



International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
District Lodge 66
1307 Market Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Union Herald Article from the desk of:

Rick Mickschl, DBR

Union Herald for May 2009

Sisters and Brothers,

On behalf of the entire District 66 members, delegates and Executive Board, we would like to thank the Western Wisconsin AFL-CIO, under the leadership of Terry Hicks, for Workers Memorial Day on April 28th. This event is April 28th every year. The day honors all who have fallen while working at their jobs. Each year, I am humbled by this ceremony and the crosses that represent our fallen brothers and sisters. We must always remember these members who did not come home from work. Please put this date on your calendar for each year and attend this ceremony to honor those members. April 28th is the date.

Each year the District Lodge No. 66 donates two (2) Scholarship Awards, one to a son of our Machinists Union Member and the other to a daughter of our Machinists Union member. The winning essays are published in this paper. IAM District Lodge 66 is pleased to announce the 2009 Scholarship winners for this year. Every essay submitted was great and thank you to all who participated. The scholarship committee of District delegates had a tough and final decision to make with all being well written essays. The female recipient is **Kelsey Murphy**, daughter of David and Peggy Murphy. David is a member of Local Lodge 21 and is employed at Trane Company. Kelsey is a senior attending Viroqua Senior High School. The male recipient is **Joshua Elder**, son of Leigh and Janice Elder. Leigh is a member of Local Lodge 1115 and is employed at Luxco. Josh is a senior attending La Crosse Logan Senior High. The District Lodge would like to thank all of the participants and wish them the best of luck in their endeavors in the future. The winning essays are to follow – Ladies First! **2009 District Lodge No. 66 Scholarship**, by Kelsey Murphy

Small children are told to be kind, help other people; especially those less fortunate than themselves and treat everyone fairly. Unions work in a similar way; they were created in order to ensure that their members were treated equally and fairly in the workplace. Since unions are groups of people working together towards a similar cause, they provide additional negotiating power to its members. Through these negotiations unions are able to provide safer work environments, as well as, better wages and benefits.

A labor union is a group of people, typically employees, that work to improve their work environment, wages, benefits and their community. By working together the employees gain more leverage and power than if they try to negotiate by themselves. Unions help to maintain a balance of power between the bosses and workers. If all the workers refuse to work under the current conditions then their employer is more likely to correct what is amiss than if one or a small group of workers refused to work. Unions also help discourage discrimination in the workplace. Union members often enjoy higher wages, shorter work hours and other benefits such as insurance and retirement pensions.

Because of the many things that unions can do for their members, they also impact the families and communities of its members. Higher wages allow for more spending which in turn helps support the local economy. Providing safer working conditions is another obvious way that unions protect their members. If workers are hurt while on the job or become ill, health insurance provides them with the means to get well as soon as possible. Unions continue to benefit their members even after they can no longer work or retire through pension plans. Unions also can provide additional, often necessary resources, to aid the community if some kind of disaster strikes.

My father has been a member of the Machinists Union since being hired at Trane in 2000. My mother is also a member of a labor union. She is a teacher at Viroqua Area Schools and has been a member of the teacher union there since 1987. One example of how a union has been beneficial to me is with the health insurance that my mom gets through her school. About a year ago, the teacher's union began to look into getting more affordable health insurance. For several years their insurance had steadily increased each year, they felt that this was unnecessary and that they could find a better option. After exploring different options they found that they could get health insurance through a more local company for a reasonable price. The transition was virtually seamless; we still use all of the same doctors and receive the same benefits. One additional plus is that the money we pay stays in our local community.

Unions are an excellent example of how many people working together can make light work out of any task. They work to improve the lives of not only their members but also the lives of their member's families and community. Through this scholarship the Machinists Union is supporting the values and ideas that unions were created. As graduation day nears I feel very lucky to have so

many people as well as businesses willing to support my classmates and I as we start this new part of our lives.

And now for the male essay!

"Unions have been important to my family and community because...."

by Joshua S. Elder

The dramatic decline in union membership over the past several decades has had a substantial negative impact on the well-being of the American worker. Organized labor not only protects and strengthens the rights of union workers, it is the voice for fair treatment of all employees and the most effective check on corporate influence in Congress and legislatures across the country.

These current times have definitely had an effect on everyone's lives including my family. Nearly three million manufacturing jobs have been lost since George W. Bush took office. My father is a "tool and die maker" and a member of a local union that have been fighting to keep jobs. If he had not belonged to a union he may have lost his job. Management has a negotiated contact with all its union employees and they must follow this agreement. The percentage of workers in the United States who belong to a union has decreased from a high of over 35% at the end of World War II to about 13% today. Only about 9% of employees in the private sector are union members. In the 1980's President Reagan replaced air traffic controllers who were on strike. This weakened organized labor and membership plummeted despite the fact that many unorganized workers would join a union if they could.

My grandfather was a member of the Wisconsin Teachers union for over thirty years. My father has been a member of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Union for the past twenty-two years and has provided a good life for my family. We have enjoyed the right to a fair living that is provided in the union negotiated contract. My family has visited Mexico and traveled to Florida more than once. These vacations were a result of the hard work my dad and his union representation did. Over the years my brother, sister and I have had the opportunity to attend the best schools and go to camps to improve our skills in music, hockey, basketball, football and softball. We all participated in these activities in school and will continue to through our lives. Our family has volunteered for charitable events and given generously to charitable organizations that will help the people in our community. This will help strengthen the environment that we live in. We live in a home that my father and mother bought before any of my older siblings were born and the house is now debt free. All of these opportunities and gains are the direct result of my father's association with a strong and dedicated union.

Health care is a growing concern for everyone and it has risen in cost for everyone. My father's union has negotiated a health plan that is much better than any plan he had prior to being a union member. With higher wages he has been able to save more for retirement to go along with a guaranteed union pension. The gap in wages between union and non-union is about 15% - 28% with unionized workers receiving higher wages. Because union workers earn

more they also receive better benefits. The working conditions in his shop are constantly being upgraded and improved to make a safer working environment. He has a voice as an employee with three shop stewards representing him and his fellow workers. He has had the opportunity to be elected as a shop steward for three years so he knows first hand how representation works. If he has a problem on the job, it will be handled by his shop stewards in an orderly and just fashion. This procedure relieves hostility and stress for both management and the workers. The union local also provides legal representation at a reduced fee which has been used by my dad more than once.

Early in my father's working career, he was not a member of a union and he says it was much harder to provide these opportunities for his family. His previous non-union jobs provided no retirement benefits or pension. Wages were three dollars an hour less than his unionized job. Safety standards were not looked into as thoroughly as they are in the union shop he now works. These are important things that I will be thinking of as I go into college and into the workforce.

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local 1115 District 66, and the state of Wisconsin Labor History Society are both offering scholarships to students who want to continue their education beyond high school. This is an opportunity only being offered to members and children of members of a union. Each year many scholarship funds are awarded to students by the IAM and affiliated labor associations. Without the help from these labor union scholarships many students would not be able to continue their education. Union labor sponsors many different organizations such as softball teams, the labor day activities, youth activities and many charitable events. Much of this involvement is in the form of donations and volunteer work which helps strengthen our youth and surrounding society. Unions have helped workers who have lost their jobs find other work or train for new jobs. Young people as well as adults will become better and more productive citizens with the help of organizations like Local 1115.

With the economy struggling and unemployment rising, the United States worker is faced with an evermore need to be skilled and competitive. We, as Americans, work harder and longer hours than any worker in the world. We produce a multitude of products and services used throughout the entire world. Labor unions encourage and demand skill and hard work to produce products that will be competitive globally. This is the attitude and agenda that union labor has had in past and will have in the future, Every American wants to provide the best for his family and their future and organized labor unions help secure this way of life.

Congratulations to both of our scholarship winners as well as all graduating High School Seniors from District Lodge 66, we wish them all the best in life and luck in their journeys they are just starting.

Rick A. Mickschl, Directing Business Rep., District Lodge 66, IAMAW