

Stepping UP

ONE STRONG, UNITED VOICE
FOR MINNESOTA'S WORKERS

American Federation
of State, County
and Municipal
Employees, AFL-CIO

Volume 9, No. 2
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Defending the Constitution—

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Ramsey County public defender Edith Brown, a member of Local 8, talks over charges with a client.



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Local 1842's Janos McGhie coordinates Createch and other innovative programs that are models for successful libraries and partnerships.

Serving Communities in New Ways



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Local 599's Marilyn Dueschle is one of the security cooks at St. Cloud Correctional Facility who shows how to effectively in-source food service at state prisons.

Prison Locals Fight Privatized Vendors

Let's Move Minnesota in 2014!



AFSCME has joined Move MN, a growing coalition of more than 150 organizations dedicated to making transportation a priority in 2014.

Minnesota has an urgent transportation problem that's making it difficult for us to get to our next destination, whether that's work, school, play, or family.

Transportation is about opportunity for all, no matter who you are or where you live. Our farmers need sturdy bridges to get their products to market. Our businesses require safe highways to quickly move their goods. Our workers need plowed roads and better public transit to get to work. Our seniors need a ride to live independently. Our families need better bike and pedestrian routes that connect them to their schools, jobs, and recreation.

Crumbling infrastructure, shrinking workforce

There's no way our economy can grow, prosper, and compete on crumbling infrastructure that takes a beating from our winter climate. Here are some facts that scream urgency:

- Half of our roads and bridges are more than 40 years old and in poor condition. Nearly 2.5 million commuters drive across a structurally deficient bridge every day.
- The state transportation department has 2,000 fewer maintenance workers than it did a decade ago. With MnDOT's shrinking workforce, it's impossible to keep up with our aging infrastructure. Much of Minnesota's infrastructure was built in a short span of years – in the 1960s and '70s – so our roads and bridges are all wearing out at the same time. It's like a circulatory system that can no longer pump.
- Transportation employs 65,000 workers in Minnesota, including 2,700 AFSCME members who maintain and repair state highways and bridges, plus hundreds of other AFSCME members who pave and plow city roads. Our members see the underbellies of our bridges, the poor pavement on our roads, and potholes that could swallow a car. Maybe the public can't yet see the deterioration that AFSCME members see every day, but that doesn't make it any less dangerous.

Everyone deserves a ride

Workers can save up to \$8,000 a year if they can walk, bike or ride transit to work – instead of driving alone. Unfortunately, only 10 percent of jobs in the metro area are easy to get to by bus or train. In Greater Minnesota, public transit is severely limited.



Learn more:
visit movemn.org

Our aging population and people with disabilities need adequate bus service to live independently. Demand is also exploding for bike and pedestrian routes that provide healthy, affordable, environmentally friendly choices for getting around.

2014: The year to fund transportation

Minnesota has only 60 percent of the revenue it needs for roads, bridges, and transit. Each year we delay Minnesota's urgent transportation needs, the cost to taxpayers increases.

Move MN has proposed a funding package that comprehensively addresses roads, bridges, transit, and bike and pedestrian connections. It fairly balances the needs of Greater Minnesota and the metro, urban and suburban communities, and the East and West metro. It's a long-term, sustainable solution with funding dedicated to transportation.

Our funding package is just the beginning of the discussion. To fund roads and bridges, the Move MN proposal includes a sales tax on leased vehicles and wholesale oil distributors. A three-quarter cent increase in the seven-county metro sales tax would expand current city and suburban transit systems. A portion of that sales-tax revenue would add bike and pedestrian connections in the metro; and flexible federal dollars would be allocated for bike and pedestrian connections in other parts of the state.

Please urge your state legislators to make transportation a priority this year. Our cherished quality of life and Minnesota's economic vitality depend on safe roads and bridges, and easy access to public transit in communities where people can bike and walk.

Eliot Seide
Executive director



AFSCME Council 5 is a union of 43,000 workers who provide the vital services that make Minnesota happen. We advocate for excellence in public services, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all workers.

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(elected October 2012)

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Libraries create better ideas to serve their communities

Innovative programs for teens are doing more than help St. Paul library branches become stronger parts of their communities. They're showing:

- How to use public resources more effectively
- How public libraries remain vital beyond the era of books
- How public and private agencies are working together to close opportunity gaps in society
- How front-line public workers can create success if they get the freedom and support to do so

"I don't think libraries were ever about being warehouses of books," says Janos McGhie. "Libraries exist for the community."

McGhie, a Local 1842 member, is coordinator for Createch, one of the leading examples of cutting-edge programming.

Bridging the digital divide

Createch is a weekly program at four St. Paul libraries. It gives tweens and teens a huge range of opportunities to play, create, and learn – "using technology to do something expressive," in the words of Alaina Kozma, a Local 1842 member who oversees Createch at the Arlington Hills branch.

The libraries set aside a dedicated time and space for teens to shoot video or still photography; record and edit musical clips on laptop computers; play video, Wii and X-Box games; surf the internet; or just hang out. Not all activities rely on technology – the kids can also write poetry or learn to sew, for example – but access to technology and a space of their own are key, Kozma says.

"We want to be a space where people can come and learn about all the media available to them." That's especially important for kids who don't have internet access, computers, tablets, or sophisticated software at home, she says. "The information landscape has completely changed. It's not just about receiving information, but taking it and sharing it.

"That is an opportunity that is readily available for some people – but for other people, not so much."

The evolution of libraries

McGhie believes that providing the opportunity to dabble with technology is a big piece of libraries' future. In the past – when libraries expanded from books to movies, music,



Local 1842's Alaina Kozma hands out an iPad during a Createch session at the Arlington Hills library.



Local 1842's Janos McGhie passes out headphones to teens attending Library After Dark.

story times, guest speakers, classes, concerts, computers, and internet, he says – it was always about providing resources that community members could not easily obtain on their own.

He thinks the next evolution is to provide "maker space." That means letting people sample high-end software, hardware, and other creative tools.

In fact, Kozma says, when the new Arlington Hills building opens in April, it will have its own technology room. That might include a dedicated computer connected to 3D printers in a lab at nearby Johnson High School.

Flexibility leads to success

Createch grew out of an occasional program run by the Science Museum of Minnesota. The original focus – computer animation – didn't go over so well. But with the more expansive and flexible structure fostered by McGhie, Kozma, and others, the partnership expanded to include the museum, libraries, St. Paul parks, and SPNN, the public-access cable channel that specializes in teaching audio and video skills.

"It's really important to be nimble," Kozma says. "That's kind of hard for a government organization."

Getting started is "vastly easier than you think it is," McGhie says. "It was just a matter of finding willing staff and having support of our superiors to do it." And the numbers speak for themselves, he says.

Arlington Hills routinely attracts 30 participants – mostly on the younger end of the teen spectrum – while Rice Street typically attracts 40. "For a teen program at a library, we're usually thrilled if there's five," McGhie says. "It's been phenomenal."

The whole project is part of larger, cooperative line-up of after-school youth activities that link St. Paul's public schools, parks, and libraries. Activities are coordinated and publicized by the school district's Sprockets website. ■



Kao Choua Vue, youth projects coordinator with SPNN, works with a Createch participant to write a song using the Garage Band software.

Partners find new ways to collaborate, cooperate

The kind of collaboration and flexibility demonstrated by Createch has morphed in other directions, too. For example, Createch at the Rice Street Library actually takes place at the Teen Zone, a rec center a block away. The library and Teen Zone also team up on "Library After Dark," a pilot program in which the library opens only to teens after 8 p.m. every Monday.

Library After Dark is a way for teens "to experience the library on their own terms," says Rice Street's Janos McGhie. Everybody realizes that "normal teen behavior is vilified in a library setting," he says. Teens can be loud, like to hang in groups, cluster at the same computer, and do other things "that are against most library rules. So teens are just frozen out of this environment."

A safe space of their own

With Library After Dark, he says, all those barriers become unnecessary. "There's no one else to bother. They can act normally. They can see staff as positive toward them. They can get used to being in a library, of thinking of a library as a place where they are welcome."

"You can be loud and be kind of rambunctious, and that's accepted and embraced," says Alaina Kozma, who blends the Createch and Library After Dark concepts at Arlington Hills. "You can meet other people in your neighborhood and have a good time." And that, she says, builds community.

"At a basic level, but a profound level, this is a safe space," McGhie says. "It's not home. It's not school. Some kids come from tough domestic situations. They don't want to be at home, and they're smart enough not to be on the streets. These are kids that want to do something constructive."

Partnering with the trained youth workers at the Teen Zone has led to activities that are "astonishingly trouble-free," McGhie says. The Teen Zone philosophy is "radical trust. Expect them to do the right thing. Hold them accountable when they slip up."

Bending the time-space continuum

Library After Dark also solves a practical challenge. Many libraries want more youth programming, but don't have extra space. With Library After Dark, McGhie says, instead of waiting to build a bigger library, "you take the existing space and harness this fourth dimension: time. Just recognize this building is here 24 hours a day, and the library is only open for a fraction of that, really. So take advantage of the existing space, and just use it at a different time than everyone else. It just uses city resources in a creative way."

Prison locals fight privatized food service

Council 5 corrections locals are mobilizing to end Minnesota's outsourcing of food services in state prisons. Their push goes beyond fighting privatization. Local officers say outside vendors:

- Lack the specialized training necessary to properly supervise the dozens of offenders who work in prison kitchens
- Run out of food too frequently
- Sometimes serve food that is spoiled or otherwise inedible

Problems in the kitchen spark safety and security issues throughout the prison. "If you and I get a bad meal at McDonald's, we complain," says Mike Keapproth, president of Local 915 at Oak Park Heights. "Here, it's 100 complaints, and it turns pretty ugly pretty fast. Inmates have a way of turning little things into big things in a hurry."

"We get 70 trays sent to the segregation unit every day," says Paul Gammel, president of Local 1539 at Rush City. "Every day, there's at least one discrepancy. To you and I, it's not a big deal. You fix it. But guys in segregation feel it's purposeful, that it has intent, that somebody did it to them."

Vendor contract expires in June

AFSCME corrections officers are documenting problems with outsourced food in the chow halls and the meal carts that get delivered to cells. They're working with commissioner Tom Roy and legislators to end outsourcing when the current contract expires this June.

"Companies want to make as much profit as they can. That's what companies do," Gammel says. "But I don't think it's desirable to do it for a profit in an operation that depends on security."

Aviands Food and Service Management is the latest in a line of outside vendors. The Department of Corrections outsourced its first kitchen in 1975, and expanded to other facilities through the 1980s and 1990s.

Aviands now serves more than 8,000 inmates at eight state prisons. The Roseville-based company has the contract for every adult prison except Red Wing and St. Cloud. The contract includes 64 jobs that could be brought in-house.

Food gets offenders riled up

The state pays Aviands roughly \$1.05 per inmate per day. That has to cover food and supplies, salaries for workers, overhead – and still leave a profit, union officers point out. It's no surprise, they say, if a vendor cuts corners to cut costs.

AFSCME corrections officers have tracked all sorts of cases where the vendor ran out of food while dozens of inmates still hadn't eaten, where some inmates got food that others didn't, or where the vendor ran out of vital supplies.

As corrections officers point out, they're the ones who deal with fallout. "In a prison, one person, one mistake, becomes a big deal," says Oak Park Heights' Keapproth. "Then they turn on staff, and it becomes 2 on 52."

"Offenders are difficult to deal with sometimes, especially with their essentials," says Rush City's Gammel. "Their meal is one of their essentials."

Food quality is questionable

Quantity of food isn't the only issue. So is quality. Officers from different prisons report that vendors used milk that was past its expiration date, served moldy food, served food that sat unheated or unrefrigerated for hours, or served food that was clearly burnt or undercooked.

Because some inmates work in the kitchen, they know what's going on, and word spreads. "It breaks down trust in the facility," Gammel says.

In Moose Lake, the vendor ran out of chicken. So it gave offenders five ice cream sandwiches instead.



Local 599's Kelly Brown runs the in-house bakery at St. Cloud Correctional Facility.



Local 599's Jim Sheeley runs St. Cloud's butcher shop.

St. Cloud shows a different way

Bringing food service back in-house would re-establish the position of "security cooks" as state employees, Keapproth says. Security cooks are kitchen supervisors trained specifically to work in a risky environment with offenders.

"Security cooks were very well respected members of the team," Keapproth says. "They were trained in security, in inmate behavior. They could read inmates, tell us when inmates weren't getting along. They would share information."

St. Cloud is the rare state prison where food service is not outsourced to a for-profit corporation. All staff, including security cooks, are state workers, says Randy Ramler, president of Local 599.

Many also have backgrounds in food service, Ramler says. That makes them doubly qualified to manage the prison's kitchen, bakery, butcher shop, and other food operations.

"The cooks are very good at overseeing offenders, and the product they put out is very good," he says. In addition, "They keep the lines stocked. We rarely run out."

Outside staff bring higher risks

At other prisons, however, corrections officers must keep an eye not just on offenders, but on vendor staff as well. Food service staff have been caught bringing in contraband and implicated in other inappropriate behavior. One food vendor employee, for example, gave her underwear to an inmate, Gammel says.

"If staff have weaknesses that can be taken advantage of, a chink in their armor," he says, "offenders will manipulate that." ■

DOC dumps longtime private health contractor

After years of complaints by AFSCME corrections staff, and after more than \$1.8 million in wrongful death and negligence settlements, the Department of Corrections has ousted Corizon Health, a private contractor that managed health care in Minnesota prisons for more than 15 years.

Since 2000, at least nine inmates died because medical care was denied or delayed under Corizon's watch, according to a *Star Tribune* investigation. The root of the problem was that Corizon, as a cost-saving measure, often did not have medical staff on site around the clock.

Council 5 corrections officers fought repeatedly to get rid of Corizon. The fact that DOC did not renew Corizon's contract last fall is "progress," says Mike Keapproth, president of Local 915 at Oak Park Heights. But DOC now is relying on another private contractor, Centurion Managed Care, through at least 2015. That decision falls short of corrections officers' goal of ultimately having state employees manage all medical care.

Inmates go to regular hospitals

"My belief is, a private entity is in it to make money, not to protect the public," Keapproth says. "I really don't believe a private corporation has the state's best interest in mind." The biggest flaw, he says, was that when inmates needed medical care outside of prison walls, Corizon stopped bringing them to an isolated, locked ward at a designated hospital.

Instead, inmates now are treated at a variety of metro-area hospitals. Although inmates are under guard, "they're in a regular ward, right down the hall from your relative, or whatever," Keapproth says. "It's a public safety issue and it's an officer safety issue."

Corrections staff have broken up plots to break inmates out of their hospital rooms, he says. "It might cost a little bit more to have locked ward, and pay for beds you're not using. But I believe people's lives and safety are more important."



DEFENDERS of the Constitution – and more

“Even a guilty guy is entitled to a fair trial.” That, says Hennepin County public defender David Cohoes, is the bottom line. In a society built around the rule of law, public defenders ultimately uphold that core standard.

In day-to-day practice, of course, it’s not always that noble. Public defenders don’t always get a lot of respect. Critics on one side think they’re actually in cahoots with police and prosecutors. Others say they’re soft on crime, or accuse them of representing the scum of the earth.

Some call them “public pretenders” and question whether they’re even real lawyers. (They are – they’ve got law degrees, pass the bar exam, and jump through all the hoops other attorneys do.)

But public defenders put up with less-than-ideal conditions because they believe deeply in their role: defending the Constitution. “My role is to make sure everybody gets a fair shot, that the system is fair, that everybody’s rights are respected,” says Ramsey County’s Edith Brown.

Fundamental rights

“The whole Bill of Rights – no arrest or search and seizure without probable cause, protection of people’s privacy, right to a fair trial, you can’t be forced to incriminate yourself, no excessive bail, due process – all of those things, we protect those every day,” Cohoes says.

Public defenders typically represent those who don’t have money, who don’t have power, who are mentally ill, homeless, or on the margins. In doing that, Cohoes says, public defenders actually are protecting everybody’s rights.

Public defenders exist because of a 1963 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Gideon vs. Wainwright*. That ruling says the Sixth Amendment requires state and federal governments to provide free legal counsel to defendants in criminal cases if they cannot afford their own attorney.

“Poor folks, in particular, often get second-class citizenship,” Cohoes says. “They should at least get first-class representation.”

Time is at a premium

Achieving that, however, is a nonstop challenge, especially in times of declining public resources. In Ramsey, for example, there used to be three public defenders for each judge in misdemeanor court, where Brown practices. Now there’s only one. “Because of the caseload, and because defendants are being passed from one attorney to another, you only spend a little bit of time with them. So it’s really difficult,” she says.

Cohoes, who handles felonies, says public defenders have to be realistic about how much they can accomplish – and to stop “trying to do too many things for too many people with not enough time.... The kinds of cases I have, the stakes are very high. Somebody may go to



Local 8 member Edith Brown is the only full-time African-American public defender in Ramsey County. That, she says, can be frustrating and isolating. “In court, anybody who looks like me, they’re clients. The judge doesn’t look like me, the prosecutor, the court staff – no one. It gets old.”

Sometimes, family members get in the way, Cohoes says. Some defendants simply won’t listen. Some have an incomplete sense of what the law is. “Things like self-defense – trying to explain to people that the law of self-defense on the street and the law of self-defense in the courtroom are different,” he says.

But the client is not the only one who has to agree on a plea deal. So do the judge

and prosecutor. Judges often have their own preferences, Brown says, and in Ramsey County, they also have a history of being less flexible.

Public defenders say that, especially in felony cases, they typically have far more discretion in their jobs than prosecutors do.

“I can run my cases the way I want to,” Brown says. “Nobody’s second-guessing me about how things should be handled.” Prosecutors don’t always have that autonomy. “By and large, I have a great deal of respect for them,” Cohoes says. “I think most of them are very good lawyers. But many of them, especially the newer ones, feel that their supervisors will not approve their decisions. There is a whole chain of command they need to get approval from before they can offer a plea bargain or agree to a reduction or whatever.”

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Adding a touch of humanity

Often, the public defenders say, they fight for an alternative to prison because they believe drug treatment, alcohol treatment, mental health treatment, or some other option is the best way to keep defendants from re-offending.

“I’m just trying to get the best offer I can for them, make sure that the sentence is fair when you look at it in terms of what the behavior was,” Brown says. “That’s the ultimate goal.”

“I don’t consider myself a social worker, but I do care about what happens to clients,” Cohoes says, “about getting an outcome for someone that they’re satisfied with, that either gets them out of trouble or gets them the help that they need, or sets them on the right path in life.” ■



David Cohoes, of Hennepin County Local 2938: “The notion of a guilty person going free? I think a worse thing is an innocent person who winds up in prison.”



10 smartphone apps that power ALEC

ALEC – the American Legislative Exchange Council – helps corporations write laws that undermine unions, outsource public services, fight living wages, and destroy middle-class opportunity.

Buzzfeed compiled this list of smartphone apps – and the corporations behind them – that help finance ALEC’s extreme agenda.

- EBay
- Facebook
- Flickr (owned by ALEC member Yahoo)
- Google Maps (owned by ALEC member Google)
- Instagram (owned by ALEC member Facebook)
- Skype (owned by ALEC member Microsoft)
- Weather Channel (owned by ALEC member Comcast)
- Yahoo
- Yelp
- YouTube (owned by ALEC member Google)

TELL GOOGLE: DUMP ALEC

- Sign the petition at go.afclcio.org/dump-alec.

TELL YOUR LEGISLATOR: STAND UP TO ALEC

- Go to www.standuptoalec.org

83,000 Minnesota workers make minimum wage or less

An estimated 83,000 Minnesota workers are paid the federal minimum wage or less, a new state report says.

The vast majority of these workers who are stuck with poverty wages have at least some college education. Most are adults. Most are women. The vast majority also work in just two industries: retail stores, and bars and restaurants.

The report, from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, puts a human face on who benefits most if the Legislature increases the state minimum wage to \$9.50.

Earlier research shows that, overall, 357,000 Minnesota workers will get a pay raise if the Legislature comes through. That number includes workers who now make between the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 and the proposed state wage of \$9.50.

Most businesses in the state are required to pay the federal minimum.

**TELL YOUR STATE SENATOR:
RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE
TO AT LEAST \$9.50 AN HOUR**

To contact your senator, go to www.senate.mn: Click "2013-2014 Senator Information."

But Minnesota's current minimum IS \$6.15 – the third-lowest in the nation. State law also allows small businesses to pay only \$5.25. And businesses can pay teenagers even less: only \$4.90 an hour for their first 90 days.

Purchasing power plummets

The new report estimates that more than 5 percent of the state's hourly workers – a total of 83,000 – make \$7.25 an hour or less. Key findings about these underpaid workers:

- Nearly two-thirds are adults.
- 60 percent are women.
- Most adults – 58 percent – have at



least some college education. • Nearly two-thirds work in just two industries: 47 percent work in "eating and drinking places," 17 percent work in "retail trade."

Minnesota has not raised its minimum wage since August 2005. Adjusted for inflation, the current wage is worth 30 percent less than in 1974, when Minnesota first established a state minimum.

Last spring, the Minnesota House voted to raise the state minimum from \$6.15 to \$9.50 an hour by 2015. The minimum wage then would increase each year based on the cost of living. Minnesota also outlaws a "tip penalty," which creates a lower, second-tier wage for servers and others who rely on tip income.

The Senate also voted to raise the wage – but only to \$7.75 an hour. ■

Seize transportation opportunity, Move MN coalition urges

If Minnesota expects to remain a national leader in economic opportunity and quality of life, it needs an integrated, modern transportation network so more communities and individuals can share in the state's prosperity.

That's one of the goals of Move MN, a coalition that is calling on the Legislature to back a 21st-century transportation plan that provides more options for more people, meets evolving demographics, and pays for it with sustainable revenue.

"If we don't invest in our infrastructure, we squander our advantages," says Louis King, executive director of Summit Academy in Minneapolis, one of the partners in the coalition.



Mike Lindholt, president of Metro MnDOT Local 221, was one of the AFSCME members at a Move MN forum.

Move MN's goal is to persuade state residents to persuade their legislators that "transportation is just as much a priority to their communities as good schools," says Ann Mulholland, vice president of the Minnesota Community Foundation, another coalition partner.

Move MN already includes more than 150 organizational members – not just typical road, bus, and rail advocates, but also unions (including AFSCME), nonprofits, businesses and business associations, environmental organizations, local governments, and a wide range of community and advocacy groups.

A new sense of urgency

The Legislature needs to act this year because current funding for roads, bridges and transit, and for bike, wheelchair, and pedestrian access, is drying up, coalition leaders say.

The funding shortfall is the victim of declining revenue from gasoline taxes, and decreased federal funding.

For example, the federal highway trust fund essentially goes broke this September, says Derrell Turner, division administrator for the federal Department of Transportation.

Even with new efficiencies that are stretching transportation dollars further, gasoline tax revenue no longer raises enough to pay the bills, says Charlie Zelle, commissioner of the state's Department of Transportation.

Minnesota faces a \$50 billion transportation deficit in the next 20 years, a state task force estimates. That

includes bus, rail, and road needs in the metro; transit gaps and outdated regional highway corridors in Greater Minnesota; and deficient bridges statewide.

Doing it the smart way

Raising the revenue is only one challenge. So is allocating it fairly and effectively.

Smart growth includes the kinds of "fix it first" highway projects that AFSCME's MnDOT members perform.

One approach is to apply "smart growth" policies, says Greg LeRoy, executive director of Good Jobs First. At a forum in St. Paul, he said evidence shows that "smart growth" typically produces more jobs, better jobs, and more opportunities for economic equity than policies that promote sprawl. ■



Jared Pullis, of Lino Lakes DOC Local 2728, takes the plunge.

In case of a water landing ...

Nearly 60 Corrections employees from the Lino Lakes, Oak Park Heights, and Stillwater locals raised more than \$10,000 for Special Olympics at the annual Polar Bear Plunge in White Bear Lake. They were the most successful of the 10 DOC teams taking part in plunges at eight sites across Minnesota.

Solidarity in action

Helping each other is what being union is all about. Child-care providers need to be certified and recertified in first aid and CPR on a regular basis. Other AFSCME members are certified trainers.

So, in December, members of Shakopee Corrections Local 1988 provided training for child-care providers, including members of CCPT Local 3400 – for free. That's a huge gift for child-care providers, who typically would have to pay \$65 to more than \$100 for the required training.



Amit Markman, of Shakopee Corrections Local 1988, demonstrates back slaps for a choking infant.



Don Schwarz of Clarkfield, a member of the "Best of the West" subchapter of Retirees United, discusses priorities during strategic planning.

Retirees on the move

After three months of strategic planning, Council 5's Retirees United chapter has its priorities straight for 2014. The retirees intend to be active at the Legislature this spring, in political campaigns this fall, and in building coalitions and membership all year. They are focusing on actions that promote economic security and a dignified retirement for all.

BRIEFS



Bonding plans make everyone safer

Gov. Dayton's bonding bill is more than a list of construction projects. For AFSCME members in DOC and DHS, the projects literally protect their health and safety.

Dayton's proposal includes \$63.7 million for construction at the Minnesota Security Hospital and sex-offender program in St. Peter, \$32.5 million for a new intake facility and other projects at the St. Cloud Correctional Facility, and \$5.4 million for a security fence at the women's prison in Shakopee.

A prison without a fence?

Shakopee has lacked a security fence since it was built in 1986. The only barrier is a short, 4,300-foot hedge around the prison grounds.

The prison holds more than 600 female felons, including 90 convicted of homicide. But from the outside, it looks more like an apartment complex or an office park. The prison sits across from an elementary school and in the middle of a residential neighborhood.

The lack of a secure perimeter is a constant challenge, says Kyle Perlich, president of Local 1988. He's "absolutely" in favor of the fence. "People don't realize the criminals we have here. The safety of the public is huge."

An escape, such as one that occurred in December, is not the only risk. A bigger threat, Perlich says, is people who wander onto prison grounds – either accidentally or intentionally. Because corrections officers do not routinely carry weapons, they may not be able to protect themselves, other staff, or offenders from intruders, he says.

"It's crazy. We don't know what they're coming here for – for revenge, to get someone out – or what they're bringing in." The proposed fence, he says, "will be better protection for everyone."

Outdated facility raises risks

St. Cloud, built in 1889, is the oldest prison in Minnesota. But every male convict in the state passes through its obsolete intake unit.

Intake processes roughly 700 offenders each month, but is small, cramped, and not nearly as secure as it needs to be, says Randy Ramler, president of Local 599. As many



St. Cloud, the state's oldest prison, would get an expanded intake unit, an expanded medical services unit, and a more secure loading dock under Gov. Dayton's bonding proposal.

as 30 offenders might be waiting in the same holding cell, but correctional officers may not know if any belong to rival gangs or have other bad blood. That's an invitation to trouble, he says.

"The numbers are staggering at times," Ramler says. "We really, really do need the renovations."

St. Peter hopes to separate operations

Intake is a similar challenge at the Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter. The admissions and crisis units share the same space in the mental-health facility, says W. John Knobbe, vice president of Local 404. As a result, patients being admitted often walk into a scene where they see other patients acting out psychotic or aggressive behavior.

That sends the message that new patients also must be aggressive to survive, Knobbe says. That increases risks for staff, slows patient recovery, and lengthens their stay.

The governor also proposes separating the forensics operations of the hospital from the higher-security Minnesota Sex Offender Program. Both steps would make treatment more effective, Knobbe says. ■



Join Day on the Hill March 25

Council 5's Day on the Hill takes place Tuesday March 25 in St. Paul. Now that Minnesota has a stable budget, we can imagine what we want our state to become. AFSCME members will urge the Legislature to:

- Raise the minimum wage to \$9.50
- Create opportunity by investing in transportation and education
- Insource public services
- Expand the right to organize
- Protect public pensions

Day on the Hill SCHEDULE

- 7:30 a.m. Registration opens at the Crowne Plaza Riverfront
- 9 a.m. Workshops
- 10 a.m. General session
- 11 a.m. Break-out sessions with working lunch

Shuttle buses to the Capitol

- 12:30 p.m. Rally in the Rotunda
- 1:15-5 p.m. Lobbying our legislators
- 5 p.m. Reception at the Crowne Plaza

For up-to-date details, including the schedule of buses from Greater Minnesota, go to afscmemn.org; click "Political," then "Day on the Hill 2014."

Projects reach across state

Gov. Dayton is proposing \$986 million in bonding projects statewide. Any bonding project must receive at least 60 percent, supermajority support in both the House and Senate.

The proposal includes:

- \$210 million for local and regional projects
- \$118 million for projects on University of Minnesota campuses
- \$114 million for MnSCU campuses
- \$54.6 million for DNR projects, including improved fish hatchery facilities
- \$40 million for MnDOT to accelerate work on state roads and bridges

- \$26 million for parks, transit, and wastewater projects through the Metropolitan Council
- \$12.6 million for the Minnesota Academies in Faribault
- \$12 million for the Minnesota Zoo
- \$7.7 million for wastewater and stormwater projects through the Pollution Control Agency

Pioneers among AFSCME women

Two local leaders from Council 5 are among 27 women nationwide in the first-ever graduating class from AFSCME's Women's Leadership Academy.

Cherrene Horazuk, president of University of Minnesota Clerical Workers Local 3800, and Grace Jones, a steward in MnSCU Local 4001 at Inver Hills Community College, completed the sixth-month program in December. Training included public speaking, strategic planning, and organizing skills.

Both women worked with mentors through the International; they also had to complete a union-building project within their local. Jones set up a system to track monthly outreach to fair-share members across MnSCU campuses. Horazuk worked on tactics and actions to build member involvement and participation as part of a longer-term effort to improve bargaining power at the university.

"We have created a bond with each other and a bond with the international's leadership," Jones says. "The motivation we gave each other to be better, it was amazing."



U of M Clerical Worker Local 3800's Cherrene Horazuk.



Continuing King's work

Without labor leaders like Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph, and financial and logistical help from unions, the 1963 March on Washington never would have happened. That was one of the lessons from history that blended with provocative speakers and uplifting performances during a Martin Luther King holiday observance at Zion Baptist Church in Minneapolis. MnSCU Local 4001 and University of Minnesota Clerical Workers Local 3800 sponsored the event.

MnSCU Local 4001's Grace Jones talks about being a "sister" – as both a black woman and a union member.



In St. Peter, union creates the solution

An unprecedented collaboration between Local 404 and DHS administrators at the Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter created more than 40 new full-time jobs, wiped out thousands of hours of mandatory overtime each month, and re-arranged schedules in a way that cuts costs, eases pressures on workers, and provides better treatment for patients.

The results show what can be accomplished when management involves front-line workers in solving problems.

The changes came after CEO Carol Olson let Local 404 dig through years of records in hopes the union could find solutions to excessive overtime and other scheduling nightmares that plagued the hospital.

“Things are changing now,” says local vice-president W. John Knobbe. “Issues are being resolved. We’re getting to the point where we’re working together to do the best job we can.”

A real solution

The biggest change is a new staffing rotation that union leaders and management developed in tandem. The schedule was phased in at the end of 2013. It arranges shifts and staffing in a way that works better

for the hospital, for patients, and for the 250 security counselors AFSCME represents, Knobbe says.

The new rotation is an alternative to a plan that the administration was going to implement unilaterally at the end of 2012. That plan would have obliterated seniority and turned the personal lives of members upside down, Knobbe says.

Instead, the local and Council 5 worked with Olson to find the roots of the scheduling problems, then come up with a real solution. By the fall of 2013, they developed a rotation that:

- Eliminates nearly 5,000 hours of overtime each month. That practice was wreaking havoc on department budgets, and wreaking havoc on the health and personal lives of security counselors – who had to work as much as 16 hours straight, often without a choice. “It was just burning people out,” Knobbe says.
- Creates a new 10-hour shift, and staggers the start and end times of other shifts. Now, shifts overlap. That supplies additional staffing for a few key hours each day when needs are highest.
- Improves care and treatment of patients. The overlapping shifts help staff carry out more treatment activities, allow counselors to meet and compare



DHS’ Carol Olson and Local 404’s John Knobbe worked together to draft new staffing arrangements that work both for the agency and for members.

notes when they transfer care of a patient from one shift to another, and shore up security operations at different parts of the day.

“You have more of a continuous flow to the day,” Knobbe says. “Everyone knows the mood of the unit and how the patients are doing when they come on board.”

Union finds unfilled positions

Knobbe’s research uncovered that most of the staffing problems were self-inflicted. The biggest surprise: Administrators before Olson actually had been authorized to hire 39.5 additional full-time equivalent positions – but never did so.

Those vacancies, Knobbe notes, would have recovered most of the 58 layoffs that St. Peter endured under Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Since Olson and the union starting

working together, the security hospital has filled 44 full-time vacancies. Those new positions made the new scheduling possible. They also all but eliminate costly, mandated overtime. And they create enough of a staffing cushion that security counselors actually can take vacation, Knobbe says.

Existing part-time and intermittent employees got first crack at the new full-time jobs. Temporary workers got first crack at the classified, part-time jobs that remain in order to give the hospital additional scheduling flexibility.

“I really feel like, with this administration, she is willing to listen with a critical mind, look at the issues, and let us give her an honest appraisal of what’s going on and how they can improve it,” Knobbe says. “It’s a breath of fresh air.” ■



The Union Wage Advantage (every week)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Union Members Summary,” Table 2: Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers.

Union workers make \$10,400 a year more, on average, than nonunion workers. That’s like getting a raise of \$200 a week, or \$5 more an hour. That’s one of the facts hidden in a new report from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Public workers are among those demonstrating the advantage of being unionized on the job. Nationwide, state government workers make \$153 a week more, on average, if they’re in a union bargaining unit, compared with peers who are not. Local government employees make \$246 a week more on average than workers doing the same kinds of jobs in nonunion cities, counties, and school districts.

Wages aren’t the only way unions deliver stronger economic security for their

members. Other BLS statistics show that union members tend to have more benefits, better benefits, and pay less out of pocket for those benefits than workers who are not represented by a union at work.

Being in a union also continues to erase the historical wage gap that women and minorities face:

- In the economy overall, women get paid only \$77 for every \$100 that men make. However, women who have a union job turn that gap upside-down: They actually make an average of \$67 a week more than men who are not in a union.
- African-Americans make an average of \$4.65 an hour more if they are in a union. Unionized Latino workers make an average of \$7.28 an hour more. ■

LABOR HISTORY



Artist: Carlos Cortez (Industrial Workers of the World)

This 1973 linocut of Joe Hill is one of Cortez’s most famous works of art; the image lives on in numerous adaptations of the original.

Hill – a legendary labor songwriter and organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World – is revered for his songs, poetry, and determination to organize the working class. He’s shown here holding his accordion in one hand, and a statement about the power of the working class in the other.

Hill was framed for murder in Salt Lake City and executed by a firing squad in 1915. Among his last requests to Wobbly leader Bill Heywood: “Don’t mourn. Organize.”

This labor history poster is one of a series compiled by Council 5.