

March - April 2015

# SOLIDARITY

A NEED FOR  
**skill**

Retirements in the trades will soon create opportunities for UAW members



THE MAGAZINE FOR UAW MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

## When working women and men win, we all win

In just about every month since our nation started to recover from the Great Recession, we've heard about dropping unemployment rates and how the country is pulling itself out of the ditch that Wall Street put us into back in 2008.

But those who never really went into the ditch in the first place have reaped most of the benefits of the recovery. More than 95 percent of personal income growth between 2009 and 2012 went to a few wealthy Americans, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

Simply put, the folks who needed the recovery the least have gained the most. That fact turns the American Dream on its head. It used to be that each generation of Americans did better than the next. You would root for your neighbor to do better, because when he or she did better, we all did better. America was a consumer economy and that meant more money in the hands of working people was more money fueling the America we know and love.

Americans remain the most productive working people in the world. But as Wall Street scales to new heights of profit, our collective wages haven't kept up. The result is an economy with less spending, less consumption of the goods we make and less

opportunity for our families and our children in the future.

UAW members know more than anyone that the world has changed. We understand that a company has to have profit to survive. In fact, tens

*One wealthy family is spending as much as a candidate to have influence on policies that affect all of us.*

of thousands of our members put their own skin in the game to keep their employers afloat during the auto industry crisis of 2008-2010. So today as many companies are restored to profitability — in some cases record profits — the bottom line is our workforce needs to reap the rewards of its sacrifices and share in the prosperity. The recovery will remain tenuous unless consumers can thrive. Wall Street's records mean little if the rewards fail to reach the consumers who oil the economic engine.

This is not just a problem for UAW members. It affects the companies we work for and the nonunion neighbors we see every day. When families have less income they spend less on the

products we produce.

So why aren't the effects of the recovery being felt by Main Street? Part of the problem we face today is the outsized influence many wealthy families have on our electoral process.

The uber-wealthy Koch Brothers announced in January that they are planning to spend close to \$900 million in the next presidential election, according to a report in the New York Times. That would rival the spending of the campaigns of each party's presidential nominee. Think about that: One wealthy

family is spending as much as a candidate to have influence on policies that affect all of us.

The Koch Brothers are also the ones who fund the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which puts lawmakers up at swanky resorts and supplies them with pre-drafted legislation to push in Washington and in state capitols. Support their legislation and be rewarded with campaign contributions and attack ads on your opponent. Cross the Koch Brothers and their wealthy friends and your re-election campaign is in serious peril. Much of this legislation, of course, is designed to destroy unions and their ability to win a decent standard of living for their members — and for our nonunion neighbors

as well. Is it any wonder the economic benefits of our productivity fail to lift our wages?

Too often in America today we are taught that someone has to win and someone has to lose. But the fact is companies can have profit, shareholders can benefit and working people can win as well. Everyone can win. We've done it before in America and the result was an economy and a massive middle class that was the envy of the world.

That is why it is important as we negotiate contracts that UAW members share in the prosperity of record profits, as our members bore the sacrifice of the Great Recession. We've done our part, and then some. A rising tide is supposed to lift all boats in America and when working people benefit so does our manufacturing economy. When working Americans benefit, so do the big box retailers, as well as the mom-and-pop stores. The public sector also benefits from increased tax collections. That means more police and firefighters, better roads and properly funded school systems. Simply put, when working people win, we all win. Our nation is still a land of plenty. And UAW members understand that our hard work, our success and our sacrifice can fuel the consumer economy of tomorrow. It starts with the prosperity of our work, for us, for our products and the health of our companies.

It's true we are up against the \$900 million of profiteers like the Koch Brothers. We will never be able to outspend them. But there are more of us, than there are of them. When we stick together we win. And when working women and men win, everyone in America wins.



The march to freedom:  
Page 12

## inside

- 4 PRO-Member**  
Local leaders talk about involvement
- 8 Contract at Navistar**  
Job security helps members, community
- 10 New Work at AM General**  
Local 5 members to show Mercedes their skills
- 14 COVER STORY**  
The need for skilled trades will soon intensify
- 20 Nissan Update**  
Automaker refuses mediation offer
- 25 Award-Winning Work**  
Member's play a lesson in courage

## PLUS

- 9 White Shirt Day
- 22 Legislative Update
- 24 New Members at HAP
- 27 Letters

COVER AND INSIDE PHOTO BY DENN PIETRO



# Local leaders talk shop

## Being a proud UAW member goes beyond paying dues and carrying a card

*We recently talked with several local union leaders about the challenges of leading in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Though the participants represent a variety of sectors and come from all corners of the country, their experiences and approaches to leadership are surprisingly similar.*

**PRO-Member:** Let's start by hearing about what led you to your current positions:

**Rodriguez:** I started working for Delphi in 1999 at their Oak Creek plant in Milwaukee. That led to a stint at the GM plant in Doraville, Georgia, in 2003 and finally now the Fairfax Assembly Plant in

Kansas City, Kansas, in 2006.

**Marvicsin:** I got hired at Ford's Sandusky, Ohio, plant as a manufacturing technician about 15 years ago. They built then and still do lighting and housings for the auto industry. In 2005, Ford transferred the plant to Automotive Components Holdings

**Name:**  
Jorge Rodriguez

**Worksite:**  
General Motors Fairfax Assembly Plant  
Kansas City, Kansas

**Local:**  
Local 31, Region 5

**Position:**  
Bargaining chair and top UAW negotiator for the eight GM assembly plants making cars

**Best advice I ever got from a union mentor:**  
"Level with people and trust that they can handle the truth."



**Name:**  
Romaine McKinney III

**Worksite:**  
Chrysler Warren Stamping Plant  
Warren, Michigan

**Local:**  
Local 869, Region 1

**Position:**  
Newly elected president

**Best advice I ever got from a union mentor:**  
"Stay focused. Keep your eyes on the goal and we will all be successful."



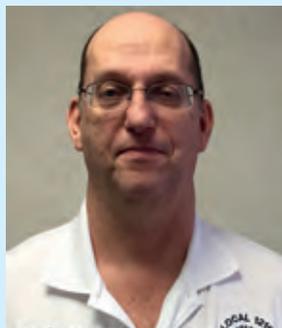
**Name:**  
Gary Marvicsin

**Worksite:**  
Ventra Sandusky  
Sandusky, Ohio

**Local:**  
Local 1216, Region 2B

**Position:**  
Newly elected president/chair

**Best advice I ever got from a union mentor:**  
"The whole membership equals the union, not one person. We are stronger together, than apart."



**Name:**  
Leslie Hitchcock

**Worksite:**  
Pall Trinity Micro Corporation  
Cortland, New York

**Local:**  
Local 1326, Region 9

**Position:**  
President for last 10 years

**Best advice I ever got from a union mentor:**  
"Leslie, you can't save everyone."





(ACH) which was set up as Ford started to sell off its parts business. Then two years ago, the plant was purchased by Flex-N-Gate and it now operates as part of their plastic division called Ventra. We've picked up new business. Though Ford is still an important customer, we also now make parts for Nissan. We're actually the largest IPS (Independent Parts Supplier) plant in the UAW.

**McKinney:** Well, I'm an electrician by trade. I've been with Chrysler for 21 years and have been active at many levels in the past two decades. I was elected president of Local 869 last summer.

**Hitchcock:** I guess I have the seniority of the group. I've been a UAW member for 26 years and president of Local 1326 for the past 10. Our 330 members work at Pall Trinity Micro of Cortland, New York, where we make filters and systems for fluid clarification processes for the food and electronics industries.

**PRO-Member:** What got you active in your union?

**Hitchcock:** My whole family is union – in fact, my father and brother both worked at Pall and I got active in the union through my brother. It's a major employer in our community and always had a feeling of family. Local union president is not a full-time job – I'm still on the shop floor, but I get to do union business 12 hours a month.

**McKinney:** For me, I was always active and understood the power of our union. But I decided to run for my position because in recent years, there was a lot of division in our worksite. A lot of us versus them. The result was a lot of distrust. Nothing was getting done. I decided to step up because I wanted to be part of helping solve the problems.

**Rodriguez:** Like Romaine, I also got active early on. I was lucky. My first president spent time with me early on talking about the importance of politics and collective bargaining. To this day, CAP is one of the most important programs in my eyes. Having strong mentors really does shape you as a leader. To be honest, I always had confidence in how I approached things and thought I did a good job. But I am amazed at how much I learn each day now that helps me. You just have to be open to new ideas and never be satisfied with staying the same.

*"I think too many of us underestimate our membership. They are smart. They are committed. They can handle bad news. They want to be a part of the fight. All they really want is what we all want – to be treated fairly and respectfully."*  
Local 31 President Jorge Rodriguez

**Marvicsin:** I also have a lot of union in my family. My father worked for GM and I grew up respecting collective bargaining. When I hired into Ford, I immediately got active and joined multiple committees including Civil Rights and CAP. It wasn't a question whether I was going to be active or not. No one had to tell me to attend a union meeting – it was always my right and choice to know what was happening with our contract and to figure out how to make us stronger. I'd run for various positions. I won some races and lost others. I always wanted to

be part of making things better for our all of us. I think I can play a role in that and so I ran again in 2014 and won.

**PRO-Member:** What have you learned about leadership?

**Rodriguez:** I think too many of us underestimate our membership. They are smart. They are committed. They can handle bad news. They want to be a part of the fight. All they really want is what we all want – to be treated fairly and respectfully. Here's an example: Like a lot of locals, we struggle with the issue of union attendance. It's easy to get down on members for not coming, but that doesn't get any of us anywhere. We started something a few years ago



where we would hold our regular Saturday meeting, but the following Thursday, I would do shift meetings in the plant with my entire committee. I would start with a summary of what happened last Saturday, but then open it up for questions and feedback. It accomplishes a lot of the goals of a union meeting and gets new people involved in our union. It was tough on all of us when we started and I had to persuade some of the committee. But I now think everyone sees the value in this.

**McKinney:** I completely agree. In the Chrysler system, the local union president is involved in a lot of the day-to-day operations of the worksite from bargaining to servicing. What I've learned is that in order to do what we need to do to protect our contracts and build a strong future, we have to be diligent every day. That means we have to be sharp and know our facts to advocate for our case.

**Marvicsin:** For me, leadership comes down to communication. You have just got to be open and straightforward and honest with our members. I try to walk the shop floor for an hour at least every day so I have the chance to hear directly from our members. I can't always give them the answers they want to hear, but I will always be honest with them about where we are at on an issue. Our local in particular has a lot of history. We changed hands so many times in a short period of time and have had a lot of turn over. Many of the traditional Ford members started to move out and new workers were hired under the ACH or Ventra agreements. When Flex-N-Gate/Ventra purchased our plant two years ago, we had 675 members. Today, we have about 1,500 and almost 1,000 are newer hires who started in the last 18 months. That's a lot of new members who pay dues just the same as someone who has been

there for decades. All members have the right to be included and get regular communication about their union.

**Hitchcock:** Leadership to me is an honor given to me by those who elected me. But I am no different than those I represent. I always try to work in other areas so I can connect with my fellow members. We just came out of a very tough round of bargaining and I knew that we had to engage with our brothers and sisters throughout the process to keep them updated as this was *their* bargaining process. I want to treat others the way I would want to be treated.

It's a simple rule that works in all situations.

**PRO-Member:** What role do members play in the success of your local?

**Rodriguez:** The members are everything. It's not us with the titles – it's all of us together. It's easy to forget that and too often it becomes 'us versus them' – that they see leadership as a group separate from themselves. I try to challenge those views. When I talk to other UAW members,

it is a dialogue. If they have a question that is answered in the contract, I give it to them straight. Sometimes, it isn't answered in the contract and I ask them to be a part of helping me solve their issue or raise their idea.

**McKinney:** I couldn't agree more. UAW members come first. This is our union – all of ours. I'm a local union president, but I rely on member involvement and input to be a leader. That's why hitting the floor is a key part of leadership. We can't wait for something to come to a crisis. We need to be out engaging with members long before something is a problem. To be really honest, I believe in us. Our workforce is very skilled and well-educated. We're experts in our job and all care about our future. We have issues, sure, but

*"This is our union – all of ours. I'm a local union president, but I rely on member involvement and input to be a leader. That's why hitting the floor is a key part of leadership."*

*Local 869 President  
Romaine McKinney III*



I also think we are the best source for solutions. I always challenge those around me to make sure they bring solutions to the table, not just problems.

**Marvicsin:** I was once asked what solidarity meant. To me, it's an action, not a word. You live solidarity, you act solidarity – you don't honor its principles by just saying the word. Members are a key part of building solidarity. It can't just be a slogan; we have to all live it together.

**Hitchcock:** I mentioned earlier that we recently got tested in a very tough way during our 2014 negotiations. There are about 30 Pall plants in the world and ours is the only one that's unionized. The fact that the company was closely run by the founders led to relatively smooth bargaining over the decades. But all that changed when the company took a hard line on profits in 2014 and wanted to exact a price from our members. I was overwhelmed by the support the bargaining team had from our membership. We never felt alone at the table. One of the darkest times was also one of the brightest. Management decided that it wanted to drive a wedge between the bargaining team and the members so it started providing its own updates directly to the bargaining unit members with their spin on their positions. They did this through company emails. On their own, members would reply back that they did not want management propaganda. They wanted their updates from their own bargaining team. Soon our members were wearing T-shirts and buttons – ones they bought on their own – to show support for the bargaining team. They would put up signs and stickers on their tool boxes. I was blown away by the support. Eventually, management got the message and gave up. But honestly what we gained was more than stopping a dirty management tactic. We also came out of it a stronger union.

**PRO-Member:** What do you say to a person who becomes a union member for the first time?

**Rodriguez:** I think back to how I was treated when I first became a UAW member. As union activists,

we have to mentor new members, not only on the ins and outs of the contract, but show them what it means to stand together and why we do it. What's special about us is that we have these legal rights called collective bargaining that other workers don't have. That's power. It's not something given, but something that someone fought for and we have to work each day to protect. I'm really excited about the future of our great union because I believe in our members.

**Marvicsin:** Even though I've only been at this plant for 15 years, I'm considered an old timer here. And it is easy to just assume everyone knows what I know or has seen what I've seen because I've been around for so long. But the truth is our plant has so many new members for whom this might be their first union experience. Breaking down what a union truly is and helping a new member understand the power of standing together is the greatest challenge of our day. That's the biggest misconception – 'the union' isn't me. We are really in this together.

**McKinney:** I look at the new faces in the plant and I get excited about the future. They really are smart, committed and, in them, I see a bit of myself when I first started. Everyone takes that first step to become a union activist. Often times, that first step comes when someone before you reaches out his or her hand to encourage you. That's what we all have to do to make our union stronger for the future generations to come.

**Hitchcock:** I would say being hired into an organized facility is an incredible opportunity. Unlike most of the workers in America, you have a voice and management has to negotiate with us about work. That's a very special right. Our recent contract was tough stuff, but we all know that without our union, it would have been much, much worse. At the end of the day, we're family at Local 1326. This is a process for all of us and we're all vested in it. We'll learn the lessons from 2014 and plan for the future. But we all have to be a part of it. It can't be done by just those of us with titles.

## Four-year agreement ratified

# New Navistar contract makes a difference for members and community

When Ed Zirkle of UAW Local 402 in Springfield, Ohio, voted in favor of the proposed new contract for 1,500 UAW members at Navistar, he knew the agreement amounted to much more than a signing bonus or a wage increase.

"Don't get me wrong. Those things are nice but that is not all that makes a difference. This is actually something that will make a difference in the community and something that gives us job security for every year of the agreement," said Zirkle who hired on at the company 20 years ago.

Zirkle started out just looking for a job when he started in the axle department. Now he is proud that he has job security as do new workers just coming in the door. That is very important for Zirkle, who is the son of a retired UAW member at Navistar, has uncles who have worked there, and now has a son and a brother who work there, too.

He is proud to be part of the team that fights for solid contracts

like the one UAW members approved recently for Navistar facilities in Melrose Park, Illinois (engineering and engine assembly), Springfield, Ohio (truck assembly), and Atlanta, Dallas and York, Pennsylvania (parts distribution centers).

The new agreement was approved by a majority of voting UAW members Feb. 7-8, and replaces the prior contract that expired Oct. 1, 2014. The contract gives UAW members a \$1,000 contract signing bonus, 3 percent lump-sum payments upon ratification and in October 2016, and an annual improvement factor increase of 2 percent this year and in 2017.

The \$1,000 profit-sharing bonus will be paid in each year of the agreement that the company makes a profit.

"A good contract means that there are career jobs for people," Zirkle said. "When people find work here now, they can feel that this is a place they can stay

and make a career like I was able to do."

He added that one of the best parts about the contract was maintaining health care benefits.

"Keeping those benefits translates into a huge savings for members. You have to have a sense of pride and I am proud of what has been accomplished," Zirkle said.

"UAW members have approved a contract that is fair and equitable for everyone," said UAW Vice President Norwood Jewell, who directs the union's Heavy Trucks Department.

"With this new agreement, our members can continue serving our customers in the heavy truck industry while maintaining good jobs and benefits that will allow them to support their family and community. This is an example of how working women and men and companies can work together so that everyone wins."

*Sandra Davis*

### UAW V-CAP: Investing in our future

The UAW cannot use union dues to directly support federal candidates and, in an ever-increasing number of states, any candidate for public office. Our only means of monetary support for many labor-friendly candidates is voluntary political contributions from UAW members to UAW V-CAP (our union's political action fund).

Members can contribute to V-CAP in multiple

ways. Many of our contracts have "check off" which allows for direct contribution to V-CAP through payroll deduction. Members and retirees can also give to V-CAP directly with a check. Either way, a modest contribution of \$10 a month comes to about 33 cents a day and allows our union to support candidates who support our values. Send to:

**UAW National CAP Department**  
**8000 E. Jefferson Ave.**  
**Detroit, MI 48214**

# The UAW honors Geraldine Blankinship

The Women's Emergency Brigade's participation during the Flint Sit-Down Strike of 1936-37 that led to the UAW being recognized at General Motors would make for a great movie: They broke windows so their men could breathe when police lobbed tear gas into the plant; they kept hungry sitdowners supplied with food; and they put themselves in physical danger countless times.

On Jan. 29, Geraldine Blankinship, the last surviving member of the Women's Emergency Brigade, died at age 95. A candle was lit in her honor during the annual White Shirt Day celebration in Flint, Michigan, on Feb. 11. White Shirt Day marks the end of the Sit-Down Strike. Union members wear white shirts to make the point that managers are no more important than working women and men.

"The UAW and all working people have lost a true fighter with Geraldine Blankinship's passing," said Region 1D Director Gerald Kariem. "The courage of Geraldine Blankinship and other members of the Women's Emergency Brigade continue to inspire working men and women who follow her example. Her physical presence will be missed but her spirit lives on in all of us."



Geraldine Blankinship and other women played a crucial role in our union's history. They kept the sitdowners fed and placed themselves in harm's way to help win UAW recognition by General Motors.

## An opportunity to shine

# Local 5 gets ready to show Mercedes how the UAW adds value

Home to the nation's first sit-down strike, UAW Local 5 members in Mishawaka, Indiana, hold a special spot in our union's history. The local's formation predates the founding of the UAW. Indeed, the union's first convention under the UAW banner was held in 1936 in northern Indiana and Local 5 was a huge reason why.

The local has seen good times and bad since its founding in 1933. Nameplates such as Studebaker, Kaiser Jeep and Hummer have come off of its production lines. This year, Local 5 and the UAW members at AM General will add to our rich history when they begin building vehicles for Mercedes-Benz.

The German automaker announced in January that it selected AM General to build its R-Class luxury crossover. Vehicle production is being moved from its Tuscaloosa, Alabama, plant to free up capacity. The R-Class has been sold exclusively in China since

2013. It's the first time Mercedes has used a North American manufacturer to build a vehicle on contract.

Local 5 members are proud of their reputation for building high-quality vehicles at low volumes. It's what makes them unique. To say that they – and the community surrounding the plant – welcome the Mercedes work is an understatement, Bargaining Chairman Bruce Schweizer said during a tour of AM General's meticulously clean commercial plant.

"They could have built it overseas," Schweizer said, adding that Local 5 members "are excited that Mercedes is not afraid to go into a union facility and get work done."

If Local 5 can prove to Mercedes that having UAW members build its vehicles is a good business proposition, it's possible it could help members of its Alabama workforce who want UAW representation. Schweizer said he hopes Mercedes workers will one day have the same advantages of union representation that Local 5 members enjoy. "We're proud of our history at Local 5 and hope that Mercedes workers in Alabama will soon make some history of their own," he added.

Troy Murphy, a team leader who is training to teach other Local 5 members on Mercedes production requirements, already had his team learning about Mercedes specifications.

"We're very excited and looking forward to the challenges," Murphy said during a break. "We want



Local 5 members have already begun training to build the new Mercedes vehicle. Pictured above are the Local 5 members selected to train their co-workers.



Troy Murphy says his fellow Local 5 members are ready for the challenge of building a vehicle to Mercedes' standards.

to reduce the learning curve as soon as possible. It starts with us and ends with us."

Local 5 is excited to get many of its own members off layoff and back to work. AM General, which built the Hummer and Hummer 2 until 2009 when General Motors discontinued the military-based vehicle, has 240 UAW members on layoff on its commercial side.

"I was overjoyed," Local 5 President Joe Taylor III said about the announcement. "We had heard some rumors and rumblings. It's been a rough three or four years."

Schweizer said he isn't sure how many members will return because of the Mercedes announcement, but added, "It's going to bring our local back."

AM General also manufactures military vehicles at a sister plant next door to the commercial facility. It has produced more than 300,000 High Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicle (Humvees)

for the U.S. military and more than 50 friendly international forces since 1985. It is bidding for additional military work, too.

Local 5 members presently build the MV-1, the nation's only purpose-built accessible vehicle that meets or exceeds relevant American with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. The MV-1 has a telescoping wheelchair ramp, two wheelchair locations with restraints and many other features that other drivers may take for granted.

"We're the only American company that does it," Schweizer said. "Everybody else does it through (van) conversion."

The engines for the MV-1 are made by UAW members at Ford's Romeo, Michigan (Local 400), and Cleveland, Ohio (Local 1250), engine plants, while the transmissions are manufactured at its Livonia (Michigan) Transmission plant (Local 182).

*Vince Piscopo*



Leadership at Local 5 stands in front of the MV-1 accessibility vehicle they build at American General's commercial plant in Mishawaka, Indiana. The vehicle is the only American-made passenger vehicle specifically designed to meet the needs of disabled drivers and passengers.

# Still on the march for freedom

## UAW is there to mark the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma

*One day when the glory comes  
It will be ours, it will be ours  
One day when the war is won  
We will be sure, we will be sure  
Oh, glory ...*

From "Glory", the Academy-Award winning song by John Legend and Common from the movie "Selma."

Tens of thousands converged on the Alabama town of Selma on March 7-8 to celebrate the glory of civil rights victories achieved by the brave women and men who marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge to advocate for voting rights for African-Americans on Bloody Sunday 50 years ago.

In 1965, the UAW lived up to its commitment of social justice and continued that tradition this year with our members' participation. For the Bloody Sunday march in 1965, then-UAW President Walter Reuther sent staff and provided financial backing for

the event. Two weeks later on March 21, he gave the address to open the historic March to Selma.

"Walter Reuther and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were of the same mind when it came to social justice: No one can be free unless all of us are free - free from discrimination and free to join a labor union. They knew those struggles were closely related. That was true in 1965 in Selma and here today," said UAW President Dennis Williams in Selma with hundreds of UAW members who journeyed to Alabama from around the country for the anniversary of the march.

"I and my UAW brothers and sisters from Region 1 wanted to be here, together, to mark this occasion in solidarity," said Local 228's LaTanya Burdis, who works at Ford Motor Co.'s Sterling Axle plant in Michigan.

"We're also here to mark the sacrifices made and victories won during the march to Selma, and to reaffirm our commitment to the struggle. We know there's still a lot of work to do."



DENN PIETRO

Tens of thousands of people, including many UAW members, participated in activities marking the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama. Our union played a key role in the Civil Rights movement.

*... That's why Rosa sat on the bus  
That's why we walk through Ferguson  
with our hands up ...*

"In many ways, we are regressing when it comes to civil rights and race relations," said Williams. "Recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, Staten Island, New York, Cleveland, Ohio, and elsewhere demonstrate the gulf that exists."

Williams, President Obama, civil rights leaders and many others gave moving speeches before the large crowd at the Pettus Bridge to honor those who were beaten by police as they crossed the span in 1965, earning the march its nickname. Bloody Sunday and the March to Selma helped spur passage of the Voting Rights Act. Also participating were UAW International Executive Board members, local union presidents, original marcher Congressman John Lewis, former U.S. presidents and more than 70 members of Congress.

Williams also received a posthumous American Spirit Award from the city of Selma on behalf of Walter Reuther for the UAW's role in the march.

*... The movement is a rhythm to us  
Freedom is like religion to us ...*

Local 1853's Margaret Tinsley says this anniversary means a lot to her. The retiree from General Motors' Spring Hill facility in Tennessee says her mother was born and raised in Selma "so it's a double whammy for me. I was very happy to hear President Obama speak and see the celebration of so many who walked on Bloody Sunday in 1965. It's a great weekend."

Today, the fight for civil rights justice continues with even more powerful, well-funded forces working against racial equality, the same divisive forces that fund right-to-work legislation in our state capitals. They are the same ones that fight union organizing drives even when nonunion companies and those who work there agree that working people should decide on whether to unionize without outside interference.

"So much of our turbulent history -- the stain of slavery and the anguish of civil war, the yoke of segregation and tyranny of Jim Crow, the death of our four little girls in Birmingham, and the dream of a Baptist minister -- met on the bridge," Obama said. "It was not a clash of armies, but a clash of wills, a contest to determine the meaning of



Photo courtesy of the Walter Reuther Library at Wayne State University

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., along with civil rights activists Ralph Abernathy, right, Andrew Young, and UAW President Walter Reuther march to the funeral service for the Rev. James Reeb, who was killed following the second attempt to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

America."

Today's civil and labor rights advocates stand on the shoulders of the 1965 marchers, including Dr. King, and on the shoulders of Walter Reuther and all who came before in social justice fights. The UAW's civil rights advocacy dates back to the 1940s when the UAW led a referendum vote in Michigan to pass a fair employment practices law. Reuther also established a Fair Practices and Anti-Discrimination Department within the UAW.

The focus of shared prosperity and equality for all continues for the UAW and the social justice movement because when working people win, when non-discrimination wins, we all win.

*... Hands to the heavens, no man, no weapon  
Formed against, yes glory is destined  
Every day women and men become legends  
Sins that go against our skin become blessings ...*

Joan Silvi

# THE SKILLED TRADES



**Will there be enough trained apprentices to fill the ranks of retiring journeyworkers when it bursts?**

It's roughly the same question Jason Peterson, the skilled trades committeeperson for UAW Local 140 at Fiat-Chrysler Corp.'s Warren (Michigan) Truck Plant, and just about every other union representative hear every day as they walk through the sprawling facility:

"Hey Jason!" UAW production members yell as Ram pickup trucks in various stages of completion pass by on the assembly line. "When are they going to hold that apprentice test?"

The correct answer is that he doesn't know right now. But in the back of his mind he knows that thousands of UAW skilled trades members, including many at his plant, are eligible to retire. Many have 30 or even 40 years of seniority. When they leave, they will take a truck-load of technical and hands-on knowledge out of the plant gates with them. It's a dilemma that Chrysler and every other

manufacturing company in the United States will face: many retirements and not enough *trained* replacements. When the bubble bursts, who will keep the plants running? Will UAW members who want and deserve a chance to move into the skilled trades be at a competitive disadvantage with hires from off the street because the companies haven't trained enough replacements and need skilled trades workers immediately?

"The need is tremendous," Peterson said. "Obviously, on the union side, we understand the need."

Indeed, the UAW Skilled Trades Department has negotiated 47 new apprenticeship programs since December 2011 with more in the pipeline. But companies have to fill those spots. In General Motors alone, there are fewer than 100 apprentices and a vast majority of these are

in engineering classifications at the General Motors Technical Center. As of July 2014, 55 percent of GM's skilled trades workforce was eligible to retire immediately. At Ford, there are about 300 apprentices, while there are just 40 at Chrysler UAW-represented facilities.

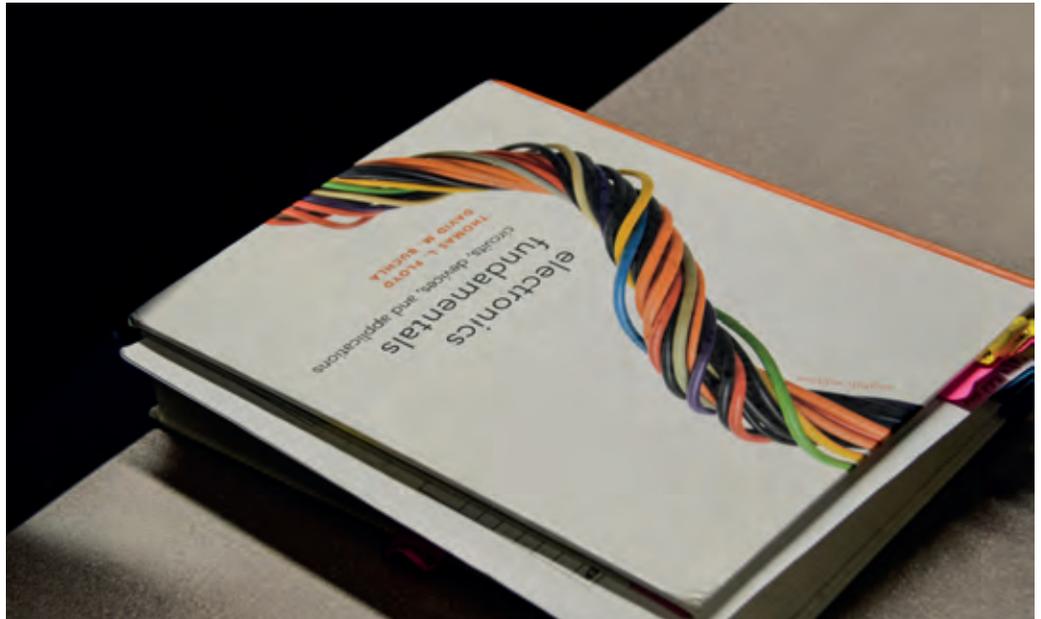
Both union and nonunion companies have been reluctant to restart apprenticeship programs since the Great Recession, but now that manufacturing has rebounded, the time may just be right.

"Private industries, the government and certainly UAW members understand the value of the skilled trades and in particular apprenticeship programs," said UAW Secretary-Treasurer Gary Casteel, who directs the union's Skilled Trades Department and holds a pipefitter's journeyworker



Vivian Johnson and Leon Anderson Jr. examine a fender-setting machine at Fiat-Chrysler's Warren Truck Assembly Plant in Michigan. Anderson volunteered to help guide Johnson through the program, just as someone volunteered to guide him through his electrical apprenticeship 20 years ago.

card. "We cannot ignore this problem, not only at the Detroit Three, but at other manufacturers where the skilled trades bubble could burst at any time. The time is now to add apprenticeship programs and add apprentices to existing ones. Of course, we want current UAW production members with seniority to fill these soon-to-be open positions."



## Skills deficit draws national attention

According to ManpowerGroups' 2014 survey, skilled trades positions are the hardest to fill on a global basis. The skills deficit in the U.S. has long been a problem and has caught the attention of many, from the White House on down. President Obama in 2014 committed \$100 million to promote registered apprenticeship programs. The president also said that a four-year college education remains the goal of many American parents for their children, but the skilled trades can represent as much or more opportunity for young Americans as a traditional college degree — with a lot less long-term debt. It was one reason why he in January proposed a plan to make community college — where many apprentices earn associate degrees as they learn and work at the same time — free as long as they earn good grades. The goal is to double the number of apprentices from 410,000 to 800,000 within a four-year period.

In Michigan, a \$50 million grant program was recently proposed to help community colleges boost skilled trades instruction.

The renewal and creation of apprenticeship programs registered with the U.S. Department of Labor has increased ten-fold in recent months. The Obama administration has also recognized the UAW's expertise in apprenticeship programs by appointing a UAW Skilled Trades Department representative to the Federal Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship after the Bush administration removed UAW representation on the board in 2002.

## Held to a high standard

There is a great deal of anticipation and interest on UAW plant floors among production members and other technicians who want a chance to enter the skilled trades. They are ready for the challenge. Rick Nicosia, a tool-and-die apprentice at Warren Truck, is just one of four apprentices at the plant that churns out 1,200 trucks a day right now. The assembly line is humming along fine now, but for how long? The plant also has 80 UAW members with 40 or more years of seniority and a majority of those are in skilled trades. Plenty more have 30 years or more of seniority, Peterson said.

Nicosia, who previously worked in air tool repair, wants to be one of the journeyworkers who eventually replace them. He has family members in the skilled trades who worked at the plant and entering the skilled trades was always his goal.

"I've always had an interest in being a toolmaker," said Nicosia, who is about a quarter of the way through the program. He must complete 8,000 hours of combined on-the-job training and classroom work.





"I've always tried to be a hard worker but you are held to the fire as an apprentice," he said.

Holding him to a high standard is Rich Comeau, a tool-and-die journeyworker who said one of the biggest challenges apprentices face is learning how to process the job before them. They may know how to do the work, but setting it up so it can be done in the most efficient manner takes time to learn.

## Super skilled, ready to go

### New journeyworker reflects on her apprenticeship training

Journeyworker Jennifer Wessell's job involves designing how interior spaces of U.S. Navy submarines will work. It's a highly specialized job and she has to be proficient in areas such as plumbing and electrical. She also has to understand the exceptional limitations of her work space.

"The way you wire a house is not the way you wire a submarine," said Wessell, a Local 571 member who recently completed her five-year apprenticeship as an arrangements designer at the General Dynamics Corp. Electric Boat Division in Groton, Connecticut. She recently spoke with Solidarity about what it was like to go through the General Dynamics apprenticeship program.

"I feel like I have more opportunities open to me," she said. "The cross-training is probably the most beneficial thing to me."

Wessell was interested in becoming an apprentice even before she started working at General Dynamics eight years ago as an arrangements draftsman. Her interest was further stoked when her husband, Joshua, entered the program.

"I know a lot of people who have gone through it," she said. "My husband said, 'Hey, you're going to like this.'"

"It's a great program. You get to check out the other disciplines. They have it very structured to what they

want to get out of people."

The program she recently completed is different from those in automotive plants or other manufacturing facilities. For instance, she has to take into account the exceptionally tight spaces where she installs electrical wiring, plumbing fixtures, refrigerators, bunks and other fixtures. How to work around a nuclear reactor was also a part of apprenticeship training.

Still, it's similar in that it requires a great deal of classroom work, a minimum of 144 hours a year that enabled her to complete a union-negotiated, company-paid associate degree program from a local community college. The classroom learning is combined with on-the-job training under the watchful eye of a journeyworker. By the time an apprentice finishes at General Dynamics, they will have completed 10,000 combined classroom/on-the-job training hours, 2,000 more than the minimum set by the UAW Skilled Trade's Department as well as the state of Connecticut.

As part of her program, she spent a four-month rotation working alongside a journeyperson in each discipline so she could understand how assignments or problems looked

from their point of view.

"When you switch from one discipline to the next, you have to re-learn everything," Wessell added.

But it pays off when she attends a meeting to discuss future work and other journeyworkers discuss their aspects of the project. For instance, knowing in advance where and when plumbing will be installed is crucial if she is installing an electrical panel.

"When stuff gets brought up, I know what they are talking about and I get to work on it," Wessell said.

She also spent some time working on a destroyer during her apprenticeship, going from a 7,000-square-foot working area to a 700,000-square-foot working area.

"Those are two different worlds," she said.

Her advice to future apprentices is to take refresher math courses now. And they should also appreciate what the Local 571 bargaining committee has done to help ensure that UAW members on production jobs get a fair shot at receiving education and training so that they can enter an apprenticeship program.

"They negotiated the contract that actually lets the program happen," said Wessell, who

"It's a process," Comeau said. "Everything is a process."

Based on his work ethic, skill and commitment to the apprenticeship program, Comeau is confident Nicosia will soon be a fellow journeyworker.

"He's a pretty good kid," Comeau said. "He works out well. He's a pretty quick learner. He does a good job."

Also doing a good job in another area plant is electrician apprentice Vivian Johnson, who was hitting the books in advance of her class on the National Electric code. She tries to make the most of what little "down time" she has.

"I'm doing what I can between my activities," Johnson said as she gathered her hefty stack of

added that the joint Apprentice Committee at General Dynamics works out the particulars of the apprenticeship program.

Wessel is also active in her union, serving on the elections committee, including the last two as its chairwoman.

A woman in a traditionally male-dominated field, she said she didn't feel she was treated any differently. But as a younger and newer journeyworker at a facility that has plenty of journeyworkers with decades of experience and that has had no apprentices in the decade before she was hired, she and other apprentices must prove themselves to the older generation.

Her training also required some sacrifice at home as she spent a great deal of time with books, which cut into family time with her husband and 8-year-old son.

"We had to do a bit of juggling, planning things ahead of time, but we made it work," she said.

After five years of classroom and practical skills learning, graduation day for Wessel's class finally arrived in 2013. They recently celebrated it with the class that fulfilled its 10,000 hours requirement in 2014.

"We had a graduation ceremony together, which was good," she said. "A lot happened in that five years. When everyone finishes an apprenticeship, you feel different. You feel honored."

U.S. NAVY PHOTO



The five-year apprenticeship program at General Dynamics allowed Wessel to work in many different disciplines and get to know a great deal about the boats she works on.

AP PHOTO



Designing systems on a submarine often involves placing piping and electrical systems around berths where sailors sleep. There aren't any walls to hide wires or pipes.

CAROL MAURO/UAW LOCAL 571



Local 571's Jennifer Wessel also earned an associate degree as she completed her apprenticeship as an interior designer at the General Dynamics Corp. Electric Boat Division in Groton, Connecticut.

# A NEED FOR Skill



books and papers.

Unlike Nicosia, Johnson recently arrived from another Chrysler facility and not only has to learn her trade, but has to get used to a different work environment. She previously worked at Chrysler's Trenton (Michigan) Engine plant.

"It's a new environment and new people," Johnson said. "That's been the roughest transition for me."

She was convinced she wanted to be an electrician after helping out a relative, a master electrician who really seemed to love his work.

"It's very cool," she said. "You never know exactly what it is that you're going to encounter. You have to leave yourself open to that."

Leon Anderson, Jr. is Johnson's journeyworker, although she will be trained by other journeyworkers, too, as she travels to the different "centers" in the plant. On this day, they were examining a machine that sets fenders. Anderson said he was trying to get Johnson comfortable and acclimated to the machine that she may one day need to repair.

"The classroom, the schoolwork is very important at this stage," he said.

Anderson, like Comeau and other journeyworkers, volunteers to take on apprentices.

"It's only fair," he said, recalling his apprenticeship two decades ago. "People were kind to me."

His advice to current and future apprentices:

"Number one: Take care of yourself and the people you are working with. Be patient and keep an open mind."

## Safety a big part of the learning

Taking care of each other has always been a part of the UAW skilled trades tradition. They work in confined spaces, on hi-los, with and near dangerous chemicals and solvents, around moving machinery with high voltage and in other areas with many

Rick Nicosia, left, says he has a lot of respect for Rich Comeau, the journeyworker who is guiding Nicosia through his apprenticeship as a toolmaker.

possible hazards. It can be a dangerous job, one that requires constant vigilance. Injury and death rates are higher in the skilled trades than they are in production classifications.

"That's one of the things that as journeymen we try to instill in apprentices – the need for safety," said Mark Maron, a pipefitter/welder and Local 5 skilled trades committeeman at AM General in Mishawaka, Indiana.

Comeau watches intently as Nicosia cuts a piece of metal on a lathe. One might think safety gloves would be required for a job that has a lot of metal shards flying about. An experienced tool-and-die maker knows better.

"It's a no-no," Comeau said, pointing out that if the lathe catches one of the apprentice's gloves, it will likely take a finger or two with it.

Working around machinery that has voltage in the tens of thousands or that can start unexpectedly isn't a walk in the park, either.

"Man, have I taken a lot of safety classes," Johnson added. "They are serious about it. But ultimately, it's on you."

## Hire from within

Peterson said it's more beneficial to the company when it trains its own apprentices rather than outside hires. Our members are already comfortable working in the facility. At Warren, each apprentice does a rotation in each of the plant's production areas.

But hires off the street may have learned a different way and they may still have a learning curve to get past.

"A lot of new people can come in with an attitude," Local 5's Maron said, adding that they have to be told how they did the job at their previous employer is not how the job is done at their new plant.

There's a lot of pride in earning a journeyworker's card. Obviously, there is the pay increase one usually receives when moving from production to skilled trades. Many like Nicosia and Johnson will have earned an associate degree, which moves them closer to a bachelor's degree. But it's more than that. There's also a feeling of accomplishment that comes after completing the program.

"Once you get that skill, they can never take it away from you," Maron said. "All it costs you is hard work and time."

But you have to be committed and prepared to listen to what people with decades of experience are trying to teach you, including about being a committed UAW member. Both apprentices know that the excellent opportunities the apprenticeship programs give them would not



Vivian Johnson knows she has to keep on top of the classroom learning as well as the on-the-job training. She tries to use whatever 'down time' she has to study.



Local 140 skilled trades committeeman Jason Peterson confers with toolmaker Bonnie Meyer. Peterson knows that many UAW members in the skilled trades are eligible to retire. Apprenticeship programs must be ramped up to meet the coming demand in the skilled trades.

be possible without collective bargaining.

Johnson and Nicosia advise prospective apprentices to have a feeling for the type of trade they would like to be trained in. Math and spatial relationships will play a very big part in the program.

"There's a lot of critical thinking in skilled trades jobs," Nicosia added.

Hopefully, the patience shown by UAW production members who want their shot at becoming an apprentice will pay off. The need to step up skilled trades training is coming to a head. There will always be questions as Jason Peterson and other union representatives walk the plant floor. Soon, they may have an answer to the apprenticeship test question.

## Nissan says no to mediation

### Automaker will continue to treat U.S. workforce as second-class citizens

Sometimes the best way to resolve disputes is to have a neutral third party come in, hear the evidence from all sides and help both sides find a win-win situation to solve the problem.

That's what the U.S. State Department attempted to do when it offered to mediate the long-standing dispute between workers and Nissan Motor Co. At issue is the company's treatment of its U.S. workforce, which the UAW and the IndustriALL Global Union maintain violates the Organization for Economic

Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

The OECD's guidelines on freedom of association for working people and trade union organizing rights are clear. Multinational enterprises have a responsibility to respect the right of workers to join trade unions and "while workers are exercising a right to organize, not threaten to transfer the whole or part of an operating unit from the country." Nissan's poor treatment of its U.S. workforce is unquestioned. But a majority of Nissan and Renault

operations around the world uphold the rights enshrined under the OECD Guidelines.

The State Department's offer to mediate the dispute could have put the issue to rest, but Nissan rebuffed the move.

"We're disappointed that Nissan refuses to enter into mediation," said Sheila Wilson, a Nissan paint technician. "We think the company, its investors, its employees and customers would benefit from meaningful dialogue on the issue of union representation."

Lee Ruffin, a technician on the final line at Nissan, and other

Nissan employees want to be treated the same as employees at Nissan's other plants around the world.

"We are Americans. We should not be treated as second-class citizens," Ruffin said. "There's no reason for other Nissan employees to have more freedoms and rights than those in the United States."

The UAW and IndustriALL accepted the offer of mediation and joined a preliminary information session in November with mediators from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to learn

Photo by C.J. HAMILTON



Jyrki Raina, general secretary of IndustriALL, pictured in the second row with black shirt, led a delegation of union leaders from six countries to meet with Nissan workers and gather information about the situation at the Canton, Mississippi, plant.

about the mediation procedures. Nissan rejected the offer of mediation, saying it believed mediation might violate U.S. labor law, a point which federal officials strongly disagreed with.

The U.S. government is recommending that Nissan should "conduct a corporate-wide labor rights review" of its adherence to the OECD Guidelines and that Nissan should consider other forms of mediation to resolve the issues raised in the OECD case.

"It is clear Nissan behaves one way in some parts of the world but is grossly exploiting workers in the United States," said UAW President Dennis Williams. "The fact that the company continues to ignore the severity of the situation and its refusal

to end these abuses or engage in dialogue that could result in a positive step forward for both workers and the company is absolutely unreasonable."

Jyrki Raina, head of IndustriALL which represents 50 million workers globally including 150,000 Nissan workers and a majority of Renault autoworkers worldwide expressed grave disappointment by the news.

"UAW and IndustriALL affiliates have repeatedly made attempts to meet with Nissan North America to resolve this issue. Nissan's unwillingness to engage in the OECD process sends a very worrisome message to its partners at Renault and Daimler as well as the global investment community," Raina said.

"We have known Nissan for

its respect of workers' rights elsewhere in the world, but in the U.S. we have heard evidence of intimidation and exploitation of its workers and their communities. This is a troubling step backwards for Nissan."

Raina and a delegation of 16 senior ranking union leaders from six countries representing Nissan and Renault workers conducted a fact-finding mission in Canton, Mississippi, in October 2014. The mission corroborated the claims of intimidation and other labor rights abuses highlighted in the OECD case, and heard testimony from workers about ongoing management interference with freedom of association.

*Vince Piscopo*

## Chevrolet Colorado wins 2015 Motor Trend Truck of the Year



The honors keep rolling in for UAW-built trucks. The Chevrolet Colorado, which returned to the automaker's lineup after a three-year hiatus, was recently named the 2015 Motor Trend Truck of the Year in the magazine's February issue. Judges evaluated the midsize pickup in areas such as price, handling, towing capacity and fuel economy against other midsize competition.

In January, the Ford F-150 was named the 2015 Truck of the Year at the North American International Auto Show. Fiat-Chrysler in February marked its 59<sup>th</sup> consecutive month of year-over-year U.S. sales gains in part because of the success of its Ram pickup trucks.

# Fast track keeps Congress from doing its job

## Trade agreements need close scrutiny to ensure fairness

We live in a global economy and this trend will certainly continue in the future. In fact, international trade, including both imports and exports, accounts for roughly 30 percent of the U.S. economy. UAW members know firsthand how important trade is for domestic manufacturing and our economy.

The automotive industry is, after all, our largest export sector for manufactured goods. We live in a world where the impact of trade not only affects the automobile industry, but also touches nearly every aspect of our lives. Our jobs, food, health, communities, and the entire economy are all impacted by trade. Done right, trade agreements can create jobs and bring people closer together. On the other hand, misguided trade agreements can destroy jobs, lower wages, and harm communities. There is an important debate going on in Washington right now that will have a huge impact on how trade agreements are considered by Congress.

From the president of the UAW, to the UAW International Executive Board, to UAW members and staff, we have been working for years with the Obama administration and Congress to try to shape trade agreements in a way that is not detrimental to UAW members and American working people. It is important that we have a seat at the table. We have especially been focused on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which includes 12 countries and 40 percent of the world's economy.

The Obama administration and some Congressional leaders are aggressively lobbying for the passage



The concern over fast-track trade authority dates back to NAFTA, which received similar consideration and led to massive job losses, especially in American manufacturing.

of fast-track trade authority. The goal is to complete massive trade deals with Asia and Europe and bypass the usual congressional oversight mechanisms. The UAW is adamantly opposed to fast track. For starters, UAW members are still feeling the negative impacts of NAFTA, which was fast tracked and resulted in a net loss of nearly 700,000 jobs in the United States. In Mexico, it led to a huge upheaval in which more than 2 million subsistence farmers were forced from their land.

Under the Constitution, Congress has primary responsibility on international trade and fast track undermines this responsibility. Another problem with fast track is that it prevents Congress from making changes or improvements to trade agreements once they come to the floor for a vote. Fast track also nullifies the use of the filibuster in the Senate.

Simply put, fast track keeps

Congress from doing its job of shaping and debating legislation by only giving elected leaders an up or down vote, and abolishing the use of the filibuster.

Once fast track is passed it is nearly impossible to address troubling provisions in any trade agreement. The UAW strongly opposes fast track because historically it has led to unfair trade practices that have left millions of Americans out of work. Trade policies adopted under fast track have cost us more than 1 million jobs and contributed to the shuttering of more than 60,000 factories.

Passage of fast track is a high priority for many multinational corporations. Well-connected lobbyists are making their voices heard to get it passed. In order to raise our concerns and have our voices heard we must do the same.

Source:  
*UAW Legislative Department*

# Manufacturing grows but wages remain low

## The jobs being created are often temporary

As manufacturing grows, the assumption is that good jobs that support working families will follow. But, according to a recent study, that isn't happening as wages are falling, particularly in the auto parts sector.

The study, "Manufacturing Low Pay: Declining Wages in the Jobs That Built America's Middle Class," was released by the National Employment Law Project (NELP). It shows how manufacturing jobs, once the staple of a growing middle class, are now barely keeping families out of poverty.

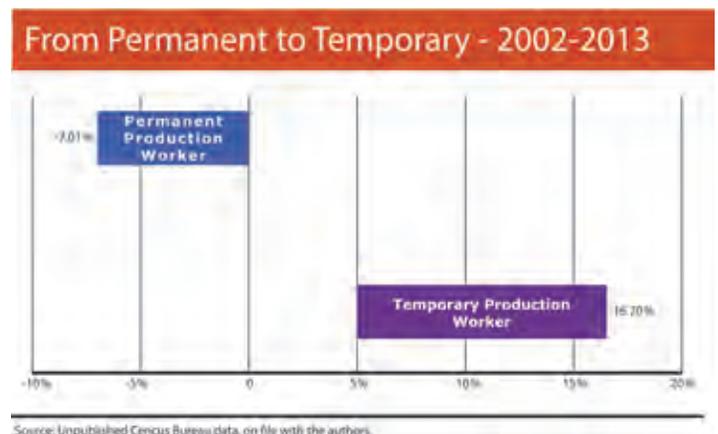
"Jobs in manufacturing and auto, important growth-generating industries, are not as good as they once were," wrote Catherine Ruckelshaus and Sarah Leberstein, the study's authors. "What will these jobs look like in 10 years if these trends continue?"

The overwhelming majority of Americans believe that a strong manufacturing base is critical to our standard of living. The study found that while manufacturing workers used to earn a wage significantly higher than the U.S. average, by 2013 the average factory worker made 7.7 percent below the median wage for all occupations. In the automotive sector, real wages for auto parts workers fell by nearly 14 percent from 2003 to 2013 - that's three times faster than manufacturing as a whole and nine times faster than the decline for all occupations.

"If these wage trends continue, manufacturing and auto jobs will not deliver on the promise of creating livable jobs with positive economic revivals in communities and for families," according to the study.

The manufacturing sector grew by 4.3 percent between 2010 and 2012. Overall unemployment, which was 10 percent in October 2009, was 5.5 percent in February and signs point to continued improvement.

The ramifications for manufacturing workers, the communities that host the jobs and the U.S. economy are far-reaching. These include increasing inequality as middle-class jobs do not return, drains on taxpayers as local and federal subsidies fail to bring back jobs with good wages, and a lack of accountability for businesses that seek only to enhance profits at the expense of working families



and communities.

The study used Alabama as an example. Today, there are 12,800 workers employed at auto assembly plants in the state, plus 20,700 at parts suppliers. But while the number of jobs has increased, the monthly earnings for Alabama auto parts workers have declined by 42 percent. The monthly wage in 2013 was \$1,593 less than it was in 2001.

Fourteen percent of auto parts workers are employed by staffing agencies. On average auto parts workers placed by staffing agencies make 29 percent less than those employed directly by auto parts manufacturers. Often, these workers are promised the opportunity to move to permanent status, only to be left as temps for years. They also usually have benefits that are far inferior to permanent working people and risk being fired if they take more than a few days off.

The auto industry has added nearly 350,000 jobs and invested \$38 billion in U.S. facilities since 2009, a sign of long-term commitment to building vehicles here. Just-in-time manufacturing ensures that jobs at many parts suppliers are also likely to stay in the United States even if wages rise.

"The time is right for all auto parts workers to win their fair shot at a decent standard of living," said UAW President Dennis Williams. "This study provides concrete evidence that taxpayers are often getting a bad deal when incentives are given to some manufacturers. It's time everyone shared in the prosperity of a booming economy."

Vince Piscopo

## An overwhelming need

### Overworked and undercompensated Health Alliance Plan workers become UAW members

Toni Marie Thomas, a client relations liaison in Health Alliance Plan's (HAP) Retention and Education Department, has been with the health insurance provider for more than 42 years. Before she retired this spring, she wanted to make sure that she could leave saying that she made a difference and that her co-workers would be taken care of after she left them.

She wanted her colleagues at HAP's corporate office in Detroit to be part of a union.

"The reason we decided to form a union is because we were all being treated unfair," Thomas said. "Our Grievance Department has been working seven days, over eight hours and are not being compensated. They work weekends without pay plus there are mandatory meetings on Saturday without pay. The clericals are in the same meeting and getting paid time and a half."

On Jan. 26, employees from the HAP corporate office joined the UAW through a card-check process with 22 votes for and one against.

For Jamar Williams, a personal service coordinator, the need for forming a union became overwhelming.

"We want to have more of an input and voice in the direction the employer was taking jobs, the company and its functions," Williams said. "We want a defined contract based on our duties, title, compensation and benefits and a support system that has our best interest at heart. We want to work in a fair work environment."

When HAP employees initiated the process of joining the UAW there were just three departments involved: web communication analysts, appeal and grievance analysts, and Retention and Education Department employees.

"Our employer prolonged the process. There were delays and in some cases, employees felt they were harassed by management," Williams said. "We finally had to file a complaint with the (National Labor Relations Board), which we won."

However, with communication and determination, when the day came to sign cards to join the union,



DENN PIETRO

Employees of Health Alliance Plan in Detroit were frustrated with being overworked and underpaid. They overwhelmingly joined the UAW in February.

they were also joined by employees in the Credentialing Department, quality analysts, the HAP Direct Department and monitoring and oversight analysts.

When working people come together, they learned they could all win.

"I have never been in a union and never really thought I needed one," said Tonya Williams, an appeal and grievance analyst. "However, I am now in a place where I definitely see the need and feel the need for protection of a union and someone who will fight the fight with and for you."

Williams now plans to become very involved in UAW-sponsored community charity work.

That kind of involvement helps Toni Marie Thomas know she made a difference.

"My biggest hope in joining this union is having job security, being compensated when working over 40 hours and being able to voice your opinion; fairness, but I can go on and on. Although I will be retiring at the end of March, I can say before I leave that I was a voice for my peers and that we hung in there and never gave up."

Denn Pietro

*When working people come together, they learned they could all win.*

# Her grandmother's convictions live on

## Local 7902 member is an award-winning playwright

Why do some of us stand up in the face of adversity while others don't? It's a thought-provoking question and one that is the subject of a play, "Carla Cooks the War," written by UAW Local 7902 member Laura Maria Censabella. The play was recently recognized for a national writing award.

Censabella is a faculty member at The New School for Drama in New York. She's also shop steward and a life-long activist who was involved in organizing her division at the New School more than a decade ago. Their efforts led to recognition of their union, which includes almost 2,000 full- and part-time New School faculty.

"We organized because collective bargaining was better than having to rely on politely asking management for things like notice if classes got cancelled and we lost our main source of income for a semester," she recalls.

Supporting collective bargaining came easily for Censabella. Her father was a clothing salesman in New York for 40 years and became shop steward of Local 340 of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

"He would always remind me that what he was able to provide our family — health care, my college education, everything — came from their union. I never forgot that," Censabella said.

These days the attention has been on Censabella and her writing. As a produced playwright, she took on the task of taking her Italian grandmother's young life and translating it into a story about courage and convictions.

"Her name was Carla Avidano, and when she was a very young mother, about 20, she stood up to the Nazis in Italy and helped Italian partisan soldiers who were resisting the Nazis and fascists. Things like passing messages, hiding them in her home, cooking for them, distracting the Germans — all things that put her in great danger," Censabella said.

"I used to ask her, 'Why did you do it?' Her answer was always the same: 'I have to do it. I cannot live with myself if I don't.'"

Her courage was not without cost — the



Top photo: Laura Maria Censabella learned about unions from her father, Arturo Censabella.

Left: The play is about Censabella's grandmother, Carla Avidano, who stood up to the Nazis during World War II.

Right: Censabella won the William Saroyan Playwriting Prize in Human Rights/Social Justice.

stress of fighting the Nazis led to a heart condition that eventually took her life.

"I wanted to explore the theme of those of us who do the right thing, despite the cost to us. Why do we do it? The result was my play, 'Carla Cooks the War.'"

That play has garnered a lot of attention. In December, she won the very prestigious Armenian Dramatic Arts Alliance (ADAA) William Saroyan Playwriting Prize in Human Rights/Social Justice and a \$10,000 prize. It's the first time the international award has been awarded to a non-Armenian.

"It's a great honor," Censabella said. "William Saroyan's life was about the dignity of people. I'm very touched that they saw that in my play."



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All program plans for new and existing customers may require a new two-year contract. This offer cannot be combined with any other discounts. Qualifying monthly data plan required.

### **Encouraging news in Tennessee**

The news coming out of Chattanooga is very encouraging and long overdue. Unions have been bashed and battered for far too long by the likes of Senator Bob Corker. For the UAW, it's hard to organize when the deck is stacked against you. It hasn't been easy but with Volkswagen's strong belief in the participation of working people, together, we have prevailed. Senator Corker needs to be held accountable to his constituents. Solidarity forever!

**David Corey Sr.**  
Burlington, Wisconsin  
Local 72 retiree

### **UAW pride a family thing**

Thank you for the Jan.-Feb. issue of Solidarity magazine. I sincerely appreciate keeping current with what is happening around the country to our brothers and sisters. I became a fan of Solidarity Magazine when I was 7 years old. My mother began her long tenure as financial secretary of a local at an auto parts factory in Winamac, Indiana (Local 1609), after the long struggle to organize. Now, as a writer and a member of the National Writers Union (Local 1981), I enjoy the magazine on another level. I am proud to be UAW and now my daughter is third-generation UAW (Local 4121) in the state of Washington.

Again, thank you. Your work is greatly appreciated.

**Jeff Fites**  
Brownsburg, Indiana  
Local 1981

### **Buying union just takes a little research**

At UAW Local 1005 we are in the midst of our largest project since our union hall was built in the 1960s – the upgrade of our 40-plus year old heating and cooling system. As a union, we felt it was important to use union labor and equipment where possible. Thanks to our brothers and sisters at UAW Local 893 in Marshalltown, Iowa, we found Ducane equipment that fits our requirements and offered a dramatic project savings.

We hired Relmec Mechanical, which utilizes members of Local 120 Pipefitters and Local 38 IBEW, along with our members for the removal, installation and startup of our new UAW-built heating and cooling system, which has exceeded our expectations by leaps and bounds. It just goes to show that if you do take the time and do the research you, too, can find quality union-made goods and services to serve and satisfy your needs.

**Dennis Fortney**  
**Dave Paterniti**  
**Tim Lyke**  
UAW Local 1005 trustees  
Parma, Ohio

Because we receive so many letters to Solidarity, we cannot print them all and reserve the right to edit for length. Please keep letters brief and include your name, address, daytime phone and local union number. Send to:

UAW Solidarity Letters  
8000 E. Jefferson Ave.  
Detroit, MI 48214

or e-mail to:  
**uawsolidarity@uaw.net**  
Type "Letters" in the subject line.

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PRO-Member is about what makes a union strong: membership. The UAW is strongest when every member knows that he or she is a vital part of the whole. It was that simple idea that led to our first organizing victories. PRO-Member builds on these basic principles and tells our story through the voice of members.



Through video, interviews and testimonials, UAW active and retired members tell their stories about their experience in the union. Though they come from multiple sectors and geographies, there is a common element in all of their voices: that we are at our best when we work together to build our union.

PRO-Member also highlights innovation. Recognizing that our lives are busy and we communicate differently today than we did in the past, PRO-Member features the work of local unions taking creative approaches to age-old problems.

Finally, PRO-Member is about the future. Union membership is under attack – both by legislators who want to undermine the legal right to be organized and outside groups funding campaigns against unions. But we will prevail because our ideas are timeless – that we are stronger when we stand together. That simple point cannot be undone through a sound bite or internet meme. It's who we are, it's what we do and it's what PRO-Member is all about.



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