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Drive Up Standards

NEWSLETTER

Connecting School Bus & Transit Workers From Coast to Coast

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Here in Edmonton, We Need Common Sense Laws for School Bus Drivers

by Sue Pritchard, Local 987
(Edmonton, Alberta, Canada)



Having a strong Teamsters Union creates benefits for its members on many levels. We all know how Teamster power aids members when dealing with specific issues in the workplace and with

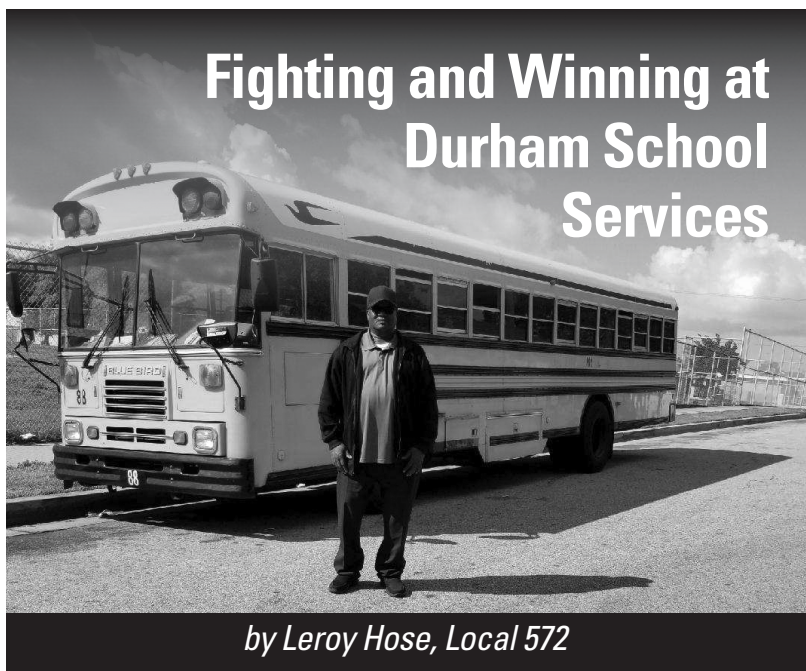
management, but are you aware of the strong voices Teamsters have when it comes to dealing with your local government? Local 987 doesn't just represent members, they advocate for us.

About this time last year, a group of members asked our local if they could help us with an issue that we felt was important. Members wanted to be able to park school buses on residential streets (on school days only). Bylaw 5590 here in Edmonton, Alberta doesn't permit this, and if drivers park on residential streets, we run the risk of a hefty fine. Bylaw 5590 needs to be changed.

What's the big deal with parking on a residential street? Why would Local 987 want to help? Because Local 987 doesn't just see us as school bus members – they also see us as community service providers. Changing Bylaw 5590 would benefit all school bus drivers in Edmonton, so Local 987 started asking questions – not

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Fighting and Winning at Durham School Services



by Leroy Hose, Local 572

I'm a driver at the Durham School Services yard in Carson, Calif. I've been there for a little over three years. My co-workers and I didn't just take on Durham School Services, we took on Durham and we won!

There were a number of reasons why we wanted to form our union with the Teamsters. One is wages – we have too many drivers at our yard who have to work second or third jobs just to maintain a normal living standard. For the younger drivers and monitors, retirement is a big problem – they need to have something put away. Some of them are going to need to wait another 45 years before Social Security kicks in, and that's not going to be enough to sustain a livelihood. We want to have something after we retire. We also want a better health plan – you get older, your knees and your shoulders start to have problems, and that gets costly. If you don't have proper insurance to take care of yourself, you might have to go out on disability, and that costs even more money.

There were also the safety concerns – too often, we were being asked to take buses off the lot that were in need of urgent repair. As drivers, we have to follow all of the state and local laws in addition to the company handbook. If you get a traffic ticket from the California Highway Patrol (CHP) because there's something wrong with your bus, that is yours to pay. The company might not take care of it, but CHP is going to say "You knew it was broken when you took it off the lot, so you can take this ticket also." We like working with

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kids – this is our passion, but the way things were going, it didn't seem like we were getting rewarded for it in the long run.

Initially, I was just going to quit because I didn't like some of the things that were going on, but I realized that if I went to another yard, I might have the exact same issues, so I decided to stay and make a difference. I have a lot of experience with unions – in my old job, I was a Sergeant at Arms and a Shop Steward for Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1589. I knew the difference that a union could bring to the job, so I decided to reach out to Local 572.

With the help of Local 572, I started to reach out to my co-workers about bringing the Teamsters into our bus yard. I always campaigned on my own time – on breaks or before and after work, but never when I was supposed to be driving. I'd talk to one or two people in each group who would get the word around to the other drivers, someone that people listen to. One thing I stressed is that Durham has all the power and we need to have a structure in place so we can make sure that the company doesn't abuse it. We're not taking power away from the company; we just want a seat at the table and for them to be fair.

Pretty soon, we had an organizing committee. The company took notice, and before long they were doing everything they could to prevent people from voting in the Teamsters Union. They did nice things for us, like buying candy, snacks and pizza. They took 50 of the junk buses off the lot when we filed our petition. They hired more mechanics. They upgraded our break room and added more employee parking.

They also started doing a lot of negative things. Management started having one-on-one meetings with workers; pulling people into the office to talk about the union. They held mandatory captive audience meetings. One of our managers sent out a letter to the entire yard where she said that the union was lying to us because they just wanted our dues money, and she claimed that "a vote for the union is a vote against me." They even hung up a notice on the bulletin board that everyone could see claiming that the Teamsters were "the most violent, corrupt and dishonest union in the country!"

At the end of the day, the company did all of this because they knew that once we brought in the union, they wouldn't be able to do whatever they wanted to us anymore. They're making a lot of money, and if they have to open up their books during negotiations, we'll find out what they're making. Our committee stood strong, and we talked to our co-workers one-on-one about the company's propaganda. I wanted everyone to see the big picture - that if we voted no for the union, nothing would change, and that promises from the company could be broken. In a week's time, the company made all sorts of changes just because we filed a petition. What sort of change could happen in the long run?

In the end, the Durham workers in the Carson yard voted for the Teamsters by a landslide. There are no guarantees with collective bargaining until after the contract is ratified, but we now have a voice and a chance to negotiate for higher pay, better benefits, safer buses, seniority and a host of other issues. With Local 572, we are already a much closer group, and the drivers have a chance to be even happier. Right now the drivers are happier because we have a big brother behind us, someone who has our back. Thanks to the Teamsters, it's a much more level playing field.

We Need Common Sense Laws for School Bus Drivers

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to just to our group at First Student, but to all school bus drivers, including drivers at companies that the local doesn't represent yet.

After many meetings, Local 987 decided on a strategy to approach local government officials, and we outlined to them the reasons why Bylaw 5590 was having a negative impact on school bus drivers in the city of Edmonton. As community service providers responsible for safely transporting children, we are the first ones on the road and the last ones to get home. When we are not allowed to park on residential streets, it makes driver fatigue much worse. Another point we raised with municipal officials was the deadheading that all of drivers do many times a day to and from various points, and the negative effect that this deadheading has on the environment, traffic congestion and the city's infrastructure and budget.

Local 987 is working with local government officials and bus drivers throughout the city to look into the process of changing the bylaws so they allow school buses to park on residential streets on school days. With the ability to park our buses at our homes when emergencies arise, response times will be quicker because we will travel less when we are leaving from home. Not all bus yards are located in centralized areas; depending on the location of bus yard, this could create a response time that's faster by an hour.

When dealing with local government, time has no bounds. Although the outcome of this campaign is still to be determined, Local 987 believes this advocacy will not just benefit members, but also the children we carry every day and the environment we all share. Thanks to the work they have done on behalf of me and the many bus members in our area, I believe in Local 987!



From Organizing to Negotiations: *Learning and Growing as Shop Stewards*

By Christine Little and Anna Shoemaker, Local 957

Greetings from Xenia, Ohio!

We reside and work in a small, rural, down-home town in south-western Ohio that is best known for tornadoes and bicycles. The sign that invites you into our small town lets you know that Xenia is known as "The City of Hospitality."

Back in 2012, Xenia Community Schools outsourced the entire transportation department to First Student. Emotions during this time ran high, and after more than a year of turmoil and the threat of a strike the workers voted to affiliate with Local 957.

The next three years between our affiliation with the Teamsters and the ratification of our most recent contract were challenging for everyone. As brand new stewards in a brand new union with a brand new contract, we had a lot to learn. We'll never forget what one of our business agents said to us immediately after congratulating us on the outcome of the steward election. Very seriously, he looked at us and said, "I'm sorry, but I forgot your complimentary bottle of Tylenol." We laughed about it at the time, but unfortunately, he wasn't kidding!

As new stewards, we had to learn how to grieve issues, unite our co-workers, follow a contract, and take a on a host of new responsibilities. "Live and learn" became our new motto. We were led by our passion to create a strong, united union. That was good, because in a very short period of time we had to learn how to become a steward and get really good at it.

We worked incredibly hard. We put in late nights and learned the true meaning of insomnia. We walked around with our phones glued to our ears and spent a lot of time away from our friends and family. Most importantly, though, we never gave up. There were definitely times when we asked each other things like, "Can we handle this?" or "Is it worth it?" but our loyalty to our members kept us involved, because we knew that they deserved the best. That was all the inspiration we needed to learn and grow as stewards. Our fellow members were patient with us, and over the course of those three years we grieved situations ranging from simple attendance issues to alco-

hol-infused cupcakes.

Last year we began the process of renegotiating our collective bargaining agreement with First Student. It became readily apparent that our needs as a group had changed in three years. Members were passionate about what they wanted in their contract. Fair and equal pay increases for all topped the list; days off came in a close second. As stewards, we also knew what we needed to change. Adjustments to our grievance procedure and attendance policy were a necessity. We needed a grievance procedure with steps and time frames, and our attendance policy was outdated and impossible to follow.

We soon noticed that the same things that were uniting us when we organized with the Teamsters were uniting us yet again – we wanted to improve our jobs and make things even better than they were with our first contract. Everyone at our yard was tenacious and completely dedicated to the cause. Every vote we took, whether it was contract ratification or a strike, we made almost unanimously. We wanted change, and everyone stood their ground to get results.

The negotiating committee and First Student met 12 times. On five different occasions, members met and voted on contract proposals. Our meetings were very well attended, with each one nearing almost 100 percent attendance from our yard.

On September 27, after the third proposal from the company was voted down, we took a strike vote. 95 percent of our workforce was in favor of a strike. In accordance with the First Student National Master Agreement, a 21-day strike notice was given to the company. On the 18th day, First Student asked us to go back to the bargaining table, and on October 17 negotiations resumed once again. We were truly committed to negotiating in good faith.

The next proposal we negotiated was also rejected. Again, we issued a 21-day strike notice. Members were ready, educated and organized for what seemed inevitable. Without wasting too much time, we found ourselves sitting at that same table once again. After asking for another extension and realizing that wasn't an option, the company got serious and they presented us with an offer we could take back to our membership. This time, two-thirds of our membership voted to ratify, and on Nov. 6, 2017 we made it official.

We received wage increases ranging from 6-10 percent for the first year, along with retroactive pay back to Sept. 1, 2017. The following years included raises ranging from 4-6 percent, and in the third year, the wage increases went above 7 percent. Thanks to our solidarity during negotiations, we all got a raise of at least \$2.30 per hour. We also secured improvements concerning non-economic issues at our yard. Personal time language was added, and dramatic changes were made to attendance policy and bereavement leave. Necessary changes were also made to the grievance procedure. Our membership was happy.

Our yard has grown to the extent that we warrant an additional steward, bringing our total count to three. We are all enjoying the benefits of our new and improved contract, and thanks to the hard work and sacrifice of everyone at the First Student yard in Xenia, Ohio, this year promises to be even better than the last!



Teamster Women Building Political Power

By Phyllis Pepper, Local 777

Hello Teamsters!

I'm here once again to tell a story about Teamster members standing strong. Being a Teamster is all about building power – whether it be on the job, during contract negotiations, or in the political sphere.

On Jan. 20, 2018 – one year to the day since the presidential inauguration – millions of women participated in marches across the country. Guess what? Here in Chicago, Local 777 was out in full effect – along with The Teamsters Joint Council 25 Women's Committee and its newly elected president, Diahann Goode. Kim Keller and Shelley Goodman from the IBT Organizing Department also came out to support the cause.

All of met us at the Local 777 union hall and rode into downtown Chicago together. The plan was for us to walk to the Federal Building, but even though we got to Grant Park early, the plaza was packed with people,

so we couldn't even reach the park! Still, we were happy to be there to support the event. Over 300,000 people came out for the march! Some of the speakers included Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Michelle Mbekeani-Wiley from the League of Women Voters, and environmental activist Tom Steyer.

Voting is something near and dear to my heart. I hear people say, "My vote won't count enough to change anything." Guess what? Your vote, along with the votes of people in your city and state saying the same thing together can be heard loud and clear – and it will count enough to change

things. Whether you like the candidate, just vote. You should also really think about where the candidate stands on worker issues - OUR issues!

In Illinois and other states, you can register to vote and vote on the same day. Our state also has early voting. Whatever state you live in, vote! Find out what the rules are for registering and voting in your state, and encourage others to do the same – because it matters. The November election is coming up fast. If you want things to change, you have a chance to make your voice heard, and we all have a responsibility, as union members and as citizens, to participate in democracy. Read up on the candidates who are running for office where you live, go out and ask them where they stand on your issues, stay strong and support your union.



Have a question or story idea?
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