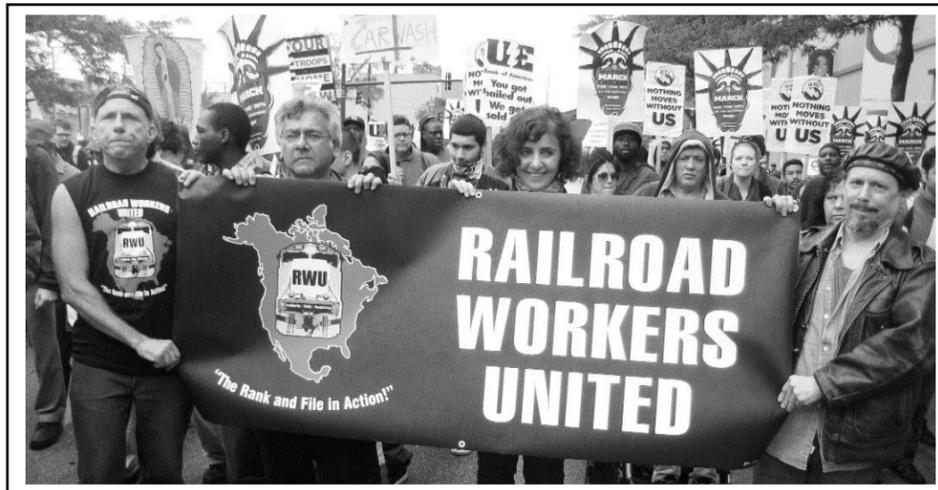


## The Official RWU Website

The new RWU website, unveiled just before the holidays was RWU's early Christmas present to our members, supporters and all of rail labor. This new website is easier and quicker to navigate and utilize. It is more visually pleasing with the addition of photographs and graphics. Just as importantly for us, it is easier for our members to learn to update and organize material. This reduces the time we must invest in keeping the site up-to-date, and gives members the confidence and ability to take part in the site upkeep. It is now easier than ever for folks to join and maintain their membership in RWU or to purchase items from our new Store,



## The Highball Newsletter

The 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 to Oppose Single employee Train Crews. The newsletter continues to be mailed to all RWU members. In addition, the Highball is distributed by a network of rails (members and non-members alike) throughout North America. Some download and make copies on their own nickel, while others seek reimbursement for RWU. With the summer issue, we began ordering bundles in increments of 25 mailed directly to members who want to distribute the newsletter in their terminal. This has greatly expanded the visibility of the newsletter and its distribution across the continent. To assist with distribution or other aspects of *The Highball*, please Contact email to [info@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:info@railroadworkersunited.org)

## RWU Finances

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 railroaders 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](mailto:treasurer@railroadworkersunited.org) or RWU General Secretary Ron Kaminkow at [secretary@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:secretary@railroadworkersunited.org).

all through the new "We Pay" system. All back issues of *The Highball* are neatly cataloged, along with all RWU Resolutions adopted by the Steering Committee since 2008. Campaign materials are available for download, and there is a wealth of information on railroad and labor issues, safety, worker fatalities, and rail labor history. RWU is extremely proud of our new site, and feel that it is one of the most comprehensive and informative websites available to the working railroader. Please take the time to look it over and let us know what you think. All feedback is appreciated. Please check us out at [www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org). and email your ideas to: [webmaster@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:webmaster@railroadworkersunited.org).

## Tax-Exempt Status

The RWU Steering Committee debated the merits of non-profit tax-exempt status and opted to pursue the creating of a "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 c3 organization. Those railroaders, retirees and supporters of the RWU mission will soon be able to make donations to this foundation and get a tax-deduction. While it cost RWU some initial investment 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](mailto:tarpinhilljct@gmail.com).

## 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 Committee is drawn from 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*.

## The RWU Store

This year RWU greatly upgraded our Store. With our new We Pay method of ordering and payment, we have been able set up a store for members (with most items discounted 25% 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.

To place your order as a member, go to the RWU webpage *The RWU Store*. All proceeds from the sale of RWU merchandise goes to build the organization. Please contact RWU Steering Committee Member Ed Michael at [tarpinhilljct@gmail.com](mailto:tarpinhilljct@gmail.com).



# Railroad Workers United Annual Report

# 2012

## Summary & Overview

In 2012, RWU soldiered 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 Biennial Convention in Chicago, Illinois, railroad capitol 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

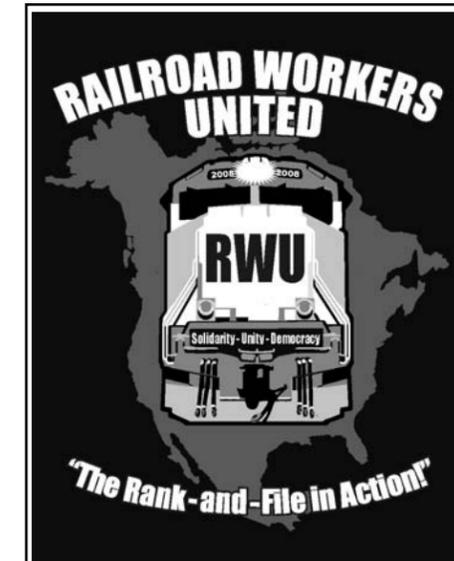
RWU Store was expanded, offering members and the general public a full line of RWU clothing, books, music and print matter. Our financial picture is stable, we incurred no debt, and are well on our way to establishing a non-profit tax-exempt sister organization. We continued to build with various labor and community organizations and we expand our list serve and network of railroaders across North America.

## Ongoing Campaigns

Throughout 2012, RWU continued to promote three basic efforts: 1 – Support for Coordinated Bargaining of All Rail Labor; 2 – Building Real Union-Based Safety; and 3 – Opposition to Single Employee Train Crews. Because rail industry bargaining was limited during 2012, our efforts were minimal. Nevertheless, this basic stand – that ALL rail unions must stand together and back one another up in contract bargaining – remains an RWU central tenet

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, accidents and fatalities. We must build union safety committees and positions that are independent of management. Nancy Lessin a 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.

On Labor Day, RWU announced a "stepped up" Campaign Against Single Employee Crews, with a revamped leaflet, special supplement to *The Highball* and a press release that was picked up by some newspapers. For more information including flyers, leaflets, resolutions and more, see the RWU webpage *RWU Campaigns*.



[www.railroadworkersunited.org](http://www.railroadworkersunited.org)  
206-984-3051  
[info@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:info@railroadworkersunited.org)

## 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 Jobs with Justice and other labor groups, etc. RWU continued to adopt resolutions of solidarity with workers engaged in struggle such as Longshore Workers (ILWU), Renzenberger van drivers (UE); locomotive builders (UE Local 506 in Erie, PA), 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 any and all 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: [janathan.flanders@verizon.net](mailto:janathan.flanders@verizon.net).

## 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 supports reside and work. Most major terminals are represented. Through our list serve, website, newsletter and other media, we are hooking up rails from 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 in one of the major bailiwicks of RWU. If you would like to be added to our list serve, see the RWU webpage Receive RWU News Alerts and fill put the webform.

## 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 carrier maintained a safe workplace. In response to this tragic accident, Railroad Workers United called for a national day of remembrance a few weeks later, on Father's Day Friday. Urging all railroaders 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 railroaders 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 an interest 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

## RAILROAD WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

"Black Shirt Friday"



A time for all railroad workers to mourn for the dead and fight like hell for the living.

Chicago, Illinois, the railroad capital of the world, was a fitting location to host the Third Biennial Convention of Railroad Workers United. On May 4th, RWU members gathered to conduct the business of the organization – to consider proposed bylaws changes, hear reports from various members, adopt a series of resolutions and elect a new Steering Committee. We also heard from an array of guest speakers and in the evening we celebrated with a raucous hospitality suite.

From the opening gavel the theme that resonated throughout the day was one of unity, democracy and especially –



Committee member Jon Flanders at: [jonathan.flanders@verizon.net](mailto:jonathan.flanders@verizon.net).

## Campaign for Fallen Rails

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 our fellow railroaders to sign the register at the funeral home as an act of solidarity with the aggrieved family; Keep a running tally of all rails killed on the job and make this information available on the website and annually in the pages of the newsletter; Continue our annual Railroad Workers Memorial Day activities each year; Make future donations to both the National Workers Memorial and the National Railroad Memorial as funding allows; We have established a special memorial fund to fund these activities. See the web Page **Remember Fallen Rails**. or contact RWU Steering Committee Member Rob Hull at [robhull9626@hotmail.com](mailto:robhull9626@hotmail.com)

## The Third Biennial Convention May 4th, 2012

one of solidarity. Labor activist Jane Slaughter from Labor Notes set the tone, reminding the Convention that our event was just one small part of the larger Labor Notes Conference which was scheduled for the entire weekend. The 2012 event set a record with more than 1400 labor activists – including a number of railroaders -- taking part in the entire weekend of workshops, plenaries and educational forums, designed "to put the movement, back in the labor movement".

A highlight of the Convention was the dynamic speakers who addressed the body throughout the course of the day. These included James Hill from the Renzenberger drivers union (UE); Nancy Lessin from the Steelworkers union who spoke on the whole question of "behavior based safety"; Tieceura Traore from the railway workers union of

Mail; David Newby, former president of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO who spoke about the Wisconsin uprising in 2011; and Benedicto Martinez of the Authentic Workers Front (FAT) in Mexico who spoke about the need for trans-border solidarity between railroad workers of Canada the U.S. and Mexico. In addition, we held an open mic at the tail end of the Convention where we heard from Larry Duncan of Labor Beat and Justin Hirsch from the ILWU among others.

Numerous reports were read, each followed by a lively discussion. Regarding our newsletter, we agreed to develop and broaden distribution of The Highball. On the safety front, we pledged to continue our efforts to debunk behavior based safety. As for organizing, we amended the bylaws to provide for a 7th Executive Board member known as the "Organizer" to get

serious about building the membership and expanding the reach and influence of RWU.

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. The date and location TBA.



## Membership

Membership continues to grow at about the same rate in 2012 as in previous years. While the majority of members continue to be drawn from the ranks and trainmen and engineers, a number of track workers, car knockers, clerks, dispatchers and others did join RWU over

the course of 2012. RWU introduced a number of new membership categories for those wishing to join the organization. These include "Sustainer", "Supporter", "Builder" and a Lifetime Membership known as the "Eugene V Debs Club". While few members have elected to join at these premium rates, they are there for

those who wish to go the extra mile for RWU. And while membership growth remains modest, a number of newer members have become more active in the organization.. To join RWU, please see the webpage **Join RWU** or contact RWU General Secretary Ron Kaminkow at [secretary@railroadworkersunited.org](mailto:secretary@railroadworkersunited.org).

## 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 Kentucky Chapter of RWU. At the Founding Convention, RWU had adopted a Resolution that commits the organization to building such "Chapters" at strategic locations around North America. Since then, fledgling groups of RWU members at a number of terminals have emerged and have begun to function informally. Loose collections of RWU members in Chicago, the Bay Area, the Pacific Northwest, Selkirk, NY, Salem, IL and Creston, IA have taken root. In response, this Fall 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 recently approved "Chapter Guidelines." If feasible, an RWU organizer from a nearby location may travel to assist in your initial meeting(s). And RWU has funds and ideas available to help get you started. Local and regional Chapters have the ability to organize around issues "on the ground", issues that matter to rank and file railroaders. And while RWU is not in the business of "filing 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

issues facing railroad workers today transcend 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 railroaders in a specified geographic area who are willing to join RWU, abide by our Bylaws and agree with the Statement of Principles without regard to craft, group, union 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](mailto:jp333@insightbb.com).

## RWU Resolutions for 2012

At the Third Convention, RWU adopted six resolutions. These included: Support for rail crew van drivers; Opposition to the practice of discriminatory bargaining which pits one section of the bargaining unit against another; Support for locomotive builders; Support for a Labor Party; The demand that rail labor leadership actively support labor actions and picket lines;; and Support for the west coast longshoremen's struggle with EGT.

In addition, the organization adopted other resolutions throughout the year, including: Support for both the Chicago teachers strike and the CP Rail strikers; Support for fired CN carman and RWU Steering Committee member Steve Desavouret; and Opposition to extended locomotive inspection periods from 90 days to 180 days.

These resolutions are all available on our website and have been mailed/emailed to the appropriate individuals/organizations concerned. And while we will never achieve the change we need simply by adopting resolutions, they set the tone, outlook and culture of our organization and let the world (and potential members) know just where we are coming from on issues of concern to railroaders and the working class in general. To view the RWU resolution from 2012 and all RWU resolutions, see the website link **RWU Resolutions**.

