



BLET Auxiliary News

Working to bring about safer working conditions for Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen, educate spouses, and enhance the lifestyles of railroad employees and their families.

Volume 5, Number 3

Autumn 2014

Anita J. Caruso, President • Sereena Hogan, Vice President/National Legislative Representative • Lawana Poss, Secretary
Helen Brand, Treasurer • Gina Forman, 1st Vice President /National Outreach Coordinator • www.bletauxiliary.net

Cowtown Vigil "Annies" Auxiliary 31 - Fort Worth, Texas



Aux. 31 Secretary Ashley Jones, BLET National President Anita Caruso, Aux. 31 Vice President Leticia Berry, and Aux. 31 President Shila Borchert

By Shila Borchert, President, Auxiliary 31

Over dinner one night, a group of other BLET members' wives and I discussed the need for a local auxiliary in the Fort Worth, Texas area. The area is home to BNSF corporate headquarters and we felt it would greatly benefit from the support that an auxiliary could provide. After communicating with BLET Auxiliary National President Anita Caruso, the Cowtown Vigil "Annies" No. 31 was on the way to being established!

Our next step was to spread the word about the newly forming auxiliary. The Vigil "Annies" contacted the area's four BNSF BLET local divisions and attended their division meetings in an effort to educate the members about the mission and purpose of the Auxiliary, as well as supply them with folders containing other useful information and membership details. In addition to meeting with the members, we also contacted the area's four local divisions' chairmen and their respective general chairmen to inform them about the creation of BLET Auxiliary 31. Our officers also sent out over one hundred invitations to the homes of local BLET members asking them and their families to attend an informational "eat and greet" dinner. Included in these invitations were membership applications in the event the invitees wanted to join the auxiliary, but could not attend the dinner. The dinner was held at Sonny Bryan's BBQ in Fort Worth, Texas, on July 17, 2014. BLET National Auxiliary President Anita Caruso was in attendance to provide support and answer any questions the attendees had concerning the auxiliary. Also in attendance were BLET Auxiliary 31 President Shila Borchert, Vice President Leticia Berry, and Secretary Ashley Jones. Immediately following the informational dinner, BLET Auxiliary 31, the Cowtown Vigil "Annies," was formally organized by National President Caruso. Members Britt Borchert, Donal Berry, and Lisa Sosa also took the oath of membership and received their BLET Auxiliary pins.

We are planning a few activities to be held in the next few months. The Cowtown Vigil "Annies" has organized a Girls' Night Out for BNSF wives, to be held at Painting with a Twist, where we hope to meet new friends and spread the word about the auxiliary and all that it can accomplish with great members. We also plan to host a BLET Family Day in the fall! It is our hope that we can raise awareness and increase solidarity between the BLET members and the BLET Auxiliary in the Fort Worth area, and that their spouses and families will come along and help us grow!

"Right to Work"

– Do you really know
what it means?

**Take this simple quiz to
test your knowledge...
answers on Page 11**

1. What does the term "right to work" mean?
2. True or false - right to work laws guarantee a non-union worker the same benefits as a union worker?
3. Is the role of workplace death higher or lower in right-to-work states? By what percent?
4. Right-to-work laws lower wages for union and non-union workers by what amount per year?
5. What states spend less on education, per pupil, right-to-work states or non right-to-work states?

Information about the upcoming National Auxiliary Convention can be found on our website. Go to www.bletauxiliary.net, scroll down to the section entitled "2nd Quadrennial Convention," and click on the hyperlink entitled "Convention Home Page."



Auxiliary President's Message - BY ANITA J. CARUSO

As the season's change with each passing year, we have now come to the time of change for the BLET Auxiliary National Officers who, with the exception of National Secretary Lawana Poss, have been in office since our 1st National Auxiliary Convention held in Reno, Nevada, in the fall of

2010. I must admit that I did not think this time would come so quickly, nor did it feel like it was arriving quickly while I was living and working it, but I seem to be experiencing an extreme swing of emotions as I start to write this last article as your BLET Auxiliary National President.

There are so many people to be grateful and thankful for and I would like to write this article with those people in mind. I have not done this job alone, although at times I felt like everything was falling on my shoulders. This was not a job that I ever anticipated taking after being National Secretary for nine years, but it was something I am fortunate to be able to say I did and, hopefully, did it with the respect, dignity, and compassion I set out to accomplish when I began this journey.

I would like to start off with our National Vice President/NLR Sereena Hogan. When I was tossing around the idea of taking this position, she promised me she would always be there to help. Well, she never wavered in her promise. Countless times throughout the years I have asked for her guidance, friendship, and honesty in decisions I had to make. It has truly been a delight to work with Sister Sereena and I thank her for being my "go to" person for all the hard decision-making aspects of this position. She has been a God-send and I thank you, Sereena, for your counsel and friendship throughout the years. In the future, if you ever need anything, I'm just an e-mail away. I'm honored to call you my sister.

Next, I would like to thank our National Treasurer Helen Brand. More than anyone, Sister Helen has been the one to hear me moan and groan the most about anything that I needed to get off my chest. She has been a rock to me. She quietly lets me rattle on about whatever I have on my mind and always has a soothing, calm effect on me. Never did she tell me to "get over it" or that I was being overly sensitive; she just listened as a great friend would do. Sister Helen and I go way back to 1980 when I first joined Helen Gould Auxiliary 235 in Osawatomie, Kansas. Helen, it has been a sincere pleasure to work with you these past eight years. You have brought the National Treasurer's job into the 21st century, saving us thousands of dollars throughout the years. Thank you for being such a wonderful person and a dear, dear friend!

First Vice President/NOC Gina Forman has been a joy to know and work with for the past seven and one-half years. Sister Gina

is like a daughter to me. Gina, I have so enjoyed having you at Executive Council each year, talking to you on the phone, texting and catching up on what's been going on in each other's lives. You have been a breath of fresh air and always managed to make us laugh; you are so fun to be around. I know we will continue to keep in touch and I thank you for your service to the BLET Auxiliary. I wish you nothing but the best in your future endeavors!

Our still somewhat new National Secretary Lawana Poss has been a joy to behold! She came to this position under not the most ideal situation, but she took it in stride and made a molehill out of the mountain! She is one of the sweetest, most positive, and most caring sisters I've ever had the fortune to work with. She doesn't get stressed, even when she has a boatload of work coming down the pike! That, in itself, is remarkable. I have enjoyed "training" her and will continue to offer my assistance well past my term. Sister Lawana knows I am only a phone call away for as long as she needs guidance. I would do anything for this sweet sister! Lawana, thank you for being such a great National Secretary, friend, and co-worker.

Past National President Becky Schneider has been a tremendous asset to me and this administration since her term ended in 2010. Naturally, being the kind of person who never says no to anyone who offers to help, I gladly accepted her offers to share her talents. She has continued to be our webmaster for the past four years; I can't tell you how much this has meant to me. It's not something I wanted to learn and I'm glad to say that, because of Sister Becky, I didn't have to do this job. She has also given us help with numerous other assignments we have asked of her and I want her to know that I thank her from the bottom of my heart for all her contributions to the BLET Auxiliary and to me! Becky, you have remained a good friend and devoted sister.

I would like to thank the BLET National Division for their support and assistance the past four years. Thank you President Pierce and the members of your Advisory Board for all that you do for the BLET Auxiliary. We remain devoted to the BLET and will always strive to continue to help railroaders and their families whenever given the chance.

A "special thanks" goes to First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt for always being available for the times I've needed advice and counsel. Brother Lee has always taken the time to listen to my questions and never failed to get back to me with an answer. He will never know how much this meant to me. I want him to know that I will never forget his kindness, generosity, and guidance to me and the BLET Auxiliary.

I'd like to give a huge thank you to Vice President John Tolman and all the State Legislative Board Chairman. You have been instrumental in promoting the BLET Auxiliary and bringing us to your constituents. The support you have given to the BLET Auxiliary has not gone unnoticed. We thank you for everything that you do for us.

Lastly, I would like to thank our biggest champions, our spouses! Thank you Ken, Charlie, Paul, Mike, and Sam. You all are the first ones to pitch in to help, whether it is at home or traveling on behalf of the Auxiliary. A simple "thank you" doesn't seem to suffice for everything you do to help us. Not only have you (at one time), been active with your own BLET Division, worked your job, taken countless vacation days to accompany us to BLET functions, ran numerous errands, and proofread articles, you have had the pleasure of taking a "gentle" ribbing from your BLET brothers. Well, next time you see one of our spouses, perhaps a simple "thank you" will suffice!

Now, I would like to thank you, our members of the BLET Auxiliary. I want to thank you for making this job so special. I had an "open door policy" where I accepted, answered, and returned any and all phone calls, letters, e-mails, and texts I received, whether

traveling or at home. I've talked through company, dinners, and favorite television shows. I say this not for kudos, but because this was part of the job and I was happy to do it.

Whatever the future holds for the BLET Auxiliary, I would like it to be known that I will continue to help the next administration in any way I can, if asked to do so. It has truly been an honor and privilege to have served as the BLET Auxiliary National President for the past four years.

Anita J. Caruso
National President - BLET Auxiliary
7660 S. 162nd Street
Omaha, NE 68136
(402) 330-6348 ~bunziegia@cox.net



Jean and Fred Weatherhill

In Memory of Sister Julia Carter

By Anita J. Caruso

It is with profound sadness that I must tell everyone that Sister Julia Carter of Auxiliary 169 in Homewood, Alabama, passed away peacefully at Fair Haven Retirement Community on June 8, 2014. Sister Julia was a member of the BLET Auxiliary for over fifty years.

I first met Sister Julia when she was the delegate for Auxiliary 169 at the 1996 GIA International Convention held in Detroit, Michigan. She represented her Auxiliary for the Sixth Quinquennial International Convention at the Westin Hotel-Renaissance Center the week of July 15, 1996. Sister Julia was assigned to the Ritual Committee where she served with honor.

Sister Julia was also the delegate for her Auxiliary #169 at the 2001 Seventh Quinquennial International Convention held in Miami, Florida, at the Fontainebleau Hotel the week of September 24-29, 2001. She again represented her Auxiliary as delegate at the 2006 Eighth Quinquennial International Convention, which was the last time Sister Julia was able to travel on behalf of the National Auxiliary. I remember how she "held court" with everyone wanting to speak to her, checking on her, just trying to spend a little bit of quality time being around her.

One of the remarkable things about Sister Julia was that she represented the Auxiliary by appearing before a Congressional Committee in the 1990s, "putting a face" to the issues at hand by addressing archaic laws that governed the benefits for BLET retirees' widows. She spoke eloquently about the hardships faced by widows whose benefits shrunk to below living standards after the death of their spouse.

All in all, Sister Julia Carter was a remarkable woman. Many times throughout the years she has called me just to tell me how proud she was of me and to let me know what a good job I was doing. I am the one who had the good fortune to meet her, become acquainted with her, and get to know her so intimately. She will always be a shining star of the BLET Auxiliary and we will all miss her terribly. God Bless you, Sister Julia!

Submitted by Darla Fent, River City Auxiliary No. 12

It is with deep sadness that we say goodbye to our beloved Sister and friend, Jean Weatherill, who on August 18, 2014, ended her struggle with years of health problems. Not until this year did these health issues keep her from being active with our auxiliary. Jean was 71 years young and was a founding member of River City Auxiliary #12 in Omaha/Council Bluffs in 1995. Jean and her husband Fred were married 52 years. They enjoyed traveling, fishing, mushrooming, and just being together. She is survived by many family and friends who all loved her. We will miss you Sister Jean, but we won't forget you.

— With Love and Friendship, Your Sisters, River City #12

87th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association - Savannah, Georgia

By Lawana Poss, National Secretary, BLET Auxiliary

More than 200 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and their families were in attendance for opening ceremonies of the 87th annual Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA), June 15-19, in Savannah, Georgia. SMA Arrangements Chairman D.C. Dickey, his wife Patty, and the members of BLET Division 646 hosted this year's SMA.



Chris and Brandy Hyde with Charlie and Helen Brand

Brother Dickey called the meeting to order and delivered the opening prayer. He introduced Lawana Poss, SMA Auxiliary Chairperson, who presided over the annual presentation of state flags by members of the BLET Auxiliary, a tradition that dates back nearly 100 years. State flags presented in the ceremony included Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Anita Caruso, National President of the BLET Auxiliary, carried the United States flag and later addressed the members and families in attendance.

Brother Dickey introduced Mark Wallace, General Chairman of the Norfolk Southern-Southern Lines General Committee of Adjustment, who led the empty chair ceremony to remember BLET members killed in the line of duty. An empty chair was left at the front of the meeting hall to honor the organization's departed Brothers and Sisters.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce introduced members of the BLET Advisory Board and National Division staff who were in attendance, and also acknowledged the presence of former BLET National President Paul Sorrow and former BLE International Vice President Paul Wingo.

Monday afternoon concluded with a closed meeting for BLET members and open meetings for the BLET Auxiliary. There were many educational workshops throughout the week. Workshops featured specialized training for BLET Legislative

Representatives, Secretary-Treasurers, Local Chairmen, and Division Trustees. Other workshops focused on the BLET's national mobilization network, United Healthcare, Railroad Retirement benefits, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).



Anita Caruso with special visitor "Forest Gump" at the Reception.

On Tuesday, those not participating in the golf tournament,

could spend a relaxing day at Daufuski Island, or take the water taxi across the river to explore the city. Many of those on the Daufuski Island outing rented golf carts and explored; however, I really enjoyed just sitting on the beach watching the dolphins and finding sand dollars right at my feet.

The dinner banquet was held on Thursday. The Auxiliary raffle tickets were drawn and winners announced. Some of the winners donated their prizes back to the Auxiliary and a wonderful auction occurred. Thank you to everyone who participated in the auction. We were able to raise more money for the BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Fund because of your generosity. Thank you, again!

Chris and Patty Dickey, and the members of BLET Division 646, we thank you so much for inviting us to share in the history and beauty of Savannah - you made us all feel like family.



SMA Auxiliary Chairperson Lawana Poss and Secretary/Treasurer Wanda Hawkins sold raffle tickets and cookbooks at the Auxiliary Information Table

Tidbits from National Secretary Lawana Poss

It has been a very busy summer and I hope that you were able to attend one of the Regional Meeting this year. It was wonderful to be able to attend my home convention in Savannah, Georgia, and also the EUMA in Cleveland, Ohio. It is always great to meet everyone who has a chance to attend.

Thank you to everyone for supporting the Auxiliary by purchasing raffle tickets and/or golf mulligans. The proceeds from these fundraisers go to our Scholarship Fund!! A Scholarship can change the life of a child and your support means the world to us.

Cookbooks!!

We are still selling BLET Auxiliary Cookbooks! We have a limited quantity of the first edition MAIN LINE COOKING and we also have MAIN LINE COOKING II. These books make wonderful gifts, so please contact me for information on how you can purchase them. The cookbooks can be shipped directly to you.

2nd Quadrennial Convention of the BLET Auxiliary

We are very busy preparing for the 2nd Quadrennial Convention of the BLET National Auxiliary in Las Vegas, Nevada. The dates are September 29 – October 1, 2014. If you are a delegate, you should have received your second packet of information containing the proposed resolutions submitted for consideration for the Auxiliary Constitution and Bylaws. If you are a delegate for a local auxiliary, it is extremely

important that your auxiliary members review the proposed resolutions and decide how your delegate will vote on these changes. Delegates MUST bring the resolutions with them to the convention. If you did not receive this packet, please contact me as soon as possible.

Welcome to our new auxiliary!!

A big welcome to the Fort Worth, Texas – Auxiliary 31 – Cowtown Vigil “Annies” see cover page for story. We welcome new members Shila and Britt Borchert, Ashley and Brandon Jones, Leticia and Donal Berry, Janet Viner, Lisa Sosa, Shayla DeLaFuente, and Christy Morton.

Welcome new members-at-large!

Terea Lipford from Jefferson, Georgia ; Lori Underwood from Pocatello, Idaho; Ester Lynn Spivey from Fernandina Beach, Florida; and JoAnn Jarvis from Syracuse, New York.

In our thoughts and prayers...

Julia Carter passed away on June 8, 2014. Julia was a member of Clemantis Auxiliary No. 169 in Birmingham, Alabama, for 57 years. Sister Julia became an Auxiliary member on March 21, 1957. We send our sympathies to her son, Harry, and the family.

Jean Weatherill, a charter member of River City Auxiliary #12 passed away on Monday, August 18, 2014. We send our deepest condolences to the Weatherill family and our Sisters in Auxiliary #12.



Lawana Poss can be reached at 770-497-8898, by e-mail at Lewp2007@bellsouth.net, or by mail at 1394 Bywood Court, Suwanee, Georgia 30024.



Emily Brown and Debbie Keele

Congratulations Debbie Keele!

Debbie Keele, longtime member and Vice President of Helen Gould Auxiliary 235 in Osawatomie, Kansas, recently retired from her job at Emily Hart Bridal Shop in Leawood, Kansas, where she worked as a seamstress. Debbie authored the “Retirement Rocks” article in the Winter issue of this publication, mostly focusing on her husband Jim’s retirement from Union Pacific Railroad in July 2012.

Pictured here with Emily Brown from the bridal shop at a retirement celebration, Debbie now gets to fully enjoy the retired lifestyle. The writing on the cake reads: Relax, Entertain, Travel, Indulge, Read, Enjoy! Congratulations, Debbie, you now have time for all of that !

Protecting Two-Person Crews

Last month, it came to light that a General Committee representing trainmen on the SMART Transportation Division (formerly UTU) had negotiated a new Crew Consist Agreement that allows for engineer-only operations under certain circumstances along portions of BNSF Railway. The news of this tentative contract agreement traveled quickly through social media and other networks and has generated a great deal of discussion and unrest amongst railroaders and their families due to its potential impact beyond its own territory. A grassroots effort, orchestrated mostly by SMART Transportation Division members and their spouses and families, has sprung up across the nation to demonstrate opposition to the one-person crew concept and to support H.R. 3040, the Safe Freight Act. This legislation, introduced last August, would require a two-person crew on virtually all freight trains, and is currently pending before the House. While we applaud the efforts of this grassroots effort, we (the Auxiliary) have opted to steer clear of any public outcry or demonstration at this time and encourage our members to continue in their efforts to urge their representatives in the House to support H.R. 3040.

As pointed out by BLET National President Pierce in his formal statement on this matter, posted on the BLET website on July 21, 2014, the three avenues available to protect a two-person crew are regulation, legislation,

and collectively bargained agreements.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a press release in April announcing its intention to issue a proposed rule requiring two-person train crews on crude oil trains and establishing minimum crew size standards for most mainline freight and passenger rail operations. A campaign is underway by the BLET National Division and the SMART Transportation Division to get state laws passed mandating a two-person crew on all freight trains. The BLET National and the SMART Transportation Division will continue to work together to promote legislation, on both the state and national level, to preserve two-person crews on our nation's freight trains. Please help by staying informed and staying involved! Thanks for all you do!

To read the statement issued by BLET National President Pierce on July 21 in its entirety, please go to: <http://www.ble-t.org/pr/news/newsflash.asp?id=5594>.

Raising the Bar for Crude by Rail Shipments

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued an emergency order on May 7 requiring all U.S. railroads operating trains containing large amounts of highly flammable Bakken crude oil to notify State Emergency Response Commissions (SERCs) about the operation of those trains through their states. Railroads that fail to comply face penalties of \$175,000 per day and a prohibition against moving Bakken oil.

The order, which was issued following a string of fiery tank-car accidents in four states, requires that SERC notification be provided for every train carrying more than one million gallons of Bakken crude (about 35 tank cars) in a particular state. The notification must include estimated volumes of Bakken crude, frequencies of anticipated train traffic, and the planned routes. The order also requires that railroads provide the SERCs contact information for at least one responsible party and help the commissions share the information with appropriate emergency responders in affected communities.

Some railroads are seeking agreements that the information not be publicly shared. They said the information is security sensitive and releasing it could put them at a competitive disadvantage, and they are asking states to sign agreements not to disclose the information. But some states are refusing, saying that the information should not be kept from the public.

FRA issues safety advisory for tank cars:

Also on May 7, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) issued a safety advisory strongly urging those shipping or offering Bakken crude to use tank-car designs with the highest available level of integrity. The FRA and PHMSA also are advising carriers and offerers to avoid the use of older legacy "DOT-111" or "CTC-111" tank cars to transport Bakken crude.

"Changes in railroad operations over the last several years, including increased rail traffic, higher in-train forces due to the transportation of hazardous materials tank cars at higher gross rail loads, and the likelihood of individual tank cars accumulating more miles annually, have resulted in tank car design changes to accommodate these increased stresses and to significantly reduce the chances of a catastrophic failure," FRA and PHMSA officials said in the safety advisory. "Design changes include new tank car steel and improvements of structural features. Older 'legacy' tank cars, however, without more modern construction and design enhancements, continue to be used to transport hazardous materials, including Bakken crude oil."

The USDOT and the FRA have undertaken more than a dozen actions to enhance crude-by-rail safety over the past 10 months.

Senate Committee Appropriations Bill for FY 15 Funding Levels

The Senate Committee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development passed its appropriations bill on June 5 with a bipartisan vote (29-1). The low funding level of \$1.39 billion for Amtrak was expected and is consistent with the level of funding provided in fiscal year 2014. This funding will allow Amtrak to continue providing safe and reliable passenger rail service in 46 states and to make investments in the state-of-good-repair infrastructure projects. Amtrak's ridership hit an all-time high of 31.6 million people last fiscal year, and Amtrak has reached record

ridership levels for 10 of the last 11 years.

The recommendation is \$1 billion less than the budget request, which assumed the mandatory funding would be provided through new legislation authorizing surface transportation programs instead of the appropriations process. No date yet on when the bill will go to the full Senate.

EPA Needs a More Balanced Energy Plan for Coal

On June 2, the Environmental Protection Agency announced a proposal called the "Clean Power Plan" that would regulate electrical generation plants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 30 percent by 2030. The EPA is expected to finalize the rule by June 2015, after which states will have until 2018 to submit their plans to cut emissions. The proposed rule poses a highly charged political battle and has been met with mixed reactions. Some see it as an attack on the U.S. coal industry that could have a devastating effect on the nation's economy and on those communities reliant on the coal industry.

Environmental activists consider the rule to be an important step to address climate change, however many of them believe that the rule does not do enough. Some industry experts and advocacy groups have challenged the legality of the rule.

For those whose livelihood depends on the rail industry, the proposal poses serious economic concerns. As BLET National President Pierce indicated in a statement issued on June 4: "Nearly one in five railroad jobs is directly linked to coal haulage. If these jobs are lost it is unlikely that new

business generated on our nation's railroad will ever make up for the loss of coal."

President Pierce expressed support for the nation's efforts to invest in renewable energy and corresponding jobs, but stated that the economy as a whole will suffer if new jobs created in the "green economy" are not well-paying and secure, which is a likely scenario. Recognizing that climate change is a global problem and it is important for the U.S. to take a leading role in solving this problem, President Pierce also pointed out that other countries like China and India are not in a position to switch from coal any time soon.

"Without a binding agreement on global greenhouse gas emissions, this proposal threatens to put U.S. manufacturing at a cost disadvantage and even more jobs will go overseas," President Pierce stated. "This is why deploying cost-effective carbon capture and sequestration technology is essential and should be a priority for this Administration and the Congress."

Preserving Amtrak's Southwest Chief

The Amtrak Southwest Chief has made daily runs between Chicago and Los Angeles since 1971, providing passengers with picturesque views of the vast expanse of the American West. Amtrak is now considering a plan to reroute the historic train from Colorado in two years to better-maintained tracks.

Maintenance to the more than 600 miles of current train rails between Hutchinson, Kansas, and Albuquerque, New Mexico is estimated at about \$200 million. Amtrak has said it will pay \$40 million to repair

the current route. Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, which owns the tracks, has not made a commitment. Amtrak estimates that, in order for the Chief to maintain its current route, Colorado, Kansas, and New Mexico must come up with \$4 million annually for the next 10 years to go toward the maintenance needed for the rails. If the Chief were to relocate its route to better-maintained rails in Oklahoma and Texas, it would still operate in parts of Kansas and New Mexico, albeit with fewer stops, but Colorado could lose the train altogether. Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper supports keeping the passenger train operating and expanding its route to Pueblo. He is working with neighboring states to find the best way to proceed.

In mid-May, Governor Hickenlooper signed legislation to preserve the current route of the Chief. The new law, HB 14-1161, supported by the BLET, establishes a Commission charged with securing the means necessary to keep the Southwest Chief running through Southwest Kansas, Southeast Colorado, and Northern New Mexico. With the signing of this legislation, Colorado joins Kansas and New Mexico in a multi-state partnership applying for \$24.5 million in grant funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation to pay for repairs to the tracks.

Colorado State Legislative Board Chairman Jim Wilmeshier stated that BLET members in Colorado were active in lobbying to save the Southwest Chief and in supporting HB 14-1161. Brother Wilmeshier attended the signing ceremony on behalf of the BLET.

— continued on page 10



Sereena Hogan can be reached by phone at (520) 297-0944; by mail at 8720 N. Myrtle Dr., Tucson, Arizona 85704, or by e-mail at vp3sereena@aol.com.

*Change does not
roll in on the wheels
of inevitability,
but comes through
continuous struggle.
And so we must
straighten our backs
and work for our
freedom. A man can't
ride you unless your
back is bent.*

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

74th Annual International Western Convention - Minneapolis, Minnesota

By Sereena Hogan

This year's International Western Convention (IWC) was hosted by Minnesota State Legislative Board Chairman Dave Brown and his wife Cheri, and the members of BLET Division 517, at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Minneapolis, June 29 - July 2. The meeting began with early registration on Sunday, the 29th, the annual golf tournament on Monday, and a welcome reception on Monday evening, with a separate activities night for the kids. The opening ceremonies on Tuesday, July 1, featured special guest speaker Ken Martin, Minnesota State Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party Chairman, who delivered brief remarks to the audience, then introduced Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton who discussed several oil train issues impacting the state. We also heard from Tom Dwyer, President of the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railroad Employees (NARVRE).



Cheri Brown at the BLET Auxiliary Meeting at the IWC

When the BLET met for their closed meeting on Tuesday afternoon, spouses and family members convened for the Auxiliary Meeting, which was open to anyone interested in attending. FELA Attorney Lloyd (Chip) Rabb, shared important information for spouses to know in the event of an on-the-job injury or death of their railroader. Jon Knetsch from Optum Health explained the special services offered to United Healthcare beneficiaries through Railroad HealthLink, and our special guest speaker Rick Brambrink, President of the James J. Hill Society, gave a presentation about the legacy of Canadian-American Railroad Executive James Hill, the empire he built in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and the home he built in St. Paul, known as the "Gilded Age Mansion" that is now a historic landmark open to the public. Following the presentations, attendees were invited to participate in a fun gift exchange with the door prizes. Thank you Cheri for your help in shopping for the door prizes as well as many of the raffle prizes, and a big thank you to the IWC for providing the funds for these purchases!

On Tuesday evening, attendees were treated to a Minnesota Twins vs. Kansas City Royals baseball game at Target Field in Downtown Minneapolis.



IWC Host Chairman David Brown presented the funds collected from the sale of golf mulligans to Sereena Hogan at the banquet

Workshops for BLET members were conducted all day on Wednesday,

and the convention concluded with the Closing Banquet on Wednesday evening, featuring an amusing Magic and Comedy Act that involved the participation of several of the guests in attendance. Many thanks to everyone who purchased raffle tickets for the raffle, and to the golfers who purchased mulligans. The proceeds from both of these fundraisers go a long way to help the Auxiliary provide scholarships for sons and daughters who belong to a family in which one parent is a member of the BLET and the other parent is a member of the Auxiliary.

Many thanks to the vendors, FELA attorneys, and other donors who sponsored this year's IWC, as well a big thank you to Hosts David and Cheri Brown, Treasurer Mark Anderson, and the other members of Division 517 who worked hard to make this year's IWC a roaring success! See you all next summer at the IWC in Denver!



Steve Leyshon was the proud winner of the beautiful handmade quilt created by Auxiliary Member Anna Stacia Penrod. The quilt displays the State of Minnesota and all the railroads that run through that state. Thank you Anna Stacia for this work of art!

Auxiliary 28 Scholarship Program

Guadalupe Auxiliary No. 28, in Tucson, Arizona, worked hard over the last year to raise funds for their scholarship program. This summer, \$500 scholarships were awarded to three daughters of BLET Division 28 members. A major part of the scholarship application was an essay explaining how having a railroader in the family has affected the applicant's life. The following essay was submitted by Alexis Walker, daughter of Division 28 Vice Local Chairman Ken Walker and his wife Asa. Alexis is attending the University of Arizona for the 2014/2015 school year. We wish her the best in her pursuit of higher education!

My entire life I've had to explain to friends, neighbors, and teachers that, no, my father isn't "that" kind of engineer. After the painfully awkward explanation of how my father is not a scientist or some man in a laboratory, I can explain to them about how my father does a job most people take for granted. I can tell them that even though he missed a few birthdays here or there, and maybe he wasn't always home when I needed him, he taught me to be strong, brave, and have a sense of community.

Growing up knowing he would be out of town for a few days gave me some freedom and responsibility. Over the years, those two or three days when he was gone taught me to be smart and independent. As the oldest of four daughters and no sons, my father depended on me to help when he could not. When the family went through rough times, my father was right there by my side to hold and protect me. He always encouraged my many interests and helped me realize my strengths and weaknesses. He showed me that it's not where you start from that matters, but it's what you do with your life and who you impact that matters. His encouragement allowed me to be confident in myself even when no one else was.

My father experienced many trials and tribulations working in the railroad, from dealing with his own problems to standing up for his fellow workers. He taught me that, no matter what anyone says, stand up for what you believe in. As cliché as it sounds, being a teenager struggling with a college preparatory high school and just growing up, this was the best advice he could have given me. I knew that he meant what he was telling me because I saw his own bravery in every investigation and incident he oversaw with the BLET.

The BLET brothers and sisters that my father introduced me to taught me the importance of community and helping each other even when it may not directly benefit you. These wonderful people helped lead me down my path, working with the labor unions. The BLET has also been a safety net for me and my family. They have held up my father in times of weakness, and the BLET has always given me open arms and a shoulder to cry on. My father's part in the railroad has allowed me to have experiences not everyone can. Being able to help plan, participate in, and work at family picnics put on by the BLET has given me a window into

the lives of working men and women. Thanks to my father, I am able to appreciate all the hard work people put in, not just our locomotive engineers or our conductors, but the loving families that support them.

Having a father with a leadership role in the railroad is sometimes a blessing and a curse. After especially long days, he is very tired, but he always finds time for me and my sometimes silly questions. Thanks to his hard work and determination, he has helped me to see my goals and my future. Thanks to the railroad, I know how I want to impact society for the better: helping hard working men and women like those of the Union Pacific Railroad.

reprinted with permission

From 1st VP/National Outreach Coordinator Gina Forman



Honor - it is really the only word I can think of to describe my tenure over the last seven years serving as National 1st Vice President/Mobilization Outreach Coordinator for the BLET National Auxiliary. Whether my tasks were getting a mobilization effort started, simply checking in on our members, or assisting other National Officers, I have enjoyed every moment of it. I have had the pleasure of working under two wonderful National Presidents. I want to thank Sisters Becky Schneider and Anita Caruso for making both of my terms enjoyable. They worked tirelessly to make sure that I, and all of the Executive Council members, were involved and utilized. Thank you is not nearly enough to express my gratitude, but it will have to do. Thank you all.

I am now at the end of my term and I must pass the torch on to a new sister who will carry on the duties required of the position. Although my time as a national officer is done, my involvement with the Auxiliary will be ongoing. I must remind you all to stay involved, no matter how large or small your role is. Everything we do affects generations to come. If you are asked to get involved, please act on that request. Our loved ones' jobs and benefits are under constant attack and scrutiny. We must stand firm in our efforts to protect what we have already fought hard to attain.

In closing, I will leave you with a quote from Helen Keller: "We may have found a cure for most evils; but it has found no remedy for the worst of them all—the apathy of human beings." Do not let change pass you by while you are waiting for change to happen. Stay involved, stay safe, and stay healthy! I will miss you all very much!

Gina Forman can be reached at 765-432-1050, by e-mail at tweetys95@yahoo.com, or by mail at 63 S. Hood Street, Peru, Indiana 46970.

Legislative Update

continued from page 7

President Dennis Pierce thanked Brother Wilmesher and the BLET members in Colorado who played a role in lobbying to save the Southwest Chief for a job well done.

Train Conductor Wins Whistleblower Case

On May 7, the U.S. Department of Labor and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) ruled Wayne Laidler, a conductor based out of Port Huron, Michigan, for seven years, had been wrongfully fired by Canadian National Railway. The case, considered a whistleblower lawsuit, stems from Laidler being fired after he refused to exit his train to conduct an inspection of an oncoming train at a Flint, Michigan substation in December 2012.

Laidler argued that his train was stopped on a bridge on December 15, 2012, at 3 a.m. where it was very dark and foggy. He stated that there was no safe place for him to stand to inspect the oncoming train. He said his actions were questioned and, after saying it was unsafe for him to complete the inspection, he was terminated for not doing so.

According to the OSHA ruling, Laidler was correct in his claims that the conditions to perform the inspection were unsafe and determined that CN violated the Federal Railroad Safety Act, and has been ordered to reinstate Laidler with guaranteed pay and monetary compensation. He is to receive \$92,916 in lost wages plus interest, \$6,408 of lost vacation pay, \$45,000 for the emotional stress of being wrongfully terminated,

\$100,000 from Canadian National Railway in order to discourage repetitive behavior from CN, and an amount equal to his attorney's fees.

BLET Members Authorize Strike on SEPTA

BLET members working for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) voted to authorize a strike when a mandatory 30-day cooling off period under the Railway Labor Act ended on June 14, 2014. On that date, commuter rail service in the Philadelphia metropolitan area was shut down by the striking BLET and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) members. That same evening, President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order to appoint a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) to investigate contract disputes between SEPTA and over 400 of its workers represented by BLET and IBEW. The striking employees were ordered to return to work at 12:01 a.m. on June 15.

The recommendations of the PEB received last month by the unions were a disappointment to both the BLET and the IBEW, as evidenced by their joint statement:

"We are disappointed with the recommendations of the [presidential emergency board], particularly because the board, instead of directly addressing the economic analysis of the employees, simply sidestepped the core issue of this labor dispute. As we have been for the past five years, we are willing and prepared to meet with SEPTA to discuss a settlement that treats our members fairly and consistent with how they have treated their other 6,000 employees. The BLET and

IBEW remain committed to achieving that outcome and hope that, in light of the board's recommendations, SEPTA is, too."

BLET members ratify new contract at Metra

Over 96% of voting members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen ratified a new five-year collective bargaining agreement with Metra, the Northeast Illinois commuter rail system, on May 19. The agreement covers approximately 200 members and provides for five general wage increases and two retroactive payments totaling a compounded value of 21.2 percent over the life of the agreement, which runs through January 1, 2019. Members will also receive a \$3,000 signing bonus. Wage increases will become effective July 1, 2014, and include retroactive payments for affected employees to July 1, 2012.

The agreement also governs numerous work rules and employee health and welfare benefits. The BLET secured a 23.8 percent increase to the membership's deferred compensation plan, and Metra's contribution will increase to \$10.40 per member, per day, by the end of the agreement. Other improvements include a 38 percent increase in certification pay for locomotive engineers to \$18 per day. Also, members will now be allowed to bank personal leave days accumulated while working in other crafts prior to earning promotion to locomotive engineer.

Many thanks to the BLET National, the involved General Committee officers, and BLET's Metra membership who worked hard to negotiate this new contract that ensures that those members employed by Metra will continue receiving fair and equitable compensation.

Condolences . . .

Our hearts go out to the family and friends of Eric R. Bunch, a BNSF locomotive engineer and Local Chairman of BLET Division 75 (Kansas City, Mo.), who died unexpectedly of cardiac arrest on July 24, 2014. Eric was only 38 years old and left behind a wife and two sons, ages 8 and 10. Those interested in supporting the family with a card, gift, or donation, please send to: Community Bank of Missouri, 1400 Hospital Dr., Excelsior Springs, Missouri, 64024 (Make checks payable to: Eric Bunch Memorial).

Our hearts also go out to the families and friends of locomotive engineer Chance J. Gober, 41, a member of BLET Division 182 in North Little Rock, Arkansas, and Conductor Roderick A. Hayes, 31, a member of the SMART Transportation Division, who were both killed in the tragic UP train accident that occurred in the early morning hours on Sunday, August 17, in Hoxie, Arkansas. Locomotive engineer Michael S. Zompakos, 54, a member of BLET Division 182, and Conductor Aaron P. Jeffery, a member of the SMART Transportation Division, were injured in this collision.

MetLife Provides Grief and Loss Counseling Resources



BLET members covered by the MetLife Group Term Life portion of the Railroad Employees National Health and Welfare Plan (GA-23000) and the NRC/UTU Health and Welfare Plan (GA-690100), as well as their dependents and beneficiaries, are eligible for free grief counseling provided by Harris, Rothenberg International, Inc. (HRI). This valuable, confidential support can provide the comfort and guidance needed at the most difficult of times, whether it be a death, an illness, a divorce, receiving a serious medical diagnosis, the loss of a pet, or even the loss felt by a child leaving home. Those who are eligible may call a dedicated 24/7 toll-free number, 1-855-609-9989, to speak with a licensed professional counselor experienced in helping people who have suffered a loss. The plan covers up to five confidential counseling sessions per event. If further assistance is desired, the counselor can help clients access services that are appropriate to their situation, preferences, finances, and health insurance coverage. Sessions can either take place in-person or by phone.

Additional assistance from research specialists is also available at the same toll-free number at no cost. These specialists can refer services and providers as well as offer additional information, including help in locating local funeral homes and monument vendors; locating back-up care for children or older adults; finding specific types of support groups, e.g., children who have lost parents, survivors of suicide, dealing with grief, etc.; and finding storage facilities, estate sale planners, and charities that pick up donations. They can also provide information on important tasks such as notifying the Social Security Administration or the Railroad Retirement Board, as well as banks and utilities.

More information is available online at griefcounseling.harrisrothenberg.net/default.aspx (username: MetLife; password: grief), as well as a flyer from MetLife that can be downloaded and shared. The toll-free number is dedicated 24/7 toll-free number, 1-855-609-9989.

We welcome your submissions for our publication. Please send your stories, articles, photos, poems, etc., to:

Sereena Hogan, Editor & Publisher
BLET Auxiliary News
8720 N. Myrtle Drive
Tucson, Arizona 85704
520-297-0944 - vp3sereena@aol.com

The next issue will be published in December 2014. Please have your submissions to Sereena by Nov. 30.

Greetings from Editor Sereena Hogan

As the four-year term for our national officers comes to a close, it is with much anticipation that I await the many changes that will take place at the National Convention in late September and early October. These last four years have been very busy for all of us, and very productive as well. Under the leadership of President Anita Caruso, we have organized six new local auxiliaries and gained numerous new members-at-large, most of whom are spouses we have met at the regional conventions we attend. We have a number of local auxiliaries "in the works" and hope to see them come into being in the next year.

President Caruso has worked tirelessly to make sure that the Auxiliary continues to grow and fulfill its purpose of educating spouses and family members, as well as providing support to our members. Her organizational skills are beyond reproach and she has kept us all "on track" with regard to due dates and responsibilities. We are grateful that she will continue to offer her guidance and share her experience during the next four years in her capacity as Past National President.

I have very much enjoyed serving as National Legislative Representative for the Auxiliary for the last seven years. As mentioned by BLET National President Dennis Pierce in his statement issued on July 21, 2014, the legislative arena is one of the three avenues available to us by which we can protect the safety of our railroad employees and preserve the rights and benefits our union has fought hard to attain for us. We, as auxiliary members, must continue to keep ourselves informed about the legislative matters that affect our lives as railroad families, as well as the safety of the communities across the nation, and do what we can to make sure that we elect congressional leaders who will support our causes. As the November 4 date for voting in the mid-term elections grows closer, I encourage all of you to stay informed about the candidates and where they stand on the issues that affect us, and by all means get out and vote, and persuade your families and friends to get the polls as well.

Wishing you all a pleasant Autumn season filled with gratitude for all the blessings that have been bestowed upon us as union families.

Answers to Questions on Front Cover:

1. A "right to work" law is a state law that stops employers and employees from negotiating an agreement – also known as a union security clause – that requires all workers who receive the benefits of a collective bargaining agreement to pay their share of the costs of representing them. Right to Work laws say that unions must represent every eligible employee, whether he or she pays dues or not. In other words, "Right to Work" laws allow workers to pay nothing and still get all the benefits of union membership. (Minnesota AFL-CIO website)
2. True (refer to answer to Question No. 1)
3. Higher - by 36% (AFL-CIO, Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect, April 2012).
4. \$1,540.00 (Economic Policy Institute)
5. Right-to-work states spend less by \$2,76671 (National Education Association)

Thanks to the Summer 2014 International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Union Teaching Techniques III Class for creating this quiz as a training exercise and granting permission to print it in this publication.



BLET Auxiliary

Sereena Hogan, Publisher, BLET Auxiliary News
8720 N. Myrtle Drive
Tucson, AZ 85704-3340

Published at the above address regularly

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Tucson, AZ
Permit No. 2216

Return Service Requested

***Moving?** Please notify us of your new address*