

SEIU Local 517M E-Former – October 2015 Edition

Lead, Unite, Fight – Win For the 99%!

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Local 517M Celebrates Labor Day

For Labor Day this year, Local 517M sponsored a table at the West Michigan Laborfest in Grand Rapids. The invitation was extended to **Julene Sims**, Unit President of Grand Rapids Head Start. Julene is involved with the Kent-Ionia Central Labor Council, a sponsor of the annual event that was held in Ah-Nab-Awen Park. Entry into the Laborfest event included admission to the Gerald Ford Museum and front row seats to live music. There were local food, arts, and crafts vendors, as well as, lots of labor unions. Julene was a volunteer at the Labor Council's booth running the 'penny toss' game. **Amy Davis-Comstock** brought reinforcements and set up a table representing Local 517M featuring games for both children and adults.

The children were encouraged to play Toss Across Tic-Tac-Toe as many times as they wanted. While the kids were busy playing tic-tac-toe, there was a quiz for adults about the history of the middle class, labor unions, and SEIU. Everyone won candy and water bottles, which were a big hit with the kids getting ready to go back to school the next day.



Meanwhile in Detroit, SEIU 517M members and staff joined with other SEIU members in the annual Labor Day Parade in downtown Detroit. Afterwards, members and guests from the SEIU Locals (SEIU Health Care Michigan, Local 1, and Local 517M) met for a picnic at SEIU Health Care Michigan's office. There was food, a bounce house and games.

SEIU Fights for 15 and for Unpaid Bonuses at Hope Network New Passages

The National Labor Relations Board found Hope Network New Passages (HNNP), a faith based adult foster care provider, guilty of “bargaining in bad faith” and wrongly imposed its final offer in the May of 2013. As part of the ruling Hope Network New Passages has to come back to the table and bargain fairly with SEIU Local 517M. However, this hasn’t stopped HNNP’s illegal behavior. This summer HNNP retaliated against union employees for prevailing in the NLRB decision by withholding annual bonuses that were scheduled to be paid on July 1st. SEIU has filed an unfair labor practice on the matter and the NLRB is currently investigating, but members have taken matters into their own hands by proudly flouting management’s draconian prohibitions on SEIU buttons and apparel. Members have made sure that everyone wears SEIU shirts at company trainings creating a sea of purple that lets management know they want their bonuses back!



In addition to fighting for the withheld bonuses, SEIU is fighting at the bargaining table for a raise to \$15 an hour for all employees at HNNP by 2018, neutral arbitration for grievances, sick days for all employees, and employer contributions to employee pension plans. So far there have only been three sessions and we are a long ways off from a tentative agreement but members are resolute in fighting for the pay and respect they deserve.

Memphis Community Schools Ratifies Contract

After successfully fighting off efforts to outsource their jobs, food service workers at Memphis Community Schools have ratified a one-year agreement with the school district on August 18th. At the bargaining table, SEIU was able to fight off proposed cuts to benefits and pay while ensuring that employees’ life insurance policies are now contractually protected. We were also able to remove language from the contract that allowed the school district to take union positions and fill them with non-union personal. This old language basically allowed the union to be grandfathered out over time. Under the new language, the recognition article in the contract is now stronger than ever which makes it harder for the district to outsource personnel.

Mott Community College Public Safety Officers Ratify Contract

Public Safety Officers have ratified a 1-year tentative agreement with Mott Community College after going into impasse and mediation. The employer refused to talk about any compensation increases, despite the fact that wages have been frozen since 2011 and some of our employees will still be making the minimum wage in 2018! They also pushed humiliating language that would have forced employees to pay for new equipment and uniforms required due to weight loss or weight gain.

Ultimately, the final agreement brokered by the mediator left the contract largely unchanged with the exception of adding Easter Sunday as a paid holiday and the creation of a new system of assigning overtime and extra hours to employees. SEIU hopes that with the improving economic climate in Michigan, we will be able to agree on compensation increases in negotiations next year.

SEIU 517M Tech Unit Report – Election of Chapter Presidents



By Arnold Beller, Technical Unit President

With all the excitement of welcoming all the new Leaders in the Tech Unit, and negotiation well under way, we almost forgot that this is our Election Year. As per our Bylaws, 30 days' notice is to be giving for the Election by Electronic means. You should have received an email informing you of this year's dates for Nominations for all 14 Chapter Presidents, election voting details and deadlines. Nomination will take place from September 25 until October 10. Elections for Officers will take place October 15-30, 2015. All ballots will be counted at the end of the Day on Friday, Oct. 30, 2015 at 5:00pm. New Officers will take office starting November 1, 2015, as per our Tech Bylaws. If you need a paper ballot, contact the office and request one.

As of Sept 24, 2015, The Tech Unit Negotiation Committee has been busy meeting with the Department of State Employer to work out the details of our new contract. We have been meeting for the past 6 weeks and will continue to meet until we can get a deal worked out or until we reach an Impasse. We are still working towards a full and voluntary agreement with the state. Stay tuned...

Now for a brief introduction we have short bios of Vice President **Rick Brower** and Secretary Treasurer, **Tim Gierman**.

My Name is Patrick Brower. Most people know me as Rick. I have been employed by MDOT for 25 Years. I started out working in Ann Arbor in the University Region and the moved to the Bay Region in 1995.

I became a steward in the early to Mid-1990's and am currently Chapter 6 President, State Vice President and Chairman of the Grievance Committee. I have also been Chief Steward and served on the negotiating team.

I have been married to my Wife Debbie for 29 years and we have one daughter Joanna Shannon who is married to Jon. I like to hunt and fish, collect coins and lots of other misc. things from Lures to bottles. I plant a garden every year and enjoy working around the yard. I am a Lions and Michigan football fan. If you have and questions or would just like to talk send me e-mail to ricksrack@aol.com.

Tim Gierman has worked for the DNR for 25 years, most of it as a technician for Wildlife Division. It was about three years ago I became involved with the union, first on the grievance committee, then bargaining, and asked to fill in for a retiring Mike Mandrick as Secretary/Treasurer last March. Since then I decided to run for the position, was the only person to file, and now in the position for the term. It's been a short time of being involved relative to my fellow board members and I rely on their experience quite frequently.

Like most of my fellow state employees my work experience has been good or bad based on my immediate supervisor, that and having a fair system in place for state workers has been my motivation for becoming involved. I look forward to working you, the members, and would comment that we want to hear from you! Obviously this is a very negative political environment we are going through right now and want to work to be as effective as we can in engaging membership. We need you and need to stand together to maintain what we now consider our normal work environment.

Sincerely, Secretary/Treasurer, Tim Gierman

Redistricting Town Hall Meetings

The League of Women Voters of Michigan is hosting over 30 Town Hall meetings across the state of Michigan this fall to educate voters on the importance of redistricting. The events are

free and open to the public. All are welcome. To view the dates and locations, head to the listing on our website: http://www.seiu517m.org/.../2.../09/LWV_redistrict_townhalls.pdf

International Monetary Fund ... Higher Wages Reduce Income Inequality

The Union's fight for higher wages is not only about workers deserving fair living wages so they can support themselves and their families, but higher wages will also decrease income inequality around the nation. According to a newly released "staff discussion note" from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), "The decline in unionization is related to the rise of top income shares and less redistribution, while the erosion of minimum wages is correlated with considerable increases in overall inequality."

According to the IMF study on Inequality and Labor Market Institutions, a steep decline in union density is followed by a 1.8 percent increase of top incomes and a 3 percent decline for workers' income over the next five years. Additionally, "if de-unionization weakens earnings for middle-and low-income workers, this necessarily increases the income share of corporate managers and shareholders." The IMF study examined 20 advanced economies between 1980 and 2010.

Declining union strength "appears to be associated with less income redistribution, likely through a reduced influence of unions on public policy," says **Florence Jaumotte**, an economist and co-author of the publication.

Unions fight for higher wages not only for members, but also for communities as a whole. The IMF doesn't state blanket recommendations pertaining to their report, but do acknowledge its findings "suggest that higher unionization and minimum wages can help reduce inequality."

To read the full IMF "staff discussion note", please visit:
<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2015/sdn1513.pdf>

September Text Contest Winners

Congratulations to the winners of the September E-Former text contest. The five winners chosen at random were:

Stacey Gough
Autumn Henney
Carrie Holka
April Lazzaro
Bethany Reimink

October Text Contest

Our monthly text contest allows five winners to receive \$20 gift cards. **To enter, text "517M" to 30644 to take a quiz about the E-Former.**

This month's question: A 1.8 percent increase of top incomes corresponds with a 3 percent decline for workers' income over what time period?

A) Three years

- B) Five years
- C) Four years
- D) Ten years

Text the correct answer to enter the contest. The contest is an opt-in contest, meaning that we will only text you if you would like to participate.

Calendar of Upcoming Union Events for October, 2015

October 3: Grand Haven Schools "Talk Back To Your Union" Tour Stop

October 6: Chapters 17 and 21 Meeting at Constitution Hall

October 9: SEIU517M Executive Board Meeting

October 12: Scientific and Engineering Unit Board Meeting

October 13: School and Local Government Region 2 Board Meeting

October 21: Human Services Support Unit Board Conference Call

October 27: School and Local Government Region 1 Board Meeting

October 28: Scientific and Engineering Unit Member Education Program *Generations @ Work*

For more information on the above events, consult our on-line calendar at:

<http://www.seiu517m.org/events/month/>

The monthly subscription for the E-Former is included in your membership dues payment and is intended for members in good standing of SEIU Local 517M.



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