



Local 153 News

42 Broadway, Suite 1936, New York, NY 10004 (212) 741-8282

Fall 2022

Local 153 Successfully Organizes New Shops; Union Also Wins First Contracts

When a new administration was elected to lead Local 153 Business Manager Richard Lanigan promised to make organizing one of the union's priorities. Fulfillment of that promise has taken shape and we are happy to report successful organizing and even some first contracts in these new shops. Here are some examples:

Guttmacher Institute Employees Say "Union Yes!"

In a landslide vote on July 12, Guttmacher Employees United (GEU) chose to join Local 153. There were only two votes against the union!

The Guttmacher Institute is a leading

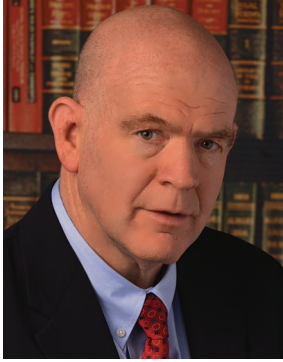
nonprofit research and policy organization committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights in the U.S. and globally. In their initial letter to management announcing their intent to unionize, the GEU organizing committee wrote, "In the spirit of Guttmacher's vision for a future

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Local 153 Members at Millersville University Health Services Stop Potential Outsourcing



Congratulations to Local 153 members employed at Millersville University's Health Services. Their solidarity, along with support they received from students, parents, elected officials and others, has led to a significant victory! Details inside this edition of Local 153 News.



By Richard Lanigan, Business Manager

A complicated issue that needs bipartisan work

Our union follows an unwritten policy that we speak out on social issues when they concern union members or workplace issues. During the recent shooting in the Tops food store in Buffalo, a long term OPEIU member, “Katherine “Kat” Massey, was gunned down while she shopped. So, it’s up to you, the person reading this, to say whether a mass shooting that killed a Local 153 member in a store where many people worked is a workplace issue.

Let me begin by saying that my father was a New York City Police Officer, and I was raised in a house with handguns and rifles. I am comfortable around them. As my dad did for me, I purchased a Daisy Red River BB gun for my son when he turned 11. My first woodworking project was a gun rack for my pump barrel Crossman BB rifle. While not a hunter, I enjoy shooting skeet.

I know the arguments in favor of relaxed gun laws as well as those against. Arguments like guns don’t kill people, people do, and people need to be armed to deter would be aggressors. Arguments like guns should be heavily regulated, and other suggestions.

The idea of adding guns as a deterrent to crime is an interesting one. Well-funded and trained police departments are the deterrent to would-be criminals. That is why we employ and retain professionals who put their lives on the line for our safety and commit to a lifetime of training. In the US, like in other industrial countries, we pay taxes to have well-

resourced police departments. If adding guns deters crime, then the U.S., which has 4% of the world’s population and owns nearly 45% of the world’s guns, should have little crime.

Nearly every modern industrial country eliminated easy access to assault weapons over the last 30 years. Each country responded in its own time to the tragedy of a mass murder committed on its soil with an assault weapon. Since eliminating easy access, the number of mass murders committed with assault weapons has gone down significantly in those countries. By contrast, sales of guns in the U.S. have skyrocketed in the last 20 years, and the number of mass murders with guns has continued to rise.

People point to the 2nd Amendment as providing a fundamental right to own and carry guns but seem to forget that it was ratified at a time when single shot muskets and pistols prevailed and the horse and buggy were the prevailing mode of transportation.

Cars are now the prevailing mode of transportation. Today you need a license to drive in the U.S. The car must have seat belts, airbags, brakes, headlights and taillights, windshield wipers and other safety equipment. Cars must be registered. In many states cars must pass minimum inspection requirements, and you violate the law if you commit a moving violation or operate the car under the influence. Interestingly, guns, which have gone through similar technological development since the single shot musket era, don’t have such regulations. Why are there regulations to

own an automobile but not a gun? The level of danger to people is comparable.

Legislators have often responded to incidents where people were killed. When actress Jayne Mansfield was killed in 1967 after her car ran under the rear of a tractor trailer, legislation was enacted requiring these vehicles to have a DOT bar. In 1982 when seven people died using Tylenol from packages that had been tampered with, legislation required “tamper-proof” packaging. When a fertilizer bomb in Oklahoma City killed 168 people in 1995, the government instituted severe restrictions on the purchase of fertilizer. In 2001 a terrorist tried to blow up a plane with a shoe bomb. Since then air travelers are required to take off their shoes for scanning. In 2021 gun violence killed 134 Americans each day, a total of almost 49,000 for the year. The U.S. Congress finally responded to gun violence with the enactment this year of the Safer Communities Act. But while many say the law doesn’t do enough to curb gun violence, other say it goes too far.

This is a complicated issue that continues to need serious thought and bipartisan work. It’s hard to say whether additional regulations would have saved the life of our Local 153 member in Buffalo. The measures taken by other countries need to be studied to determine whether similar laws or a combination of steps taken would have an impact. Perhaps they would not, and the U.S. needs its own unique approach. Either way, meaningful common sense discussion about these issues must continue.

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Hundreds of Local 153 Members Win New Contract at Highmark

Hundreds of members of Local 153 employed by Highmark in Buffalo have a new contract! It's quite a deal, considering that management swaggered to the bargaining table with an onerous list of giveback demands.

"This was a difficult negotiation," said Local 153 Business Agent Mark Jurenovich. "I give great credit to the bargaining committee members, who often participated in negotiations after working 10-hour days. Jurenovich added that 20 bargaining sessions were necessary to finally reach an agreement. The deal beneficially affects more than 350 Local 153 members.

How difficult were contract talks? Very difficult. "Highmark took over Blue Cross of Western New York, and as a new employer they had never negotiated with us before," reported Lynn Brooks, the chair of the union's bargaining committee. "They brought in a lawyer from Harrisburg, PA to lead their negotiations,"

Another issue the committee faced was

that retirements and other attrition brought into the bargaining unit many young members who are not very familiar with unions and contract negotiations. Both Jurenovich and Brooks praised these new members for their enthusiasm. "We engaged in a lot of internal organizing and thankfully the new members responded accordingly," he said.

"And I can't say enough about the great assistance Local 153 Business Agent Mark Jurenovich provided to us," Brooks said. "His experience helped us repeatedly as we worked our way to a fair and just contract."

Brooks added that one of the most helpful aspects of the contract drive was the creation of an online survey that allowed all members – newer employees and veterans alike – to weigh in on the issues that were important to them. "Tom Woodford, a member of the bargaining committee, used his IT skills to set up the process that allowed us to survey our members.

Utilizing that kind of technology proved to be an immensely valuable resource," she said.

One of the most significant things the survey revealed was that employees wanted to continue to work remotely. Because of the pandemic almost 85% of the staff had been permitted to work from home. But as the pandemic began to wane and vaccines and other health measures began to ameliorate some of the danger of Covid, the company began calling workers back into the office. The survey also revealed a stiff resistance to health care givebacks among other items of importance to the workers.

Very slow progress was made in negotiations but the entire bargaining unit solidified behind the contract drive. "We were ready to bring busloads of members to Pittsburgh to demonstrate outside Highmark's headquarters," Brooks said. "The company paid \$6 million for the naming rights of the

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Here's the negotiating committee that worked many hours through 20 bargaining sessions to reach the contract agreement with Highmark that was ratified by the membership. From left to right are Dana Delano, Donna Amos, Local 153 Business Agent Mark Jurenovich, Committee Chair Lynn Brooks, Pam Austin and Tom Woodford.

Hundreds of Local 153 Members Win New Contract at Highmark

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Buffalo Bills' Stadium and we told them the football players and others involved with the NFL are union members, too, and we would make waves if necessary."

In the end, all the hard work by the bargaining committee and the solidarity of the employees paid off. The union won a three-year agreement that provides three compounded wage increases of 2% each year. While management demanded an end to step increases, a giveback that would have sorely hurt all employees with less than 10 years on the job, the union fought back and was able to fully preserve that feature of the contract for the benefit of newer members. The company also tried to switch health care plans and the union successfully fought back that demand as well. The union also successfully opposed demands for increases in employee contributions, co-pays and deductibles.

There's more. The union was able to liberalize the use and scheduling of paid time off. Two extra PTO days were won in the new contract, a regular one and another "floating day" to replace Good Friday.

There are also bonuses for all members of the bargaining unit on top of the wage increases they will receive! There is a \$1,300 signing bonus immediately, and an additional incentive of \$1,000 for everyone. There will be bonuses of \$500 paid to all in April of 2023, \$550 in October of 2023 and \$500 in April of 2024.

There is still more. The union was able to win the right for the overwhelming majority of Highmark employees to work from home. "On the survey we created our members let us know how important this was to them and their families," Brooks said. "We fought hard and we won it. As a result of this contract a full 85% of our members will be able to work from home."

Brooks praised the members of the bargaining committee for their tireless efforts to win a good deal for their co-workers and their families. Besides Brooks, who served as chairperson, the other members of the bargaining committee were Dana Delano, (22 years of service), Donna Amos, (51 years of service), Pam Austin (23 years of service) and Tom Woodford (six years). Lynn Brooks has been with the company

for 19 years. They were assisted by Junerovich. Their hard work also united the entire work staff at Highmark. A recent Zoom meeting online drew more than 250 members of the bargaining unit!

"Congratulations to Mark Jurenovich, Lynn Brooks, the other members of the bargaining committee and all the members of our union employed by Highmark," Local 153 Business Manager Richard Lanigan said. "This contract is proof that union membership pays and that solidarity leads to success."

With all the good news surrounding the Highmark deal, there was some bad news as well. Retired Local 153 member Katherine "Kat" Massey was one of the 10 people killed in the racist mass murder at Tops Market in Buffalo on May 14. In addition, Jennifer Warrington, a traveling pharmacist who is the cousin of negotiating committee member Dana Delano, was seriously wounded during the horrific incident. Fortunately, Ms. Warrington is on the road to recovery. An article remembering Katherine Massey appears in this edition of Local 153 News.

Membership Meetings Matter

Membership meetings are a perfect way to get up-to-date information about Local 153's benefits and services. They always feature interesting reports and often present informative guest speakers. Not only that, but those who attend have the opportunity to speak personally with the union's officers and staff.

Here are some of the officers and members who attended the membership meeting on Tuesday, September 20. Dozens more attended online via Zoom. The next Local 153 membership meeting will be held on

Tuesday, January 17 at 6:00 P.M. at the Gertrude Lane Auditorium, 305 West

44th Street (corner of 8th Avenue) mezzanine level.



Introducing Three New Hires at Local 153

Local 153 is pleased to announce the hiring of two new organizers and a new field staff member. Although relatively young in age, all three have extensive experience working with unions and the trio arrives with strong credentials. We are happy to welcome Melinda Fiedler and Scott Williams as organizers and David Hamer-Hodges as a new member of our field staff.

Melinda Fiedler knows how to organize! Even before college she was a regional organizer for United Students Against Sweatshops and, later, she served as an intern at the Sunlight Foundation, College for Melinda was American University in Washington, DC, followed by additional study at the National Labor College. Melinda interned with the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) before becoming an organizer for SEIU (the international union) and then SEIU 1199. Following her successful work at SEIU, Melinda became lead organizer for The Newspaper Guild, a division of the Communications Workers of America (CWA). Later, she became a Business

Representative for the American Guild of Musical Artists and then an organizer with DC Jobs with Justice.

Scott Williams is the other organizer that has come on board at Local 153. Scott holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Carolina and a Masters Degree in Education from the University of Pennsylvania. He has extensive experience in organized labor, beginning when he was a student organizer for the United Electrical Workers, Local 150. Scott was a high school social studies teacher and was a proud member of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Local 3, where he led contract organizing. He worked in organizing for UNITE HERE, Local 274 in Philadelphia and then the Philadelphia Joint Board of Workers United. He was an organizer and communications director for Action for Community and, most recently, the program manager for the Philadelphia Unemployment Project.

David Hamer-Hodges is our union's new field staff member, coming on board with more than a decade of

experience in the labor field. He was a senior staff representative for Communications Workers of America, Local 1032, in New Jersey, representing 2,000 state and municipal government workers in multiple workplaces with 30 different job titles. While with Local 1032, David was lead negotiator on 10 separate contracts. Earlier, David worked as a communications aide for 32BJ, SEIU, in New York as a lead contract and field organizer for SEIU's Committee of Interns and Residents. David is a graduate of Wheaton College and he holds an International Baccalaureate from a college in the United Kingdom.

"These new hires represent our union's commitment to growing our membership in strength and numbers," Local 153 Business Manager Richard Lanigan said. "They have a wealth of experience with unions and the art of organizing, and they have displayed a firm commitment to assisting workers. We are pleased to have them join the staff at Local 153."



David Hamer-Hodges



Melinda Fiedler

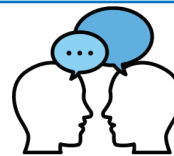


Scott Williams

Visit OSHA on the Web

Workers can use their pcs, tablets and smart phones to visit OSHA, the nation's workplace health and safety enforcement agency! OSHA's website — osha.gov — contains information about workers rights and employer responsibilities, and it provides electronic links to many sources of information about occupational safety and health issues.

There is a wealth of valuable information available at OSHA's website. Workers can even use it to file complaints with OSHA about health and safety hazards in the workplace. The form takes about 10 minutes to fill out and is automatically transmitted for follow-up to the appropriate OSHA office.



We want to talk to YOU!
Scan the QR code to update your contact information so we can keep in touch about the latest updates, events, and opportunities with OPEIU-153!



Election Day, 2022: Members Urge



On Election Day, November 8th, we hope that working families will consider the issues that are important to them when exercising their right to vote. Ignore the noise. Forget about the endless TV ads with candidates insulting each other. Instead, think about the issues that are important to you and your family, and future generations.

Healthcare remains at the forefront of the issues working families care about. There is something wrong with our system when working people are forced to forego lifesaving treatments in order to put food on the table. Americans want and need health care that allows children to grow into their potential and grandparents to be an active part of family life.

Our country has taken important — but imperfect — steps toward providing comprehensive, affordable health coverage for all. Today, the share of Americans who are uninsured is at a historical low. That's thanks to the combined impact of workers' health plans, strong Medicare and Medicaid programs, and the Affordable Care Act's protections against unaffordable private health insurance.

Still, too many people do not have health insurance. Medical care and prescription drug prices are too high, which drives up the cost of health insurance and sticks working people

and retirees with exorbitant deductibles, co-pays and co-insurance. Democrats in Congress were able to enact legislation that should that will reduce the cost of prescription medication for everyone, especially seniors, but more needs to be done. That's why unions support candidates who advocate for affordable health care for all Americans and to protect and strengthen the family protection programs that provide vital care to millions of children and seniors.

Another issue that we should think about is infrastructure. Once a symbol of national pride, our infrastructure is crumbling. Our roads, bridges, power grids, rail and transit networks all need major upgrades. There are sections of the Appian Way — built 2,000 years ago by the Romans — that are in better shape than large swaths of our parkways and roads. Investment in our infrastructure will increase safety for all Americans and create and sustain good jobs. In turn, such jobs will boost economic development, helping working people in every field. Led by Joe Biden a bipartisan \$1 trillion bill was signed into law last November that will begin to address our crumbling infrastructure. But more must be done, and the national AFL-CIO has launched a major effort to secure even more funding and staff to upgrade our nation's aging infrastructure and energy-saving retrofits. Considering this, it should be no surprise that we support

candidates that believe in rejuvenating our nation's infrastructure.

Since our nation's founding, immigrants and refugees have enriched the fabric of our communities, our workforce and our labor movement. The labor movement is the natural home for new immigrants struggling to achieve economic security and social justice, and we support candidates committed to building an immigration system that represents the needs and interests of all working people.

The labor movement fought to pass the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 that promises working people the right to a safe job. We have made real progress: Workplace deaths and injuries have declined dramatically. In fact, the lives of more than half a million workers have been saved by strengthening workplace protections. But too many Americans still work in unnecessarily unsafe conditions. Thousands of workers are killed each year — and millions more suffer injuries or illnesses — because of their jobs. That's why we support candidates that advocate for safe workplaces.

Working people are diverse. We are different colors, gender identities, religions, sexual orientations and ages. The labor movement has been at the forefront of the struggle for every major civil rights law. Unions like ours stand

ged to Support Working Families



strong today in the fight for dignity, life and liberty for every worker at the intersection of economic justice and civil rights. One area that stands out for needing improvement is gender inequality. Women are breadwinners. In fact 42% of working women in the United States are the sole breadwinner for their families, so the pay gap not only affects women but their families



as well. While there is no Local 153 contract that allows pay discrimination against women — and there never will be such an agreement with an employer — we should all do more. Women currently earn 80 cents for every dollar a man earns. That is why we support candidates who will not rest until women receive the equality in the workplace that they deserve.

It is also true that not enough employers recognize the time all working families need to care for their loved ones. We support candidates who want to enact laws that acknowledge the challenges that working families face.

So, yes, we support candidates that support unions and the rights of workers to join unions. Among them are New York State Governor Kathy Hochul, Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado, Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, Attorney General Letitia James and New York's Senior Senator Chuck Schumer, who also serves as Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate.

Each of these candidates has demonstrated strong support for working families and we ask members to consider this when voting in 2022. Additional union endorsements for the U.S. House of Representatives and other elected positions can be found at <https://nysaflcio.org/endorsements2022>

Groundbreaker Myra Hepburn Retires

History was made in the fall of 2018 when Myra Hepburn was unanimously elected Secretary-Treasurer of Local 153, becoming the first African American and first woman elected to serve in that position.

She brought a fresh perspective and an organizer's mindset to the post, and was committed to seeing Local 153 expand and grow.

From her time as an organizer in the San Francisco Bay Area to a Senior Business Representative and Organizer at Local 153, Hepburn's wealth of knowledge earned over decades in the labor movement had uniquely qualified her to best represent the interests of the members in this new position.

Hepburn has deep ties in the labor community, serving as a past Executive Board Member and current member of the NAACP, and as a member of

the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), member of the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) and delegate to the New York Central Labor Council.

And with all that, she still finds time to pursue labor studies at the City University of New York's Murphy Institute!

As Secretary-Treasurer Hepburn helped steer Local 153 through the pandemic, one of the most difficult times in its 75-year history.

Under her leadership Local 153 advanced its technological capacities, relocated to more cost-effective space, merged with sister Local 112 and started a new organizing program. In addition, Hepburn functioned as Trustee of the new OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan where she negotiated and secured the participation of Emblem Health, resulting in \$68,000,000 in assets

being merged into the new program! This valuable contribution will allow the promise of better fees, participant education and secure retirement assets to become a reality for OPEIU members for years to come.

Local 153 thanks Hepburn for her 31 years of hard work and dedication, and wishes her well in her retirement. She has definitely earned it.



Among many other activities Myra Hepburn served on the Executive Committee of the NAACP.

Labor Day 2022

Local 153 staff and members came together on September 5 for an inspiring Labor Day march to demand

union recognition, an end to union busting, and respect for organizing workers everywhere. The rally

included workers from the Amazon Labor Union and Starbucks Workers

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The September 5: Labor Day rally at Times Square.



Local 153 members and staff, including Senior Business Representative Seth Goldstein, rallying with Amazon and Starbucks workers on September 5. Goldstein has done exemplary pro bono legal work assisting Amazon workers in organizing.

Updated Local 153 Benefit Booklet

There are so many benefits, services and discounts available to Local 153 members that it is sometimes difficult to keep track. But a visit to the Local 153 website can provide a wealth of information on various benefits and discounts that you and your family members may use. It would not be an exaggeration to say that use of these discounts can save union families hundreds, even thousands of dollars a year. Just go to opeiulocal153.org/member-benefits and the updated Benefits Booklet will appear. You can download the booklet or, by scrolling to the bottom of the webpage you can sift through more than 30 pages of benefits, services and savings!

As an example, did you know that the Benefits Booklet can help you with the purchase of new or used car? There is even a link to union-made vehicles, crash test ratings, common car buying mistakes and more, much more for those who are about to purchase a new car and even for those looking to purchase a used car.

There are other benefits and services for Local 153 members with cars. There are discounts for Goodyear products. There are auto care tips. There are car rental discounts and other savings for your automobile.

There's more. The Benefits Booklet has an auto insurance program that has saved plenty of money for lots of union members. An Online Discount Driver's Safety Course is available, too, and that can save you even more on your auto insurance.

And while many of us already know about the two mortgage programs available to members, Union Plus and the Union Advantage program, there are other home and family discounts and services available in the Benefits Booklet. For example, there are discounts for moving services.

There is even information on Local 153's another valuable benefit for members and their families -- identity theft protection. Identity theft is now the fastest-growing crime against families and individuals in the U.S. Now, members have protection against identity theft and the updated Benefits Booklet has information on this.

There are other great things the Benefits Booklet offers to Local 153 members and their families. There are shopping discounts for many items. There are savings on flowers and gift baskets and discounts on movie theaters and other entertainment venues -- even Broadway shows!

Energy savings are also easy to obtain using the Benefits Booklet. There are rebates available for green energy products and there are steep discounts for home heating oil purchased through HEAT USA.

There are telephone and computer deals that can save you lots of money: union-members-only discounts on AT&T wireless service and computers.

AT&T Wireless can make a real difference

for Local 153 members and their families. It is a unionized wireless service company -- "Proud to be Union" -- and it offers discounts on its regular monthly rate for all AT&T wireless individual or family plans. Not only will you be saving, you'll be supporting union workers and their families. AT&T is the only national wireless company that is completely unionized. Some 40,000 AT&T Mobility employees are represented by the CWA. The program also has other union member-only savings.

And we're just getting started with the services and benefits that are available from through your membership in Local 153. In the Benefits Booklet you will find discounts on restaurants, dental services, auto, accident and supplemental life insurance. There is information on how to obtain the money-saving Union Plus credit card. You can even save money on family vacations by using services listed in the Benefits Booklet.

With all these benefits and services available to you and your families, it is also important for you to know that there are sure to be changes from time to time. Please know that the Benefits Booklet is updated at least twice a year, and changes and/or new benefits are reported in Local 153 News.

It's no secret that union membership pays dividends to working families. Your updated Local 153 Benefits Booklet is just another example of one of those dividends.

Contract Won at SEIU 32BJ



Employees of SEIU 32BJ, representing three Local 153 bargaining units, completed negotiations in July after lengthy and spirited negotiations. The bargaining team, seen here and led by Chief Shop Steward Danette Torres, navigated a months' long tandem negotiation on behalf of support professionals, dentists and dental assistants. More importantly, the members worked together on a series of job actions to push the employer to a three-year contract described by management as the most lucrative agreement in the multi-unit's history.

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in which all people can realize their rights and access the resources they need to achieve sexual and reproductive health; we are committed to unionizing in order to ensure that we the staff have appropriate and meaningful channels of advocacy, representation, and employment protection.”

After more than two years of working to protect sexual and reproductive rights during the pandemic, members of GEU came together to address concerns including staff retention, morale, and pay equity. They believed a union is vital to supporting the Institute’s work for abortion rights, as well as ensuring the Institute’s sustainability for years to come. Their overwhelming victory in an NLRB election has Guttmacher joining the ranks of fellow reproductive rights nonprofits including the Center for Reproductive Rights, Planned Parenthood NYC, and the National Abortion Federation, all of whom are now proud union shops!

Unfortunately, just hours after the vote count at Guttmacher, management fired one of the lead organizing committee



A number of Guttmacher employees joined the thousands who demonstrated at the U.S. Supreme Court for women’s right to choose.

members, Sam Heyne, sparking outrage and media coverage. Over 800 emails were sent to Guttmacher’s leadership via an Action Network petition demanding reinstatement for Heyne. The union has filed unfair labor practice charges over the unjust dismissal and will take all steps necessary to correct this injustice.

And that’s not all Guttmacher management has done in its attempt

to impede its employees desire to unionize. The non-profit has hired Jackson Lewis, probably the most notorious anti-union law firm in the country, to battle GEU and Local 153 in negotiations.

“We congratulate employees of the Guttmacher Institute on their decision to join the union,” Local 153 Business Manager Richard Lanigan said. “They have displayed total determination to bargain collectively and they can count on our union’s full support in their effort to win a fair contract. In addition, we will do everything necessary to see that anyone fired for union activity is restored to their job. Our union has a history of successfully fighting back the termination of employees for engaging in union activity.”

Local 153 members can follow Guttmacher Employees United on Twitter and Instagram at @GuttUnion.

Union Victory at Community Solutions

On June 22, 2022, a supermajority of eligible employees at the national

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EST 2022
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS UNITED
 Community Solutions-United staff
 Won our union!!

96% UNION YES!

Employees at Community Solutions, among the newest members of our union, attending a meeting via Zoom.

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nonprofit Community Solutions voted overwhelmingly in favor of establishing a labor union, CS United (@CSUnited22), to be represented by Local 153. In the vote all but one chose to join the union.

Community Solutions is a national nonprofit with a mission to create a lasting end to homelessness that leaves no one behind.

Employees at Community Solutions had worked for several months to organize to ensure that they have a more inclusive role in shaping an equitable and successful workplace. Members of CS United will join thousands of nonprofit employees across the country represented by OPEIU's Nonprofit Employees United (NEU).

"I'm proud to work at an organization that promotes the value of human-centered design and integrating the voices of those closest to the work into decision-making processes," said Lenny Pierce, a CS Capacity-building advisor, following the overwhelming vote to unionize. "Today's vote to approve our union shows that staff members at Community Solutions are committed to living up to those values within our own organization and to working with management to hold ourselves to the same standards we ask of our communities."

Community Solutions leads Built for Zero, a movement of more than 100 U.S. cities and counties using enhanced data systems and improvement science to radically change how they work and the impact they have — proving that homelessness is solvable, one population at a time.

"While I feel privileged to work at Community Solutions, there have been too many instances of unilateral decision making, deprioritizing racial equity within the organization,

overlooking staff well being, and other managerial missteps, said Amber Chandler, a Community Solutions Systems Improvement Advisor. "I am thrilled that today's vote means we now have a clear way to address these concerns collaboratively with CS Leadership. With this vote, we have clearly shown the strength of our solidarity, and look forward to carrying this power forward as we bargain our first contract,"

"We are thrilled to welcome CS United to our rapidly growing nonprofit union community," said Local 153 organizer, Scott Williams. "They have displayed a clear commitment to strengthening their workplace, recognizing that all employees should have the equal opportunity to learn and grow. We look forward to working with our newest members to bargain a contract which empowers workers at Community Solutions to win a more diverse, equitable and truly inclusive workplace."

Wesleyan Student Workers Win Voluntary Recognition

Residential Life student staff at Wesleyan University formed the Wesleyan Union of Student Employees recently, becoming the first confirmed union of undergraduate student workers in the country to be voluntarily recognized by their university. They join their colleagues at Wesleyan's physical plant in becoming members of Local 153.



Here are some of the members of the Wesleyan Union of Student Employees.

The union of student workers, called WesUSE, requested voluntary recognition from Wesleyan leadership after obtaining signed authorization cards from 84% of ResLife employees and filing a petition that received over one thousand signatures from students, alumni, faculty, and elected officials.

Ruby Clarke, a community advisor and sophomore at Wesleyan, said that before unionizing the school failed to pay proper attention to student workers' needs. "In fall of 2020, there was a rise in [COVID] cases on campus, and students were advised to leave early. But ResLife staffers were forced to stay on campus. And over thirty-five student workers signed a petition asking for hazard pay. And the school said no, and they gave out fuzzy socks instead," Clarke stated. "I think insensitive moments like that speak to the way administrators haven't really listened to the concerns of students."

ResLife employees let students in when they're locked out, facilitate evacuations during fire alarms, interface with physical plant staff when necessary, hold educational events, and even help students during mental health crises — at all hours. Many are low-income students who rely on their pay to afford Wesleyan. Yet the highest-paid ResLife worker earns less than fifty percent of what Wesleyan charges them for room and board.

"I was talking with people who are in charge at the Office of Student Employment, and I let them know that not a single student who works for ResLife is compensated for their full housing allotment, and they were shocked," Clarke said. "At a lot of colleges, ResLife staff don't have to pay for housing at all."

With their union recognized, however, Clarke believes Wesleyan administrators are finally paying attention. "During

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Other Local 153 members at Wesleyan showed solidarity and support for the members of the Wesleyan Union of Student Employees.

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our first meeting with the admin and staff, the way they treated us was totally different," Clarke said. "It felt really powerful."

After 6 Months of Bargaining, AJWS Union Wins their First Contract!



After six months of bargaining, Local 153 members at American Jewish World Service (AJWS) unanimously ratified their first contract. Highlights of the contract include:

- \$60K salary floor, and structural salary increases for over half of the unit
- 20 weeks paid plus 12 weeks unpaid parental leave
- Increased employer match to employees 403 (b) plan
- Right to bargain over return to the office/remote work
- Healthcare improvements such as reduced co-pays, increased fertility care, increased transgender/gender-nonconforming benefits, and the addition of orthodontics coverage
- Transparent processes for promotions, job

expansions, and annual salary increases

- A grievance and arbitration procedure

The AJWS Union bargaining committee stated, "We are so proud of the hard work that went into this contract, and we believe it reflects the progressive values that are central to AJWS's mission. A big thank you to our dedicated bargaining committee, our supportive organizers and lawyer from Local 153 OPEIU, and of course our members who stuck together through a long and at times challenging process. All workers deserve unions, and we are proud to be a part of the growing movement of unionized non-profit workplaces with strong contracts."

Unanimous Vote at INCLUDEnyc to join Local 153

Family educators, youth and family coordinators, and administrative and operational staff at INCLUDEnyc, a New York City-based nonprofit voted unanimously to join Local 153. The nonprofit works with disabled young people and their families.

Staff at INCLUDE NYC decided to unionize in response to a number of issues, including salary discrepancies, unfair promotion processes and a lack of transparency, according to Local 153 Organizer Dana Kopel. Neil Purohit, an organizing committee member and youth coordinator who started at INCLUDEnyc during the pandemic, pointed to "the

lack of understanding of processes and decision-making voiced by co-workers," particularly those who have worked at the organization for several years.

Issues of sustainability and capacity pushed staff to ask "leadership to really think about how being overworked and not having strong organizational systems can result in people struggling," said Colin Montgomery, a senior family educator and fellow organizing committee member.

With this election win, Union included members will collectively bargain to create a workplace designed for all people and to make sure every voice is heard. In addition to negotiating for greater transparency, clearer protocols and a voice in organization-wide decision-making, union members hope to secure better pay and benefits — particularly to address health expenses disproportionately affecting disabled staff — as well as flexible scheduling and improved leave policy to make INCLUDEnyc a more accessible and sustainable place to work.

Asked if they had any advice for other nonprofit workers forming their own unions, Maggie Downham, another organizing committee member, said, "Make sure you know your people. Everyone's voice is so critical, and you're representing the whole when you're unionizing."

City Bar Justice Center Union Wins First Contract

The City Bar Justice Center (CBJC) Union members have ratified their first contract. It took five months to negotiate the agreement, assisted by representatives of Local 153, and the contract is a major win for the union. It includes an immediate wage increase of close to 8%, with regular raises, just cause provisions, a mental health stipend for all unionized

Continued on next page

Local 153 Successfully Organizes New Shops; Union Also Wins First Contracts

Continued from previous page
employees, and increased flexibility in accessing paid time off.

The CBJC Union includes project coordinators at the City Bar Justice Center, an organization within the New York City Bar Association that provides legal assistance to low-income New Yorkers. Project coordinators at the City Bar Justice Center voted unanimously to unionize and joined OPEIU Local 153 on May 21, 2020, to address issues including extremely low salaries and bias in salary and promotions. While the workers earned as little as \$38,000 at the start of 2020, their new contract provides immediate increases to \$41,500 and \$43,500, with annual increases each May for the life of the three-year contract. The union was

also able to win back pay for several employees who had been affected by racialized pay discrepancies — an issue the workers discovered last year, and which spurred their unionizing efforts.

The mental health stipend also represents a significant gain for the workers, who regularly interface with clients who have faced trauma. Leah Susman, a project coordinator and member of the union's bargaining committee, said, "The mental health stipend was a huge win for us because we each work with low-income, marginalized clients who have experienced substantial trauma. Our role requires emotional space and empathy. When we're confided in, we can't just turn off our feelings and leave our vicarious trauma in the office. The stipend will allow us to dig into how our clients' stories affect

us so that we can continue to show up for them and for ourselves."

The project coordinators faced dismissive attitudes from City Bar Justice Center management when they tried to address these issues without a union. Logan Campbell, another bargaining committee member, reported, "When we met with management we were widely dismissed on matters. We needed union representation to make sure racist pay practices didn't happen again and to force management to listen to the other issues."

With a union and their first contract, workers at the City Bar Justice Center were able to push for necessary changes to their compensation and working conditions.

Local 153 Members at Millersville University Health Services Stop Potential Outsourcing

Millersville University Health Services staff members, along with strong support from students, campus staff, faculty, parents, community members and elected officials, have successfully defended their positions and the high quality of patient care for MU students. These Local 153 members will remain public sector employees devoted to serving MU students.

The staff members at Millersville University Health Services released the following statement on September 7:

We are excited to announce that yesterday we received notice that the RFP (request for proposal) process has ended. There were no bids placed by outside providers. This process has been difficult on our staff; however, we were overwhelmed by the outpouring

of support that we received from faculty, staff, students, community members, family and friends. We are fortunate to be able to continue to provide student-centered, affordable, quality care to our students. We look forward to our continued work with Millersville University serving our students and campus community. We are sincerely grateful for all your kind words and unwavering support.

In the words of Coretta King, "The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."
With love & solidarity,
Millersville University Health Services Team

On August 31st, a group of around 30

University staff, students and community allies delivered a petition to stop the potential outsourcing of these critical positions. Students delivered the more than 1,400 signatures to the University President and Vice President of Student Affairs. In this powerful petition delivery Health Services staff, students and faculty spoke to university leaders about why they want to keep Health Services as part of the MU community.

Seth Goldstein, Senior Business Representative with OPEIU Local 153, stated, "This bold action showed the strength of building solidarity and community in response to potential corporate takeover of public resources. This is how we will rebuild the power of workers. We need to make sure that heroes like these MU Health Services workers keep their hard won positions and benefits."

Local 153 Membership Benefits

▶ DEATH BENEFIT

\$5,000 Death Benefit + Additional \$2,000 OPEIU Total \$7,000.

\$5,000 AD&D Benefit + Additional \$2,000 OPEIU Total \$7,000. (Death by accident total \$14,000).

Eligibility – Membership in good standing with payment of dues for 12 months during the last 14-month period prior to death, exclusive of the month of death.

For more information, please call 212-741-8282

▶ TOWING BENEFIT

Two towing/service calls per year for members and family living in the same household, valued at up to \$80 each. You will need “producer code 74046” for “plan letter C”.

For information, call 212-741-8282

For towing and service call information, call 800-617-2677

▶ 401 (K) NATIONAL PLAN

OPEIU has established a voluntary 401 (k) program that charges considerably less management fees than standard 401 (k) plans. Members will be able to enroll in this benefit shortly.

▶ STUDENT DEBT REDUCTION PROGRAM

Students with \$10,000 or more of outstanding student debt have an opportunity each year to reduce the amount they owe.

▶ FREE COLLEGE EDUCATION BENEFIT

Members may earn tuition-free an Associate Degree online through Eastern Gateway Community College. The free college benefit provides degrees in Associate of Arts, Associate of Criminal Justice, Associate of Business Management and Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education, with more free online degree programs to come. To obtain a brochure about this program call Local 153 at 212-741-8282 and press “7” for member benefits.

▶ GENERAL VISION SERVICES “Vision Pass”

Eyeglasses discount packages for you and your family.

Call the union for a “vision pass” 212-741-8250/8251

▶ AFL-CIO UNION PLUS BENEFITS

Discounts for services such as dental, vision, health clubs, legal services, pet and car insurance, car rentals, mortgages, etc.

Visit unionplus.org

▶ WORKING ADVANTAGE

Discounts for theater and events, entertainment, sporting events, shopping, travel, etc.

Visit workingadvantage.com

Create an account using ID#: 924400144

▶ SCHOLARSHIPS

Howard Coughlin, John Kelly Labor Studies, Union Privilege and Lavina Michl Wright with grants of up to \$6,500.

Visit opeiu153.org

▶ DEFENSE FUND

Where an authorized strike is called, members will receive \$290 per week.

▶ UNION SUPPORT SERVICES

For members and their families who suffer with substance abuse, depression or stress.

Call 212-741-8282

▶ PUBLICATIONS

Local 153 News and OPEIU’s White Collar.

▶ RETIREE ASSOCIATION

National Council of Senior Citizens Active on Social & Political Issues.

Call 212-741-8262

▶ EDUCATION FOR UPGRADING SKILLS

Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint Access, Web Design, Business Writing, Job Readiness and Financial Planning. Additional programs are being formed.

Call Victoria at 212-675-3210

New Local 153 HRA Benefit Coming Soon!

Good news! Working with the OPEIU Local 153 Benefit Fund we have established a brand-new Health Reimbursement Arrangement benefit that will be rolled out in early 2023.

A Health Reimbursement Arrangement, or 'HRA,' is generally designed to enable individuals and their families to receive tax-free reimbursement for certain health care expenses that are not covered (or partially covered) by their group health care plans. Realizing that no two participants are alike, an HRA offers you the flexibility to use your HRA in a way that best meets your and your family's needs.

When participants become eligible to participate in the new HRA benefit, the Fund will set up and maintain an HRA Account on your behalf. The level of contributions to be made into the HRA will be set through each collective bargaining agreement or participation agreement, allowing flexibility to bargaining parties and employers to contribute more or less depending on the needs and wishes of the members of those units. Only employer contributions made on your behalf are credited into

your Account—participants cannot make voluntary contributions. There will be no Plan-imposed cap on contributions allowed to be made into the Plan, and all balances will be eligible to roll over throughout active employment and, ultimately, into retirement (through a separate but equivalent Retiree HRA Plan).

Our new benefit will allow reimbursement for any IRS "qualified medical expense" that's not already covered by your existing health plan, with no additional Plan-imposed limitations. Such expenses could include insurance deductibles, copays, coinsurance, prescription drug costs, insulins, dental expenses, COBRA premiums, long-term care premiums and retiree health premiums. A detailed listing of qualified medical expenses can be found at www.IRS.gov/Pub502

The HRA benefit is not intended to replace anyone's existing health coverage. In fact, under the law, an HRA must be paired with another group health plan, and therefore enrolling in our new HRA will not impact your eligibility for benefits under your

existing health plans. The HRA is intended to supplement the coverage you already have, to lessen your out-of-pocket medical expenses while you're actively working, and to provide you a tax advantaged vehicle to save toward medical expenses in retirement.

The administration of this new benefit will be done by an experienced HRA vendor to ensure a hassle-free participant experience. Participants will be provided debit cards to allow for reimbursements directly from the HRA accounts, reducing the need to pay out of pocket or to track receipts for most of the most common medical expenses. For those rare instances where you may need to submit a claim for an expense already incurred, you'll have access to an online portal where you can file claims, upload receipts, and view account balances in close to real time.

We are in the process of finalizing the plan documentation and vendor selection process for this new benefit and expect to make a more formal announcement in the 4th quarter of 2022. We'll keep you posted in the coming.

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United, and also had hundreds of rank and file workers from Google's Alphabet Workers' Union, the newly formed Trader Joe's Union, the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys, student labor organizers from Columbia and NYU, and members of our own Local 153 family from Fordham University, INCLUDEnyc, Wesleyan University, and other shops.

The march started at Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz's house, where Starbucks workers spoke out about the rampant union busting by the company, the workers insisting that this would not deter them from continuing to organize. The march continued to

Labor Day 2022

Jeff Bezos' penthouse, to highlight the major successes its workers have had in unionizing despite Amazon's continued labor violations. It concluded with a rally in Times Square, where the marchers and their families exchanged information and campaign swag so that they could continue to organize together and show support for each others' hard work.

Local 153 members put solidarity into action and marched proudly in this grassroots action, and challenged some of our country's most rich and powerful individuals and corporations to do right by their workers. When the day-to-day work of organizing gets hard, or negotiations are exhausting, it is

important to remember how fortunate we are to be a part of this powerful, creative, and inspirational collective movement, and that the work we all do each day is truly building a better future for ourselves and our communities.



Workers from Amazon, Starbucks, Guttmacher Institute at the September 5 rally.

Address Service Requested

Remembering Katherine “Kat” Massey

40-year Local 153 Member was Killed in Buffalo Mass Shooting

The sick racist who shot and killed 10 people and injured others in Tops Market in Buffalo on May 14 took more than 10 lives. He severely damaged a tight-knit community, ruined scores of families and made America hang its collective head in shame.

One of the victims was Katherine “Kat” Massey, a member of Local 153 for four decades who had once worked at BCBS, the predecessor of Highmark.

Kat Massey was a force. She was deeply involved in the civil rights movement, women’s issues, political activism, community service, church work and more. She believed in unions and the rights of workers to organize. She used that belief to organize residents of her neighborhood in just one example of the good work that she performed.

She did not deserve to die the way she did. As someone who did so much to advance the cause of others, she did not deserve to be gunned down by a white supremacist who stood for all the hate that Kat Massey stood against.

In remembering Kat Massey the Buffalo News recalled her founding of the Cherry Street Block Club, a neighborhood



Katherine “Kat” Massey

association designed to improve the area where she and so many others lived. It was a highly successful effort, as was everything Kat did. In fact it was so successful it merited her being called “The Mayor of Cherry Street” the rest of her life.

There was a long list of elected officials, community leaders, activists and other dignitaries that attended her funeral. Congressman Brian Higgins, NY State Senator Tim Kennedy, Erie County Legislator April Baskin, Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown and former CEO of the NAACP Benjamin Chavis were among them.

“Kat was an ardent advocate for civil rights and education and did everything she could to lift up Buffalo’s Black community,” said former Erie County Legislator Betty Jean Grant, who had been friends with Massey for more than 20 years. “We have lost a powerful voice.”

More than a few Local 153 members attended the Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church service as well. Kat Massey was fondly remembered there for her many contributions to others and for the bright light that seemingly surrounded her as she battled for civil rights, better education and neighborhood improvements. It was clear to anyone who attended the service that Kat Massey was special and that she will be sorely missed.

“Our union is deeply saddened and shaken by the death of Kat Massey,” Local 153 Business Manager Richard Lanigan said. “Kat Massey understood that the ties between labor unions and civil rights organizations were as strong as steel. She exemplified the words of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., when he said, ‘Our needs are identical with organized labor’s needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old age security, and conditions in which families can grow, have education for our children and respect in our community.’”

“The things Kat Massey stood for are the same things that Local 153 stands for,” Lanigan added. “We extend our sincere condolences to her family and many friends and former co-workers, all of whom were indeed fortunate to have known her.”