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The Official Electronic Newsletter of SEIU Local 517M

May 2019

Experience the 517Edge!

At SEIU Local 517M, we are committed to delivering the highest level of service to our members across the State of Michigan.

As a result of that commitment, **517M is proud to announce a series of new benefits and programs that are exclusive to SEIU Local 517M members and their families.** Over the next several weeks, we will roll out these benefits through every forum possible and engage with our members like never before. The first of these exciting new benefits is access to free college through a partnership with Eastern Gateway Community College. Learn more below.

Help us spread the word on social media and in the workplace by checking out and sign up for the #517Edge on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and our website www.seiu517m.org.

SEIU Local 517M Free College Benefit

SEIU 517M FREE COLLEGE BENEFIT

How The Program Works
With the SEIU 517M Free College Benefit, individuals choosing to become members of the union are instantly eligible for unique educational advantages.

In partnership with Eastern Gateway Community College, SEIU 517M members and their families can earn an Associates Degree or Certificate online without having to pay for tuition, fees or e-books.

About Eastern Gateway
Established in 1968, Eastern Gateway Community College is a state, public, accredited institution, that offers flexible opportunities for students in all walks of life. From degree-seekers, to those climbing the career ladder, EGCC has a wide variety of degree programs, certificates and courses to best fit your academic and professional needs.

How To Get Started
To get started, visit <https://freecollege.seiunb.com>. If you need any assistance with applying or enrolling, call EGCC's toll-free number, 800-68-COLLEGE (800-682-4553).

BALANCE
Online classes let you balance life's demands, making it possible to go back to school while you continue to work.

FLEXIBILITY
You can choose either 8 week or 16 week classes, and 24/7 access means you can work on assignments anytime, day or night.

CREDIBILITY
Graduate from a respected and accredited institution with the assurance that credits and coursework are transferable to colleges and universities all over the country.

#517EDGE

With the SEIU Free College Benefit, **SEIU dues paying members and their families**, including spouses, domestic partners, children, grandchildren, and financial dependents, can earn an Associate Degree or Certificate online without paying for tuition, fees or e-books. This program is also open to SEIU retiree members and their families.

A new partnership with Eastern Gateway Community College, part of the University System of Ohio and regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, offers grants that fill the gap between any Federal, state, or employer education grants the student receives and the cost of tuition, fees, and e-books for certain online programs.

Over the past several years, many of our members have commented on the rising costs and affordability of a quality education. Those conversations, in conjunction with

the programs offered by the Service Employees International Union, have given rise to an exciting opportunity for 517M members!

[Click here for more information!](#)

Scholarship Applications Must be Submitted by May 31st!

Time is running out to submit your 2019 SEIU Local 517M Scholarship Application. Eight \$500 nonrenewable scholarships will be awarded to students based on successful completion of the application process and meeting certain criteria. Awards will be made via a lottery system from all eligible submissions.

Scholarships are awarded without regard to gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or political affiliation of the applicant. Scholarships are limited to one per household for each academic year. SEIU Local 517M offers our scholarship program to dues-paying members in good standing and their children with college or trade school expenses.

Applications must be received by May 31, 2019. The winners will be notified July 1, 2019.

For full details and the application, [please click here](#).

Volunteers Needed to Clean Veterans' Grave in Royal Oak

The Royal Oak Memorial Society is seeking volunteers to clean military veterans' grave sites before Memorial Day. Volunteers will meet, weather permitting, from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 4 and Saturday, May 11. Volunteers will meet just inside the cemetery past the pond by the American flag before cleaning the grave sites.

Volunteers need to bring rakes, clippers, gloves, rags and water to Oakview Cemetery and will clear away grass from headstones and wipe them down. The memorial society will provide garbage bags and flags. Flags will be placed on the veterans' graves on at 10 a.m. May 25, two days before Memorial Day.

Oakview Cemetery is on Rochester Road, just north of Gardenia and next to the Rite Aid drug store. Anyone with questions is asked to call 248-543-8420.

2019 SEIU Local 517M Annual Conference Registration is Now Open!

Come join us for the 2019 SEIU Local 517M Annual Conference at the Bavarian Inn (1 Covered Bridge Lane) in Frankenmuth on Saturday, July 27, 2019!



This fun-filled and informative program will begin at 9:30 am and will end at 4:00 pm.

Agenda items will include:

- Member of the Year Presentation
- Leadership Academy Presentation and Graduation
- Legislative Update

SEIU Local 517M dues paying members can click this link to [Register Now](#) no later than Monday, July 15, 2019. You may also register by using your smartphone's camera and scan the QR code on the right.



Contact Olivia Toretta with any questions at otoretta@seiu517m.org or call her at the Lansing office at 517-482-1737. Information about the Bavarian Inn is available on their website at www.BavarianInn.com

517M Works to Reverse Dangerous Policy; Secures Access to Life Saving Drugs for Forensic Scientists!

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention around 66 percent of the 63,600 drug overdose deaths in 2016 involved an opioid and in 2018 those numbers rose steadily.

Amongst SEIU 517M Forensic Scientists, the risk and potential exposure to these life-threatening opioids has become a serious concern and was raised as a major Health and Safety issue during bargaining of the 2019-2021 contract negotiations.

While you will find little disagreement between the union and the state about the risk and dangers of opioid exposure, the two parties did disagree on a departmental policy that imposed a mandatory 5-minute waiting period before employees could be administered Narcan, an opioid antagonist used to combat and reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Realizing the danger and risks of such a policy, the union pushed hard to have the policy removed and lobbied at the bargaining table, the legislature and the governor's office for the safety of 517M members.

Finally, in February, several months after our initial discussions began, the Michigan State Police eliminated the 5-minute waiting period for administration of Narcan, ensuring access to life saving drugs for members across the state.

This is one small example of what members can do when they band together and stand up for what they know is right. Due to the efforts of the union and the persistence of our membership, SEIU 517M members are now safer and more equipped to handle the potential dangers that await them in the workplace.

Supervisors at the William P. Faust Public Library of Westland Ratify First Contract!

On April 8th, 2019, the supervisory union members at the William P. Faust Public Library of Westland voted unanimously in favor of ratifying their newly negotiated Collective Bargaining Agreement. This is their first ever contract and they are now members of SEIU Local 517M!

"We are proud to say that we have an agreement with the Library Board. We are looking forward to working together building the library user base and providing the best service to the community," says Library Supervisor member Dan Wetterstrom. The Library Board approved the new Collective Bargaining Agreement at their meeting on April 1st, 2019. Congratulations and welcome to the SEIU Local 517M family!



Pictured L-R: Ishwar Laxminarayan – Library Director, Dan Wetterstrom – Library Supervisor, Kevin Karpinski – SEIU Labor Representative, James W. Higgins – Library Board President

Register Now for the SEIU 517M Scholarship Golf Outing



The Annual SEIU Local 517M Scholarship Golf Outing will be held on Friday, August 9, 2019 at Wheatfield Valley Golf Course in Williamston. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. with a shotgun start at 9:00 a.m. Last year, the event raised enough money to fund 8 scholarships for SEIU Local 517M members and their children.

The cost this year is \$80 per player and includes golf with a cart, coffee and donuts, lunch at the turn, chicken and pasta dinner, prizes and much more!!! [Download the Registration Form!](#)

Get your foursome ready and join us for a great day of golf and supporting a great cause! Contact Dave Corrie at (517) 267-2090, or e-mail at corried@seiu517m.org with any questions.

2019 Legislative Day Recap!

On April 10, 2019, thirty SEIU 517M members met in the Senate Office Building to prepare for appointments with their State Senators and Representatives. SEIU State Council Political Director



L-R: State Senator Curtis Hertel, Jr., Diane Adams, Renee Pionk, Nadia Affes, Chereese Wilkerson

Steve James provided training and documents to help support members to speak with their Legislators. Word at the Capitol is that more Bi-Partisan conversations are happening to find solutions for Michigan.

Part of our focus this year was discussion on some top issues impacting our members. These topics included; Who is SEIU 517M? Getting to know your Legislator; Road Funding and Solutions to Fix Our Roads; the Cost of outsourcing; and Revenue Sharing/School and Local Government Funding.

517M President Joey Combs, COPE Committee Members, several long time members and new active members were able to attend. Senators and their Staff were invited to join us for lunch, and just like at your office, food brings out the people.



L-R: Chyrell Sexton, Nadia Affes, Renee Pionk, Chereese Wilkerson, State Representative Tyrone Carter, Bryan Grochowski

Did you miss it? No worries... You can contact your Chapter Officers to ask about how to get involved or reach out to the COPE Committee Co-Chairs Amy Davis Comstock or Bryan Grochowski to get involved. One of the best reasons to get involved is to learn about policies that affect public employees in all of the various units of State and Local Government, and to be sure to share what is going on in your area of expertise. Make your voice heard.

Along with the leaders listed above, special thanks to staff member Dave Corrie, HSS President Janice Cosey, and member leaders Rod Jackson and Jason Jackson.

AFRAM National Conference Reflections

The SEIU AFRAM National Leadership Conference was held in Baltimore, Maryland from April 12-14, 2019. The theme of this year's conference was "When We Fight, We Win". This year, the conference was led by our own staffer Andy Johnson. Andy was one of the founders of the 517M AFRAM Chapter and is currently the National AFRAM President. SEIU Local 517M members that attended were 517M President Joey Combs, 517M Divisional Vice President and 517M AFRAM President Yolanda Johnson, 517M Divisional Vice President Carmella Johnson, HSS AFRAM President Maria Gilson, and HSS Unit member Antonia Brown.

The conference kicked off with a series of town hall discussions, covering topics such as African American Women Leading Organized Labor (our own 517M President Joey Combs was one of the Panelists), Electoral Politics & Expanding the Vote, Economic and Racial Justice, and African American Women Empowering Social Change.

Day Two started with the State of the Union which was led by SEIU International Secretary Treasurer Gerry Hudson.

Antonia Brown from the HSS Unit stated her impressions about the conference as, *"We were able to see the fight of security workers, airport workers, child care workers, and even health care workers! Seeing that I am a part of public service with the government, we don't often see these fights or struggles first hand. Just knowing that my fellow brothers and sisters are fighting the good fight all the time is heartbreaking!"*

The afternoon focused on the vision of our Union featuring SEIU International President Mary Kay Henry and the vision of this caucus which was presented by Andy Johnson.

Carmella Johnson from Flint Schools stated, *"To know that we are a part of this strong legacy of making peoples lives, especially people of color, better than generations before is priceless and will far outlive us. That's what its about."*



When We Fight, We Win, #AFRAMSTRONG

(Pictured L-R: Maria Gilson, Carmella Johnson, Joey Combs, Antonia Brown)

Calendar of Upcoming Union Events - May, 2019

May 13: Scientific and Engineering Unit Board Meeting, Lansing

May 31: Scholarship Applications Due at the SEIU Local 517M Lansing Office

For more information on the above and future events, consult our on-line calendar at:
<http://www.seiu517m.org/events/month/>

City of Battle Creek Members Host the Easter Bunny!

On Saturday, April 20th, City of Battle Creek Employees hosted a community-wide Easter egg hunt at the Leila Arboretum, in front of the Kingman Museum. There were around 200 attendees, ages ranged from under 2 to 12 years old. Although the temperature was cold and threatening to rain, SEIU members were at the park early volunteering for this event. The children enjoyed face-painting, being allowed to sit in the Fire Truck, and of course, the Easter Bunny!! City of Battle Creek Employees would like to thank the Local, and the community for their support, and the members who volunteered.



SEIU member Jim Eldridge (pictured right) was one of the volunteers who assisted in the event set-up, he also promoted support for a dog park in Battle Creek through the Friends of Calhoun County Dog Parks.



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20+ Year Region 2 Board Member Acknowledged

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to Renee Wines as a School and Local



Government Region 2 Board member. While we will miss her on the board, she stills remains part of the SEIU Local 517M family working as a Paraprofessional for Bangor Public Schools where she has worked for the last 24 years. Renee has served on the Region 2 Board for over 20 years, many as the Board Secretary. She also served on the Local 517M Executive Board as a Board Member and the Ethics Liaison. Renee's many years of dedication and service to Local 517M are greatly appreciated and her presence on the board will be missed. Thank you Renee! Renee was presented with a plaque for her service by SEIU Local 517M Secretary/Treasurer Eric Campbell.

Region 2 Board Welcomes New Board Member



SEIU Local 517M would like to welcome Lori Steele to the School and Local Government Region 2 Board. Lori joins us from Plainwell Community Schools where she has been a bus driver for the last 29 years. Lori is an active member in her community and has been a city council member for the last 20 years for the City of Plainwell and currently serves as Mayor Pro-Tem. We are excited that Lori has joined the Region 2 Board and look forward to working with her. Lori was sworn in by Region 2 Vice President/Treasurer Peter Anderson at their April meeting.

Cindy Wilson to Retire on May 17th

Cindy joined the SEIU Local 517M staff on April 1, 1991. Over these past 28 years Cindy has progressed from a secretarial role to become the office manager. Cindy brought a style and flair for her job that was all her own and impacted her co-workers and the members she interacted with.

Her dedication to the membership and creativity over the years has been greatly appreciated and has strengthened SEIU 517M as an organization. Cindy officially retires from Local 517M on Friday, May 17, 2019.

We asked Cindy if there were any parting "words of wisdom" that she wished to share, she responded....

"Twenty eight years is a long time, some would say, but when you have enjoyed what you do as much as I have, it seems like the time has flown by. From starting with working in the database and pretty much knowing the name and zip code of every single member, to being Secretary to the Executive Director as we grew to over 10,000 members, then doing the bookkeeping and now being called the Office Manager - it has been like a whirlwind. Where did the time go? I will never forget the wonderful people I have met, the late night preparations of our training conferences, the staff meetings, the board meetings, shopping for doorprizes, the purple logo, all of the reimbursement checks I have processed, the 50 minute drive to and from work every day, and the excitement of working on Michigan Avenue. So, even though I won't be in the office, the memories of the past 28 years will carry me and keep me smiling for a long time! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity to serve you. I consider it a blessing to have been a part of the SEIU Local 517M family."

While Cindy's contributions and knowledge will be missed, we wish her well as she transitions into a much deserved retirement. We thank Cindy Wilson for her many years of service!

