that approach "infuriating," given the risks workers face during the pandemic.

In addition, Metro Transit has been unwilling to address hazard pay for workers' service through the pandemic.

"Those were the things that really pushed a 'no' vote," Timlin said. To get a breakthrough in the negotiations, he added, "we might have to do some actions. We'll see."

– Reporting by the Minneapolis Labor Review and Union Advocate.



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## After nearing strike at Allina, SEIU members at local hospitals ratify new contracts

Last month, essential workers at United Hospital and seven other Allina Health facilities were ready to strike for a fair contract that respects their service on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead, the 4,000 members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota struck a last-minute agreement with Allina and overwhelmingly ratified the new contract.

"We fought hard to win a contract that respects, protects and pays the workers who provide the best patient care in the world," said Lynn Carlson, a licensed practical nurse and member of the union's bargaining team.

"The debt we owe to the frontline, essential workers who kept Minnesota safe and healthy over this last year is immense, and we still have work to do. But I'm proud that our members fought for and won this contract."

Key gains won by Allina workers include a 5% pay increase over the course of the three-year agreement, including 3% in the first year, with back pay.

Workers also will see a 9% pension increase over the next three years.

### Hospital talks wrap

Earlier this spring, another group of 4,000 SEIU Healthcare members, after negotiations separate from the Allina table, approved new contracts with their hospital employers, includ-



Dee Tomic, a nursing assistant who volunteered to work in the COVID unit during the pandemic, chooses a sign for informational picketing outside Allina Health's United Hospital in downtown St. Paul. "I am disappointed – very – by these negotiations," she said.

Union Advocate photo

ing M Health Fairview and Children's hospitals, North Memorial and Park Nicollet Methodist.

The three-year contracts include pay and pension increases of 7.5% over the course of the agreement, according to SEIU.

In addition, new contract language will address racial justice, equity and inclusion in the workplace, and seek

to improve workplace safety. And a new action plan will provide union members an opportunity to address concerns around safe staffing.

"We've worked hard this last year to keep our patients safe, and that is why it was so critical to win the best contract we could," Hope Dahn, a nursing assistant and Park Nicollet, said. "If you work in health care – no

matter what your job is – you are part of the patient's care. I think the unity shown by our members helped us get this great contract."

### 'You've been through a war for us'

Allina workers appeared headed for an unfair-labor-practice (ULP) strike in early May, as talks broke down over the provider's refusal to budge from a 0% wage increase in the first year of the contract.

Union members staged informational picketing outside several of Allina's facilities, including United Hospital in downtown St. Paul April 21. Supporters from the labor community, including union nurses at the hospital, walked alongside SEIU members, as did several elected officials.

"You have been through a war for us through this pandemic," St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter told union members during a brief rally. "I see the trauma in your eyes. I see the hard work that you have given us, facing down this pandemic every single day."

"We know that we are in such a better place because you have stood between us and this crisis, and we've got to stand with you too."

The Allina contract also covers workers at Abbott Northwestern, St. Francis, Mercy, Buffalo, Unity and Owatonna hospitals, as well as Phillips Eye Institute in Minneapolis.

– Union Advocate staff

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# Walz joins unions in remembering fallen workers

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

In a Workers Memorial Day ceremony on the State Capitol grounds, Gov. Tim Walz and Labor Commissioner Roslyn Robertson joined members of Twin Cities Building Trades unions in paying tribute to workers who died in the past two years due to work-related injuries or illnesses.

Observed each year on April 28, Workers Memorial Day honors those who lost their lives on the job. In ceremonies across North America, union members pause to reflect on the impact workplace deaths have on families, co-workers and communities, and raise awareness of ongoing efforts to ensure safer, healthier workplaces.

Walz and other speakers at the St. Paul ceremony noted that COVID-19 has created new hazards and uncertainties for frontline, essential workers, who have not been able to work remotely over the past 13 months.

"Those that aren't with us today, those 7,000-plus Minnesotans who aren't here, no doubt some of them contracted COVID and lost their lives doing their jobs," Walz said. "And we found out very early how essential workers are."

"Today is about remembering," Walz added. "But there better be some lessons we've learned over the last year."

Building Trades unions honored 12 fallen members at the ceremony, their names affixed to white crosses held by family members or union representatives. At the conclusion of the observance, a speaker called out each name, followed by a single bell toll, as black sashes were placed over the crosses.

"They used their God-given talents to provide," St. Paul Building Trades President Tom McCarthy

said during an opening prayer. "They left us too soon. We humbly pray for their families and loved ones."

On behalf of the people of Minnesota, Walz extended his "deepest condolences to the representatives and the families here who have lost loved ones doing the work that makes our lives a little better, doing the work that fuels our economy, doing the work that moves us from place to place."

Nationwide, about 15 workplace fatalities occur each day, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. That's roughly one fatal injury every 99 minutes.

In Minnesota, the state's Occupational Safety and Health Administration investigated 30 workplace fatalities in 2020.

In her remarks, Robertson noted that Workers Memorial Day is timed to coincide with the anniversary of the date, now 50 years ago, that federal legislation creating OSHA went into effect. Minnesota won approval to establish its own OSHA in 1985.

"Workplaces are much safer today than they were before the OSHA Act, but our work is not done," Robertson said, adding that the legislation "transformed employers' responsibility to keep workplaces safe."

Robertson emphasized the need to do more to protect workers who face greater risks on the job, whether due to the dangerous nature of their work or due to factors that may prevent them from understanding their rights and protections on the job, including language and cultural differences.

"A safe workplace isn't a privilege, it is a right of every worker," the labor commissioner said. "It's important that all workers have the information and training they need to be safe at the work site, regard-



IUPAT District Council 82's Tony McGarvey (L) and Laborers Local 563's Chris Peltier pause to reflect on Workers Memorial Day.  
Union Advocate photo

less of what they look like, where they come from or what language they speak.

"If they're in the workplace, they have a right to a safe work environment."

That's a principle shared by labor unions, which have taken a leading role during the pandemic in winning protections for members and all working people. Unions have fought for access to personal protective equipment, ventilation and paid COVID leave, and they have lobbied lawmakers like Walz for emergency workplace health and safety standards.

"With the voice of labor and the voice of legislators to back it up, we made sure we wouldn't ask someone to go back into an unsafe work condition unless we made sure they were taken care of," Walz said. "We wouldn't ask them to go back in there unless we were doing all we could to protect them."

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## Cottage Grove Steelworkers ratify hard-fought contract with 3M

Members of United Steelworkers Local 11-418 voted in April to ratify a new contract covering essential workers at 3M's facility in Cottage Grove, wrapping up a slow-moving round of bargaining with the company that began in June 2020.

While the pace of negotiations was frustrating, union leaders said, the local succeeded in mobilizing members to push back against 100 unacceptable demands from the company. To let management know they weren't backing down, Steelworkers held multiple rounds of informational picketing outside the plant gates, with support from union leaders and elected officials like U.S. Rep. Angie Craig. The union also placed a billboard demanding a fair contract near the

3M corporate headquarters

The message to 3M was clear, said USW Sub-District Director Brian Ecker, the lead negotiator in talks with 3M.

"The solidarity of the local union and the leadership of the local union bargaining committee was so important during months of negotiations," Ecker said.

Also important was the solidarity Local 11-418 saw from fellow Steelworkers and the broader labor community, said Justin Recla, the local's vice president.

"On behalf of the local union, I want to thank the locals of the 3M council and all the local unions that supported our fight for a fair contract," he said.

## Car show to benefit Machinists' Guide Dogs charity

As a benefit for Guide Dogs of America, Minnesota Rides for Guides will host its Second Annual Car Show from 9 a.m. to noon Sunday, June 13, at Blacksmith Lounge, 1720 Forest Blvd. North in Hugo.

Guide Dogs of America was founded by the Machinists union in 1948 to help provide and train guide dogs for the visually impaired.

The event in Hugo welcomes peo-

ple to display all makes and models of vehicles. The first 50 vehicles registered will receive a dash plaque. Registration is \$15.

The event is free to anyone who wants to view the car show.

Raffles will be available and Rides for Guides t-shirts and other Guide Dogs of America items will be sold. All proceeds from the event will benefit Guide Dogs of America.

## NOT EVERYONE COULD WORK FROM HOME WHEN COVID HIT

UFCW 1189 salutes the brave union members who risked their health to keep us safe, and recognizes our members in retail, healthcare, and food production who kept Minnesota fed and cared for the most vulnerable.

Show them your thanks by buying your groceries from union retail locations. Look for the UFCW sign on the door, or check out [UFCW1189.org](http://UFCW1189.org) for locations.

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A peek behind the line at Kyatchi restaurant in St. Paul's Lowertown district.

submitted photo

## Guest Commentary

# St. Paul's minimum wage will increase July 1. Here's how one local restaurant is adapting

**By Alicia Thoj**

As I settled into a comfortable spot in Kyatchi's dining room, I remembered all the previous times I had been to this restaurant to enjoy the ramen and hot dog with yakisoba noodles. It was a nostalgic feeling because it had been a couple of years since I had gone inside and ordered from the menu.

Before I placed my order, I met with Kyatchi manager Trevor Garcia to hear about the benefits of him receiving a livable wage while working in the restaurant industry and why he loves working at Kyatchi.

"I fell in love with the Kyatchi culture because it is very different from other bars and restaurants," Garcia said. "I take pride in the food and service. We have time to teach people about our menu and give them an experience."

Not only is the customer service great, but even on a slow night the staff is guaranteed pay. That's because Kyatchi owner Sam Peterson decided years ago, when the City of Minneapolis began discussions about increasing the citywide minimum wage, to sit down and look at his numbers. He knew he would make it work and came up with a dollar amount to increase revenue for the Kyatchi Minneapolis location. He started paying the staff \$15 per hour at that time and had no pushback from staff or customers.

"As a business owner I can make this (minimum-wage increase) work," Peterson said of his response at the time. "This can be done. You can have a suc-

cessful business and pay your people well and still make a profit."

The profit increase was the reason Kyatchi was able to open its St. Paul location four years ago, creating opportunities for more customers to be able to enjoy their food.

As I pondered Peterson's words, I thought of the many businesses that have been in a bind during the pandemic and have survived, barely survived or are now shut down. The City of St. Paul's first annual minimum-wage increase is around the corner on July 1, 2021, and I acknowledge the challenges and difficulties this can create for employers within the city.

Yet I also think about how families have fared during this time, how we are all in this together and how no one has been exempted from COVID-19. Employers need to earn a profit, and employees need to earn livable wages to sustain their families.

How did Kyatchi rise to the challenge when they reopened for indoor dining? Kyatchi's owner decided to increase food prices by 19% and added a no-tipping policy for indoor dining, so the restaurant could maintain its ability to pay employees a livable wage.

The new approach "prevents a high employee-turnover rate and gives them passion for the job," Garcia said. "It also decreases anxiety because a steady paycheck really helps people to live their lives and have money management."

You can review the hourly minimum wage increase on the City of St. Paul's website, [www.stpaul.gov](http://www.stpaul.gov), which displays the four business sizes: Macro, Large, Small, and Micro. The Minimum Wage Ordinance rolled out in early 2020, and will bring the first wage increase this July. The wage increases will continue over the next three to seven years, depending on the business size, in order to reach the full \$15 per hour.

The Minimum Wage Ordinance also includes youth employees, 14-17 years of age, who must be paid not less than eighty-five percent of the city minimum wage for small employers, and after more than ninety days after the date of hire, employees should be paid the applicable city minimum wage.

– Alicia Thoj is a labor standards investigator with the City of Saint Paul's Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity department.

## Know the new minimum wage

**What's changing?** Minimum wage ticks up at most capital-city workplaces July 1. Employers with 101 or more employees must pay \$12.50 per hour. For employers with six to 100 employees, it's \$11. For employers with one to six employees, it's \$10.

**Online:** Learn more about St. Paul's minimum-wage ordinance and your rights as a worker at [www.stpaul.gov/departments/human-rights-equal-economic-opportunity/labor-standards-enforcement-and-education](http://www.stpaul.gov/departments/human-rights-equal-economic-opportunity/labor-standards-enforcement-and-education).



## Northwest Airlines museum gets parting gift from union retirees

Local airline retirees placed their social club into retirement last month, but not before donating the organization's remaining funds to a museum preserving the history of Minneapolis-St. Paul's longtime union carrier, Northwest Airlines.

Founded in 1976, the Machinists Airline Local 1833 Retired Members Social Club met for the final time April 15 in Bloomington. As the last order of business before gaveling into permanent adjournment, Club President Mary Sansom presented Bruce Kitt, executive director of the Northwest Airlines History Center, with a check made out to the Twin Cities museum.

"Recognizing the history that we've all shared and have all been a part of, literally, this is bittersweet," Kitt told some 30 club members gathered for the final meeting. "But on behalf of the museum, I do thank each and every one of you because each and every one of you are represented in this museum – your history, your names, your faces and your accomplishments."

The social club, affiliated with Machinists Local Lodge 1833, made the difficult decision to fold as a result of dwindling participation, Sansom said.

The local represents airline workers based at MSP, once a hub of operations for heavily unionized Northwest. But Northwest folded into non-union Delta Air Lines as part of a merger announced in 2008, and Local



Mary Sansom presents Bruce Kitt with a check for the airline retirees club's remaining funds, made out to the Northwest Airlines History Center.

Union Advocate photo

Lodge 1833's membership cratered.

"Our ability and resources to enlist new members for the retiree club was gone," Sansom said. "With our current members growing older, unable to move around as easily as they used to or moving out of state to a warmer climate or passing away, the membership has steadily been going down."

"The remaining members decided it was time to 'retire' the social club."

Local Lodge 1833's membership peaked at over 10,000 airline workers and retirees in 1988, two years after Northwest merged with Republic

Airlines. Most members were Northwest employees, as the airline was headquartered in Eagan.

Local Lodge 1833 represented mechanics, stock clerks, cleaners, flight-kitchen workers, equipment-service and plant-protection workers, and the merger with Republic brought bus drivers, reservation and ticket agents and clerical and office workers into the fold. (Northwest mechanics voted to leave the Machinists union in 2000.)

After their final order of business – transferring their accounts to the

### Northwest Airlines History Center

The Twin Cities organization is dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of all 12 airlines that are part of Northwest's corporate legacy.

**Museum:** Open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Saturday on the third floor of the Crowne Plaza Aire MSP hotel, 3 Apple-tree Square, Bloomington. Admission is free.

**Online:** [northwestairlineshistory.org](http://northwestairlineshistory.org)

**Archive:** The history center also maintains a vast archive of Northwest Airlines history at Flying Cloud Airport in Eden Prairie. Access is by appointment only.

museum – retirees took the opportunity to share memories of working at "the Red Tail," as Northwest was familiarly known in the airline industry.

But it doesn't have to be the last opportunity for reflection, Kitt said, noting that the Northwest Airlines History Center museum is open to visitors four days a week at the Crowne Plaza Aire MSP Hotel in Bloomington.

"I like to say it's the only place you can still get a Red Tail fix that Delta can't touch," Kitt said.

– Michael Moore, UA editor

## St. Paul Federation of Educators announces leadership change

Longtime Highland Park Middle school teacher Leah VanDassor will succeed Nick Faber as president of the St. Paul Federation of Educators June 15. Faber plans to retire after 35 years in the St. Paul Public Schools, the last four on leave as union president.

Members of SPFE, one of the state's largest educator unions, elected VanDassor in voting last month. She currently serves as the local's vice president.

VanDassor has taught 8th-grade English in St. Paul since 1996, all at

Highland Park Middle School.

"I promise to keep showing up to work with and for St. Paul educators," she said. "I'll keep showing up to fight the good fight for our students. And I'll keep showing up to fight against injustices to our Black and Brown students and their families who are, too often, left out of the conversations and decision-making in our public schools."

VanDassor said she looks forward to building on SPFE's work to create the public schools students and educators

deserve. That includes expanding restorative practices, increasing mental health supports for students, and improving pay and working conditions for Saint Paul's multilingual educators, particularly education support staff.

VanDassor has taken on a range of roles with SPFE in recent years. She has served as a building steward and a member of the Contract Action Team, bargaining team and executive board. And she now works as a liaison with the district on COVID-19-related issues.



Leah VanDassor



Nick Faber

SPFE represents more than 3,500 teachers, educational assistants, school and community personnel and other licensed staff who work at over 65 sites in the St. Paul school district.

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## Congratulations, Union Advocate!

The members of Machinists Local Lodge 459 join in celebrating your publication's 124th anniversary in newsprint.







# Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

## APRIL 14, 2021

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation met in regular session remotely due to COVID 19 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 Beissel, Edwards, Faber, Gibbons, Guertin, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McCarthy, McNamara, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Sansom, St. Aoro, Tastad-Damer, Vandassor and Varco. Excused were Beedle B., Engeldorf, Gorman, Roth, Ryan, Seath, and Slattery. Absent were Hoppe, Jones, Luneburg, Schmidt, and Terry.

President Peterson called for a moment of silence for Union Brother Jerry Beedle.

## CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from IUPAT Local 61, Teamsters Local 320, and UAW Local 722. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates present online.

## MINUTES

**M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF MARCH 10, 2021, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY NOTES THERE ARE NO ADDITIONS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.**

## COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES APRIL 14, 2021

COPE met in regular session remotely on the above date and was called to order by President Peterson at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Anglimson, Beissel, Edwards, Faber, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Krey, Lohmann, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, Mayer, McCarthy, McNamara, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Sansom, St. Aoro, Tastad-Damer, Vandassor and Varco. Excused were Beedle B., Engeldorf, Gorman, Naseth, Roth, Ryan, Seath, Slattery and Wise. Absent were DeRoy, Hoppe, Jones, Luneburg, Schmidt, and Terry.

Items to come before this board included:

- The PRO Act, HF 39, film industry bill and Driver's Licenses for All were discussed.

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

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES APRIL 14, 2021

The Executive Board met upon conclusion of COPE 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 appointment of Josh Loahr, Teamsters Local 320, to replace Gus Froemke, Teamsters Local 320, on the RLF Executive Board; USDA Farmers to Families Food box program; COVID vaccines to worksites, encouraging union members to go to COVID vaccine connector; Virtual screening of the Film "The Stand" on May 1; Union Advocate newspaper, new members appointed to the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center Labor Community Action Committee; and Labor Bowl tentatively scheduled for Monday, August 23, 2021 at Sun Ray Lanes.  
– There will be changes in the publi-

cation of the Union Advocate Newspaper as the print plant in DLH is shut down and moved to a non-union shop located in Brainerd.

– The National Guard's presence at the Labor Center was discussed, and no action was taken.

- **ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS:** AFSCME, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, and SEIU Local 284 gave an update on their organizing activities.

- **M/S/C TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF JOSH LOAHR, TEAMSTERS LOCAL 320, TO THE SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION EXECUTIVE BOARD, REPLACING GUS FROEMKE, TEAMSTERS LOCAL 320.**

- **M/S/C TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE SAINT PAUL BUILDING TRADES COUNCIL ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT.**

- **M/S/C TO MAKE A \$675 CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2021 NELLIE STONE JOHNSON SCHLORSHIP FUND.**

- **M/S/C TO MAKE A \$1,000 CONTRIBUTION TO THE FREEDOM TO DRIVE MN.**

- **M/S/C TO PURCHASE A \$150 GAS CARD FOR FARMERS TO FAMILY VOLUNTEER**

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

## REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Acting Secretary-Treasurer Sansom reported on the financial status of the Federation as of March 2021. The report was accepted as read.

## PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Peterson reported on: the COVID vaccine Connector, the Teamsters at Marathon still continue to be locked out, new members have been appointed to the LSRC's Labor Community Action Committee, Labor Bowl has been tentatively scheduled for August 23 at Sun Ray Lanes, and the Farmers to Family Food box program has delivered 1.6 million pounds of food.

## STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

Erica Dalager Reed, AFL-CIO Community Liaison, announced we will be having a Stand Movie Fundraiser for St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center on May 1, 2021.

## REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. There will be a food distribution event on Saturday, April 24, 2021. We request that the RLF pay for renting a Port-A-Potty for use during the food distribution program. Our next meeting will be the fourth Thursday of the month at 4:30 p.m. via zoom.

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO RENT A PORT-A-POTTY FOR THE CCLA TO USE DURING THE FOOD DISTRIBUTION EVENT ON SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 2021.**

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. On Saturday, April 28, 2021, the assembly will hold its annual Worker's Day Memorial Service at Lebanon Hills Cemetery in Apple Valley. Next meeting will be the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. via Zoom. To participate, RSVP to Colleen.

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

Submitted by,  
**MARY SANSOM**  
Acting Secretary-Treasurer



The St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center held food giveaways with (clockwise from top) the Chisago County Labor Assembly in North Branch, IBEW Local 110 in St. Paul, Ironworkers Local 512 in St. Paul, IUPAT District Council 82 in Little Canada and Letter Carriers Branch 28 in St. Paul.

## Union food giveaways serving metro communities and beyond



Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter helps load a pickup truck with free, fresh food during a distribution event in April outside International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 110's union hall.

Union Advocate photos



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## Local Teamsters take on Marathon in fight for safety

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Picketing outside the refinery annoys Marathon and its vendors. But ambulatory picketing at Speedway and other gas stations gives refinery workers like Ryan Bierman, whose pickup truck has been on “well over a hundred” picketing runs, an opportunity to educate the public.

“I enjoy just getting out and talking to different people about what’s going on with our strike and what the company wants to do, cutting potentially up to 50 local jobs and putting pretty much the whole plant at risk,” Bierman said. “And with that plant being so tightly-knit into different communities – St. Paul Park, Newport, Cottage Grove – if there is a major fire, an explosion or a chemical release, all these other communities are going to be put at risk too.”

Bierman typically livestreams the ambulatory picket on his social media account, where thousands of people have watched as he and other picketers use megaphones to warn approaching vehicles that the Speedway or other station is getting a delivery of “scab gas” from St. Paul Park.

“I’m letting people know that the highly trained employees who are normally in there making the fuel are not in there making the fuel,” refinery worker Dick Briguet said. “They brought in other workers to make it, other people in there testing it, so we can’t personally guarantee that it’s quality fuel.”

Local 120 members cannot legally call for a boycott of stations selling Marathon’s gas, but the union is finding creative and effective ways to pressure Marathon, the nation’s largest independent refining company, to get back to the table and bargain a fair, safe contract.

In advance of the company’s April 28 virtual shareholder meeting, the Teamsters led a successful

campaign to convince 70% of voting shareholders to oppose the company’s executive compensation – a pay structure headlined by \$6 million in restricted stock for the outgoing chairman and CEO, Gary Heminger. It was the largest margin of defeat in a “say-on-pay” vote at any S&P 500 energy company this year, according to the union.

“Marathon investors are not impressed with the golden parachutes the company provides its executives, the 379:1 CEO-to-median-employee pay ratio, and the risks the company has created by jeopardizing safety at its St. Paul Park refinery by locking out its workers,” Teamsters General Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall said. “Placing workers, the community and the environment at undue risk is a clear ... failure reflected in the vote.”

Closer to home, the Marathon dispute has prompted several Minnesota legislators to look into changing state law to ensure an adequately trained workforce in local refineries.

And Local 120 has rolled out a “Burn Zone” campaign to raise awareness of the devastating impact a safety incident at the St. Paul Park refinery could have on surrounding communities. Text “BURN” to 86466 or visit [areyouintheburnzone.com](http://areyouintheburnzone.com) to learn more.

“Teamsters are punching above their weight in this fight, and it’s inspiring to see,” St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson said. “So is the solidarity other union members have offered these refinery workers, who are taking a stand for everyone’s safety.”

When people understand what’s going on in St. Paul Park, they typically support the Teamsters’ cause, refinery welder Mason Bahl said. That’s why he likes ambulatory picketing.

“It actually gives you a sense a satisfaction to go to a Minnoco or another independently owned sta-



Dick Briguet, Mason Bahl and Alex Kittleson advise Speedway customers in Brooklyn Center that the gas they’re about to purchase crossed a picket line.

tion and talk to the manager, and they agree without you,” Bahl said. “They say, ‘Hey, we get it. We won’t get fuel from your refinery anymore.’”

“We just try to tell people what’s going on, why we’re here and how to help us out,” refinery worker Alex Kittleson added. “And a lot of people seem to understand that it’s about safety for ourselves, our families and our communities.”

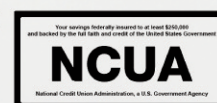
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