

## Building a Stewards Army

**M**ore than 600 organizers and activists from unions, Jobs with Justice and other groups - including about 40 CWAers spent two days in December at the AFL-CIO's Organizing Summit in Washington, D.C., talking strategy and planning how to fight back to restore workers' rights in the United States.

A key goal of the summit was to move forward on building the Stewards Army, a mobilization across the labor movement that will create a force of hundreds of thousands of activists who will stand together on jobs, health care, bargaining rights and other important fights for working families.

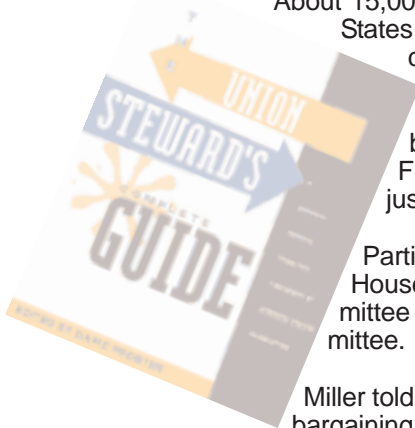
The summit also focused on the fight to win the Employee Free Choice Act, strategic organizing campaigns, building community-labor alliances, and globalization, among other issues.

The fight for the Employee Free Choice Act isn't only about organizing, as important as that is, CWA President Larry Cohen told the participants. "It's about our rights on the job. It's about bargaining rights and the squeeze on the middle class" that has hit working families hard, he said. The preamble to the National Labor Relations Act says that the purpose of the law is to promote collective bargaining, Cohen said. Today, "this is a farce."

Cohen called on every activist and every union to be a part of the fight for justice at Goodyear Tire. "All of us need to mobilize for this Goodyear fight as if it is our own, because it is our own fight. We need corporate management to know that in every fight, the Stewards Army will be there. We need to build that together," he said.

"This is a fight for all of us in the labor movement," he said. "The time to stand up to this corporate attack is now. This fight is our fight. Saving retiree health care at Goodyear is the first step to saving health care for our members too. At key times like this, we can make a real difference."

About 15,000 employees at more than a dozen Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. plants in the United States and Canada began the walkout October 5 in a fight to save their jobs and protect health care coverage for current workers and retirees.



"The election on Nov. 7 was a turning point for all of us. The second turning point will be winning the Goodyear strike and the third turning point will be passing the Employee Free Choice Act in the House. We will continue building on each victory until we have justice in America again," Cohen said. Cohen heads the AFL-CIO Organizing Committee.

Participants marched to Capitol Hill for a rally on the Employee Free Choice Act, with top House and Senate leaders, including Sen. Edward Kennedy, who will head the labor committee in the new Senate and Rep. George Miller (D-CA), who will chair the House labor committee.

Miller told the crowd that workers must mobilize as they haven't done for generations to win back bargaining and organizing rights. "We are going to ease the squeeze on the middle class and one of the most important ways to do that is by restoring the freedom of workers to have a voice at work," he said. "When workers have the opportunity to join a union, it makes a world of difference for them and their families."

Kennedy said that "History tells us that the best way to make sure that workers get their fair share is to give them a stronger voice, but shamefully America's labor laws are too weak to prevent employers from resorting to illegal union-busting tactics to intimidate workers. That's why Representative Miller and I are determined to protect every employee's right to join a union and stop once and for all this continuing epidemic of bullying and intimidation."





## **IT DOESN'T WORK TO LEAP A TWENTY-FOOT CHASM IN TWO TEN-FOOT JUMPS**

American Proverb

January 8, 2007 marks the 25th anniversary of a seminal event for the telecommunications industry in the United States. Twenty-Five years ago this month AT&T settled the anti-trust

lawsuit brought by the U.S. Justice Department. The break up of AT&T was initiated in 1974 against the telephone monopoly. Under the terms of a settlement finalized on January 8, 1982, "Ma Bell" agreed to divest its local exchange service operating companies, in return for a chance to go into the computer business, AT&T Computer Systems. (Anybody ever heard of them?) Effective January 1, 1984, AT&T's local operations were split into seven independent Regional Bell Operating Companies (RBOCs) known as the "Baby Bells".

The changes promised at the time were to be enormous. Those who stayed with the parent company, AT&T, did see many changes. Through the remainder of the 1980's, AT&T's venture into the personal PC market failed miserably.

In 1995, another major change took place as AT&T once again divested itself of its manufacturing arm and created Lucent Technologies. Lucent, in turn, split itself into two companies in the year 2000 by creating Avaya Communications, separating their consumer equipment division from the switch and cable manufacturing side.

Avaya has eroded its unionized workforce by steadily moving work out of the bargaining unit over to what they call "Business Partners". The Avaya bargaining unit today numbers around 2,500 nationwide. Lucent Technologies recently completed a merger with the French company Alcatel, and AT&T has

become "the new AT&T" after they were bought out by the former "Baby Bell" SBC Communications.

From the late 1980's into the early nineties the world of wireless telecommunications began to develop. The networks were unreliable and the cost was very expensive. But the technology moved steadily forward and with income from the landline business, Bell Atlantic and the other "Baby Bells" continued to invest in this new communications medium. Wireless would not be where it is today without the profits produced by CWA represented workers and the financial resources provided by the landline side of the business. Let's hope Denny Strigl, current president and CEO over Verizon Wireless, remembers that as he replaces retiring Verizon vice chairman and president, Larry Babbio.

Then along came January 2004. That date marks Verizon's announcement of the FTTP or Fiber To The Premises project, and the beginning of what has become a constant stream of change ever since. In the world of Verizon today, change seems to be the only constant.

Suddenly, we went from business as usual, to for all intent and purposes, abandoning the copper network to build the network of the future, fiber. FTTP is a bold step in the evolution of telecommunications world-wide. So bold in fact, Wall Street investors have a dubious view of the move. If they can pull it off, it will place Verizon in the drivers seat of a vehicle which will, quite literally, operate at the speed of light.

As Verizon has moved down this path the changes they are making are enormous. The management ranks have been devastated over the last two years with cutbacks in benefits and more recently, straight up layoffs in the effort to trim payroll and save money. It goes without saying that without the Job Security Letter in the Verizon collective bargaining agreement, we would be in that same boat.

As it is, Verizon has consolidated work within the company and moved some of it to outside contractors. We have workgroups where Verizon is struggling to find work for them. Without the no layoff clause, the many EISP offers we have seen would surely have been accompanied by layoffs.

Verizon spun off their yellow pages division, VIS, now Idearc, to raise cash for investing in this fiber network. Every day we hear new rumors of this or that building being sold with the workers being moved to the former MCI location in Ashburn, Va.

More recently, for those who work in the FiOS install side of the business, Verizon is talking about scheduling their workforce three out of four Saturdays a month.

The changes we have witnessed since the 1984 breakup of the Bell System may pale in comparison to those we are likely to see in the next five to ten years. If Verizon is successful with FTTP, the other telecommunications giants will be forced to follow and the change will accelerate. If Verizon fails, the fallout will bring about changes not just for those of us working for Verizon, but the telecom landscape in general.

For many the concern is, are they trying to make that twenty-foot leap in two ten-foot jumps. Only time will tell.

*Les*

### Communications Workers of America

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## RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

By Dennis Strout, President RMC 2108

Well, it's a new year again and the officers of the Chapter are meeting and trying to find speakers and activities to keep everyone interested in attending the meetings. We are always looking for ideas from the membership so if you have an idea for a speaker or a social activity contact an officer and let them know about it.

One thing we do on an annual basis is take part in the Bowling for Gold Union Bowling Tournament to raise money for the Community Services Agency of the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO. This is a fun afternoon at the Crofton Bowling Center in Crofton Md. If you would like to join us contact **Kenny Roach** at **KEROACH58@peoplepc.com**. Even if you don't want to bowl, come on out and have a good time with us.



**RMC 2108**



*The holiday meeting in December featured an impressive array of food and goodies for the members who attended. See you next year!*

All of the meetings that we will have a speaker scheduled will be posted in these articles as well as announced at our monthly meetings. Our social activities will be announced as we decide when they will be held.

The following is a reprint from the ***Friday Alert*** published by the Alliance for Retired Americans, you may find it interesting.

### **“Employers Take Aim at Retiree Health Care Benefits**

Over the course of this past year, employers have taken several steps to increase the amount retirees contribute for their health care. Findings from a new survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Hewitt Associates, found that in 2006, 74% of large employers increased premiums for retirees under the age of 65, and 58% raised premiums for retirees over 65. In addition, 34% of the firms raised cost-sharing requirements for those under 65, while 24% did so for retirees over 65. When questioned about changes to retiree health care plans in 2007, 64% of the employers planned to increase retiree contributions to premiums, 26% planned to

increase cost-sharing requirements, 20% planned to raise drug co-payments and 18% planned to raise out-of-pocket limits. An estimated 3.8 million retirees between ages 55 and 64 and their dependents, receive health coverage from an employer or union. More than 12 million retirees now on Medicare receive supplemental benefits from their former employers. “The burden of America’s failing health care system is increasingly being placed on retirees shoulders and it’s not right”, said George J. Kourpias, President of the Alliance. “From 1988 to 2006, the share of large employers offering retiree health benefits declined from 66% to 35%.”

Something to think about as we get closer to contract negotiation time with Verizon.

Hope to see you at the January meeting.



**HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS  
FROM  
RMC  
2108**

## Breakfast With Santa



*Santa is very busy these days, but has plenty of time to listen to two CWA member's children during the Breakfast with Santa held on December 2nd.*



*"Ho! Ho! Ho! What have we here?" Santa gets a visit from Executive Vice President Amory Proctor and Amber Proctor. Amory found out the only thing he's getting in his stocking this year is a lump of coal!*



*Santa's helper assists in preparing a young lady to visit with Mr. Claus himself.*



*Techs from Wilkins Ave enjoy the fine sport of Paint Ball during the Thanksgiving Holidays. Techs that play together, stay together!*

## Many Thanks!

***To all who helped at the Breakfast with Santa morning including:***

Barbara Oliver, Jenny Henry, Johnny Brown, Dedria Tyree, Tony Gunn, Tonie Price, Trish Lyle, Joe Cooke, Amber Proctor, Amory Proctor, Les Evans, Gail Evans, Karen Lewis and Barbara Allred.

***For those who helped at the Holiday Gala at the Local on December 5th:***

Dedria Tyree, Trish Lyle, Lashawn Marks, LaTasha Carpenter, Michelle Washington, John Jordan, Ed Anderson, Tonie Price, Marilyn Irwin, Antoine Parker, Amory Proctor, Sabrina Staley and Carl Brogden.

## We Have Winners

On the night of our December Membership Meeting at the Local office, several members came away with some extra \$\$\$\$ for the holidays. Winners include:

Children's Hospital 50-50: Regina Pitts, wife of member and Chief Steward Joe Briscoe, won \$1,254.00, with the other half donated to the Childrens Hospital in Washington, DC.

Pot-O'-Gold: For this drawing you must be present to win, and the winner was Vallorie Coley who won \$160.00

Regular Meeting 50-50: Marilyn Irwin won \$28.50

Congratulations to all our winners, and Happy Holidays from Local 2108.

## CWA Local 2108 Members

### Welcome New Members

#### Chantelle Townsend

Luis Chacon  
Gilbert Ericson  
Gregory Pack

#### Larry Gibson

Calvin Hunter

#### Carl Brogden

Douglas Fuentes

### Transferred Members

#### Don Kurz

Jaison Shell

Melvin Rutherford

Wright Dixon

Kirk Keys

#### Carmen Butler

Kevin Blair  
Andre' Anderson  
Demetri Jones  
Marcus Pee

Darryl Johnson

Jermaine Alexander

## Delegate Election Guidelines

**N**ominations will be held for at-large delegates to the CWA International Annual Convention at the January 10, 2007 membership meeting. In the event the Membership meeting is cancelled due to a snow emergency declaration in the county where the meeting is scheduled, nominations will be rescheduled for the next regularly scheduled membership meeting on February 14, 2007.

Ballots will be mailed on January 26th, and counted on February 16, 2007. A declared snow emergency may delay ballot mailing and counting.

Candidates may have use of the Local's facilities for the purpose of mailing campaign literature to the membership beginning 30 days prior to nominations being scheduled. As membership list labels will no longer be printed, any candidate who wishes to mail campaign literature should furnish their envelopes or flyers to the Local. Within four business days the Local will print the names and addresses on the material. The Local will not furnish envelopes or postage. This and all other expenses are to be borne by the candidates.

The Local postage machine may not be used to affix postage to the envelopes. Arrangements for use of the Local facilities should be made with the Chair of the Election Committee, **Frank Walker**, who can be contacted through the Local office on **301.459.2108**. Use of the Local's facilities and campaigning may not be done on union-paid time.

## *Personals*

*We wish to extend sincere sympathy to the family and friends of:*

**James Darwin Summerlot**, father of **John Summerlot** who died on November 13, 2006.

**Clarence Corley, Sr.**, father of **Andre Corley** who died on November 26, 2006.

**Frank Irwin**, husband of **Marilyn Irwin** who died on November 29, 2006.

**Nana Kofi Bamfo**, grandfather of **Akosua Nkrumah** who died on December 4, 2006.

### Congratulations to:

**Katrina Moten** on the birth of her daughter, **Kyndall Moten** on September 11, 2006.

**Jenny Sylvester** on the birth of her granddaughter, **Andriana** on November 14, 2006.

**Angel Mason** on the birth of her daughter, **Reagan Mason** on November 15, 2006.

Below are the candidates for At-Large Delegate who submitted their photos to the 2108News.



**Carl Brogden**



**Larry Gibson**



**LaTasha Carpenter**

## A REMINDER ABOUT AN OLD DEATH BENEFIT

For those who may have forgotten, under the Verizon Pension plan, a Death Benefit is available to members and retirees who were on the Bell Atlantic Payroll as of August 1986. This benefit is over and above the life insurance our members currently receive from Verizon.

The Life Insurance is one year's salary at the time of death or what your salary was when you retired. This benefit begins reducing at the age of 65 and goes to one half of your final salary at the age of 70. It does not reduce any more than 50% of the final year's salary.

The Death Benefit is also a year's salary, based on your salary as of August 1986, with a maximum payable of \$39,000. This

amount does not reduce with age. Information concerning this benefit may be found in the Verizon Pension SPD.

It is very important you call the Benefits Center at 877-275-8947 and ask if you qualify for this Death Benefit. If you do qualify ask them to send you a certificate acknowledging this benefit for your records.

When you call, ask for Life Events, then ask for Notification Of A Death. This group is the only one trained on how to calculate your qualifications, determine the Death Benefit and send you a confirmation. A family member has one year from the time of death to collect this benefit before it expires.

## VERIZON DOWNCHECKS SAFETY



A near miss is the only reason we do not have to report to you once again a serious injury or tragic loss of life in the increasingly unsafe world of Outside Plant.

We have been informed about how two Cable Splicers from Locals 2004 and 2011 were recently placed in great physical peril as a result of shoddy, sub-standard work by contractors.

Using improper materials to replace cable along with several poles, the contractors left our cable in an unsafe condition, jeopardizing the health and safety of the splicers.

After replacing damaged the poles, these contractors re-hung the cable incorrectly causing it to come unlashd and fall to the ground while the two splicers were working aloft in bucket trucks at adjacent poles.

The fallen cable caused the poles to sway dangerously. Luckily the only injury sustained was a minor cut. It could have been much worse. The company's response was to say they would review contractor compliance procedures and attempt to verify the contractors' required training.

Verizon uses contractors because they believe it saves them money. Verizon then skimps on compliance oversight of these contractors.

Notice how we have not mentioned a renewed, much less any commitment to safety on Verizon's part. Why? Because that would take time and money.

We've noticed this is part of a disturbing trend by Verizon reaching the point where the company has decided to revise accepted standards regarding the condition of Personal Safety Protection items and tools used by our technicians on a daily basis.



Two of the most commonly used items associated with outside techs are hardhats and ladders. In some areas management is attempting to change the testing standards for hardhats. Instead of using the flex test for the whole hardhat, management is advocating that the only portion which needs to pass this test is the brim. This would be acceptable if the only requirement for wearing a hardhat is to provide protection from a sunburned scalp on a sunny day! However, the function of the hardhat is to protect the wearer from electrical shock and impact protection. It will not help if the brim is the only portion of the hardhat passing inspection.

It has been reported that twenty percent of the ladders inspected at a recent safety rodeo in Gaithersburg failed and are now condemned. One supervisor indicated that the defects in some of these ladders were present from the manufacturer. Yet, in his inexperience, he allowed for repairs which didn't meet the safety standard for the ladders.

The resulting formula:

New supervisors working without an understanding of the importance of safety in the workplace

+

New employees worried about making sure they reach their productivity numbers

=

Greater potential for accidents and injury at work.

Be smarter than that. Make sure you are following **ALL** safety practices. **YOUR FAMILY WANTS YOU HOME TONIGHT!**

# CWA Joe Beirne Scholarships

## Eligibility

CWA members, their spouses, children and grandchildren (including dependents of laid-off, retired or deceased CWA members) may apply. Applicants must be high school graduates or at least high school students who will graduate during the year in which they apply. Undergraduate and graduate students returning to school may also apply. Prior winners may not re-apply.

## Scholarships

Thirty partial college scholarships of **\$3,000** each are being offered for the 2007-2008 school year. Winners, selected in a lottery drawing, also will receive second-year scholarships of the same amount contingent upon satisfactory academic accomplishment.

## Dates

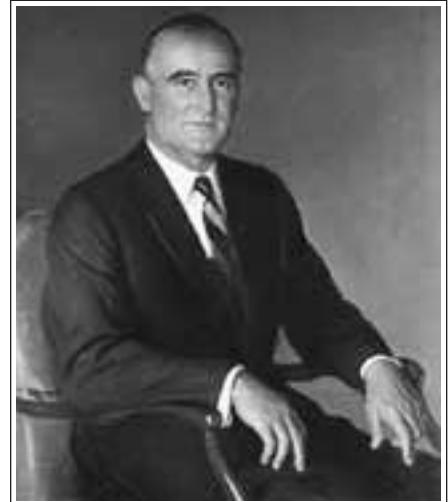
Applications are accepted during the months of November through March. Final deadline is **March 31, 2007**.

## Selections

Winners are chosen by lottery drawing and only winners will be notified.

## Applications

Applications should only be submitted through the online application form available at:  
[www.cwa-union.org/members/beirne/application.html](http://www.cwa-union.org/members/beirne/application.html).



Joseph Beirne



## **FIFTEENTH ANNUAL BOWLING FOR GOLD**



**L**ocal 2108 is proud to once again sponsor two teams for the Bowling For Gold, a union-only tournament, to be held Sunday, January 28, 2007 at the Crofton Bowling Center in Crofton, MD.

The two teams are looking for pledges from our members for a very worthwhile cause, the Community Services Agency (a United Way Agency) of the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL- CIO.

If you would like to help by making a monetary pledge, or would like to field your own team, please call Vice President Jenny Sylvester at the Local Office: 301.459.2108.

## **EMERGENCY MILITARY LEAVE RENEWED**

**T**he agreement covering our members for Emergency Military Leave of Absence (EMLA) expired on September 30, 2006. The CWA and Verizon have agreed to extend its provisions through September 30, 2007.

This includes such items as Pay Treatment, Benefits, Offers under the Income Security Plan and Return To Work.

Should you have any questions about this policy, see your supervisor, or contact the Local Office: 301.459.2108.



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"When did you first start to have nightmares about your employees forming a union?"

# Local 2108 Union Calendar

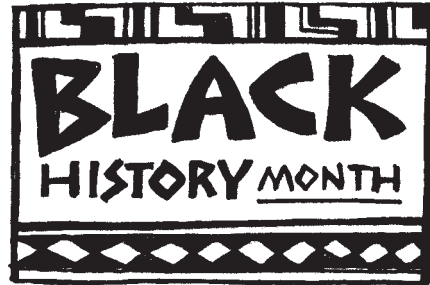
## January 2007

- 1 Happy New Year!  
Union Office Closed.  
Union Negotiated Holiday.
- 3 Chief Steward Meeting 9:00am  
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 3 Finance Committee Meeting 3:00pm  
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 10 Retired Member Club Meeting 11:00am  
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 10 General Membership Meeting 6:00pm  
American Legion, Wheaton, MD  
Delegate Nominations Tonight
- 26 Delegate Ballots Mailed today



## February 2007

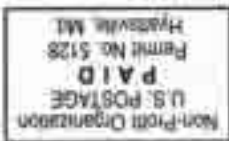
- 7 Chief Steward Meeting 9:00am  
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 7 Finance Committee Meeting 3:00pm  
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 14 Retired Member Club Meeting 11:00am  
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 14 General Membership Meeting 6:00pm  
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 16 Delegate Ballots Counted Today
- 19 President's Day: Local Office Closed  
Union Negotiated Holiday



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Visit Local 2108 On The Web: [www.cwaincocal2108.org](http://www.cwaincocal2108.org)

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