

Pulling Back the Curtain on Mental Health Awareness

Mental health awareness is a movement that aims to reduce the stigma around mental illness and mental health conditions by sharing personal experiences and increasing public knowledge of mental health disorders. It helps people understand that mental illness is not a character flaw but rather an illness like any other.

Mental health awareness also helps society work toward eliminating its stigmas, but it does much more. For instance, developing a greater understanding of mental illness can allow people to recognize those in their lives who may be dealing with anxiety, depression, or other conditions that affect their mental well-being.

Mental health awareness is crucial for several reasons. It helps to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues and encourages people to seek help when they need it. It also helps to promote empathy and understanding towards those who are struggling with mental health issues. Mental health awareness can also help to identify early warning signs of mental health problems, which can lead to early intervention and treatment.. Mental health awareness is not just about recognizing the signs of mental illness in others, but also about taking care of your own mental health.

Mental health stigma can come from family, friends, coworkers, and society on a broader level. It can prevent people living with mental illness from getting help, fitting into society, and leading happy and comfortable lives. Stigma can also lead to discrimination, and this in turn can make mental illness worse.

The reasons behind the stigma around mental illness are complex and multifaceted. Some of the common reasons include lack of awareness and understanding about mental health issues, fear of the unknown, cultural beliefs and values, and negative media portrayals of mental illness. Stigma can also be perpetuated by the language used to describe mental health issues. For example, using terms like "crazy" or "insane" to describe someone with a mental health issue can further stigmatize them.

It is important to note that while progress has been made in reducing the stigma around mental illness, there is still much work to be done. Education and awareness campaigns can help to reduce stigma by promoting empathy and understanding towards those who are struggling with mental health issues. Additionally, seeking professional help when needed and practicing self-care can help to improve overall mental well-being and quality of life.

Supporting someone with a mental health issue can be challenging, but it can also be incredibly rewarding. Here are some tips to help you support someone who is struggling with their mental health:

- **Start a conversation:** Let the person know that you are there for them and that you care about them. Encourage them to talk about how they are feeling and listen without judgment.
- **Educate yourself:** Learn about the person's mental health condition and what they are going through. This can help you to understand their experiences and provide better support.
- **Be patient:** Recovery from mental illness takes time, and it can be a difficult journey. Be patient and supportive, and let the person

know that you are there for them no matter what.

- **Offer practical support:** Offer to help with day-to-day tasks such as cooking, cleaning, or running errands. This can help to alleviate some of the stress that the person may be feeling.
- **Encourage professional help:** Encourage the person to seek professional help if they haven't already done so. Offer to help them find a therapist or other mental health professional if needed.
- **Take care of yourself:** Supporting someone with a mental health issue can be emotionally taxing. Make sure that you are taking care of your own mental health needs as well.
- **Avoid judgment:** Avoid making assumptions or judgments about the person's experiences or behavior. Instead, try to be empathetic and understanding.

Remember, supporting someone with a mental health issue is an ongoing process. Be patient, kind, and supportive, and let the person know that they are not alone in their struggles.

CWA Local 2108 Executive Board Elected by Acclamation

Local 2108 Officer nominations were conducted at the November 8th membership meeting by Election Committee Chairperson Christopher Smith. Those nominated were:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| President | Johnny Brown (unopposed) |
| Executive Vice President | Amory Proctor (unopposed) |
| Secretary-Treasurer | Tamera Nelson (unopposed) |
| Vice President | LaTasha Carpenter (unopposed) |



Since all of the offices were not contested, those officers were therefore elected by acclamation. They will begin their three-year term of office January 1, 2024. In October, a referendum vote was passed to modify the number of officers that would be eligible to run for office based on membership strength. Under the previous bylaws, the Local's Executive Board consisted of 5 officers; President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and (2) Vice Presidents. In order to maintain an effective presence, the Executive Board proposed that if the Local's membership ranges from 1000 -1600 members, the next election would reduce the number of Vice Presidents to (1). If the Local's membership drops below 1000 members then the Local would not elect any Vice Presidents. Membership strength would be based on a monthly average look-back from August 1st of the prior year through July 31st of the current year prior to an election to determine how many officers positions would be eligible for the current election cycle. Since our Local's membership average over the look-back period was around 1150 members, only one Vice President was elected.

This is my last Letter from the President. After fifty years as a member of the Communications Workers of America, with thirty-seven of those years as a Local 2108 member, two of them as a Steward, nine as a Chief Steward, twelve as Vice President and twelve as President, I made the decision to retire at the end of this year and not seek reelection.



It is a bittersweet time for me. While it has been an honor to serve as your officer for the past twenty-four years and I know I will miss interacting with so many of you, I am looking forward to more time to relax, renovate my home, travel and spoil (just a little!) my grandkids.

I didn't have the opportunity to attend college, and was happy to be hired as a cord board Operator for C&P Telephone Company in Wheeling, WV, one month after my high school graduation. Four years later when I was promoted to Service Representative, I was able to buy my first car. That year I suggested that my forty five year-old mother apply for an Operator job when the company transitioned to TSPS equipment, and she was hired. Because of these union jobs, we both had medical, dental and vision benefits for the first time in our lives. We were entitled to paid vacation and paid holidays, and a defined-benefit pension plan to count on in our "golden years" (which seemed a hundred years away!)

I was introduced to my future husband at work, and our good union jobs allowed us to buy two houses together, and to raise our two children. Our kids never missed a doctor or dentist appointment, nor a meal. We didn't live an extravagant life, but our kids had braces, art and karate lessons, and the opportunity to go to college.

Having a union job ensured that all those things were possible. But sacrifices had to be made over the years to maintain the benefits of that union job. My first strike lasted three weeks. My husband and I were both on strike, and there were no striker assistance checks at that time, so we had absolutely no income for that entire time. We had a mortgage, a two-year old and a newborn, but thanks to my husband's foresight we had saved our income tax refund check that spring, knowing the contract would expire in August. Our next strike was in 1989, and it lasted three weeks, also. I have two very clear memories from that strike: (1) My coworker who not only crossed the picket line to work as a scab, but deliberately tried to run be over in her Cadillac as she drove through it, admonished me when the strike was over that we didn't "get enough" in the new contract and she wasn't happy with it! And (2) how happy my six-year-old son was to yell "Scab!" at those crossing the picket line, because normally he wasn't allowed to call people names!

While no strike is ever easy, the most difficult strike if my fifty years was the forty-nine-day strike in 2016. For the first time, Verizon cut off benefits to our active members and their families. That strike was long, and very difficult, and the lack of benefits could have been catastrophic for many of you who were dealing with serious health conditions and treatments, pregnancies, surgeries, etc. But, as promised, CWA either paid for our members' urgent/emergency healthcare needs, or paid their COBRA premium, if that was less expensive. While it was an administrative nightmare to administer, I was so proud of our Union for helping our members in that way. And I was never more proud of our members than I was when you refused to buckle to Verizon's power play and return to work. Verizon counted on you all returning to work in droves when they cancelled your benefits, which would have forced CWA to accept any horrible contract the company wanted to shove down our throats. Instead, Verizon's health care cancellation strengthened your resolve and you remained on strike, resulting in a successful contract after forty-nine

days. Strikes are never easy, but each one has been worth it in the long run.

Please remember the importance of solidarity moving forward. It is that commitment to stand together, in the workplace and on the picket line, that provides our strength.

As always, I wish you and yours a holiday season full of love, togetherness and happiness. And since this is my last letter to you, I also wish you a long, successful career followed by a long and healthy retirement!

In Solidarity,

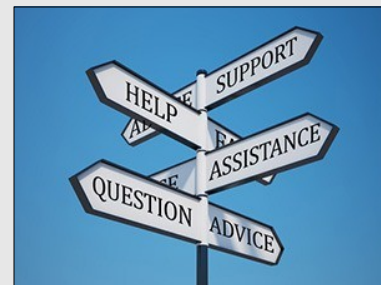
Marilyn

EAP Offers Assistance in Times of Need

Stressed out? Need help? Need it NOW? Verizon employees can get assistance from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through either the website (<https://www.anthem.com/eap/verizon>) or by calling **1-888-441-8674**. The call is free and confidential and EAP services are available 24/7.

EAP is your resource for assistance with managing problems at home and at work. EAP provides you and eligible family members with a no-cost, confidential and user-friendly resource for life management concerns such as:

- Emotional and mental health well-being
- Maintaining a healthy life style
- Successful communication
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Relationship issues
- Legal concerns
- Financial concerns
- Dependent adult care
- Childcare needs
- Everyday concerns and resources



While some of the information online about scheduling appointments may be a bit vague and confusing, CWA members in the Potomac Region are entitled to 5 free visits to an EAP counselor, which may be scheduled "with pay" during your normal daily tour.

Local 2108 Calendar

DECEMBER 2023

- 6 **Chief Stewards Meeting - 12:30pm**
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 11-14 **CWA District 2-13 Conference**
Baltimore, MD
- 13 **RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am**
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 13 **Membership Meeting - 6:00pm (CANCELED)**
- 25 **Christmas Day**
Local Office Closed



JANUARY 2024

- 1 **New Year's Day**
Local Office Closed
- 10 **RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am**
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 10 **Membership Meeting - 6:00pm**
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 15 **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**



- 31 **New Year's Eve**

The CWA Joseph A. Beirne Foundation Scholarship Program

The CWA Joe Beirne Foundation was established in October 1974 by the Communications Workers of America Executive Board to honor the name and memory of the founding President of CWA, who served for more than 30 years. In his capacity as the first CWA President, Joe Beirne took great pride in the roles he played in the fields of education and learning and other areas of social concern.



Sixteen partial college scholarships of \$4,000 each are being offered for the 2024-2025 school year. Winners, selected in a lottery drawing, also will receive second-year scholarships of the same amount contingent upon satisfactory academic accomplishment. Part-time students, less than 12 credits, will receive half of the scholarship monies.

Eligible for the awards are CWA members and their spouses, children and grandchildren, including those of retired or deceased members. 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 schooling may also apply.

Applications are accepted during the months of November through April. **Final deadline for the 2023-2024 school year is April 30, 2024.**

To apply online, go to:

<http://www.cwa-union.org/pages/beirne>

2024 Union Plus Scholarship Program Accepting Applications

Since 1991, the Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$5.4 million to students of working families who want to begin or continue their post-secondary education. Over 3,800 families have benefited from our commitment to higher education.

Eligibility

Current and retired members of participating unions, their spouses and their dependent children (as defined by IRS regulations). At least one year of continuous union membership by the applicant, applicant's spouse or parent (if applicant is a dependent). The one year membership minimum must be satisfied by May 31, 2024.

Application Timeline:

Applications are available starting in mid-June, and a complete application must be received on or before 12:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on **January 31, 2024**. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

Scholarship Award Amounts:

Amounts range from \$500 to \$4,000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the Fall of 2024. Students may re-apply each year.

Award date:

The Scholarship Committee will determine recipients of scholarship awards by May 31st each year. During the first week of June 2024 award recipients will be notified by postal mail, and all applicants will be sent email notification.

To apply, go to:

www.unionplus.org/benefits/education/union-plus-scholarships

To receive CWA action alerts via text message, Text CWAAction to 69866

Personals

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

Retiree **Wanda Glover**, who passed away on March 14, 2023.

Member **Raymond Buksha**, who passed away on October 9, 2023.

Member **Erica Whitmere**, who passed away on October 18, 2023.

Member **Brian Miller** who passed away on October 28, 2023.

Barbara Ann Tai, mother of Steward **Linette Tai**, who passed away on October 29, 2023.

Gary Maddox, brother of Retiree **Kathleen Bartmanski**, who passed away on November 13, 2023.

Retiree & former Chief Steward **Scot McElroy** who passed away on November 15, 2023.

Congratulations to:

Noelle Swanson on the birth of her son **Cairo Swanson**, on September 5, 2023.

Welcome to Local 2108

Transferred Members



Bobby Isaac
Andrew Gaines



WORKING AROUND LEAD? GET TESTED!



If you work in telecommunications, you may be exposed to lead as a result of working with and around **lead-sheathed cables** and other telecom plant, such as old **lead splice cases**, or **lead solder** in Central Offices or other areas.

Lead is toxic and can have serious health consequences, including neurological and reproductive issues.

Blood lead tests through your employer's **voluntary** program are **free** for eligible employees.

Scan QR Code For More Information



Learn more at cwa.org/lead.



[Scan the Code - Sign the Petition](#)

CWA is Fighting for High Paying, High Quality Jobs in Maryland

Shoddy Broadband Contractor Work Endangers Workers and Communities

A shoddy contractor placed an old pole on wood blocks. If the pole falls, it will cause damage both to the cables above and whatever it falls on.



A shoddy contractor sits on a line away from the bucket truck and with no PPE. He could get injured or killed.




A shoddy contractor left a spool of wire hanging from a pole endangering anyone walking underneath.



When broadband construction goes wrong, there are serious consequences. For example, in April 2019, a subcontractor for Crown Castle in North Carolina hit a gas line and caused an explosion that killed two people, injured another twenty-five, destroyed a building including two businesses, and damaged nearby properties.¹

We need labor standards across the country to keep communities and workers safe. **If companies use contractors with bad labor records and that don't train their technicians on OSHA safety standards, they should not qualify for federal funding to do the buildout.**

BUILD 
BROADBAND
BETTER

Sign The Petition 

Broadband buildout funds should be put towards lasting infrastructure and creating good jobs.



Scan the QR code or visit
BuildBroadbandBetter.org



Facebook.com/BuildBroadbandBetter

The federal *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's* Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that everyone has access to high-quality broadband internet connections. The federal law contains strong guidelines for building broadband, but gives states options on how to implement the buildout.

Communications Workers of America members want to ensure these funds are spent wisely so the job is done correctly and safely with a skilled and trained workforce, not shoddy contractors. **Sign the petition to join the fight!**