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# 21 NEWS

Editor: Gerald Kell [WWW.USW2-21.COM](http://WWW.USW2-21.COM) January, 2017  
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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.freckmanandassociates.com](http://www.freckmanandassociates.com) (800) 331-3226

**Retiree Get Together** 1st Wed 10am - Union Hall

**Union Meeting:** 2nd Wednesday - 7 pm – Dinner 6 pm

**Steward's Meeting:** 4th Wednesday - 3 pm at the Hall

**Welfare Club Meeting:** 1st Monday of the month - 7 pm at the Mead Rod & Gun Club

**Total Benefit Solutions:** Union Hall hours on the first two Wednesdays of each month from 9:30 to 3:30. Call 1.877.265.2212 to schedule an appointment.



## Committee Members

		Work	Personal
President	Steve Benoit	233-2529	399-4195
1st Vice	Chuck Way	233-2705	280-1698
2nd Vice	Bob Larson		420-2256
3rd Vice	Jeff Skorupski	233-2556	399-5472
Insurance	Gerald Kell	233-3135	869-7943
Comp	Ross Strand	233-2531	280-1494
Secretary	Brandon Stromberg	233-2556	284-1604
Treasurer	Guy Trudell	233-2534	399-9143
Hall Rental	Steve Kennedy		789-1933



[www.pacelocal21.proboards.com](http://www.pacelocal21.proboards.com)



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

## Another Successful Arbitration

**Bob Larson, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice**

Our union won a very important arbitration this past month. A brother was brought back with full pay and benefits lost during his time off. The arbitrator's summary flogged the company for breaking the contract, making statements they could not prove, and wrongly accusing our brother of lying.

This victory was made possible by several things; the Company's arrogance in thinking they could do whatever they chose regardless of contractual language; the Company's ineptitude in reporting as they were writing one thing in the reports and then saying something else; the final piece in our win over tyranny was the entire USW Local 2-21 membership. The solidarity of this local makes me proud. Our fellow workers, department stewards, committee, and district staff put together a case that the Company simply could not combat.

We have won three of the last four arbitrations and received a positive language clarification in our favor on the fourth. On average unions only win 27% of arbitrations. One would think that the Company would want to work with us to avoid all of the expense and time consumed by this process. Unfortunately, that appears not to be the case. We have an arbitration being set up and other grievances that are going to 3<sup>rd</sup> step as I write this. The Company constantly cries about being broke yet two of these arbitrations were handled by a law firm from Louisiana. I cannot guess what that cost. The Company paid one of our brothers nine month's wages including benefits and overtime while they paid someone else to do the work. The Company will continue with this style of management. They expect us to take a knee and grovel for things as if they've just given them to us. REMEMBER: we have what we have because we were STRONG enough to TAKE it and we brothers and sisters are strong enough to KEEP IT!

## **Bring Derick and Tracy Back**

*Steve Benoit, President*

With a company that claims they want trust they sure have a shitty way of earning it. Our Union Brother and Sister had one of the worst decisions in front of them and no one should ever have to be placed in a position where they have to either give up their rights or their job. A message needs to be sent to this company through avenues that we have available to us as a union. You have probably seen the stickers available that read: **“Follow Our Contract, Bring Derick and Tracy Back”**, this is only the beginning. Our brother and sister made an honest mistake but the mistake wasn't willful nor egregious. According to the talking points provided to our foreman from Pam Lauscher, the Company is choosing to overdramatize it by saying, “The only thing that prevented a possible fatality was LUCK!” This couldn't be further from the truth. In the incident at hand, Tracy and Derick pulled the emergency stop cord. Most know that when this cord is pulled it shuts everything down and will not allow start up until someone comes out to the area and resets the cable. If someone was willful or neglectful they would never have pulled that cord. For more information please see CAT Letter number 99. Please show support for these members by wearing the sticker. There will be a pancake breakfast held this Saturday, January 28 at the hall from 8am to 1pm. Deliveries will be available starting at 6:30 am by calling the hall at 786-1846.

## **Strike for Hunger**

*Brandon Stromberg, Secretary*

The last three years we have had the pleasure of hosting an awesome community event called ***Strike for Hunger***. The first year we held the event in the throes of our January winter and stood outside of Elmer's Grocery store for 48 consecutive hours collecting non-perishable food items and cash donations. It was cold and challenging, but our membership's enthusiasm was warm and inspiring. The local food pantries were thrilled to receive our donation. We quickly discovered that in January the food pantries are actually less in need due to spikes in donations during that time, so we decided the summer months would be more beneficial to their needs. After the overwhelming success of our second annual ***Strike for Hunger***, we expanded to another local grocery store and added three drop-off locations throughout the community. Overall, our ***Strike for Hunger*** has raised nearly 10,000 lbs. of food and \$11,500 in cash! The food pantries to which we donate assist more than 500 local families per month.

Recently, the USW recognized our local union's ***Strike for Hunger*** in a “USW Cares” article. In addition to the recognition we were also nominated for the Jefferson Award. The Jefferson Awards Foundation was created in 1972 and is dedicated to activating and celebrating public service. Jefferson Awards are given both nationally and locally to ordinary people who do extraordinary things without expectation of recognition. Currently we are planning our 4<sup>th</sup> annual ***Strike for Hunger***. If you would like to be part of the planning process, please let me know. Otherwise, be on alert for more information to come in the near future. You all deserve a round of applause because you have made this event a huge success!

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## **Grievance Misconceptions**

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

The Union files grievances on behalf of its members. They are not filed to stop or delay job postings or filling of said jobs. The use of coercion in order to pressure the dropping of a grievance will not be tolerated. We will move forward regardless if they're successful or not and the grievance will be settled. References made by outside factions will not bear on any decisions that are made now or in the future when it comes to Union matters.



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## **Asbestos Disease Among Paper Mill Workers**

OSHA has determined that paper mill workers who worked in the 1960's and 1970's are recognized as being at risk for asbestos related lung diseases such as mesothelioma, lung cancer and asbestosis. Some workers from our paper mill who started working in the 1960's and 1970's have been diagnosed with asbestos lung disease and have received compensation from the companies who sold asbestos products to the mill without warning the mill of the known dangers of asbestos. The law firm of Goldberg, Persky & White from Saginaw offers free asbestos disease evaluations to any interested workers who started in the paper mill in the 60's or 70's and are concerned about their exposure to asbestos. To schedule a no-cost asbestos disease evaluation and discuss with an attorney whether you may be entitled to compensation from the companies who sold asbestos products to the mill, contact Goldberg, Persky & White at 800.799.2234 or by email at [jbedortha@gpwlaw.com](mailto:jbedortha@gpwlaw.com).

### **Welfare Club**

*Bob Larson, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice*

I have stepped down as president of the employee Welfare Club. Gary Dubord, Jr. has taken my place. Gary will do a fine job in his duties. The Welfare Club is an organization that is unique to our mill and demonstrates how well we take care of each other. None of the other mills have a club that steps up and pays the insurance premiums for their fellow employees. All mill employees are eligible for this benefit, salaried *or* union as long as you contribute to the fund. All new hires are enrolled automatically. The \$10 monthly cost of belonging is trivial compared to the cost of paying your insurance while you are off. This benefit kicks in after 90 days off work. The only problem is the Welfare Club doesn't always know who is off work. Please remind people who are off have to contact us. This can be done by contacting Gary, myself or any committee member. I truly hope that people do not need this benefit, but if you do thank your fellow workers.

### **2017 Welfare Club**

#### **Meeting Dates**

*February 6<sup>th</sup>*

*March 6<sup>th</sup>                      August 7<sup>th</sup>*

*April 3<sup>rd</sup>                        Sept 11<sup>th</sup>*

*May 1<sup>st</sup>                         October 2<sup>nd</sup>*

*June 5<sup>th</sup>                        November 6<sup>th</sup>*

*July 10<sup>th</sup>                        December 4<sup>th</sup>*

**Meetings are held at the  
Mead Rod & Gun Club**

### **Union Meeting Highlights**

- Jesse Peacock is our new hourly safety advisor
- Hourly safety advocate explained some possible changes to the positions moving forward
- A suggestion was made to the company to take on a 6-month safety advisor in the maintenance department and it was not received well.
- All were encouraged to contact a safety advisor if anyone has any questions or concerns about lockouts.
- The membership was educated on the Employee Assistance Fund.
- Discussions ongoing for a new position, Tool Tech.
- Currently, the motor salvage bid is still available in E/I, but there will not be a spare.
- Three mechanic jobs were filled and three more will be.
- A thank you to all in regards to the Matt Scheuren arbitration victory.
- A panel for our next arbitration was ordered
- The company will be bringing in 20 new people and putting an ad in the paper soon.
- Two paid grievances were reported.
- Discussion on the new HRA/FSA cards
- The Strike for Hunger was discussed and the recognition we received from the USW international.
- A discussion about the company calling our members on their day off and forcing them to come in for 18 hours. This is wrong and the company has to inform you before you leave work.
- Regarding the PPE vending machines, the company has been provided a letter to bargain with us over it.
- We have discussed the discipline surrounding the monthly safety meetings and we will continue to do so.
- Jason Berube has accepted the Next Generation position for 2017.
- We have been informed master negotiations probably will not happen and we will prepare for local negotiations.

## Health Equity HRA/FSA Cards

*Gerald Kell, Insurance Advocate*

Those who recall the financial inconvenience of our transition to BlueCrossBlueShield of Tennessee last year are hopefully welcoming the addition of the Health Equity Debit cards received last month. Members who sought to fill a prescription early last year found themselves having to spend hundreds of dollars out-of-pocket and then having to seek reimbursement from their Health Reimbursement Account (HRA). Additional inconvenience followed for those who utilize the Flex Spending Account (FSA) when we abruptly learned they would no longer receive a debit card to utilize for qualifying point-of-sale transactions. Those who experienced neither inconvenience are more likely to have no idea why we've received these cards and that's understandable. In fact, if you mistakingly threw the cards away, know that you're not alone. And if you're reading this and still have no idea what I'm referring to, please contact me and we'll get you the cards.

The Health Equity cards were issued to any individual who is enrolled in the mill's healthcare HRA plan or FSA. If you have both, the card can be used for both accounts. Understand that HRA money—the money deposited on your behalf at the beginning of each year; either \$500, \$750, or \$1000 depending on which plan you have—is spent first for qualifying medical expenses. Once HRA money is



**HSA**

Health savings account



**FSA**

Flexible spending account

exhausted, qualifying expenses will be deducted from your FSA—the pre-tax money voluntarily set aside for potential healthcare costs—if you have enrolled in one. The HRA funds can only be used for medical plan expenses, not Dental nor Vision. The FSA funds can be used for all three along with some additional over-the-counter items. Primary function of the card is to replace the need for individuals to pay for prescriptions and services upfront and wait for a reimbursement. However, if you have already paid for either, you can still submit reimbursement requests through your Health Equity account. There is a user-friendly app available for your smart phone, printable forms on the website, or you can call and have this information sent to your home. Or you can call me and I will help you navigate the process. Remember to utilize the Union's online discussion board to read other member's experiences and get answers to your questions.

We encourage all members to login and check their accounts to verify accurate information and fund balance. You may notice that if you had HRA money remaining from 2016 that it does not yet show up on your account, the rollover funds will remain with BCBST until March to enable their processing of outstanding 2016 claims.

This is also a great time to take advantage of the HRA incentive funds available through the BCBST website. You may receive up to \$800 in HRA funds for each covered adult on the plan.

### FAQ's:

#### ***When will I use the card?***

Any qualifying out-of-pocket healthcare expense

#### ***Do I have a PIN?***

No PIN, the card should be run as 'credit'

#### ***How do I contact HealthEquity?***

Member Services 877.472.8632

#### ***What if I've already paid for expenses out of pocket?***

You can submit a reimbursement request

#### ***Can I use last year's reimbursement forms?***

No, Health Equity has their own forms

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Call **1.877.265.2212** for an appointment. A qualified representative will come directly to your home and help qualify your options. As a service to our Members, a TBS Representative is available at the Union Hall two days each month. Stop in or call for a specific appointment time.

### SPORTSMAN'S CLUB MEMBERSHIP

It has been brought to my attention that a number of Verso Employees have inquired about becoming members of the Sportsman's Club. First, they can acquire an application from the LPO at the front gate, fill it out and send it to me. My address is on the application. The cost for membership is \$35 annually and is payroll deducted around the middle of April.

Many employees join the Club so they and their families are able to use our 300 yard Rifle Range. We also have a Trap Shooting Range and will be constructing a Pistol Range in the Spring. Only the members are allowed to use the range.

Other employees join for the use of renting our Club House. Rental of the Club House to members is \$75 a day plus \$100 deposit that is to cover any damages that might occur during rental. We also require an Insurance Binder from the renter's insurance company, which is free; this covers the Club in the case of any liability. To non-members the rental cost is \$160 a day plus the Binder and \$100 deposit.

The Club meets monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday with lunch and drinks provided.

Any questions can be directed to Mike Gobert at 786.1957 or Jerry Erickson at 474.6591

### Follow the Contract

*Steve Benoit, President*

Recently, the Company chose to violate the contract because a fear that they might need to shut down machinery. The problem is not the unions issue it is the company's issue because they have not and will not hire enough people to staff the mill. Without the appropriate staffing, it causes issues with training and with scheduling.


In the E4 coater we had this issue happen twice where a scheduler contacted members on their day off and informed them that they were forced in on an 18-hour shift. What makes this even worse is that they forced them in over a voice mail. These employees not knowing what do came in to work and were informed that they did not have to come in. First of all, the company cannot force you in on your day off if you were not informed prior to leaving on your preceding shift (see language below) and second a scheduler should not be forcing you in over a voice mail. If the scheduler is unable to get ahold of you they should be moving on to another option. It is my belief that if you do not come in because a scheduler left you a message there is no recourse against you and I would fight that.

### ARTICLE 15. HOURS OF WORK AND OVERTIME

#### Section 6. Reporting Time

*It is agreed that the time for the start of the employee's shift or day may be changed at any time by the management upon notification to the employee before the end of their last preceding shift, provided such change is deemed necessary for the most efficient operation of the plant.*

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## **Your Community Needs You**

How satisfied are you with how the government is working? How can you make a difference? One simple way you, as a citizen of a community, can make a difference is by attending a local city or township meeting.

Get involved, speak up and make a difference.

### **Maple Ridge Township**

Township Officers meet the last Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Maple Ridge Community Bldg.

### **Masonville Township**

Township Officers meet the third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. in the OMNI Center.  
Telephone (906) 474-9505.

### **Nahma Township**

Township Officers meet the first Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Nahma Township Hall.

### **Village of Garden**

Village of Garden Officers meet the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Village Office Garden, MI.

### **Garden Township**

The regular meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m., at the Garden Community Center except for November and February which are held on the 2nd Thursday of the month

### **Cornell Township**

Township Officers meet the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Township Hall.

### **Baldwin Township**

Township Officers meet the last Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Baldwin Township Hall, Perkins, MI.  
Telephone (906) 359-4228.

### **Brampton Township**

Township Officers meet the third Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Kipling Town Hall in Kipling.  
Telephone (906) 428-4790.

### **Ensign Township**

Township Officers meet the third Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Ensign Township Hall.

### **Escanaba Township**

Township Officers meet the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Escanaba Township Hall.  
Telephone (906) 786-6200.

### **Bark River Township**

Township Officers meet the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Bark River Senior Center in Bark River.  
Telephone (906) 466-2331.

### **Ford River Township**

Township Officers meet the second Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Ford River Town Hall.  
Phone (906) 786-8532.

### **City of Escanaba**

City Council meetings are held the first and third Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the City Hall Conference Room.

### **City of Gladstone**

City Commission meetings are held the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 7:00pm at the Gladstone City Hall.

### **Bay de Noc Township**

Township Officers meet the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Stonington Community Hall.  
Telephone (906) 474-6286.

### **Fairbanks Township**

Township Officers meet the second Tuesday of every other month (February, April, June, August, October, & December) at 7:30 p.m. at the Fairbanks Township Hall.  
Telephone (906) 644-2027.

### **Wells Township**

Township Officers meet the third Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Wells Town Hall, 6436 N. 8th St., Wells, MI 49894.  
Telephone (906) 786-0839.

### **Delta County**

Board of Commissioners meet the first and third Tuesday of every month at 7pm. Delta County Service Center, 2920 College Ave., Escanaba, MI 49829.





## **Protect Our Work, Protect Our Contract**

*Steve Benoit, President*

It has been brought to our attention that there is a number of foremen in our areas that have been doing hourly rated work that is normally assigned to Union Employees. This cannot happen and is a violation of the contract (see below excerpt from the contract).

### **ARTICLE 21. SUPERVISORY WORK RESTRICTION**

*Supervisors, foremen and other non-unit company employees shall not perform any work normally assigned to hourly rated employees, except for training purposes and in case of emergencies or to protect the health and welfare of employees.*

There are a number of grievances that have been filed in the past concerning Article 21 in all areas of the mill that prove that supervision cannot do Union work. Some of those grievances as of late even have the awarded answer that states:

***Grievance 21-14-085 Accepted Second Step Answer:*** *The Company is in full agreement that supervision should not perform bargaining unit work per Article 21 of the Labor Agreement. All Supervisors have been reminded of this expectation by Mill Manager, Matt Archambeau.*

Also in a recent grievance the Union was awarded the below answer to Management sitting in the operators seat when there is a vacancy that cannot be filled.

### **Grievance 21-15-112**

***Situation:*** *On December 12, 2015 Greg Pederson was working as an Operator in the Kraft Mill due to a vacancy that was not able to be filled. The Union contested that Greg should have been training a Kraft Mill Employee in order to be performing functions of the job. This situation did not fit the definition of an emergency. The Union asked the company to stop allowing supervisors to do hourly work unless contractually allowed.*

***Accepted Second Step Answer:*** *In future shutdown circumstances, the company will provide training when appropriate.*

We must stop allowing Management to do our work. Do not stand by and watch these supervisors disrespect our contract or allow them to take your jobs. Inform supervision they cannot do our work and if they do, file a grievance with a Union Steward. Remember the company is holding you accountable to follow the rules, policies and contract, we must do the same. Hold Management accountable and do not allow them to do your work.

To Our Union Brothers, Sisters, and Families,

We just wanted to give you all a heartfelt THANK YOU for all of your continued support, cards, donations, thoughts and prayers for us and our family during this most difficult time in our lives. Words cannot truly express how grateful we are for everything you've done and continue to for us!

People have the thoughts/beliefs that, "It will happen to someone else, it won't happen to me" and take a lot of things for granted in the short time we are here. Most times, we are lucky and an event, circumstance, or close call comes and goes and no one really notices. It's just another day... We always hear that "Life is short" but how many people REALLY pay attention to that saying or actually live their lives that way? How many times have you said, "Screw it" when going riding, hunting, whatever it may be, and don't wear a helmet, don't fasten your seatbelt, leave the gun loaded, or take a shortcut at work, etc. and NEVER think about what your wife, husband or kids would have to go through if you were seriously injured or KILLED in a senseless accident? I guess what we're trying to get across to everyone is that none of us knows when the LAST time we'll see our loved ones will be, when we will say goodbye or "I love you" for the last time, the last hug, the last holiday or birthday we will get to spend with them.

PLEASE do not take any moment for granted! One thing we have discovered the hard way is that NOTHING is GUARANTEED. We don't know how much time we have to LIVE LIFE, so make sure you take the time to hug your wife/husband and kids and make sure you tell them you LOVE them EVERY CHANCE YOU GET because you never know when the last time will be.

Michael Scheuren & April Chartre

