



Label Letter

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Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Special Focus: Unions Give Back

Building better communities is part of the fabric of America's labor unions, whether it be through organizing workplaces for better wages, benefits, and working conditions or by giving back to others around them. As far back as the 1800s, unions were involved in community aid, establishing "mutual insurance" for sickness and funeral expenses for struggling members during the 1820 depression. A century later, unions formed "unemployed committees" to provide resources for workers and their families harmed by the Great Depression.

Walter Reuther, famed former leader of the United Auto Workers, said "There is no greater calling than to serve your fellow man. There is no greater contribution than to help the weak. There is no greater satisfaction than to do it well." This legacy lives on in today's labor movement.

This year, labor unions across north America gave back to their communities and beyond. Below are just a few examples of the work these unions have done to help those in need.

IAFF LOCAL 798 TOY PROGRAM

The International Association of Fire Fighters Local 798 in San Francisco has run the largest IAFF Toy Program since 1949. Since then, the Local 798 Toy Program has grown to serve hundreds of thousands of Bay Area children and families who are in need. It has evolved from a few firefighters repairing broken toys and bikes for 15 families to over 300 firefighters and friends volunteering their time to distribute over 200,000

toys to more than 40,000 disadvantaged children year-round.

Besides helping individual families in need, the Toy Program serves many community organizations, including shelters for abused women and children, innercity schools, neighborhood groups, children's cancer wards, and pediatric AIDS units. They also respond on a year-round basis to displaced children who are victims of fires, floods, and other disasters.

The Toy Program collects toys for infants through age 13. They also hold a Bike Day, where they give away 100 bicycles and helmets.



SEE 'AFM,' PAGE 3



IAFF Local 798 in San Francisco has run the largest annual toy drive Toy Program since 1949



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'AFM,' FROM PAGE 1

AFM EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND

The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) maintains an emergency relief fund for members who are adversely affected by major disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes, wildfires, or tornadoes. In addition, the union has created the Lester Petrillo Fund to assist members in good-standing who become ill or disabled and cannot accept work.

AFT DISTRIBUTES ONE MILLION BOOKS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

This holiday season, after successfully distributing one million books to students and teachers in the last year, the American Federation of Teachers announced it would distribute an additional one million books through its multiyear Reading Opens the World campaign to create a nation of confident and joyful readers.

"Last year, we announced our commitment to distribute one million books to educators, students, and their families to promote the joy of reading," a statement issued by the union reads. "And we did. We held more than 200 events in 28 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico at schools, community centers, faith-based organizations, and union halls over the last 12 months. At each event, children, their families, and their teachers were able to choose books from diverse titles for kids of all ages—for their classrooms and home libraries. Now we are taking that initial literacy effort to the next level."

The AFT will continue the campaign in 2023, pledging to give away another one million books to promote literacy.

BCTGM LOCAL 84 HELD TOY DRIVE IN GEORGIA

A toy drive led by members of Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco, and Grain Millers (BCTGM) Local 84 and Hostess Brands brought holiday joy to children in Columbus, Georgia.

Hostess Brands was eager to join with the Union after seeing the success and happiness brought to the community following the back-to-school backpack giveaway the union did earlier in the year.

BCTGM International Representative Darrell Copeland worked closely with Allen Elementary School in Columbus to identify students who needed the most support this



AFT, AFT Massachusetts, the Lynn Teachers Union, and a group of high school students from Lynn Vocational Technical Institute SkillsUSA chapter held a free book giveaway in an effort to promote literacy and get more books in the hands of young people in their community.

holiday season. More than 30 students and 11 families from the school were identified as recipients of the gifts at the Georgia Title 1 school.

Each student was asked to write a letter to Santa asking for what they wanted most. Some of the letters requested toys, shoes, and clothing, while others requested bed sheets, comforters, pillows, and even body care items.

BCTGM Southern Region Vice President Zack Townsend and Copeland read through all the letters and purchased gifts for the kids at department stores, grocery stores, big box stores and online websites. "To ensure the children would smile on Christmas morning," noted Copeland.

On the day of the toy drive, there were plenty of smiles and grateful tears. Parents were asked to pick up the gifts, many of which would be the only items the children would receive on Christmas morning.

"This is what Christmas is all about!" said Vice President Townsend.

IATSE DONATES 25K TO SUPPORT URGENT HUMANITARIAN AID FOR UKRAINIANS

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) General Executive Board approved a \$25,000 donation to support urgent humanitarian aid for Ukrainians in March 2022. The donations, made through the International and European Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), provided essentials like food, water, medical, and hygiene supplies to now-refugees in Ukraine and neighboring countries.

IBEW LOCAL 332 'WALK A MILE IN THEIR SHOES' FUNDRAISER SUPPORTS YWCA

"It's one of my favorite and long-standing events that Local 332 supports," said Lilliana Martinez, a fourth-year International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 332 apprentice and co-captain of the Local's 'Walk a Mile In Their Shoes' Fundraiser. "I look forward to it every year."

More than 150 members and their families participated in the YWCA Golden Gate Silicon Valley fundraiser, held on June 23 at the Santana Row shopping area. Billed as a light-hearted annual event to raise awareness about the serious issue of sexual assault and domestic violence, it raises much-needed funds to support critical and life-saving services for survivors. These services include shelter, therapy, legal support, childcare, employment assistance and outreach.

"It was a warm, beautiful day and the building trades really showed up," said Local 332 President Javier Casillas, who also co-captained the event. "Local 332 and UA Local 393 had the largest presence."

In addition to members walking, Local 332 also sponsored the event, raising more than \$10,000. The event itself raised over \$100,000 in total and was the first in-person walk since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

Local 332 also supports other community events, including a turkey trot, a charity drive for their local Sacred Heart, Operation Freedom Paws which works with veterans and service dogs, and Christmas in the Park.

NALC DISASTER RELIEF FOUNDATION

The National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) Disaster Relief Foundation was created to alleviate the suffering of members affected by natural disasters, including earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, and wildfires.

In response to multiple disasters last year, the NALC created the foundation so that Branches had a central location to send donations.

"Branches wanted to know where they could send desperately needed supplies and money, but there wasn't a central loca-

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tion,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “That’s why we created this foundation, to reflect the will of the members and make it easy for them to help other in need quickly and efficiently.”

The NALC is also creating response teams around the country as part of their efforts. Individuals on the teams receive disaster relief training from charitable organizations and government agencies, including the American Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Foundation volunteers were activated to go to North Carolina to help letter carriers recover from the destruction wrought by Hurricane Florence. They helped remove water-logged furniture and tear out soaked drywall and offered emotional support for individuals who were overwhelmed by the aftermath.

The foundation also offers financial support through grants to members facing hardship as a result of a natural disaster. Members can apply on the union’s website.

UTILITY WORKERS RAISE FUNDS FOR VETERANS

The Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA) Local 648 and employer American Water held a sponsored walk fundraiser for Camp Freedom, an adventure camp for disabled veterans, first responders, and Gold Star families this fall. The walk raised more than \$3,000 for the camp.

The camp, located in Northeast Pennsylvania, seeks to use the outdoors and nature to promote the social well-being of participants through peer-to-peer interaction, camaraderie, and outdoor adventures.

SAG-AFTRA FOUNDATION GRANTED MORE THAN \$800,000 IN EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The SAG-AFTRA Foundation says it has granted more than \$800,000 in emergency financial assistance, COVID assistance, senior financial crisis aid, health assistance and disaster relief this year to members of the union. Foundation President Courtney B. Vance says the foundation also awarded another \$300,000 in higher education

scholarships to 106 SAG-AFTRA members and their dependents.

In his annual year-end report, Vance thanked the donors and said “as has always been true, if you need help, please ask. And if you can help, please give.”

HANFORD UNIONS HELP 150 CHILDREN HAVE A MEMORABLE CHRISTMAS

Members of the 13 unions that make up the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council (HAMTC) in Richland, Wash., adopted 150 Children, identified by the Department of Social and Health Services as in need, buying gifts for them to open on Christmas morning.

HAMTC and the International Association of Firefighters Local 124 have been adopting local foster children for Christmas for more than 10 years.

“This last year with the help of our Firefighters Local 124, we helped 150 children have a memorable Christmas morning,” says HAMTC’s Diane Whitten. “We get our children’s information from our local DSHS organization. Their caseworkers ask the children what they would like for Christmas, what their favorite colors are, favorite books, toys etc. We get that information and pass it on to our supporters.”

Volunteers that help with the annual event include union members, retired and active, as well as some non-union coworkers.

Whitten says that all the gifts are packaged, wrapped, and inventoried and “we



HAMTC union volunteers shop and wrap gifts for more than 150 children in need

make sure that kids that are part of a family all get approximately the same number of gifts. Because well you know how children are.”

For children that ask for bicycles, HAMTC reaches out to the United Association Local 598 which runs a ‘Bikes for Tykes’ Program.

“We never get to meet the kids, everything is done anonymously,” explains Whitten.

Volunteers do occasionally get reports back from DSHS caseworkers stating how this program helps families, the children, and the agency.

Whitten notes that not all the children are foster kids who get money from the state. Some of them are living with rela-

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UFCW Local 655 in Missouri collect toys for needy children



Volunteers from the SIU prepare items for annual Santa's Castle event to benefit U.S. Military families

tives who need help buying gifts due to the additional financial burden.

"We look forward to doing this every year, and we hope to continue it for many, many, more years.

The 13 unions that make up the HAMTC are the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 280; Ironworkers Local 14; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Locals 77 and 984; International Brotherhood of Boilermakers Local 242; International Union of Painters and Allied Trades Local 427; International Association of Machinists Local 1951; International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 120; International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 839; IAFF Local I 24; Sheet Metal Workers Local 55; UA Local 598; United Steel Workers Local 12-369; and Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association Local 72.

SEAFARERS HOST ANNUAL SANTA'S CASTLE

The Seafarers International Union hosts an annual Tacoma, Wash.-area outreach event known as Santa's Castle. The annual philanthropic project benefits U.S. military families

at Christmastime.

Santa's Castle generates donations of toys and other gifts to U.S. military families from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, and other bases.

Most of the contributions come from rank-and-file members, with additional donations from the union's executive board, pensioners, and officials from SIU-contracted Crowley Maritime and TOTE Services. This year's donations were worth \$8,000, and SIU representatives say the cumulative total (16 consecutive years, pandemic be damned) is around \$100,000.

UFCW LOCALS HOLD TOY, TEDDY BEAR DRIVES

Every year, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 655 in Missouri collects and donates toys to needy children for Christmas. The Local partnered with Mercy Children's Hospital in St. Louis for the second year in 2022 and reports it had its largest haul ever this Christmas.

UFCW Local 135 also held a Toy Drive in conjunction with the San Diego & Imperial Counties Labor Council. The Union collected new, unwrapped toys for the Labor Council's Toy Drop off at the National City Rail Depot.

In New Jersey, the UFCW Local 152 Women's Network held a Teddy Bear Drive for The Arc, a grassroots organization dedicated to advocating for the rights and full participation of all children and adults with developmental disabilities. According to the Local's website, The ARC of Burlington County requested new teddy bears or stuffed animals to give to their members at their annual holiday party.

Also at Local 152, members who work at Village ShopRite in Somers Point, NJ, got in the holiday spirit when they purchased and distributed food baskets for members in need.

IAMAW MEMBERS GIVE BACK



IAMAW Local 623 volunteers build shelving for local community organization

A group of members from the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) Local 623 built wall shelving

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for their local St. Cloud, Minn., Promise Neighborhood Central, a community organization that provides year-round for low-income families through academic programs for youth and resources and training for adults.

IAM District 77 organizer Brittany Anderson arranged the IAM H.E.L.P.S. project with help from Grand Lodge Representative Geny Ulloa and District 77 Directing Business Representative John Steigauf, recruiting Local 623 members who weren't previously active in union events.

"We had a few young members who hadn't been involved before," said Anderson. "They saw the flyer and it resonated with their values, so they participated, got to know their union siblings and now they are involved."

The volunteers replaced unstable free-standing shelves with wall shelving in four different rooms.

IAMAW local unions and district councils also hold various charity events throughout the year to benefit the Guide Dogs of America-Tender Loving Canines. GDA-TLC is an organization that helps the visually impaired, autistic children, and veterans by providing service dogs.

The organization was first started by Joseph Jones, a Machinist who lost his eyesight later in life. More than 70 years ago, the IAMAW Executive Council endorsed the founding of the International Guiding Eyes, Inc., dba Guide Dogs of America, one of the first guide dog schools to be founded by a blind individual. The Guide Dogs of America is the Charity of record for the IAMAW.

ILWU LOCALS FEED THE COMMUNITY

The Southern California ILWU's Feed the Community Day celebrated its 25th year in 2022. The event is sponsored by Locals 13, 63, and 94, So Cal Pensioners, Auxiliary 8, and the ILWU Credit Union. The event is manned by ILWU volunteers and their families.

The event supplied a full Thanksgiving meal to more than 1,500 families from the surrounding community. Each basket is filled with the fixings for full dinner for ten people, with all of the traditional holiday dinner items. ■

Labor and Large Charities



AFL-CIO & THE UNITED WAY

For over 80 years, Labor has partnered with the United Way. Just after World War II, the United Way (then Community Chests and Councils) and the AFL-CIO worked together to create a mechanism for payroll deduction that helped build the organization and added labor representatives to United Way's boards in their communities. Since then, unions have been strong partners in the workplace campaign, encouraging union members to give and volunteer.

To tackle the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, in 2016, members of the United Association of Journeyman, along with Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry, worked with United Way of Genesee County to install free faucets and water filters for community residents in more than 800 homes.

NATION'S LARGEST FOOD DRIVE

The National Association of Letter Carriers' annual Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is the nation's largest all-volunteer one-day food drive.

The national, coordinated effort by the NALC to help fight hunger in America

grew out of discussions in 1991 by several leaders at the time, including NALC President Vincent

R. Sombrotto, AFL-CIO Community Services Director Joseph Velasquez and Postmaster General Anthony Frank. A pilot drive was held in 10 cities in October of 1991, and it proved so successful that work began immediately on making it a nationwide effort.

Input from food banks and pantries suggested that late spring would be the best time since by then most food banks in the country start running out of donations received during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday periods.

A revamped drive was organized for May 15, 1993—the second Saturday in May—with a goal of having at least one NALC branch in each of the 50 states participating. The result was astounding. More than 11 million pounds of food was collected—a one-day record in the United States—involving more than 220 union branches.

From Alaska to Florida and Maine to Hawaii, letter carriers did double duty—delivering mail and picking up donations. It just grew and grew from that point. In 2019, letter carriers collected more than 76.1 million pounds of food, the 15th straight year that collections exceeded 70 million pounds. Since the drive began in 1993, nearly 1.4 billion pounds of food have been collected.

This year's drive takes place on May 13, 2023. ■



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UL&STD thanks Ullico for supporting our mission.

EndNotes



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By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*

Voluntarism has a Union Label



The Labor Movement, the acknowledged champion of the middle class, indeed according to many its creator, has always been devoted to the economic improvement of the lives of its members and the public at large.

Public employees among them teachers, police, firefighters, nurses and first responders are recognized for their commitment to community service.

Less widely known is the voluntary public service activity undertaken by unions at every level, from local to regional to state to national and International. This issue of the *Label Letter* publicizes some of that voluntary service. We are putting a Union Label on it.

Across the Labor Movement in communities throughout the United States and Canada, unions large and small are acting on behalf of others. The accounts that we have in this issue are a small representation of those actions. If you know of others, please forward them to us for inclusion in our continuing efforts to publicize the Labor Movement's community service.

The Union Label Department's website: www.unionlabel.org; and its Facebook page: [facebook.com/UnionLabel](https://www.facebook.com/UnionLabel) feature the Labor Movement's activities and commitment to community service.

We want to feature your union's voluntarism news and activities, send information, photos, and contact details via email to: unionlabel@unionlabel.org.