

WINTER 2020-2021



Drive Up Standards

NEWSLETTER

Connecting School Bus & Transit Workers From Coast to Coast

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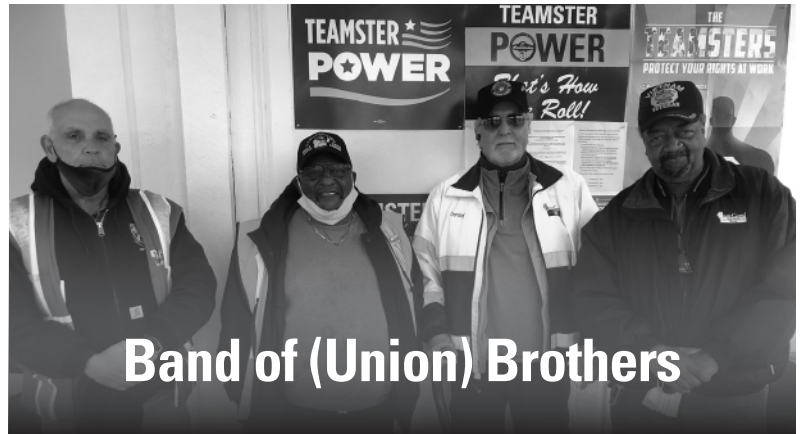
TEAMSTERS WIN BIG AFTER STRIKING IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF AMERICAN INDUSTRY

Lowell, Mass. is known as the cradle of the industrial revolution because its mills and factories were some of the first of the United States. Almost 200 years after the city forever changed American history, Lowell workers continue to fight and win, this time at the largest privately-owned transit contractor in the United States.

"Local 170 MV members stood together and stood strong," said Shannon George, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 170. "They should be proud of the solidarity they showed to gain the improvements they deserved. Workers everywhere should take note of what can be achieved when we act together, act smart and take on corporate America."

MV Transportation is the contractor for the Road Runner, a paratransit service for elderly and disabled residents of Lowell and the surrounding communities. Most of Road Runner's passengers rely on the service as the only way that they can get to appointments, errands, or anywhere else that they need to go. Elderly residents and those

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Band of (Union) Brothers

Veterans Continue Tradition of Service at Illinois Central School Bus

At a Local 777 school bus yard in St. Charles, Ill., service to your fellow citizens doesn't end after an honorable discharge.

"At our Illinois Central School Bus yard in St. Charles, we have over forty members who are veterans from all four branches of the military," said Jim Glimco, President of Local 777. "Our stewards and the leaders of our negotiating committee at the St. Charles yard are veterans as well. We're honored to represent such extraordinary people."

Four of those members are former Army 1st. Sgt. and Local 777 Shop Steward John Blanchford, former Marine Sgt. and Local 777 Shop Steward Gerald Marshall, Army Veteran and Local 777 Shop Steward Willie Lesure and Marine Veteran Ray Williams. Blanchford, Williams and Lesure all received Purple Hearts. Lesure and Williams were in the Vietnam War.

Williams and Marshall said that the sense of solidarity they learned during their service in the U.S. Marine Corps prepared them well for union membership.

"We look out for one another, same as the Marines," Williams said. "As veterans and as Teamsters, we have an engrained sense of duty and service."

"In both the military and in the Teamsters, it's important that you learn different perspectives about how things work," Marshall said.

Blanchford added that the values of the military were similar to that of labor unions.

"With both, it's about being a team player," Blanchford said. "It's about learning from other people. We have natural bonds with one another and we're proud to be members."

Willie Lesure agreed.

"I'm proud to serve my fellow members and I'm proud that I served my country," Lesure said. "I'd do it all over again if I could."

*The Teamsters "Drive Up Standards" newsletter is by and for school bus drivers, monitors and mechanics.
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Teamsters Win Big *continued from page 1*



with chronic illnesses have been struck particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, making the essential service workers employed by MV Transportation more essential than ever. It was a slap in the face when the company balked at wage and benefit increases during contract negotiations for this reason. The decision to strike was probably the last thing that the workers wanted to do, but Local 170 Business Agent

Ken Bergen indicated that the company left them little recourse.

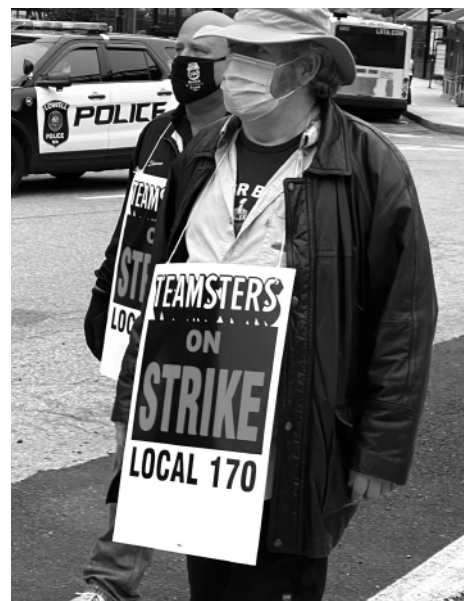
"The drivers care about the job they do," said Bergen. "They have relationships with the passengers they transport and they are torn about having to take a stand like this because of the ill effects it has on those passengers and friends, but they also have to provide for their families."

On October 5, with momentum on their

side and the winds of change at their backs, MV Transportation workers in Lowell started a picket line. Road Runner employs less than twenty Teamsters, but there were times when if you walked by the terminal where the workers were demonstrating, you would have been forgiven for thinking the paratransit service employs a small army. Members from all over New England came to support their brothers and sisters at the MV Trans-

Boston Teamsters Set Precedent for Successful 2020 Transit Strike





portation picket line. One day a Teamster truck caravan paraded by the picket line, blaring their horns in support of the members. Even Lowell Mayor John Leahy expressed sympathy for the drivers.

"The impact of this halt to services demonstrates the value of the work that paratransit drivers provide to our community every day, and I believe they should be fairly compensated and benefited for it," he said.

After an 11-day strike where members were walking the picket line 24/7, the company agreed to go back to the bargaining table. The workers ratified a three-year agreement with significant wage and benefit increases: company contributions towards retirement, wage increases of \$1.25 per hour in the first year and three percent in the second and third years, an increased starting rate for all members, a forty-hour per week

guarantee and more. MV Transportation Driver Christine Patterson said that her fellow Teamsters, along with others who walked the picket line with her, were essential to the victory.

"As one of the drivers I would like to thank each and every person who stood together with us for the last 11 days," Patterson said. "We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you!"

Walking off the job was probably the last thing the workers at MV Transportation in Lowell wanted to do, but they had plenty of reason to believe it would work. Last July, over 300 members of Local 25 work for Veterans Transportation, the paratransit contractor for "The Ride," walked off the job and went on strike.

The Ride is the paratransit wing of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The MBTA is the largest public transportation authority in New England, providing a variety of services to the Greater Boston area, so it came as no surprise that the strike garnered a great deal

of attention. After voting in favor of a strike, Local 25 Shop Steward Ray Domkowski walked a picket line.

"The company was trying to cut back on health insurance at the worst possible time, and it was just unacceptable," Domkowski said. "We've finally reached the end; it was just like hamsters on a merry go round. No progress and we kept talking and talking and trying different scenarios to come up with a solution to the situation, and that was where we wound up."

After eight days of walking the picket line 24/7 at the company's three locations, the company agreed to go back to the table and the workers reached an agree-

ment that they ratified by over 90 percent — a fantastic example of Teamsters refusing to give in to concessions even during a pandemic.

"Our members at Veterans Transportation are heroes who have put themselves and their families at risk during the pandemic, providing transit services for our most at-risk citizens," said Sean O'Brien, President of Local 25. "Teamsters Local 25 is proud to represent the MBTA — The RIDE drivers and will never stop fighting to make sure our members are treated with dignity and respect and receive fair wages, affordable health insurance and a safe working environment."

Organizing and Contract Victories



Durham School Services, Smithfield, R.I. – On Friday, November 20, Durham School Services drivers, monitors and aides voted by an eight-to-one ratio to also join Local 251.

“These workers safely transport our most precious cargo, our children, to school every school day,” said Matt Taibi, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 251. “When companies realize the importance of these jobs to our communities; recognize and respect their workers with fair wages, benefits and safe working conditions – everybody wins.”

“These workers are not paid well and were concerned that the company wasn’t addressing the issues they raised regarding COVID-19, along with how to keep them and their students safer when school started up again after the lockdown in March,” said Mike Simone, Local 251 Organizer. “These are just two of the many issues we will raise during negotiations.”

Cheryl Vertilotti has been Durham School Services Driver for 15 years.

“We knew how much more Teamster school bus drivers were paid in

other yards and the safety protocols the other school bus companies have to follow, so we reached out to the union for help,” said Vertilotti. “We are very excited to finally be Teamsters.”

Student Transportation of America, Duval County, Fla. – Local 512 ratified a collective bargaining agreement with Student Transportation of America (STA) covering over 1,200 school bus workers employed at the company. STA secured Duval County Public Schools as a client earlier in the year, but agreed to keep in place the collective bargaining agreement that the Local 512 members had with their previous employer. This includes employer matching for 401k contributions, seven paid holidays, time off for jury duty, annual wage increases, and a 12 percent increase for the top rate of pay.

“This contract was ratified by a margin of over four-to-one voting in favor of the agreement,” said Jim Shurling, President of Local 512. “I’m extremely proud of everyone who worked so hard to make this happen. When we show strength at the negotiating table, we win and we win big.”

First Student, Villa Park, Ill. – With an overwhelming majority of members voting in favor of both agreements, Local 777 ratified two collective bargaining agreements at First Student of Villa

Park, Ill. One contract covers drivers and monitors at the location and the other contract covers the administrative office staff.

Both collective bargaining agreements include significant wage increases. The contract covering drivers and monitors included improvements to the workers’ retirement plans. The contract covering office staff, the first of its kind negotiated by Local 777, moved the members to a health care plan with massively reduced out-of-pocket costs.

Karla Wood is an administrative worker at the Villa Park location who has worked at First Student since 1996.

“I’ve worked at this company for a long time in a couple of different roles,” Wood said. “Thanks to my union contract, I was able to get my vacation time to reflect my years of service. I’m so happy to be a Teamster!”



First Student, Scituate, R.I. – On Monday First Student school bus drivers voted 14-0 to join Local 251 to become the fifth First Student yard in Rhode Island to be represented by the union. The Teamsters also represent school

transportation workers at four Ocean State Transit locations, for an approximate total of 1000 members statewide.

“The instability of the student transportation industry – along with concerns for their livelihood, health and personal safety during this pandemic – is causing much dismay amongst these and many other workers,” said Matthew Taibi, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 251. “They recognize that a Teamster contract provides guaranteed wage increases, benefits, bonuses and working conditions that cannot be changed on a whim by an employer.”

Liz Taylor has been a driver at the Scituate location for four years. The organizing drive began with a phone call from her to the Teamsters back in March 2020.

“After several conversations with Local 251 Organizer Mike Simone, I told everyone the Teamsters would fight just as hard for the new drivers as they would for the long-term drivers,” said Taylor. “We want fairness. We want to be treated with respect like the other Teamster school bus drivers in the state.”

“It’s pretty unusual for a group to vote unanimously to join the union, but I knew this group of drivers was solid,” said Simone. “I congratulate them on choosing to join the rest of Teamster school bus yards in the state and on becoming part of the union that sets the standard for workers in this industry.”



It’s been a rough year, but our future is bright.

In spite of everything we have been there for the people who count on us – for our students, for our passengers and for one another. We continued to drive, monitor and maintain buses and vans because we knew that without us, vulnerable people would be left stranded. When classes or routes were cancelled, we adapted and used our skills to fill the sudden, urgent needs of our communities. We held employers accountable to ensure they took the safety precautions they needed to take to save lives, and when they pushed back, we pushed harder. When adversity knocked at our door, we met it with strength and refused to throw in the towel.

With that in mind, happy holidays from all of us at the IBT Passenger Transportation Division. Close out the year any which way you please because you earned it and nobody can tell you otherwise.

With Solidarity,

Rick Middleton

Check out our re-vamped website and Facebook page for news, updates and more!
<https://driveupstandards.org/> • <https://www.facebook.com/driveupstandards>