The Official RWU Website

The new RWU newsletter continues to be published each season in the standard 8-page, 11x17 format. The Fall issue included a special 4-page supplement on the stepped-up RWU Campaign Against Single Employee Crews, with a revamped leaflet, special supplement to The Highball. On Labor Day, RWU announced a “stepped up” Campaign Against Single Employee Crews, with a revamped leaflet, special supplement to The Highball. The Safety Campaign took on a higher profile. Since its inception, RWU has taken the position that rail labor must break with the so-called “behavior-based safety” programs promoted by the carriers. Rather than focus on worker behavior, safety programs must focus on fixing the hazards that lead to injuries and fatalities. We must build union safety committees and positions that are independent of management. Nancy Lessin’s life-long advocate of this perspective, spoke at the RWU convention, addressed two UTU Regional Meetings, and in December was appointed to OSHA’s Whistleblower Protection Advisory Committee.

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The Highball Newsletter

RWU continues to operate primarily on the membership dues of our members. Without membership dues, RWU would not exist. In addition, the dues income is augmented by financial contributions and sales of merchandise in our Store. Income is spent on stickers, copies, postage, etc. The RWU Steering Committee is comprised of working railroad workers and retirees and none of us receive any money from the organization. Currently, RWU is entirely run by railroad workers on their own time. The day may not be far off when RWU has the need and the funds to pay a part-time staff person with the website, typing, editing and other office skills necessary to handle the expanding workload to keep the organization running. For further information, contact RWU Treasurer Chet Whyers at treasurer@railroadworkersunited.org or contact RWU Secretary-General Ron Kaminkow at secertary@railroadworkersunited.org.

The RWU Store

In 2012, RWU solidified on with own basic campaigns and activities. We expanded our membership in some key terminals, began the work of building local Chapters, and developed a series of options for how to join RWU. We hosted our Third Annual Convention in Chicago, Illinois, railroad capital of the World on May 4th. Once again, RWU sponsored Railroad Workers Memorial Day on Fathers Day Friday, the fourth year that we have promoted a national day to honor and remember our fallen brothers & sisters from the previous year. And in the summer, RWU established a “Fund for Fallen Rails” Our newsletter The Highball continued to be published quarterly and we greatly expanded the newsletter distribution network. At the end of the year we unveiled our long awaited user-friendly website complete with new information and features. The RWU Store was expanded, offering members and the general public a full line of RWU clothing, books, music and printed materials. As always, unfor-tunate, we incurred no debt, and are well on our way to establishing a non-profit tax-exempt sister organization. We continue to build with various labor and community organizations and we expand our list serve and network of railroaders across North America.

Railroad Workers United Annual Report

Summary & Overview

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Building the Rank & File Network

RWU continues to build a network of rank and file railroaders across North America. While some elect to join, others remain as “contacts” and supporters. Inevitably, we hope to get the latter to become members eventually, as full participation in all facets of the organization are essential. Our new pinpoint map on the website displays graphically where our members and supporters reside and work. Most major terminals are represented. Through our list serve, website, newsletter and other media, we are hooking up rails form disparate regions who are ready willing and able to fight back. Putting various rails in contact with each other to assist one another in their efforts. We continue to grow. If you would like to be added to our list serve, see the RWU webpage Receive RWU News Alerts and fill out the form.

Labor Solidarity Work

On an individual level, a number of RWU members were involved in the greater labor movement: as delegates to central labor bodies; activists in their local organizations; who were warehouse workers and others. RWU encourages all railroad workers to remember that they are part of the greater labor movement and to support and participate in labor actions on behalf of all and sections of the working class. In turn, a number of workers who are not railroad workers but are associated with the industry: locomotive builders, crew van drivers, seamen, longshore workers and others – have joined RWU as “Associate Members”. If you would like to assist with solidarity work, contact RWU Steering Committee member Jon Flanders at: jonathan.flanders@verizon.net.

RWU Finances

This year RWU greatly upgraded our Store. With our new “We Pay” method of ordering and payment, we have been able to set up a store for members with the most income. $250 or more and a store for the general public. At either store you can order and purchase a full line of RWU merchandise including hats, T-shirts, lapel pins, books, CDs the Founding Convention DVD, stickers and buttons. Members can now order their bundles of The Highball through their store. In addition, they can order flyers, make donations or contribute to the Fallen Rails Fund, all in one stop.

Steering Committee

In 2012 we elected a new Steering Committee (ISC) Three are brand new to the body, while one returned after a hiatus of one term. The Steering Committee is divided among the ranks of railroad workers and retirees from seven different rail carriers, four crafts and four unions. To learn more about each Steering Committee member, see the website link Who We Are.

Tax-Exempt Status

The RWU Steering Committee debated the merits of non-profit tax-exempt status and opted to pursue the creating of an “sister” organization to act as an education and legal defense fund. The Railroad Workers Education & Legal Defense Fund is now in the process of being created and established as a tax-exempt non-profit 501(C)3 organization. Those railroadworkers, retirees and supporters of the RWU mis-sion will soon be able to make donations to this foundation and get a tax-deductio-n. While it cost RWU some initial invest-ment to get this foundation up and running, it is bound to pay for itself in the coming years. To make a donation to the RWELDF, please contact RWU Steering Committee Member Ed Michael at tarpinhilljct@gmail.com.

Who We Are

The Highball Newsletter

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Railroad Workers Memorial Day

On Mother’s Day, 2009, a young conductor, Jared Boehlke, was killed on the job in Selkirk, NY while working a single-employee RCO job in the hump yard. Like so many other railroad fatalities, Jared’s death could so easily have been avoided had the conductor maintained a safe work place. In response to this tragic accident, Railroad Workers United called for a national day of remembrance a few weeks later, on Father’s Day. Urging all railroad employees to wear black shirts to work that day, we proclaimed the day ‘Railroad Workers Memorial Day’, and have pledged the organization to observe this day every year in honor and remembrance of those railroad workers who have died on the job.

This last year once again, RWU members wore our RWU T-shirts to work on June 15th. We asked that all railroad employees wear a black shirt and join with us in standing in solidarity with our fallen comrades. Help us to make a statement to the carriers that we will not go along with business-as-usual corporate sponsored safety programs that only look at our behaviors and fail to take into account in alleviating the hazards that lead to accident, injury and death on the job. See the RWU website page Remember Fallen Rails for posters, flyers and more. To help out with the 2013 Railroad Workers Memorial Day, please contact RWU Steering Committee Member Rob Hull at robhull9626@hotmail.com.

The fractured nature of rail labor has led RWU to initiate a program to honor each and every railroad worker killed on the job, regardless of what craft and what union the worker was a member of. When a brother or sister is killed in the line of duty, it should be the concern of all of us, whatever position we happen to currently hold.

To those ends, RWU has committed to do the following: Send cards and flowers to the family of all victims; Publicize each and every railroad fatality; Encourage all RWU members to attend Memorial Services when possible; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays; Designate a special “Railroad Workers Memorial Day” in honor of our dead; Dedicate the railroad sticks on birthdays;

Committee member Jon Flanders at jonathan.flanders@verizon.net.

Campaign for Fallen Rails

The Fourth Convention

The body debated and discussed a series of proposed resolutions and adopted six new ones (see the column to the right for more details). And we elected a new Steering Committee of 11 members to guide the organization until 2014, including three brand new Co-Chairs. (See the back page for more information). The Fourth Convention is scheduled for spring of 2014. And the date location TBA.

RWU Launches Official Local Chapters

After a formal request for a Charter was submitted by Louisville area members to the RWU Steering Committee in December, RWU officially chartered Chapter #1, the Louisville Chapter. Since then, ridgeline groups of RWU members at a number of terminals have emerged and have begun to function informally. Loss of members in Chicago, the Bay Area, the Pacific Northwest, Selkirk, NY, Salem, IL and Creston, IA have taken root. In addition, the Growth Fund Committee RWU has promulgated some basic guide lines for chapters and their activities. RWU is now actively organizing Chapters and is encouraging its members in locations around North America to submit requests for a Charter.

RWU will provide a copy of the Bylaws—Article XIV, Chapters & Their Responsibilities along with a copy of the recommended Charter Resolution (See our website page Charter for a sample). If feasible, an RWU organizer form a nearby location may travel to assist in your initial meeting(s). And RWU has funds and ideas available to help get Chapter membership on the ground and local and regional Chapters have the ability to organize around issues “on the ground”, issues that matter to rank and file railroad workers. And while RWU is not in the business of “filling claims” (that is the domain of your craft union), we are all about member-to-member contact, mutual support, and assisting members to fight back with creative tactics. Many of the same issues railroad workers today face are craft, union, carrier and geographical boundaries. Our traditional craft unions are not set up to effectively deal with many of these day-to-day struggles that affect the workforce. The RWU Chapter can prove to be a great asset to the workers of a specific area.

RWU Chapters are all inclusive; that is, they are open to any and all non-management railroad workers in a specified geographic area who are willing to join RWU, abide by our Bylaws and agree to the Statement of Principles without regard to race, age, political affiliation, carrier or other categories that have divided us for all too long. To organize a Chapter in your area, contact RWU Organizer J.P. Wright at jp333@insightbb.com.