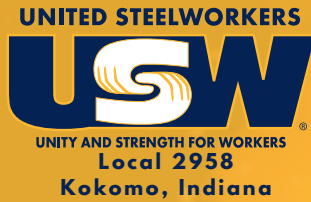


July - August 2025

Volume 13



# Forged Together

USW 2958 Newsletter



Communications Team:  
Zach Keller, Andrew Betzner, & Paul Reehling  
Contributors: Paul Wines, Kurtis Cox, & Joe Fields

## **LOCAL SOLIDARITY: 2025 SUMMER SOLIDARITY PICNIC**

*By Andrew Betzner*

The rain held off and members were met with solidarity and sunshine as Local 2958's NextGen Committee hosted this year's Summer Solidarity Picnic. The culminating event for the committee's project, six months in the making, was attended by an estimated 150 people. Entertainment included a bounce house, inflatable obstacle course, dunk tank, cornhole tournament, and food.

While there was no rain, some participants did get soaked. Officers Zach Keller, Dave Tocco, and John Beck reluctantly perched on the narrow platform above the tank in what was undoubtedly the most popular event of the day. Whereas they might have been hesitant, numerous children eagerly volunteered to take their place to enjoy a cool splash. It is worth noting that the very first pitch of the day delivered by Christi Keller, sent her husband Zach into the deep.

# SUMMER SOLIDARITY PICNIC

Continued

A total of 5 teams participated in the cornhole tournament. The first round saw tough competition between the team of Johnny Roberts and his daughter, against Brandi Harmon and Max. Ultimately Brandi and Max would prevail and go on to win the tournament. In lieu of proclaiming "We're going to Disney World!" the team enthusiastically said, "Does this mean we get to be in the newsletter?" Yes, yes it does.

Curious children of the community timidly approached and offered an enthusiastic smile upon learning that they could join in the celebration. Patrons of the Kokomo Rescue Mission benefited from the event, as well. Unused burgers, hotdogs, and buns were donated and will provide over 50 meals to members of our community in need.

This project was more than just a chance to provide value and entertainment for the membership. NextGen'ers practiced disseminating information such as gate pamphleting, social media use, and graphic design. They made essential connections with people in different departments and opposite sides of the road. Trust was formed between members and

problem solving skills were put to the test. No class or lecture can substitute for the real world experience NextGen has provided.

The committee would like to thank everyone who attended, volunteered on the day of the event, helped sell tickets, or bought a raffle ticket to help with funding. Special thanks also goes out to Kokomo Fire Department for filling the dunk tank, Coca-Cola of Kokomo for donating drinks, and Unlimited Chiropractic on North Washington for donating gift cards for the raffle.

A big thank you also goes out to the NextGen Committee. Members of the committee donated countless unpaid hours, sacrificed lunch breaks, and time with family on the weekends to ensure its success. It is worth noting almost the entirety of the picnic was paid for by their fundraising. No one person could have accomplished this by themselves. It took the whole union coming together. We truly are better when we all work together.



Max & Brandi - Winners of the Cornhole Tournament



# 2025 SUMMER PICNIC

# — HAPPY — Retirement



25 YEARS



20 YEARS



20 YEARS - EFFECTIVE 8/1

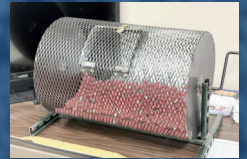


20 YEARS - EFFECTIVE 8/1



## Raffle Results

May -  
**Joe Alexander**  
*(not present, prize  
rolled over)*



**THE  
WINNER**

June -  
**Jack Workman -**  
**Winner of \$599**  
**Gift Card**

## Local Solidarity: The Man (or Woman) in the Mirror

By Andrew Betzner

Michael Jackson was known as the King of Pop. Celebrated not only for his singing ability and exceptional dance moves, but his often motivational lyrics. I can't think of a more inspiring line than "If you wanna make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change" from his 1987 hit "Man in the Mirror." His message is simple, look at yourself.

## THE MAN (OR WOMAN) IN THE MIRROR

Continued

Everyone can make a difference in this world, and the best place to start is within oneself. While not everyone wants to or is ready to run for a union position everyone can strive to become a better union activist.

Here is a list of small changes anyone can start with today to create the union they want for tomorrow:

### Just show up

Yes, it really is as simple as just showing up. Show up to that NextGen or Women of Steel meeting. Participating in that t-shirt design contest or voting in that Awards contest. An incredible amount of time goes into these things. Nothing is more demoralizing than to dedicate all that energy and it all goes to waste. On the flip side, a successful event such as last year's Christmas gathering emboldened others to do more and start planning a Summer event. Some of these undertakings, such as a design competition, are only fun if you get a good turn out. The more the merrier definitely applies when it comes to union activities.

### Put down the phone and pick up a conversation

Go out of your way to get to know the people around you. These are the ones you're spending most of your waking hours with. A good paying union job like this doesn't have a lot of turn over. You might be spending the next 10, 20, 30+ years with some of these individuals. Don't just focus on your small group of friends. I encourage you to reach out to those different from you, or that new hire who's struggling to find his tribe.

### Go to the monthly union meetings

Seriously, go to the f\*\*\*\*\* meetings.

### Never let someone go it alone

It can be intimidating challenging authority, even for your Committeeperson. I was a union official at my last job. There were times a group of people would come to me with a legitimate problem. Not always a greivable one, but definitely one we could win if enough of us spoke up.

The time would come and the boss would show up. I'd plead our case and people would scatter or it would be crickets from those who stayed. Have your brothers' back. If someone says they're going to talk to the boss, tell them you're coming with them. If it's not your personal problem make it one cause an attack on one is an attack on all.

### Read your contract

Although they may sometimes act it, your supervisor is not a subject matter expert on our contract. If you haven't fully read or recently reviewed it, chances are neither are you. Don't try taking someones word for what's in there, either. I can't count how many times I've heard someone swear up and down that something is in that book and find that they've misquoted or tried wishing it into existence. "Do your own research" or whatever the internet trolls keep repeating.

This is by no means a comprehensive list of all the small steps one could take to change themselves and make our union and our work life better. As you're going about your workday try implementing just one or two of these tips and "make the change." As the late MJ would say, "shamone!"

## P.O.L.I.T.E: Please Omit Loud, Intense Talks Entirely

By Zach Keller

Work is hard enough already, why add volatile discussions to the mix? Few topics generate such passionate discussion as politics and religion. Although these conversations might seem harmless, they can quickly become sources of tension, distraction, and even workplace discord. I know, I've seen it firsthand lately and maybe been involved in one or two of them before. Avoiding these discussions isn't just about dodging contentious encounters, it's about fostering a productive and harmonious workplace environment.

### • It Creates Unnecessary Tension

People hold deep, personal political and religious convictions. Even a casual conversation can escalate into an argument in seconds, leaving coworkers resentful, alienated, or frustrated. In a work environment where collaboration is critical, especially to the safety of a crew, stirring up tension over personal perspectives simply isn't worth it.

### • It Distracts from Workplace Safety

Time spent debating elections, policies, or religious beliefs is time not spent paying attention to your surroundings. Even when discussions remain respectful, they can divert attention, slow down reactions, and create an environment where personal opinions overshadow job responsibilities, up to and including safety standards.



• **It Can Strain Relationships**

Coworkers don't need to agree on everything to work well together. However, constant discussions about divisive topics can make collaboration more difficult. Some of us spend more time at work than at home. Strong working relationships are built on shared goals and mutual respect, not on political or religious alignment.

• **It's Rarely a Productive Conversation**

Few people change their political or religious views because of a workplace discussion. More often than not, these conversations lead to frustration rather than meaningful understanding. To

maintain a cooperative and respectful work environment, steering clear of sensitive topics is often the best approach.

Instead of discussing politics and religion at work, focus on common interests, whether it's industry trends, weekend plans, or hobbies. If a conversation starts veering into controversial territory, a simple redirection like, "Let's save that for happy hour," can help keep the environment jovial and friendly.

At the end of the day, we're all here to get the job done and get along while doing it. Keeping politics and religion out of workplace conversations promotes a more respectful, productive, and drama-free environment.

**LOCAL 2958 CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS**



**METAL  
MAYHEM**

**LOCAL  
2958'S  
EDITORIAL  
CARTOON  
FEATURE**



# Kids' Coloring Contest Winners!!

Forged Together is proud to announce this year's coloring contest winners: Brynlee (Nick Coffman WG1) age 7+, and Harper (Brandi Harmon WG5) age 1-6! Thanks goes out to all who participated by submitting their colorful and creative art work!

## Winner Age 1-6



Harper Age 5 (Brandi Harmon WG5)

## Winner Age 7+



Brynlee Age 7 (Nick Coffman WG1)

## Honorable Mentions



Addaley Age 10 (Troy Johns WG8)



Aria Age 7 (Lisa Garber WG11)



Alexis Age 9 (Jennifer Bess Local Secretary)



Holden Age 7 (Andrew Betzner WG2)



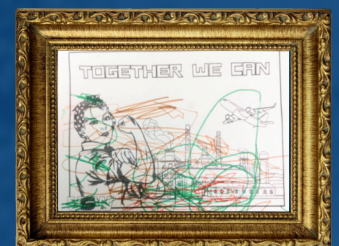
Alyvia Age 3 (Nick Coffman WG1)



Bently Age 8 (Brandi Harmon WG5)



Jacob Age 7 (Eric Gibson WG2)



Kreed Age 2 (Josh Keiter WG2)



Harper (Winner of age 1-6 age bracket) enjoying her prizes!!

# Local 2958 Celebrates Class of 2025



Sanae Geyton  
Kokomo High School  
Daughter of Ranisha Holland  
- WG5



Emerson R. Jackson  
Marion High School  
(To Attend Butler University)  
Daughter of Willie Jackson - WG5



Kody Musgrave  
Western High School  
(Welding)  
Son of Jamie Musgrave - WG8



Micah Irwin  
Taylor High School  
(Music Education)  
Son of Justin Irwin - WG1

## CONGRATULATIONS GRADS!

Congratulations to the families of our members on the graduation of your loved ones from school this year! This milestone reflects your unwavering support, encouragement, and guidance throughout their academic journey. Your dedication to their success has played a crucial role in shaping their achievements. As they step into a new phase of life, your continued support will be instrumental. Here's to celebrating this momentous occasion and wishing your families all the happiness and success ahead!



Lydia Keiter  
Northwestern High School  
(To Attend Trine University)  
Daughter of Josh Keiter - WG2



Addison LaFever  
Ball State (Art Education)  
Step-Daughter of Jeremy  
Conaway - WG9



Malorey White  
Ball State (Mathematical  
Economics)  
Daughter of Jamie White - WG1

# Local 2958 Member Highlight

Lisa Bryant ~ Member Since 2022

## Tell us a little about yourself? What are your passions, and interests outside of the job?

"When I am not at work I love being with my children (adults) and friends. Game nights are the best. Working 2nd shift limits my opportunities for that though. I also love to read and spend time outside. I am a fair weather girl - yard work, power washing, walking the dogs, naps in my hammock..."

## What is your favorite thing about your local community and how do you like to contribute or give back?

"My biggest involvement with local community would be my church family. I attend Crossroads - Downtown Campus. I have contributed by helping with the youth group, serving in the nursery/children's church area, and leading an adult small group Bible study."

## If your life were a movie, which actor would play you, and what would the title be?

"This question really made me think! Julia Roberts - "I'll Do it Myself"  
Other ideas: "But Wait - There's More", "Underestimate Me", "Kindness is Not Weakness", and "Rolling With It". I also thought maybe Sandra Bullock - "Grace Abounds" - a silly play on her movie "Hope Floats".

## What did you like most about the District 7 Summer School program at the University of Illinois and what would you say to those considering going?

"I really enjoyed the Summer School experience. I am excited to be going back the first week of June. My class was an introduction to the union so I learned the basics of dues, grievances, and the ins and outs of how we function. I got to know a handful of 2958 brothers and sisters on a more personal level. I met brothers and sisters from the far reaches of District 7 and created friendships that extended beyond that week. Considering going? I say do it!"

## You're involved in ERT. What's that like?

"This is a volunteer opportunity that I am blessed to be part of. We have certification through the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. A gentleman named Bill comes for a week to do our training in emergency medical response. At the end of the week we have to pass 6 or 7 practical exams plus a written test. This is something that cannot be taken away - knowledge! Our team finished a week long course of HAZMAT training in May. Our team is growing in numbers and capabilities every time we meet. There are open spots if anyone is interested in joining."

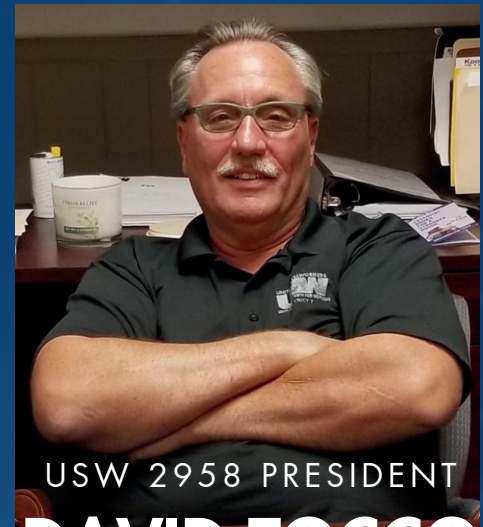
## What advice would you give to the newer members of our union?

"Get involved! The union is a collective voice - the best way to make yours heard is to come to the meetings. Get to know who is in charge of the goings on and go with them. Be positive and encouraging, ask questions, and become part of the voice."



## YOUR LOCAL OFFICERS & OFFICIALS

VICE-PRESIDENT - STEVE LEMING  
FINANCIAL SECRETARY - ROBERT CRULL  
TREASURER - DAVE HUNT  
RECORDING SECRETARY - ZACH KELLER  
GUIDE - TROY JOHNS  
OUTSIDE GUARD - JOHN BECK  
INSIDE GUARD - WILLIE JACKSON  
TRUSTEE - BUD LABIG  
TRUSTEE - KATT MCNEIL  
TRUSTEE - JIM ELLIOTT



USW 2958 PRESIDENT  
**DAVID TOCCO**

## YOUR LOCAL OFFICERS & OFFICIALS

EAP REPRESENTATIVE - KELLY SILVERS, FIRST SHIFT  
EAP REPRESENTATIVE - DANNY SHELTON, THIRD SHIFT  
EAP REPRESENTATIVE - DAVID TOCCO, FIRST SHIFT  
EAP REPRESENTATIVE - JIM ELLIOTT, FIRST SHIFT  
EAP REPRESENTATIVE - ERIC HAINLEN, THIRD SHIFT  
EAP REPRESENTATIVE - STEVE LEMING, FIRST SHIFT  
EAP REPRESENTATIVE - ERIC GIBSON, SECOND SHIFT  
EAP REPRESENTATIVE - LISA BRYANT, SECOND SHIFT  
EAP REPRESENTATIVE - BRAYDEN MOTE, THIRD SHIFT

Continued

HUMAN RIGHTS CHAIR - WILLIE JACKSON, FIRST SHIFT  
HUMAN RIGHTS ASSISTANT - HENRY YOUNG, SECOND SHIFT  
RAPID RESPONSE COORDINATOR, JIM ELLIOTT, FIRST SHIFT  
SAFETY & HEALTH CHAIR - KELVIN VAZQUEZ, FIRST SHIFT  
SAFETY & HEALTH (ALT) - JIM RADER, FIRST SHIFT  
SAFETY & HEALTH - DENNIS TUCKER, SECOND SHIFT  
SAFETY & HEALTH (ALT) - KEVIN SMITH, SECOND SHIFT  
SAFETY & HEALTH - DANNY SHELTON, THIRD SHIFT  
CONTRACTING OUT CHAIR - SCOTT PUSLIPHER, FIRST SHIFT  
CONTRACTING OUT ASST. - KEVIN SMITH, SECOND SHIFT  
SKILLED TRADES CHAIR - JOHN BECK, FIRST SHIFT  
SKILLED TRADES COMMITTEE - DENVER REEVES, FIRST SHIFT

AGC- Brandon Thomas WG 1 - Department 170; 1st shift  
ALT - Mason Ingram WG 1 - Department 170; 2nd shift  
ASSISTANT- Jeremy Ingold WG 1 - Department 170; 3rd shift  
ASSISTANT -Johnnie Roberts WG 1 - Department 170; 1st shift

AGC- Eric Gibson WG 2 - Department 190; 2nd shift  
ASSISTANT - Alvah Copeland WG 2 - Department 190; 1st shift  
ASSISTANT - Brandon Phelps - WG 2 Department 190; 3rd shift

AGC- Kasey Mitchell WG 3 - Department 145; 1st shift

AGC- Michael Wright WG 4 - Department 143; 1st shift  
ASSISTANT- Craig Musgrave WG 4 - Department 143

AGC- Scott Pulsipher WG 5A - Department 154; 1st shift  
ALT - Zach Keller WG 5A - Department 154; 1st shift

AGC - Austin Thorpe WG 5B - Department 168; 3rd shift  
ASSISTANT- Trey Shane WG 5B - Department 168; 1st shift  
ASSISTANT- Brandi Harmon WG 5B; Department 168; 2nd shift

AGC- Matt Mince WG 6 - Department 172; 1st shift  
ALT- Marion 'Bud' Labig WG 6 - Department 172; 1st shift  
ASSISTANT- Mike Barker WG 6 - Department 172; 1st shift

AGC- Bryan Meagher WG 8 - Department 427; first shift  
ASSISTANT- Craig Bambrough WG 8 - Department 427; 3rd shift  
ASSISTANT- Jim Elliott WG 8 - Department 427; 1st shift

AGC- Henry Young WG 9, 10 - Department 447; 3rd shift  
ASSISTANT- Rob Ooley WG 9, 10 - Department 447; 3rd shift

AGC- Alexa Hartley WG 11 - Department 297; 1st shift  
ASST- Adam Henderson WG 11 - Department 297; 1st shift

AGC- Kacey Gibson WG 13 - Department 317; 1st shift

*Area Grievance Committeepersons*

# Smoke 'em If You Got 'em

By Paul Reehling



## Union History Spotlight

Unions represent lots of different laborers in lots of different fields. Each striving to give their members a better work environment through better hours, better pay, job protection, and anything else that the members determine may be needed. Cigar makers are just another work group that wanted their way of life protected.

The first Cigar Makers Union was formed in Baltimore, Maryland in 1851. The craftsmen wanted to protect themselves from immigrants who would work for a lower amount. A couple of years later, the New York cigarmakers' union was formed. This union grew to about 180 members before dissolving after an unsuccessful strike. Unionizing cigar makers at the time was difficult. Most of these craftsmen were independent workers. They would buy the materials they needed and roll cigars in their own houses.

The Civil War would change this. The federal government needed more funds and instituted a revenue tax on cigars as well as permits for employers and employees. This forced cigar makers to have an actual place of business and individual cigar makers had to find employment instead of working for themselves. This helped push cigar makers into successfully unionizing.

In 1863, cigar makers from all over sent delegates to a convention in Philadelphia; these delegates started the formation of the National Union of Cigar Makers of America. In 1867 they changed their name to the Journeymen Cigar Makers International Union (CMIU). This union had several struggles as it tried to grow. Low-cost laborers from overseas, as well as new ways to make cigars, like molds instead of the traditional hand rolling.

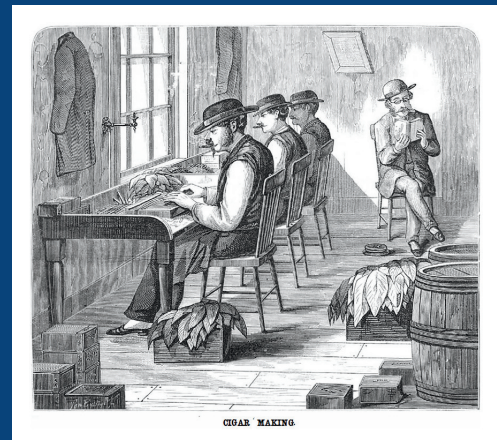
The CMIU had a couple of notable accomplishments, the first of which, they were able to get the board of health involved and looking into the working environments of cigar companies in New York. These companies had to make changes to improve these working conditions. Another notable accomplishment, in 1867 they became one of only 2 national unions to accept women as members.

In order to tell the difference between union and non-union cigars, the CMIU applied blue labels to their boxes noting them as union made and also what year they were produced.

The CMIU continued to grow to 53,000 in 1916 but this was the most they ever had. Soon after this cigarettes started to become more popular, and the new ways to make cigars plus the use of unskilled cigar makers, continued to dwindle their numbers down. After World War II, most of the US cigar production moved to Central America and South America. This furthered the decline of the CMIU. In 1974, with only 2000 members remaining, the CMIU voted to merge with the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union.

For anyone looking to smoke a union-made cigar today, you can get the "Union Break" made by Dapper Cigar Co. This company is US-owned, but the cigars are made in Nicaragua. There are a couple of companies in the US that still have union ties as well. J.C. Newman Cigar Co., My Father Cigars, and Drew Estate, but you would have to check the boxes to look for a union label to be sure.

Unions have been an integral part of our history, and learning about this history is important. Whatever industry they are in, unions are established to help improve work environments, as well as help improve our quality of life. Even a small union like the CMIU is one we should look at and acknowledge as an important part of our history as American workers.



# Shop Floor Treasure Mapping

By Andrew Betzner

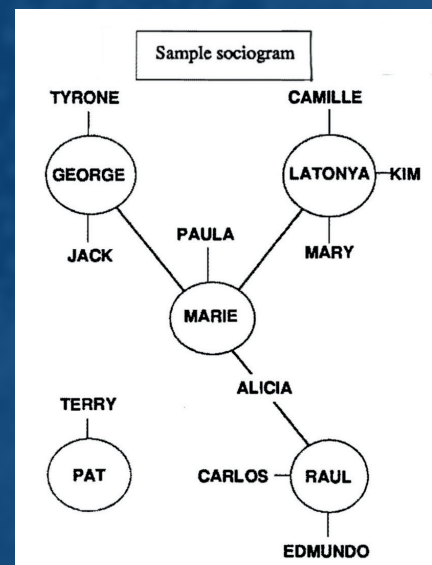
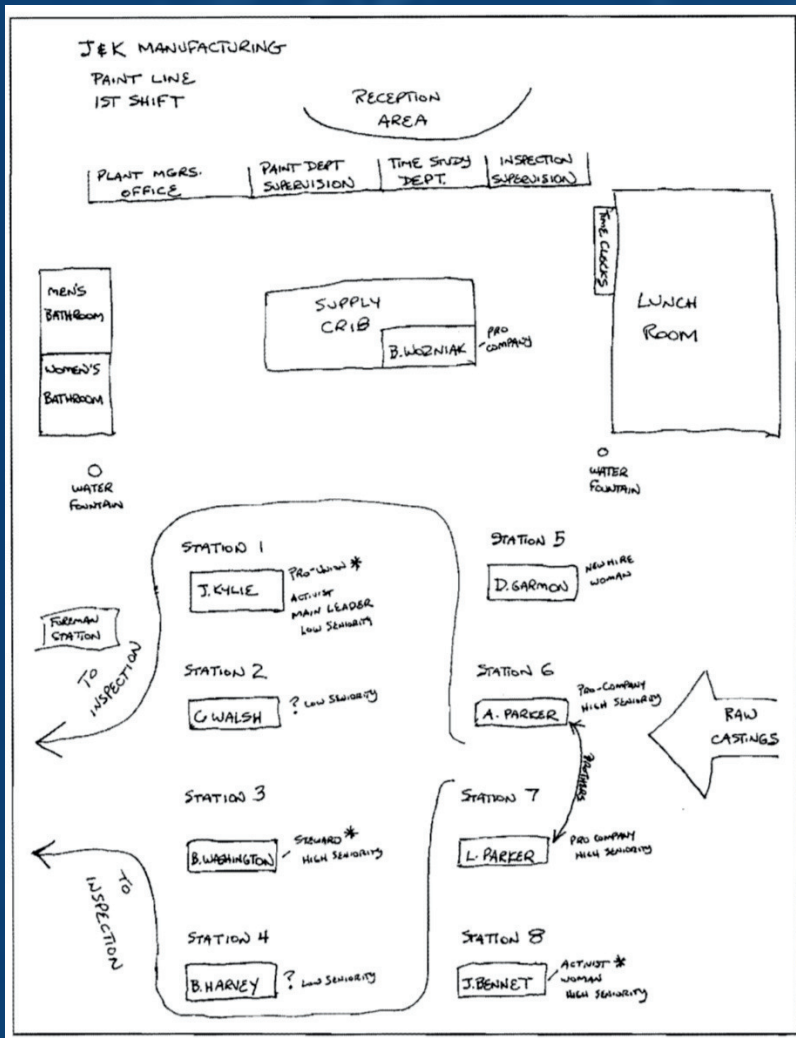
There is a reason it's called "organized labor." The ability to work together and effectively is the source of union power. Organizing isn't done solely at International in Pittsburgh, or the Local President's office on Main Street. The most effective organizing happens on the shop floor. A good first step for not only committee people, but any activist trying to enact change, is workplace mapping and sociograms.

A workplace map would closely resemble a blueprint of a work area. It could be one line, one building, or an entire company. You would typically include things such as work stations, breakrooms, bathrooms, and where supervisors offices are located. Be sure to include areas where people typically congregate like water fountains, supply cabinets, or vending machines. Arrows of how the product flows may be helpful. Include not only the names of who works where, but any other relevant information such as high/low seniority, and if they are union friendly, or someone not to be trusted.

This information can be useful when investigating a grievance, identifying safety hazards, or how workplace action can be tailored to be most effective. It provides clues on where to hand out flyers, or post information on an upcoming event. Besides providing critical information to you, it can be easily handed off to someone else wanting to take action, or combined with other area maps to create a better understanding of the workplace as a whole.

While a workplace map provides information on daily operations and location, a sociogram gives insight on social groupings. They are more abstract, like a spider web, where one point represents a person with lines between them as connections. Some groups may be connected to others with a common member, while others stand alone. Be sure to map out any solo members who don't belong to any particular group. When making sociograms, it's important to consider formal and informal groupings of people. Examples of formal would be everyone on the A&K line, or the S&S, while informal would be social groups, or "cliques." Within each grouping type there are leaders. Does your line have a "Team Leader?" Who do people congregate around and hold influence over others? These are the people you might identify as group leaders. When looking to take workplace action, these are the ones who can get information out quickly and persuade others to act. They may also be a source of information on gauging temperature, and how to better meet that group's needs and concerns.

Workplace maps and sociograms can be made as simple or as complex to fit your needs. Not only can they help you, but they can provide information to others you may need to bring into the fold. Becoming organized on the workings of your shop floor provides you with knowledge, and knowledge is power. Take the small step today in creating these organizing tools and be ready before you need to take action.



# One Man, One Hundred Miles

By Andrew Betzner

On May 18th, 2958's own Juan "Carlos" Rodriguez of Work Group 2 competed in the KEYS100 ultramarathon, a 100-mile running race from Key Largo to Key West, Florida. Carlos was one of 113 runners to cross the finish line from an original field of 233 participants. Of those who finished, he placed 40th with a time of 24 hrs, 27 minutes, and 20 seconds.

While this was Carlos's first attempt at the KEYS100, it was not his first ultramarathon. Last year he completed the 50-mile event at the same location, clocking in at 12 hrs 21 min 04 seconds, good enough for 10th overall and 1st in his age group. When asked what lessons he learned from this previous race, he mentioned, "The sun is hot -stay hydrated," likely due to the 104° temperature the race took place in. He also expressed the importance to "run your race, forget about the clock and forget about others."

Carlos faced adversity with a knee injury going into the race this year. While he and his team expected there to be pain, around the 40 mile mark it began to affect him greatly. "Funny as it seems, like I would come in to replenish on fluids and what not, just standing still or even worse sitting for just a quick change of socks, just to start again

I would almost run like Forrest Gump with leg braces. After maybe 20 yards, my knee would loosen up."

The race would take a toll on Carlos's body. Afterwards, his knee swelled to the size of a cantaloupe and left his left foot with two dead toenails. For Carlos, it was more than worth it to prove to his kids and everyone at his local YMCA that through hard work and perseverance, anything can be achieved. Carlos says to anyone who may be interested in getting into ultra-distance running to start with something just beyond your comfort zone and "JUST DO IT." "Win or lose, you will be a winner because you started and competed in a race. You know now what it takes to improve."

Carlos learned a lot about himself through this race. "I found my mind is so much stronger to be able to push past the physical pain and exhaustion. We're all capable of this, every one of us, just how bad are you willing to change for this chance." Where Carlos goes from here is uncertain, but he's interested in triathlons and the Ironman. In the fall, he is competing in the "Last Man Standing" - a race where participants must complete 4 miles every hour until there is only one runner left. Carlos says he will participate in the KEYS100 next year, shooting for sub 22 hours.



We are looking for better ways to communicate happenings within our local, but also help build community amongst our members. We hope you find the content of the newsletter worth reading, and we are always looking for feedback. If anyone has general questions, articles they would like to submit, hobbies they want to highlight, comments, ideas of topics to cover, side hustles you want to promote, questions for officers, useful information, or even to volunteer, e-mail us at: [usw2958news@gmail.com](mailto:usw2958news@gmail.com)



**Forged Together  
Newsletter Feedback**

Scan to give us valuable feedback