



Solidarity Now!

The Award Winning Newsletter of CWA 4730

Organize Educate Mobilize

Communications Workers of America
 Poplars 331, 855-7929 or 855-8508
<http://www.indiana.edu/~cwa/>

June, 2001

Volume 18, Number 4

HEALTH CARE FORUM

by Linda Harl

The IUB Professional Council sponsored a Forum on IU Health Care Plans on May 23. The event featured speakers primarily from the IU Benefits office talking about health care trends in general and other problems specific to this area, as well as our own health care coverage.

The event was well attended and thanks should be extended to the PA Council for organizing it. However, people I spoke to who went to the meeting were disappointed that so much time was devoted to "overview" issues and so little time to questions specific to their concerns. Perhaps, if it is ever done again, the order of presentation could be switched. Start with the pre-submitted questions and then go to the "big picture." Or maybe the unanswered questions could be addressed in a future Benefits newsletter. As it is now, many people who attended the forum still don't have answers to some of their basic questions.

MARCH OF DIMES WALK AMERICA

by Connie Vaughn

CWA 7430 supported March of Dimes Walk America with a team for the sixth year on May 6. Seven adults and two children walked on the CWA team and raised \$614. Many thanks to Roni Goveia, Angie Hoseman and children, Liz Feitl, June Wickboldt, Laraine Cooksey, and Laura Reed for the great job they did getting sponsorship from family members, co-workers and friends.

We plan on having a team again next year and urge you to mark your calendars, with a reminder to come join us on the first Sunday in May, 2002.

Bloomington is part of the South Central Division of The Indiana Chapter of March of Dimes, which also includes Lawrence, Bartholomew, and Green counties. Seventy-seven percent of the funds raised during the Walk stays in the local division to support numerous program services to improve the health of babies. Did you know that Indiana ranks 40th for infant mortality? That means that more babies die before their 1st birthday in Indiana each year than in 39 other states....a really good reason to come join the CWA team in 2002.

CWA LOCAL 4730

NOTICE OF NOMINATION

Nominations for the office of Local 4730 Executive Board member at Large shall be conducted at the Local's membership meeting on:

Thursday, June 28, 2001

5:15 p.m.

Large Conference Room

Telecommunications Building, 10th & the ByPass

The Election Committee will open nominations from the floor. Written nominations will also be accepted, provided they are received at the CWA Office, Poplars 331, by noon June 28. Any member in good standing may nominate, provided the nominee is a member in good standing and agrees to be a nominee. The Executive Board performs the following duties:

- a. is responsible for making decisions and taking action in behalf of the Local membership between local meetings on all matters concerning the good and welfare of the members
- b. meets prior to the next Local meeting, and with the Local Officers is responsible for the development of the next Local meeting agenda
- c. causes an annual budget to be prepared and presented to the membership
- d. Actions and decisions of the Executive Board shall be subject to approval by the membership
- e. A majority of the Executive Board shall constitute a quorum
- f. strives, generally, to advance the welfare and solidarity of the Local

Marilyn Estep, Chair
 Election Committee
ESTEPM@indiana.edu
 855-6456

SINCE YOU ASKED

QUESTION: *One of my co-workers is viewing pornographic material on his IU computer? Not only that, but he's showing it to others in the office. Is this legal? What can I do?*

ANSWER: The SN staff has talked to several people about this problem, and it would appear that people in this situation have a variety of options. But the simple answer to the question is "No, this isn't legal." Paul Styles of the COAS information technology office reminds us that everyone who gets a university computer account agrees to not use the computer for personal use. In reality, this rule is almost impossible to enforce, but it has been invoked in cases where the abuse is flagrant.

One approach to the problem would be to talk directly to the person responsible for the offensive material or to a supervisor. If that doesn't work or isn't feasible, Paul suggests you tell your computer support person. They can investigate without involving the individual who initiated the complaint. In fact, Paul says that if you suspect the person is doing something illegal (for example, distributing the material to others via email), call the UITS help line and ask for the security office. There have been a few cases on campus where computers have been seized and files turned over to law enforcement agencies!

Another option is to file a sexual harassment grievance. One kind of harassment is defined as "hostile environment harassment." This is a pattern of behaviors which is sexual in nature and creates a workplace or academic climate that "unreasonably interferes" with performance. CWA can help with such a complaint as can the Office of Women's Affairs and Human Resources, but all harassment charges are ultimately handled by the Affirmative Action Office. The contact person there is Rob Aspy at 855-7559.

What happens if you complain? Personnel Policy 6.2 in our manual states, "In the event it is found that sexual harassment has occurred, corrective action, up to and including discharge or expulsion of the offender, will be taken through the appropriate channels of the university. In addition, the university will make follow-up inquiries to ensure the harassment has not resumed and the complainant has not suffered retaliation."

Keep this in mind. EVERYONE has the right to be comfortable in his or her workplace. If you aren't, you have a right to ask for remedial action to be taken.

Editor's note: During discussions on this topic, we have learned that some people may be getting material offensive to others via the U.S. Mail. We hope to deal with the whole issue of personal mail at a business address in a future issue.

HARVARD STUDENTS STAND UP FOR HARVARD STAFF

by Steve Ingeman

In an effort to drive home their "living wage" message, as many as 40 Harvard students occupied the university's main administration building and staged a three-week sit-in, demanding higher wages for university employees. Their primary demand was that security workers, dining-hall staff, and other blue collar support staff be paid a "living wage"—at least \$10.25 per hour. In the end, the protest-ending agreement reached with the Harvard administration carries no guarantees of increased wages, but students proclaimed victory for having publicized the problem.

The city of Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Harvard is located, pays public employees no less than \$10.25 per hour (according to its "Living Wage Ordinance" of 1999), but Harvard, which is a private employer, pays as little as \$8.05 an hour for some jobs. The University insists that "only" about 400 of its 13,500 regular workers earn less than \$10 per hour, but the protesters insist that if contractors are included—including security guards and custodians—as many as 2000 earn below a "living wage." Sub-contractors regularly pay directly hired janitors \$7.50 per hour, and some dining hall staff earn as little as \$6.50 per hour. Students note that, for a full-time hourly employee taking no vacations, these wages amount to an annual salary of \$15,600 and \$13,520, respectively. Because of low wages and the high cost of living in the Boston area, many university employees must take second jobs just to survive. But despite the low wages, workers at Harvard have not been willing to actively speak up, fearing for their jobs and intimidated by the administration.

What would it take for Harvard to commit to a living wage standard, as Cambridge has? The Progressive Student Labor Movement, the student group that initiated the sit-in, estimated that it would cost the university no more than \$10 million dollars, which amounts to less than one half of one percent of the annual interest on Harvard's endowment. It also exactly equals the compensation paid to a single fund manager in 1998. Even so, after the sit-in ended, Harvard administrators boasted that they had not backed down to student demands for a "student determined" and "arbitrary" minimum wage.

Here in Indiana, this story has a quaint, New England ring to it: privileged students taking an interest in labor causes? But the living wage movement has struck at other campuses as well. William and Mary has acceded to student demands that the employee wage scale be reexamined, and even at IU, students and faculty stood up last year against low wages paid to daycare employees of the university. That students who are not directly affected by these issues should feel so strongly about them demonstrates the serious injustice of wage inequities on America's campuses. As union members, we should not forget that students have a profound sense of justice and injustice, and we should try to involve them whenever possible in Support Staff issues.

STEVE LEAVES LOCAL FOR CHINA

by Linda Butler

Steve Ingeman is the "Administrative Assistant" for the Customer and Access Services Department at the Main Library and is Secretary of Local 4730 and serves on the Executive Board. He also writes for *SN*. He will be leaving us soon, so we wanted to talk to him while he is still in town.

Steve, what encouraged you to become active in the local?

I had an experience several years ago, during the infamous "library reorganization" of 1990, that made me appreciate unions in general. I had come from a job at the William and Mary Library, where the relationship between management and workers was wonderful, and I had no particular interest in labor issues. But my wife was working at the main library here when the reorganization started, and I was shocked. To me, watching it second hand, it looked like a few people in the library administration had decided to reward their friends with better positions, and to do so they had to completely reshuffle all the other library departments. People were arbitrarily shoved into positions they never applied for, and in some cases positions they were not qualified for or were overqualified for. It was a travesty, but there was nothing to stop them—when my wife contacted HR, they were surprised to hear about it, but didn't do anything about it. They did mention, though, that since her position was classified as a service/maintenance position, she had union representation. The next day, when she was informed that everyone was just going to have to "make the best of it", she politely informed them that she was represented by AFSCME—and the backpedaling began. She was one of only a handful of people who had that protection though, and the reorganization went along pretty much as devised. The staff had no voice whatsoever.

I can't think of a better example than that of how important it is to have a unified staff voice. When Anne Likes offered me a union card, I didn't have to think about it. And since we organized, things have

improved substantially. For one thing, such a reorganization could never take place now, because the union has held the university to certain standards regarding job descriptions, job openings and postings. And in general, the university is more conscious of setting standards and enforcing them consistently. Staff know that if higher ups do fail to act professionally now, we have some recourse.

What do you like best about your union activities?

I get a sense of satisfaction out of trying to make a difference in the staff environment on campus. I'm not able to do that much, actually, but through *Solidarity Now!* hopefully I'm giving people something to think about, or informing them about something they didn't know, and maybe that helps.

What would you like to see improved in the local?

I'd like to see more people sign membership cards. When our membership is low, we have less leverage with the administration. Less leverage means less incentive for the administration to bargain seriously. If people signed a card and never gave the union another thought, it would still make a difference. Of course, I'd like to see more people "active", too!

What would you say to someone to encourage him or her to join the local and become active in it?

Most people like their employers and believe their employers are looking out for them, and many times they may be. The danger at a big institution like this, with such a large bureaucracy, is that someone you'll never see might make a pronouncement that could ruin your work life. Or, lower down the managerial line, someone might just feel pressure to do things that ruin your work life, even if no one higher up intended it. (For instance, many bosses actively discourage union participation, or make it difficult for active union members to get to union events, because they think their superiors will see them as bad managers unless they do this—even if it's illegal!) The only defense against this is to have some say yourself in managing your work situation,

and you can't do that alone—you need leverage that, right now, you can really only get with the union.

Things have improved in the ten years I've been here, but it seems like there is still a lot to be done, and a lot of pressure being put on the clerical staff here. At William and Mary, in my first job out of college, I made more money and had better benefits than I have ever had in Bloomington. Even so, every once in a while a reclassification project will come up that will actually lower wage scales, or the university will claim poverty at raise time, despite huge raises for a few administrators, or will cut back on staffing to try to save money, as if our wages are such an egregious expense! There's a corporate culture here that doesn't value the ground-level workers as much as it should. But I think the union has made some headway in getting respect. More members could only help.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time (assuming you have any)?

I have a ten-year-old and a two-year-old, a dissertation to finish, and an ambition to be a writer. Of course, with children, I can pretty much forget the last two! I also love to cook, and on Sundays I have to watch *Malcolm in the Middle*.

It's hard for the local to lose an active member like you, but you have some interesting events coming up in your future. Could you tell us why you are moving away from Bloomington?

Next year I will be in Hangzhou, China. I'm going to be teaching English at a university, but I'm really going for the food. My wife will be doing research for her dissertation—that's the official reason for moving—and I think we're both anxious for the adventure.

***Solidarity Now!* is the official newsletter of CWA Local 4730 and is made possible by the dues paying members of that local.**

We encourage all CWA members to submit or suggest items for publication. If you have any questions about the newsletter, or would like to serve on the committee, contact Linda Harl, Sycamore 026, 5-9503, email: LHARL.

IT'S TIME TO RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE

(Reprinted from the CWA Legislative Fact Sheet, March, 2001.)

Presently, 11 million works earn \$5.15/hour, the minimum wage. If these employees work 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year—without taking a vacation, observing a single unpaid holiday, or missing any work due to illness—their annual income is \$10,712. That amount is \$3,400 below the poverty level for a family of three. No one who works 40 hours a week should have to live below the poverty line.

The minimum wage should be the first rung on the ladder of opportunity, but for millions of workers, it has become the first step on a treadmill of deprivation. This is because the minimum wage has remained frozen at \$5.15/hour since 1997. But nothing else has stood still. Since 1997, housing expenses have risen by 12.8%, food prices have increased by 10.5%, medical costs have soared by 26.2%, and gasoline prices have grown by 22.8%.

Most notably, the average pay of CEOs (chief executive officers) has skyrocketed by 53 % since 1997, from \$8,100,000 to \$12,400,000 annually. But while the price of essentials and the salaries of CEOs have risen markedly since 1997, the purchasing power of the minimum wage has plunged.

To assist the lowest-paid works, CWA is pressing for passage of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2001. This bill would raise the minimum wage by \$1.50/hour in three installments, so that by January 1, 2003, the minimum wage would be \$6.65/hour. Please support this proposal by contacting your elected representatives at the national level. For contact information, go to the following website: www.congress.org.



LOCAL 4730
Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO

I hereby request and authorize the deduction of dues from my pay as established by Communications Workers of America (C.W.A.) of which I am a member. These will be paid to the Treasurer of C.W.A.

NAME (print)

Department

Work Address

Work Phone

Home Address

City/ST/Zip

Home Phone

Soc. Sec. #

Signature

Received by:

Date:

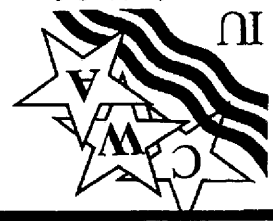
Get Involved! Make a Difference!

Fill out the membership card above and show your support. If you are already a member, how about putting your own talents to use by working with a union committee?

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Local 4730



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