

1201 Sheridan Road  
Escanaba, MI 49829

Phone: (906)786-1846  
Fax: (906)233-9250

# 21 NEWS

Editor: Gerald Kell [WWW.USW2-21.COM](http://WWW.USW2-21.COM) September, 2015  
Contact Editor at: [djgribble@gmail.com](mailto:djgribble@gmail.com) or 906-869-7943

21 News is a periodic publication of USW (United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union) Local 2-21, 1201 Sheridan Road, Escanaba, Michigan 49829. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily that of the International Union, the Local 2-21 membership, or the officers of these bodies. The editor reserves the right to refuse any article that is detrimental to the Local Union or the USW. Article accuracy and content is the responsibility of the author.

## Important Information & Events

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

[www.guidanceresources.com](http://www.guidanceresources.com) (800) 428-4650

### Retiree Get Together

First Wed. of each Month 10 am at the Union Hall

**Union Meeting:** September 9<sup>th</sup> - 7 pm - Dinner at 6 pm

**Next Generation Meeting:** : September 9<sup>th</sup> - 5 pm at Hall

**Steward's Meeting:** September 30<sup>th</sup> - 3 pm at the Union Hall

**Welfare Club Meeting:** Monday, September 7<sup>th</sup> - 7 pm at the Mead Rod & Gun Club

**Total Benefit Solutions:** Union Hall Wednesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> from 10 am until 7 pm for Union benefit open enrollment. They'll also be in the USAT Office September 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> from 6 am until 4 pm.

Call 1-877-265-2212 to schedule an appointment.



## Committee Members

	Work	Cell
President Steve Benoit .....	233-2366	399-4195
1st Vice Chuck Way.....	233-2705	280-1698
2nd Vice Joe Curran .....	233-2511	420-3918
3rd Vice Jeff Skorupski.....	233-2556	399-5472
Insurance Gerald Kell.....	233-3062	869-7943
Comp Ross Strand.....	233-2549	280-1494
Secretary Brandon Stromberg.....	233-2714	284-1604
Treasurer Guy Trudell.....	233-2922	399-9143

Next Gen/Rapid Response..Brandon Stromberg....233-2714 284-1604  
Rapid Response.....Gerald Kell.....233-3062 869-7943  
Hall Rentals .....Steve Kennedy . . . . . 789-1933



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[www.facebook.com/USWlocal21](http://www.facebook.com/USWlocal21)

## Whirlwind

*Steve Benoit, President*

This last month sure has been a whirlwind for many of us. We had the news on the 401(k), the surge of retirements, the shutting down of two machines in Androscoggin and the idling of our sister mill in Wickliffe. That notwithstanding, there were numerous positives that came about throughout the Escanaba mill.

With the news of the suspended 401(k) contribution the committee began notifying the correct people and a grievance was filed. The committee was informed while in Appleton that the Company would be paying back the contribution in September and that we would see the contribution resume normally in late September or early October. We plan to see the 401(k) grievance to fruition even if the contribution is reinstated. We are now in the 2<sup>nd</sup> step of the grievance. Our Union brothers/sisters in the IBEW and Teamsters have also filed a similar grievance. A positive outcome could deter future meddling with our retirement benefits.

We have watched many of our Union brothers/sisters retire this month for a multitude of reasons. For some it may have been the drop in lump sum funds they would receive, the uncertainty of the 401(k) situation or they simply felt it was just time to move on. Nevertheless, nearly every retiree I spoke with mentioned their frustration with Verso and an inability to continue under a regime that “disrespects and ignores the workforce here.” These people helped make this mill successful over the years along with an army of other brothers and sisters. Their departure signifies a great loss of knowledge and irreplaceable experience. I’d like to wish each and every one of them a long and happy retirement. It’s been an honor to work with each and every one of you and I hope to see you at the Hall on a regular basis!

The shutdown of two machines and the Wickliffe Mill has hit home for each and every one of us. It's always difficult to learn that *anyone* has lost their job, and when it is a paper mill within our own network, it simply digs that much deeper. Our brothers and sisters in Wickliffe are courageous



fighters and we'll need to keep them in our thoughts and prayers. Hopefully they will be purchased by another entity and successfully run for many years to come.

While in Appleton, a number of the mills asked why some were seeing downtime while others were not. The answer from Adam St. John and Ken Sawyer was simple: the company is going to run mills that produce paper at the lowest cost, it's hard to argue with such a pragmatic approach. The fact that we continued to run while others saw downtime shows that we can be thankful to those that came before us and those here today in our Local that continue to make Escanaba's product viable. Along with being a low-cost producer, we've also heard encouraging things about the paper quality coming from E1, the expansive runs and great paper coming off of E3, the promising potential of expanded orders coming for E4, the increased pulp production from the back of the mill and the solidarity of our Union brothers and sisters when there is a need to speak up and make changes like in the Roll Shipping Area (PSD). On another good note, we're hearing that some hiring may be announced very soon and that a defined direction for maintenance and E&I may also be shared with the membership. With this anticipated announcement, our unified stand against Kaizen involvement would end and our members will be encouraged to take part in these projects. We hope to hear the company announce something soon but until then we continue to stand strong against Kaizen. Remember, this stand is not against Kaizen in general, it is in regards to our staffing issues. We've heard an overwhelming majority of our members speak to the significance of staffing concerns for months. Thank you to everyone that has joined in this stand in defense of proper staffing and hopefully the Company will make haste in hiring and uphold their promise of transparency.

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Your thoughts wanted here!  
Do you have an article you'd like to submit  
or a topic you'd like us  
to cover? Contact the editor today!

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### **\$750 Summer Lottery Scholarship Winners**

USW (drawn by Steve Benoit, Local 21 President):

- **Laura Alexander** is in her first year as a Summer Student Employee and is the granddaughter of **Charles Burton**. Laura worked in Wood Waste & Coal and is currently studying Occupational Therapy at Western Michigan University.
- **Justina Liss** is in her third year as a Summer Student Employee and is the daughter of **James Liss**. Justina worked in Roll Finishing and is studying Entrepreneurship at Northern Michigan University.

Company (drawn by John Donahue, Human Resources Manager):

- **Renee Lofquist** is in her first year as a Summer Student Employee and is the daughter of **Tom Lofquist**. Renee worked in the Yard and is studying Clinical Laboratory Science at Northern Michigan University.
- **Sidonie Scizak** is in her first year as a Summer Student Employee and is the daughter of **James Nelson**. Sidonie worked on the E1 Supercalenders and is studying Nursing at Bay de Noc Community College.

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"How sad to see a father with  
money and no joy. The man studied  
economics but never studied happiness"

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### **A Better Tomorrow**

**Brandon Stromberg, Secretary/Next Gen/Rapid Response**

An entire paper mill in Kentucky, a paper machine and pulp dryer in Maine will shut down soon. Hundreds of jobs will be lost and the ripple will affect many hundreds more. I try to put myself into each person's situation be it the 55 year old who can't quite yet retire, the 36 year old single mother with a couple children and a mortgage, the

newly married couple expecting their first child, or the 26 year old college graduate who was just recently hired and expected to make a career of it. My heart genuinely aches for these men and women, their families, and their communities. I ask that each and every one of you to keep these people in your thoughts and prayers and thank you in advance.

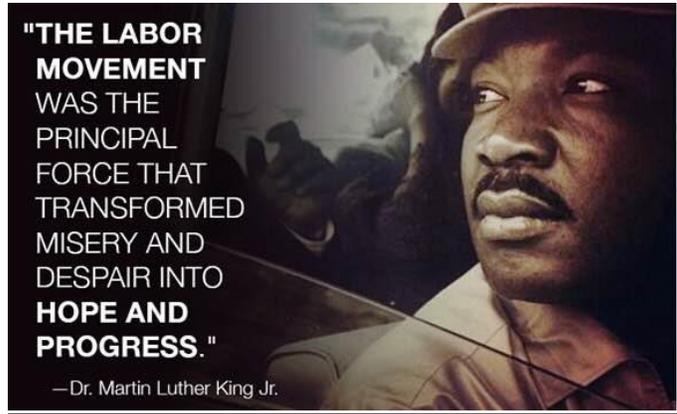
Often I ponder why it is that our industry struggles so. Is it just the weak market? Is it poor decision making? Are profit margins simply not enough to sustain our business? Or are foreign manufacturers flooding our country with their products? Frankly, all are probably contributing factors, but I find the last one to be the most concerning. If you have the “Verso Corporation Business Overview” dated August 19, 2015, pull it out and follow along with me. Highlighting a few key points from the report, we can see the following: EBITDA up 23% vs Q2 2014, total volume decreased 5.9%, total paper price increased 1.5%, synergies are ahead of schedule, \$2.6 billion in debt (the majority being Verso legacy debt), US currency is strong, and imports are up a debilitating 34.9% vs Q2 2014. Some are positive and some are



extremely alarming. I understand there are things we cannot control such as demand, currency, or price, but we need to encourage Verso to join with the USW

International in the effort

to alleviate the surge of imports into our country. When we discussed the “state of the industry” with Kenny Sawyer (Verso HR), Adam St. John (Verso Operations), and Jon Geenen (USW Paper Division), they all repeatedly stated, “We just want a level playing field.” That’s one concept the USW is fighting for every day. Jon shared with us a past legislative effort where Verso and the USW cooperated to get tariffs enacted on a Canadian-based company that was utilizing government subsidies to undercut our product pricing. I was encouraged when I learned of the concerted effort between the two entities and think it demonstrates the willingness of the USW to work side by side with Verso to take our industry into the next generation. I certainly hope Verso is willing to do the same.



### **The Times, They are a-Changing**

*Jeff Skorupski, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President*

To begin, I would like to thank the personnel in Roll, Wrap & Shipping (RWS) for coming in to help when Corporate was here reorganizing areas of their department. The company said they would have outside contractors come in if we couldn’t staff the extra help required. As it turned out, the communication from the Company to the employees who were called for extra help was terrible as they were never informed of the above information. Hopefully communication will improve and this will be avoided in the future. I have received mixed reviews on how the reorganizing is working, but overall employees seem to be relieved that something is being done.

The times they are a-changing. Many actions we once did regularly is no longer considered acceptable and we are being met with discipline in a lot of these instances. Please take the time required to ensure you are following all policies properly. Just because you’re trying to do the right thing and what’s best for production it’s still your ass on the line if something goes wrong. Do not get into a shouting match with any supervisor; if you need to walk away and collect your thoughts then do so. There seems to be a few supervisors who are looking for altercations. Do not feed into that. If you feel like your supervisor is unfairly singling you out please let a steward, myself or someone on the committee know so we can properly address the situation.

“Lunch with the Mill Manager” is being rolled out as you read this. There were several concerned members who were uncomfortable leaving their jobs vacant while attending the lunch. I spoke with Matt Archambeau about this concern and to his credit he understood and changed things around to allow production employees to attend without creating extra workload for their coworkers.

When you are scheduled to attend either a lunch or dinner with Matt, please go there with an open mind and be respectful. With that being said, he also needs to understand the issues we are facing on the floor every day. Be open, honest, and tell him the problems, you may be surprised to find he is unaware of the issues we are facing daily.

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*"When I was 5 years old, my mom always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked what I wanted to be when I got older, I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, I told them they didn't understand life"*

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### Updates

*Chuck Way, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*

Decreasing maintenance numbers have been a concern for quite some time. We've addressed the issue with the company many times over. Their latest response is that Vince St. John has been challenged with the matter and will be passing along his recommendations soon. Much of the talk has been about benchmarking—the mills that are best in industry and how they are manned—and bringing Escanaba into the top making them one of the industry leaders. The stated goal is to make us sustainable for the future. If the planned hiring does occur, most likely the new employees will go into the general labor pool and any kind of relief would surely help.

Not being the retirement specialist, I had to look up some answers that our brothers and sisters had pertaining to retirement. One of the questions was what happens to my retirement if I pass away? Will my wife get it? Directly from our Summary Plan Description (SPD): "If you are married on the date of your death and have earned a vested pension under the plan, but have not yet begun to receive benefit payments, your spouse will receive an annuity (referred to as a pre-retirement survivor pension), payable monthly for the rest of his/her life (even if your spouse remarries)." The rules and calculations are found in the SPD on page 20 or see your local union insurance retirement specialist for other answers.

Third steps were held for five grievances on Friday the 28th. Sally Feistal from the District 2 office assisted in the grievance preparation and we're now awaiting the answers. Several mechanics were granted wire pay in a previous grievance answer but along with that came a letter from the Company stating that they would no longer pay mechanics wire pay. This just means that they will no longer follow the practice of paying maintenance folks wire pay and they are putting us on notice. This breaks the past practice of doing so and is the proper way of achieving this. The counselling sessions that are happening with the Mill Manager are going well. These appear to be the way the Company faces the statistics of so many small accidents leading to a serious one and they appear to be trying to break the chain of accidents by making you more aware of how it affects you and your family. So far it looks good and is being received well by the majority of people.

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### ***REMEMBER!!!***

*Union Voluntary Benefits  
Open Enrollment Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>*

*Union Hall – September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> thru 18<sup>th</sup> from  
10am to 7pm  
USAT Office at the Mill – September 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>  
from 6am to 4pm*

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### **Road Block**

*Ross Strand, Worker's Comp Advocate*

Hi all! Steve Benoit and I met with John Donahue last week in regards to Workman's Comp issues. I brought up the fact that Sedgwick (our Workman's Comp provider) is denying nearly every case that is filed which is forcing us to instead use the Blue Cross insurance. This not only causes frustration, it forces our group insurance to pay out



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claims that should be covered by Comp. I explained that we always have to fight, even to the point of mediation in most cases and it should not be that way. I made it clear that Sedgwick is the major road block and something needs to be done; much to my surprise, John agreed that it shouldn't be that way and he will check into it. I felt pretty good about this meeting. I had one mediation last week and am waiting on a date for another. Stay safe!

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### **Community First**

*Steve Benoit, President*

Thank you to everyone that donated school supplies for our local schools. We were able to make up 32 backpacks which means there will be two backpacks per school. Backpacks were filled with folders, paper, colored pencils, crayons, pens, pencils, rulers, note cards, erasers, markers and more. We will deliver the backpacks to schools throughout Delta County. We'll inform each of the school offices about the USW's commitment that every



student deserves a good education and we strongly believe they are successfully providing that. We will donate the backpacks to the schools for students that may show up without supplies or that may not have all their needed supplies. No student should be ill-equipped to perform at their best due to something as simple as the basic required tools. The Local should be proud of everything we continue to do for the community, whether it be through "Backpacks for Schools", the "Strike for Hunger", or the many other contributions we make without fanfare. Our next initiative for the community has its roots in an idea shared by one of our members. We will be collecting hats, gloves, and jackets for those in need. Start collecting now and watch for news about upcoming designated drop off sites!

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*"Alone we can do so little.  
Together we can do so much"  
-Helen Keller*

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### **Time for Annual 401(k) Review?**

*Edward Jones Financial*

Do you have a 401(k)? If so, you'll want to review it annually—and right now, when this year is winding down, is as good a time as any. What should you look for when you review your 401(k)? Evaluate whether your investment mix is still suitable for your individual goals, risk tolerance and time horizon. If you feel your 401(k) has gotten either too aggressive or too conservative, you may need to rebalance your investments.

Your 401(k) might allow you to reallocate your investment dollars as often as you like, but if you change investments too frequently, you could be charged redemption fees, so try to make only those adjustments that are necessary.

By reviewing your 401(k) annually and making any necessary adjustments, you can help ensure that it will be a key element of your retirement savings.

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### **The Welfare Club**

*Bob Larson, Trustee*

The Mead Paper Company Employee Welfare Association is an old organization; this is obvious by the name. Our objective is to help *all* employees, not just members of Local 21. We are not affiliated with the company or directly tied to the local unions. All employees are automatically enrolled in the Welfare Club upon hire. The dues are currently \$7 per month and are deducted quarterly. For the fifteen minutes of wage each month the Welfare Club will pay your company provided insurance premiums for up to 3 years. You must be off for 3 continuous months to qualify. Many of you will never use this benefit, some people could have used it and did not simply because they did not know who to contact. The company cannot tell the Welfare Club when someone is off of work because of HIPAA rules. The best course of action to utilize these benefits is to contact one of the people listed below if you or someone you know is off. The Welfare Club also meets on the first Monday of every month at the Mead Rod & Gun Club at 7p.m; we encourage any and all members to attend and get involved.

Bob Larson	(906) 786-5525
Bob Lehouillier	(906) 786-9648
Joe Anderson	(906) 428-1804

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## Moves

*Steve Benoit, President*

I have decided to make a move back to my position on E1 winders for many reasons but the main reason was to have more time to work on Union business. I know this move will be a good choice. Please be assured that we will still be staffing the USAT office so please watch for the light to be on and be sure to stop in. If USAT office hours are not enough, I will be on C crew on No. 11 Winder at extension 2529. Feel free to call or stop by. We will also continue to offer Safety Breakfast on Thursday mornings. I believe this will be a positive change for us all. Any questions or concerns please call me at (906) 399-4195 or stop by the E1 Winder area.

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## **ARTICLE 15. HOURS OF WORK AND OVERTIME**

Employees shall not report to work earlier than thirty (30) minutes prior to starting time nor shall they leave later than fifteen (15) minutes after the regular quitting time, unless they have been required to work overtime.

Starting or quitting work contrary to Company regulations. Also lurching contrary to Company regulations is misconduct rule 23. The company has put a notice in "The Paper" due to the numerous amounts of people coming in contrary to these requirements.

Here is what I have for starting times:

6:00 - Roll Wrapping and Shipping (including reprocessing and core room)  
6:00 - #1 System (including pulp dryer)  
6:00 - #3 System  
6:00 - #4 System (excluding material handler)  
5:30 - Kraft Mill  
5:30 - Utilities  
6:00 - Wood Waste and Coal  
6:00 - Water and Effluent  
6:30 - Woodyard and PMD  
6:00 - RMP  
6:30 - Paper Inspection

If you have any questions, please contact your scheduler or Chief Steward.

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## Supplemental Benefits

*Gerald Kell, Insurance Advocate/Editor*

In my short time as your Local Insurance Advocate I've learned a substantial amount about our membership and have recognized the vast diversity that we represent.

Typically, when one speaks to diversity, they're referring to gender, race, etc. While these are certainly qualifying classifications, I've found the variety of employees we represent from other defining categories to be fascinating. The advocate job has allowed me to interact with many of our current and former employees whom which I may have never had the opportunity to encounter, and certainly not with such personal acquaintance. Discovering this array of differences in personalities, habits, backgrounds, hobbies, heritage, and ambitions has given me a clearer vision of why we place such a great importance on the health & welfare benefits of our co-workers.

Adequately insuring such an immense collection of unique individuals requires an encyclopedic knowledge of a very complicated healthcare system, a tireless work ethic, and a near-blind devotion to those under the umbrella of coverage. Here at the Escanaba Mill we've been fortunate to have former and current Union members/representatives who recognize the need for these qualifications in our healthcare providers and work to see it addressed. We now are going into another year of open enrollment for our voluntary healthcare benefits through TBS Insurance. I can personally attest to the degree of success that this program has seen thus far, even in my short tenure.

Included in this newsletter will be a flyer that we've drawn up to highlight some of these successes along with basic breakdowns of premiums, coverage, pay-outs, and bullet points about the overall plans. It can be easy for us to assume that all this information is researched, fact-

**Thinking about your retirement plans?**  
Or rethinking your current plan?



**Let's talk.**



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checked, dutifully organized, and then just simply passed down from some magical insurance fairy that migrates across the land each year to accommodate all the insurance professionals in their quest to provide benefit packages to all the good little boys and girls. Clearly, this is not the case....sadly.

Paul Baeten and Hristina Reith are our Voluntary Benefits liaisons from TBS Insurance, and for those of you that have sought their guidance on anything from short-term disability to retirement insurance through the exchange, you've already had the pleasure of witnessing their devotion to helping our members. I felt compelled to write this article after experiencing the showcase put on by these two over the past few months; especially in regards to the work that went in to the research, preparation and implementation of our new benefits plan.

While I don't expect any new born babies to be graced as namesakes in honor of Paul or Hristina, I certainly would implore you to take into consideration the work behind the scenes and offer some sincere gratitude for their work. We're all aware of the difference it can make when what you've worked for is actually appreciated!

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### **Promising News**

*Joe Curran, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*

As many of you may have heard, the Pulp Dryer is in the process of adding a 4th Crew and moving to a 24 hour/7 day a week rotation; I don't need to tell you that anytime we can add jobs it is a positive sign for our mill. The goal is obviously to bale enough pulp during the year to be self-sufficient during outages and supply softwood to Quinnesec. I cannot confirm whether or not anything else has been talked about as far as selling pulp on the market, but I am sure anything is an option as long as the dryer is configured to make a quality product.

We have also heard the Company is looking at add four temporary jobs in the Woodyard to alleviate the bark-hauling work as a result of No. 9 Boiler no longer being in full operation and taking bark from the conveyor. We are going to pursue the Company adding these as permanent jobs so the folks that take them can build seniority with the understanding that in the future, if necessary, the Company could utilize the curtailment language in the Labor Agreement. I have been in communication with the Woodyard stewards and will report more on this as more details emerge.

With the onslaught of retirements many of you will be expected to move up and begin training on new jobs. Along with unfamiliarity comes a need for heightened safety awareness so please be safe and don't put yourself or anyone else in harm's way. Take the needed time to think about your environment and surroundings. Be sure to consider what could be a potential hazard so you can go home safe to your family and friends.

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## **THIS MONTH'S LOCAL BUSINESS FEATURE**

Our membership has a significant impact on the local economy. Let's keep that impact a positive one by shopping locally and being sure to frequent establishments that give back to our community. I'll be featuring local businesses each month and encouraging members to offer suggestions for future issues. Remember to let them know you saw them in our newsletter!

This month we're featuring ***Ernie's Irish Pub***. Ernie's is conveniently located in downtown Escanaba. Visit them for your favorite drink, socialize with your friends, or make new ones. Local brothers and entrepreneurs, Dan and Steve Hackleman renovated the historic building and opened Ernie's Irish Pub over seven years ago. Since then, the establishment has become a favorite destination for locals and travelers alike. While operating other local businesses, they've also committed much of their time supporting and sponsoring many local fundraising campaigns including YAP and the Delta Animal Shelter.

As Steelworkers, we know how to work hard and play hard, be sure to stop down at Ernie's and support those who support our community!



