Most of us are generally familiar with how labor unions came to be and how they developed into their present day role as the final line in defense of workers.

Middle Age European craftsmen unified in order to assure properly-qualified future workers and to establish protected prices for their wares. As civilization industrialized, these original guilds adapted and became activist. They advocated for their craft, its artisans and eventually formed local membership groups, working for a single employer and advocating collectively on behalf of their craft with their common employer. They remained social collective organizations, and provided each other with mutual support, benefit and comfort.

In the early to mid-20th century, the imbalance of wealth in the world (last generation’s 1% v 99%) drove workers to activate their unions and become increasingly militant with their requests, then proposals, then demands for more balanced distribution of wealth and appropriate compensation for their work. The public sector watched the private sector, and recognized that the unionized private sector workers were successfully securing both improved compensation and genuine ownership in their careers, and as mid-century approached the public sector began its own process of unionizing, thereby vesting legal recognition of the workers’ investment in career and protection for that investment. Unions throughout the US, and elsewhere in the “developed nations”, successfully demanded recognition, consideration for their issues, fair pay and fair treatment, and ultimately balanced the economic make-up of nations of the world and created a middle class population that came to enjoy historically unimaginable affluence, financial comfort and consideration for their investment in their employment.

Around the 1980s, however, undesirable changes began to occur – pendulums always swing, and they always swing back. In recent years, workers have focused their attention on matters other than protection of their work investment, and the result has been a steady erosion of many of the gains and benefits that had been won during the period of union activism. Wages stagnated, benefits receded and recognition of careers faded, and today workers find themselves facing attacks against everything they gained during their grandparents’ struggles 70–100 years ago.

(Continued on page 2...)
Our re-building of staff continues... around the time this edition of the newsletter is published, Gene Christian, former CEA President and board member, will be joining staff as our Anchorage Field Associate. We are actively recruiting for the “SAPO” (internal organizing and political activist) position, and for an Anchorage Regional Manager to replace Dennis Geary, who continues to insist upon his determination to retire next August. Dennis’ contributions to APEA and the Southcentral Locals have been significant, and we hope to recruit sufficiently early to allow the new manager to work with Dennis and reap benefit of Dennis’ deep knowledge and strong personal connections.

Once staff is set, we need to expand our re-building programs to the Local Unions, themselves. We must build local member activism, interest, involvement and commitment to both the Local Union and to APEA as the state affiliate. We will reach out to every Local and propose a Local-directed, APEA-supported campaign to re-engage and, we hope, re-invigorate the local membership with the activism, identification and support that previously existed when the Local was originally organized and the very first contract was negotiate—when the employer was first motivated to give serious and sincere consideration to the issues, the concerns, the hopes and the ambitions of the Local Union’s membership—the people who comprise the employer’s workforce and make the employer’s business effective and successful.

I hope the first step in this campaign will be for every APEA Local Union to create (if they have not already created) an Executive Board Political Officer or a Standing Committee for Local Political Action. These will be the members with whom staff will work most closely to re-build each Local, re-focus each Local’s energies and activities and thereby re-build APEA, itself.

We all know (although we seem to act less and less upon our knowledge) that local political engagement is required business for a public sector labor union. Political involvement is imperative for a public sector Labor Union, but we must be intelligent and focused with our political involvement. We must focus on those issues which are of bona fides and genuine significance to our work and the community services we provide through our work. We must insure that we are treated (in both management and compensation terms) fairly and in a business-like manner. That our jobs and work assignments are not politicized, but are defined and controlled by good business practices and genuine commitment to efficient accomplishment of the goals that our governing agencies have decided and directed. That our job performances – individually and collectively – are appropriate, efficient, focused on the mission and give our employers (both our political and managing employer and the public, whom we ultimately serve) solid value for the expenditure of all our public resources.

Our work is necessary work, imperative work – we translate philosophy, laws and concepts into real life action, into the product that is seen and experienced by the whole public. Let us, first, assure that our work is top quality, and then insure that the public knows both the quality of our work as well as who did the work.

UNIONS—We Still Need Them

(Continued from the front page…)

APEA and its Local Unions exist for the sole and specific purpose of assisting and facilitating its members’ efforts to protect and improve their working lives and conditions. The key word in that sentence is “assist” – neither APEA nor any other union or “state affiliate” can do their work alone. The work of “assisting” requires that the essential membership are directly, immediately and forcefully engaged in the specific and direct work of protecting and improving the workplace. Of making the pendulum swing back. APEA’s role is to assist that effort – to help, but not direct; to complement, but not control; to facilitate, but not dominate. You, each and every one of you, the Local Union membership, must be in charge, must decide and be engaged in the work of the Local Union…and when that happens, APEA and AFT will be with you to support, assist and help the efforts of you and your co-workers on your own behalf and in your own interest.
Please let me take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new APEA Field Associate. My name is Dezarae Deraimer. I loved being a CEA member (an APEA/AFT Affiliate) and I am excited, and honored, to be able to continue my union work in our community by working full time with APEA. Throughout my time in CEA, I have been witness to the critical support APEA has offered our local Alaskans through negotiating strong contracts, enforcing promises already made, and educating members on their rights. I am here to do all that I can to keep that tradition going. I am available to answer your contract questions, stand by your side when you need support, or even just listen to your concerns.

My fellow Alaskans- my most deep felt goal is to keep reminding us all that only by joining together, we working women and men will gain strength in numbers and have a collective voice to get what we need to be happy- proper pay and respect for safe work in a strong community. Please feel free to contact me through my email- dderaimer@apea-aft.org, at the Juneau office (907) 586-2334, or on my cell phone (907) 209-9361. If I haven’t already met you, I hope to meet you soon.

Dezarae Deraimer
Southeast Field Associate
dderaimer@apea-aft.org

I have been a Union Regional Internal Organizer for the Monterey, Santa Cruz, & San Benito Counties of California. I love networking, resolving issues and building relationships with members and elected officials. Your elected officials have more of an impact than most imagine.

I worked as a Steward for five years as a County employee. The Steward position inspired me to take up social justice issues and changed my major to Social and Behavioral Science. Shortly thereafter, I became a Field Representative, which was a good fit and transitioned to a Lead Internal Organizer for eight years with a great deal of bargaining experience.

I truly enjoy helping and empowering other people. My personal goal is helping other people everyday (HOPE). I am looking forward to a long association with both the Union and the community.

Joel Hill
Southeast Field Representative
jhill@apea-aft.org

Greetings from New Field Representative KC Snodgrass based out of the Anchorage office with primary responsibility of supporting the Supervisor’s Unit as well as the Confidential Unit employees in this area. I am replacing Fran Rabago who recently retired, and will be missed by all. I came to Alaska via New Mexico and California with approximately 30 years in combined Public as well as Private sector labor union experience.

I grew up in New Mexico with a mother who was a school teacher and a member of NEA, and my father an airplane pilot. I got my early start with a union when I was working at a non-union grocery store. One day a union organizer asked me to meet him after work, which I did. He explained what the Retail Clerks Union was and how they could help our working conditions, which was a major problem. I took some union cards, said I would help, and signed up 10-15 employees on union cards. Soon there was an election, and the union won by a large majority. I became a union steward and later went to work for the Retail Clerks Union, which later became United Food and Commericial Workers Union.

In the 15 years I worked for UFCW, I progressed through the positions starting as a Business Agent to Director of the Retail Division. When I left, I was Assistant to the President and responsible for contract negotiations, resolving grievances and deciding which cases to take to arbitration. I also served as a Trustee on the Joint Union/Employer Health and Welfare Trust Fund, and supervised staff.

In early 2000, I went to work for Service Employee’s International union, who represented over 50,000 employees predominantly in the Public Service Sector across a large swath of Northern California. I was originally hired to do nothing but resolve a huge backlog of grievances that the representatives did not have the time or knowledge to do. I eventually was promoted to Director of Contract Enforcement Department, and with a staff of 15, was responsible for resolving all grievances Local wide that were denied at the first step. In 2013, I took an early retirement to live with my wife in the Philippines. Gaining weight and actually missing my line of work, I decided I was not quite ready for retirement. My wife will soon join me living here in Anchorage. I expect that we both will enjoy the splendor of living in Alaska and I look forward in continuing to assist in the work of the Union, as well as working with the staff and members, to further the goals and strength of APEA.

KC Snodgrass, Southcentral Field Representative
ksnodgrass@apea-aft.org
HAPPY LABOR DAY!!!

The Labor Community came out in force to celebrate the accomplishments of the Labor Movement. Labor Day is a time to honor the economic and social achievements and contributions of American workers for the well-being and prosperity of working families.

Labor Day commemorates one of the great ethical victories of American society, a time in which we honor the men and women who, despite the best efforts on the part of greed, political influence, wealth and privilege, continue to advocate for a measure of safety, consideration, fairness and justice for the American worker.

APEA members joined their fellow brothers, sisters and their families in a day full of fun activities. The festivities began with our annual parade, beginning at the Noel Wein Library and ending at Pioneer Park, where the BBQ picnic, door prizes, free train rides and games, cotton candy and snow cone eating commenced!!

May Green, Northern Field Representative

**Community Matters**

Sarah Blei, President, Confidential Employees Association, APEA/AFT, and Dennis Knebel, President, Anchorage Central Labor Council, stand in front of part of the school supply donations they helped collect from the labor community to support students at the Anchorage School District (left). The Anchorage Central Labor Council spearheaded the Back to School Drive. According to Dave Mayo-Keily, Anchorage School District Child in Transition/Homeless Program Director, the fund raiser and donations will help over one hundred children. Labor makes a difference in our communities. What is your next project?
Another Labor Day has come and gone, but it's about much more than just an extra day off. It is a celebration of all that we in Labor Unions stand for. This Federal holiday is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of our American Workers. It establishes a national yearly tribute to the impacts workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our great country.

Did you know Labor Day has an interesting evolution? It was originally started in Chicago as a protest campaign to support the eight-hour workday (a luxury we all take for granted now, and most assume was "given" to us by our employers, but remember, it was fought for, and won, by our brothers and sisters of unions past). The legalization began as individual state celebrations, and in 1887, New York, New Jersey, and Colorado, were among the first states to officially approve a legal holiday celebrating the Labor Classes. Then, other states followed to create their own State Labor Days. Finally, in response to a groundswell of support, Sen. James Henderson Kyle of South Dakota introduced S. 730 to the 53rd Congress to make Labor Day a federal legal holiday on the first Monday of September, each year. It was signed into law by President Grover Cleveland on June 28, 1894.

By the beginning of the 19th century, there was already a great tradition of having parades and picnics in support of labor issues. Well, Juneau, we kept the great tradition going strong again this year by holding another splendid 10th Annual CLC Labor Day picnic at Sandy Beach, Douglas. We had an extremely good turnout, with lots of great food, door prizes, a raffle, games, toys and books given away; a rockin' band-The Wristrockets; and a number of local politicians present. Just to name a few: Senator Dennis Egan, Rep. Sam Kito, Mayor Merrill Sanford, former Mayor Bruce Botelho, Assembly Members-Jesse Kiehl, Loren Jones, Kate Troll, Karen Crane, Mary Becker, and Juneau School Board Member Andi Story. But, most importantly, the ones who really count: several hundred of our union members enjoyed the celebration. Thank you, Juneau Union Members, for coming out to support all of our local Unions.

Labor Day, this year in particular, has great meaning for thousands of hard working Alaskans trying to keep their jobs and contracts, as our State gets through this drop in oil revenue. Every time we can be seen working together it reinforces the fundamental reasons why Unions really work. This Labor Day Picnic was a perfect example of that. We all pulled together and made it happen. Thank you to the Juneau Central Labor Council, all the Unions, and all the members who made it a success.

Growing Our Local Activists

Jennifer Madsen, Southcentral Field Representative

Local 6070 is proud to announce they have recruited, trained and sworn in four new union stewards. The Fairbanks stewards attended a one day steward training in June with the new recruits, Andrew Bonnewell, Daniel Heselton and Jeff Pruss. The new stewards join Charles Silva, Bernard Durkee, Raif Johnson-Kennedy, Dale Pomraning and Rufus Hearsn III as the stewards representing the Local 6070 members in the Northern Region. In July, Anchorage held their Local 6070 steward training and new recruit Jason Portwood joins Rob Askew, Ryan Leary, Jim Ericksen and Stephanie Grant as the Southcentral Stewards. Jason was formerly an officer and steward in the Machinists union and a former shop steward in IBEW. Southeast Stewards are long time activists and stewards Ned Chapman and Dave Behrends. If your Local is looking to train your stewards or employee representatives have your Local officer contact the APEA/AFT field office to schedule training.

The TOTEM Executive Board met for their annual planning session on Saturday, August 8th. The board set the union goals and calendar for the year. Each year TOTEM board members meet and train new board members and set their goals. Each year TOTEM continues to increase their membership outreach with programs that are developed, started and then continued after their planning meetings. APEA/AFT also offers board trainings and planning facilitation to the Locals, if your Local is interested, they need only to contact their APEA/AFT field office.
The outcome of October’s election in Fairbanks could hit APEA employees in the pocketbook. That’s why it is more important than ever that we vote October 6.

In deciding which political candidates to endorse this year, we must look for women and men who will fight on behalf of public servants to protect our hard-earned pay, benefits, and jobs.

Karl Kassell for Borough Mayor
Van Lawrence for Borough Assembly – Seat A
Kathryn Dodge for Borough Assembly – Seat F

The membership would do well to select Karl Kassell for Borough Mayor. Not only has Kassell been a friend of labor but his opponent did not support the funding the third year negotiated salary increases of APEA’s State Supervisory Bargaining Unit. The CLC believes Mr. Kassell is by far the best candidate for Borough Mayor. A small group of lawmakers in the State Legislature go to bat for us every year, but Kassell’s opponent, Tammie Wilson, is not one of them. Incumbents Van Lawrence and Kathryn Dodge have shown a proven track record of being pro-Labor, and pro-collective bargaining.

In other races, the CLC endorsed Joy Huntington for Fairbanks City Council and Nadine Winters for IGU – Seat A.

Please remember to vote!

An update from Northern Regional Manager, Michael Koskie:

Fairbanks North Star Borough Election Update

Anchorage Early Intervention Occupations Union (AEIOU) spent the evening with members and their kids making buttons for all the bargaining unit members and decorating aprons with AEIOU on it for their upcoming community project. A lot of hands made for easy work. 14 members, 5 kids and 2 dogs all came to help and enjoy some pizza. They were able to make 30 buttons and decorate 20 aprons to show their AEIOU union pride.

Photos: AEIOU Members Stephanie Voorhees, Lois VanderBilt, Deborah Chambers (right), Deborah Chambers, Hilary Berg, Renee Wilson, Donna Kelly, Melissa Kahler-Afelin (lower right), and even the children joined the fun (lower left).