



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 8, Number 3

Autumn 2017

Sereena Hogan, President • Susie Burrola, 1st Vice President • Helen Brand, Secretary • Terri Fleming, Treasurer
Kathleen Bisbikis, 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Representative • www.bletauxiliary.net

National Convention

By Sereena Hogan, National President

The Fourth National BLET Convention is scheduled to be held September 30 - October 5, 2018, at the Rio Hotel & Convention Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Auxiliary National Convention is held in tandem with the BLET Convention at the same location. Each local auxiliary in good standing (up-to-date with all dues and fees), and having a minimum of eight active members, is eligible to send one of its members or officers to the National Convention to represent them. For each eligible auxiliary, a Convention Delegate and an Alternate Delegate must be elected no later than the end of this year. The Alternate Delegate will attend the convention in the event that the elected Delegate is unable to attend for any reason. The National Auxiliary will issue official credentials for the delegates prior to the convention, and travel and lodging expenses will be reimbursed at the conclusion of the meetings, as outlined in the National Bylaws, Article IV, Section 2, Expense Reimbursement, on page 14.

All Convention Delegates and National Officers are required to attend all meetings during the convention and are responsible for reviewing all information forwarded to them from the National Auxiliary prior to the convention. To learn more about the duties of the Convention Delegates, please refer to the National Bylaws, Article IV, Representation, on page 13. If an auxiliary is eligible but unable to send a delegate to the Convention, a proxy will be appointed to represent that auxiliary.

Resolutions reflecting requested changes to the Constitution & Bylaws are submitted by local auxiliaries, members-at-large, and the national officers prior to the Convention. During the Convention, these resolutions are considered and voted upon. Those that are passed by the delegates are enacted. After the Convention, the National Constitution and Bylaws are updated with these revisions.

All resolutions must be submitted to the National President sixty days prior to the opening of the General Session of the National Convention. For the 2018 Convention, the deadline for submitting resolutions is August 2, 2018. All members are encouraged to read through the Constitution and Bylaws and offer ideas and changes to help move our organization forward into the future. The current Constitution & Bylaws can be found on our website, www.bletauxiliary.net. Please take time to think about how your Auxiliary works and examine the existing bylaws to evaluate if the bylaw provisions now

ATTENTION LOCAL AUXILIARIES!

Elections for officers of local auxiliaries are held every two years at the last meeting of the calendar year. Some auxiliaries will conduct elections in 2017; however others may not be electing new local officers until next year. Either way, each local auxiliary in good standing (up-to-date with all dues and fees), and having a minimum of eight active members, must elect a Convention Delegate and an Alternate Delegate for the National Convention, to be held in Las Vegas, Sept. 30 - Oct. 5, 2018.



in place either stifle growth or omit rules that would benefit how the Auxiliary conducts business between conventions.

Numerous changes are made at each National Convention. Some of the major changes implemented during the 2014 Convention included: (1) Membership requirement for application to the Auxiliary Scholarship Program and the Care and Assistance Program was reduced from two years to one year; and (2) Excluding the positions of National Secretary and National Treasurer, term limits for national officers were revised, allowing a national officer to serve in the same elected office for two four-year terms, or eight years.

Each of the current national officers will give a report of her activities and accomplishments since the last National Convention in 2014. Election of new national officers will also take place during the Convention. If you are considering running for a position, please let us know.

In order to adjust to an ever-changing culture, the Auxiliary has made substantive changes from the time it was first founded, in 1887. Our bylaws must continue to be modified and fine-tuned at every convention if we are to continue to grow and adapt to the needs and aspirations of our present and future membership.

Look for more information about the details of the National Convention in future issues of this publication. The National Auxiliary Executive Council feels it is important for everyone to start thinking about the process now.

From the President - BY SEREENA HOGAN



Greetings Everyone! It was great to see so many of you at the Eastern Regional Meeting in Myrtle Beach this summer. I was unable to make it to San Antonio for the Western Convention in June as our granddaughter Kamiel was graduating from high school in Colorado during that time and we very much wanted to be there for her special day. She has since moved back to Tucson and we are so happy to have her here with us again!

Thank you to our 2nd Vice President Kathleen Bisbikis for all the hard work you did for us to secure some great raffle prizes for this year's regional conventions, and to our National Secretary Helen Brand for making some beautiful cloth purses for the Myrtle Beach raffle - they were very popular! We are so grateful to all of the vendors, organizations, and individuals who responded to Kathleen's requests for donated items. The fundraiser raffles and Mulligan sales were highly successful! And thank you to all of our national officers who were able to attend both conventions. We are grateful to all at the BLET National who worked hard to plan, prepare, and put on two excellent conventions! These meetings are invaluable opportunities to find out what is going on with the union and get the latest information about benefits and other matters of importance to BLET members and their families. They also include options for fellowship with other members and their families, entertainment, fun, and relaxation.

Next year's Western Convention will be held in Monterey, California, June 18-22, and the Eastern Convention will be held in Washington, D.C., August 13-17. All BLET members, Auxiliary members, and their families are encouraged to attend. Mark your calendars now! More details will be forthcoming.

As we look ahead to the National Convention, scheduled for next September 30 - October 5, 2018, in Las Vegas, please be aware that we must begin to prepare now for that event. As explained on the front page, local auxiliaries must elect a Convention Delegate and Alternate Delegate by the end of this year.

Please take notice of the article on Page 9, submitted by Cami Price, daughter of Ohio State Legislative Board

Chairman Tim Price, and recipient of this year's Leona A. Louis Memorial Scholarship. Enthusiastic and involved young adults like Cami give us hope for a bright future! Thanks Cami!

Although there is no before-hand communication or coordination of those who contribute articles to this publication, a theme seemed to emerge in most of the submissions for this issue: *Solidarity, and Protection of the Rights and Benefits that our union brothers and sisters have secured for us through the years.* Perhaps this is due to the recent communications disseminated by BLET National President Dennis Pierce in his letters to the membership, articles in BLET publications, and his speeches at the opening ceremonies for the regional conventions. He and some of the other BLET national officers have inspired us all to think about all that we have to be grateful for as a result of union membership and how much of it is at stake right now with what is happening politically in our country.

As this edition goes to print, we are urging our members and their families to call the offices of certain Senators to ask them to vote against the most recent attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. This bill, known as the "Graham-Cassidy Plan" is an even more damaging draft of so-called "Trumpcare" than the previous ones that have failed. Fast-track efforts have been put into play by those Senators who are pushing for passage of this legislation. They have until September 30 to pass this bill without the 60 votes they would normally need, and because they know this plan is so harmful and is already incredibly unpopular, they are recklessly rushing to a vote in less than two weeks. Amongst other provisions that are damaging to millions of Americans, one provision of this bill calls for a 40 percent excise tax, known as the "Cadillac Tax," on high quality health care plans such as the ones in which railroad families across the nation are enrolled. Hopefully enough of us will make our voices heard to have an effect on stopping the passage of this bill.

The next issue of this publication will be published in December. On that note, I wish each and every one of you a very Happy Thanksgiving!

Sereena Hogan, National President
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Tucson, Arizona 85704
520-297-0944, vp3sereena@aol.com

Western Regional Meeting - San Antonio, Texas

By Jodi Wallace

Alternate National Treasurer

San Antonio served as the host city for this year's Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen's annual Western Regional meeting, June 5-9, 2017. The meeting was held at the beautiful Hyatt Regency San Antonio Riverwalk.

Monday was registration day, giving everyone the ability to explore the amazing and historic San Antonio, Texas, and visit with all of the vendors. Monday evening was the Welcome Reception.

Over 330 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and their families were in attendance on Tuesday, June 6, for the opening ceremonies of the BLET Western Regional Meeting. The Air Force Color Guard presented the flag ceremony, followed by BLET National President Dennis Pierce's opening remarks in which he reminded us that we need to focus on solidarity, now and in the times to come. We had two guest speakers from the San Antonio area Julian Castro the former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and Linda Chavez-Thompson the former executive vice president of the AFL-CIO, and the Democratic nominee for Lieutenant Governor of Texas in the 2010 election.

In the absence of National President Sereena Hogan, I had been asked to make a speech on behalf of Auxiliary. In my speech, I

spoke about how the BLET and the BLET Auxiliary work hand-in-hand to help make the union a better organization, and how we need to keep on fighting together.

BLET National Vice President Gil Gore spoke about the benefits of belonging to a Union and the importance of mentoring the younger members to become leaders.

Walt Barrows, Labor Member from the Railroad Retirement Board, discussed the health of the Railroad Retirement Fund and the importance of protecting it in the future.

After lunch, BLET members attended a closed meeting and the Auxiliary held our open meeting. We had a great turnout for the meeting which featured guest speakers from BRCF, LECMPA, United Healthcare, and Railroad Retirement. It was so beneficial to all of us to learn from these different providers about what they do to help our BLET members. Then we talked about what the Auxiliary does, as an organization, to help out the BLET members. We had a few new members join as members-at-large, and some spouses who wanted to start a new charter in their area. We concluded the meeting with a door prize gift exchange game with prizes

for everyone who attended. All in all, it was a great meeting.

Wednesday was family day and golf day. Thank you so much to William Wallace and Helen and Charlie Brand for venturing out at 6:00 a.m. to travel to the golf course and sell Mulligans to the players. And



a big thank you to all the golfers who bought Mulligans from them. Those who did not golf had the day to explore San Antonio. Many of us took a cruise on the San Antonio River, enjoyed the infamous Riverwalk, and explored the Alamo.

Thursday was a day of training classes for BLET members. We concluded sales of raffle tickets and drew the winners of the raffle prizes. Many thanks to everyone who bought raffle tickets from us; we hope you love the prizes that you won. Thursday evening was the banquet dinner where we enjoyed great food while a DJ played some tunes for us. We drew the winner of the 50/50 raffle at the banquet. Thank you to all who bought tickets for that raffle as well. Cash always makes for a popular raffle prize!

Friday was travel day home. San Antonio was a great time with great friends, new and old. I cannot wait to see everyone at the 2018 Regional Meeting that will be held in Monterey, California, June 18-22.



Tidbits from National Secretary Helen Brand

I've heard many say that time seems to pass more quickly as we age. I, for one, can agree. As a full-time grandmother, keeping up with the grandkids' school activities is intense, and I find myself wondering how I did this thirty years ago while raising my kids and having a husband working a through-freight pool. But then I think back to the support I received from my local auxiliary sisters. They were available at the touch of a phone and willing to do whatever was needed. We were a true team - together - helping each other. And we were always working together in other ways as well ... making phone calls and writing letters to our Congressional representatives urging them to protect our spouse's rights and maintain safety in their workplace.

And that brings us to the events of today. While the White House administration is being hammered about Russian election interference, firing this person and then another, the thing that we all need to keep our eye on is what is happening behind all the smoke and mirrors. There are many things that affect our daily lives that are being pushed through and signed, hidden behind the headlines. These are things that can affect our lives, now or at some point in the future, whether it be our health insurance, retirement, or any number of things. We must stay vigilant and on top of our situation. It's not always easy to do while juggling a family, a job, and dealing with railroad life, but it is a must.

Our National Legislative Representative Kathleen Bisbikis gives us an update in each issue of the newsletter on those topics on which we need to focus our attention. We have recently had an increased interest from spouses wanting to join the Auxiliary and we hear from them that they are concerned about many things happening within the railroad industry. This is where we, as auxiliary members, can make a difference. We know that because of their work schedules, our engineers and trainmen oftentimes are not able to keep up with all the issues, but it is imperative that we stay informed and ever vigilant to in order to protect our spouses and keep our benefits viable for future generations.

I would like to welcome all the new members. It is with joy that I see hope for fighting the carriers' continued degradation of the railroad employees. It is not without much effort that the benefits that we fought for many years ago are continuing to pay off in health care, retirement benefits, etc.

As the evenings become a little more crisp here in Kansas, this retired Midwesterner is well aware that fall will soon turn to winter, and with that comes Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the coming of a new year. With each new year comes the hope and excitement of better things for the future.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Elizabeth McDonald, Shelburn, IN, Member-at-Large

Elesa McDonald, Jasonville, IN, Member-at-Large

Myrna Rodriguez, Brackettville, TX, Member-at-Large

Julia Young-EL, Washington, DC, Associate Member-at-Large

Shawna Mueller, Mankato, MN, Member-at-Large

Erica Hill, Galloway, NJ, Member-at-Large

Herbert Harris, Jr., Washington, DC, Associate Member-at-Large

Cricket Krengel, Pendleton, IN, Member-at-Large

Abigail Caswell, Friendswood, TX, Member-at-Large

Annual Report packets with year-end reports and dues notices will be mailed to local auxiliary secretaries December 1, 2017. Dues notices for members-at-large will be mailed January 1, 2018. Your prompt response will be appreciated.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the LECMPA and BLET Auxiliary scholarship winners. We know you will be successful!



Helen Brand can be reached by phone at 913-256-2741, by mail at 38768 Crescent Hill Road, Osawatomie, Kansas, 66064, or by e-mail at hybrand51@gmail.com.

If I can answer any questions for you, give me a call or send me an e-mail and I will get back to you as soon as I can!!

— Helen

Eastern Regional Meeting - Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

*By Kathleen Bisbikis, National 2nd Vice President/
National Legislative Representative*

Myrtle Beach's beautiful grand strand coastline served as the backdrop for this year's Eastern Regional Meeting, August 14 -18, at the Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort. The hotel was just a few minutes' drive into the town of Myrtle Beach, which provided lots of great places to enjoy the east coast seafood and southern hospitality.

Events began on Monday with registration and an evening reception. Tuesday was the official start of the meetings with opening ceremonies. The South Carolina Color Guard presented the colors, followed by the National Anthem accompanied by a beautiful slide show. President Dennis Pierce spoke to everyone in attendance, reminding us all of the importance of solidarity during this trying time in our country. His speeches are always motivational and help us all to remember the importance of fighting to keep our union strong.

Following President Pierce's speech, a slide show was shown in remembrance of all our brothers and sisters who have lost their lives while on the job. This presentation is a somber reminder of the dangers of working on the railroad. Following a brief break, guest speaker and U.S. Representative of South Carolina James E. Clyburn gave a very moving talk reminding all of us that "we are that somebody" when a job needs to get done. The stories he shared with everyone were not only entertaining, but they also carried the important message that we can't wait for someone else to do what needs to get done; it is up to each of us to take action.

International Brotherhood of Teamsters Vice President Sean O'Brien spoke next, reassuring us that we are not in this fight by ourselves; we have the strength and backing of the entire Teamster family. Our very own BLET Auxiliary President Sereena Hogan gave an informative speech with a brief history of the Auxiliary and an extended invitation to everyone who would like to come to attend our meeting later that afternoon. Gary Best, CSX General Chairman from South Carolina, then shared some funny and entertaining stories about his friend BLET Vice President Gil Gore. Vice President Gore spoke next, sharing with us funny stories of where he started with the railroad career and how, after many years served, he will be retiring in the not-too-far-off future. The last speaker of the day was Walt Barrows, Labor Member of the Railroad Retirement Board. Walt shared the hardships and frustrations, and resulting long wait time for claims processing, that are currently taking place at the Railroad Retirement Board due to financial cutbacks.

Tuesday afternoon, we held our auxiliary meeting, which is always open to all spouses in attendance. Sereena Hogan, Susie Burrola, and I spoke to all in attendance about the benefits of belonging to a local auxiliary or joining as a member-at-large. Several guest speakers joined us, including representatives from Cornerstone, United Healthcare, and BRCF. We concluded with a fun game and each person in attendance left with a lovely gift. We appreciate all those who take time to attend our meetings at the regional conventions.

Wednesday morning started early with buses leaving at 6:30 am for the golf course. Lawana and Mike Poss, along with my husband Jason and I, traveled to the golf course



Benefits Consultant Ryan Crow, Cornerstone Benefits Management Co., presented an overview of products and services offered by Cornerstone at the Auxiliary Meeting.

to sell Mulligans to the golfers as a fundraiser for the Auxiliary Scholarship Program. The rest of the day was open for attendees and guests to relax and enjoy the resort and surrounding area.

Local Chairman, Secretary/Treasurer, and Legislative Representative Workshops were held all day on Thursday, followed by a cocktail reception and banquet.

Throughout the entire time in Myrtle Beach, the National Auxiliary had a table set up in the vendor area where we sold raffle tickets for raffle prizes and the 50/50 raffle, as well as shirts and other donated items. We also had available information about auxiliary membership. We are very grateful to everyone who stopped by and bought tickets, inquired about and/or joined our organization, or just wanted to chit-chat.

Many thanks also to those individuals and companies who donated items for our raffle. Because of everyone's generosity, we can continue our work on behalf of BLET members and their families, and our ongoing scholarship program.



George Petri was the winner of the 50/50 Raffle. Thanks to Addie and Colten Fink for assisting with the drawing.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

BY KATHLEEN BISBIKIS, NATIONAL 2ND VICE PRESIDENT/ NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE



“Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.”

—John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Amtrak 188 Wreck Engineer Cleared of Criminal Charges

Judge Thomas Gehret dismissed all charges against Amtrak engineer Brandon Bostian, who was blamed in the train derailment that killed eight people and injured hundreds near Philadelphia in 2015. Judge Gehret called the crash “more likely an accident than criminal negligence” in dismissing the charges. The train was traveling at a speed near 106 mph while heading into a curve when the accident happened.

The Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office at first refused to pursue a criminal case against him. “We have no evidence that the engineer acted with criminal ‘intent’ or criminal ‘knowledge,’” the DA said in a statement at the time. “Nor do we believe there is sufficient evidence to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, criminal recklessness.

Pennsylvania law specially states that one acts with criminal recklessness when a person ‘consciously disregards a substantial and unjustifiable risk.’ We do not have evidence sufficient to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the engineer ‘consciously’ disregarded the risk.’

The National Transportation Safety Board concluded that Bostian lost track of where 188 was because he was distracted by an incident with a nearby SEPTA commuter train. The NTSB found no evidence that Bostian was impaired or using a cell phone.

Teamsters Offer Disaster Relief Assistance to Members in Florida and Texas

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters is offering assistance to those members living in Florida and Texas after Hurricane Harvey and Irma damaged homes and property over the last several weeks.

If you live in an affected area and need assistance, please go to the BLET website to download “Request for help” forms and to check which counties are eligible to apply. For questions, contact the Teamsters Disaster Relief Fund office at (202) 624-8971.

NTSB Wants All Transit Vehicles Equipped with Inward & Outward Facing Cameras

From NTSB Press Release August 31, 2017: The National

Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued three safety recommendations [on Aug. 31], calling upon the industry to install crash-resistant inward- and outward-facing cameras in all rail transit vehicles, saying the cameras would greatly aid in crash investigations.

The recommendations, issued to the Federal Transit Administration and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, call for recorders with a minimum of 12-hour continuous-recording capability that can verify crew actions and train operating conditions. The NTSB says the recorders must be easily accessible to review, with appropriate limitations on public release, for accident investigation, and as a tool to improve operational safety.

“These devices, which are becoming cheaper and more reliable, are critical tools in our investigations,” said NTSB Chairman Robert L. Sumwalt. “In 47 of the 64 rail transit accidents the NTSB investigated between 1976 and 2015, audio and image recorders would have greatly helped in learning what happened by documenting and preserving data describing the actions and conditions leading to an accident.”

The NTSB is currently investigating a Feb. 21, 2017 accident in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, where a SEPTA train collided with the rear of a second SEPTA train stopped on a loop track near the

69th Street station. The train was not equipped with forward-facing cameras, nor audio or image recorders in the operating cab. In a post-accident interview, the operator of the striking train said he could not remember his actions immediately prior to the collision. The NTSB-recommended recorders would have documented the operator’s actions, providing investigators valuable insights as to how and why the crash happened.

BLET Announces New Benefits to Members

From BLET Newsflash September 6, 2017: The BLET has announced the availability of three new, optional, member-owned benefits available to all active BLET members. These benefits include Universal Life Insurance with Long-Term Care (LTC) benefits underwritten by Trustmark Insurance Company as well as Group Accident Insurance and Group Critical Illness Insurance underwritten by Aflac. These new insurance offerings are intended to help members build financial protection for their families through affordable voluntary benefits.

Active BLET members can enroll in the Universal Life Insurance with Long Term Care benefits at any time, and there are only two simple medical questions to answer.

Active BLET members can also enroll in the Group Accident, and Group Critical Illness plans with

Aflac during the open enrollment, which is open now through December 14, 2017. Those who enroll during the open enrollment cannot be declined and are guaranteed issue with no health questions asked.

These benefits will be administered and serviced by Cornerstone Benefits Management of Lake Barrington, Ill. Active BLET members are advised to be on the lookout for an informational packet being mailed to them at their home address, and all members are encouraged to call Cornerstone at (847) 387-3555 to ask questions or to enroll.

"The BLET is committed to offering our members the very best benefits available in the industry," BLET National President Dennis Pierce said. "Whether the need is to offset out of pocket costs associated with major medical bills, pay off current bills and debt, cover funeral expenses, send children to college, or use living benefits for long-term care, these new benefits will serve to provide our members with options that will give them greater peace of mind and financial stability."

Missouri Right to Work Repeal Referendum

In February, Missouri Governor Eric Greitens signed into law a Right to Work bill without the voice of the people of the state being heard. The "Show Me" state has been fighting back ever since. Voters want a repeal referendum put on the ballot in November 2018. To have that opportunity, supporters of the referendum needed to collect

107,510 signatures in six of the eight congressional districts. In August, crowds gathered at the state capital as representatives delivered 163 boxes filled with 57,277 pages of names. A total of 310,567 signatures were collected, by far passing what was required.

"We've come together and put in countless hours gathering signatures from voters at festivals, community events, door-to-door canvasses, parades—you name it," said Bobby Dicken, an electrician from Butler County. "These folks who've signed the petition want their voices to be heard—they want voters—not politicians—to make the final decision on whether so-called right to work becomes law in Missouri."

"I think the people have spoken and they are not all union people. This is democracy in action," said Rep. Doug Beck, D-Afton, who is a union pipefitter. "Working families have to remain vigilant in the fight to protect workers' right to bargain collectively. Gov. Greitens should consider himself on notice when it comes to unions and protecting the middle class. The fight has only just begun," said Philip Gruber, General Vice President of the Machinists' Midwest territory.

Operation Lifesaver introduces Rail Safety Week September 24-30, 2017

Washington, D.C. (September 13, 2017) – As the first U.S. Rail Safety Week (RSW), September 24-30, approaches, Operation Lifesaver President and CEO Bonnie Murphy previewed the

event's planned activities, key sponsors, and information on how potential participants can learn more. The goal of RSW is to raise awareness for pedestrians and drivers on ways they can keep themselves safe around railroad tracks and at highway-rail grade crossings.

Preliminary government data for 2016 show 1,104 people were killed or injured in vehicle-train collisions, and that an additional 980 people were injured or killed while walking on or near railroad tracks.

"We are grateful for the positive response from our rail safety partners across the U.S. as activities for Rail Safety Week have been planned," said Murphy. "We look forward to a successful RSW, with the help of our partners in law enforcement, federal, state and local government, the rail industry, and other community safety advocates."

Rail Safety Week will include radio and digital public service advertising campaigns, along with a number of local activities in states across the country, Murphy said. Rail Safety Week is supported by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), state Operation Lifesaver programs, the Association of American Railroads (AAR), freight railroads, Amtrak, and other safety partners.

National Transportation Safety Board Swears In New Chairman

Robert L. Sumwalt, III was sworn in on August 10, 2017, as the

new chairman of the NTSB. Sumwalt's nomination came from President Trump and was confirmed by the Senate on August 3, 2017. Sumwalt has been serving as acting chairman since March.

"The NTSB is commemorating 50 years of making transportation safer yesterday, today, and tomorrow, and I am humbled and honored to have the privilege of guiding the dedicated men and women of the NTSB as we take on the challenges of transportation safety in the 21st Century," said Chairman Sumwalt. "Transportation technologies continue to advance, and the NTSB must continue to increase the breadth and depth of our knowledge and understanding of transportation innovations such as autonomous vehicles, intelligent infrastructure, commercial space transportation, hyper-speed rail, solar-powered planes, and new recording technologies. That knowledge enables us to craft safety recommendations that leverage technology to prevent accidents and save lives."

Before joining the NTSB in 2006, Sumwalt was a pilot for 32 years.

Kathleen Bisbikis can be reached by phone at; 209-786-7367, by mail at 7367 Stabulis Rd., Valley Springs, California, 95252, or by e-mail at biz4413@gmail.com.

BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Awards for School Year 2017-2018

Congratulations to all of our scholarship winners. We wish you all the best in the year ahead as you pursue your goals for a successful future!

LECMPA \$2500 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS:



JENNIFER ANDERSON

Will be attending Brigham Young University as a Senior. Her father, Mark Anderson, is a member of BLET Div. 333, and her mother, Nancy Anderson, is an Auxiliary member-at-large.



KAYLEE JEAN POTTHOFF

Will be attending the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, as a Senior. Her father, Kevin Potthoff, is a member of BLET Div. 623, and her mother, Tami Potthoff, is a member of Auxiliary 623, in McCook, NE.



KARMA JADE UNDERWOOD

Will be attending Boise State University as a Senior. Her father, Jim Underwood, is a member of BLET Div. 228, and her mother, Lori Underwood, is an Auxiliary member-at-large.



TUCKER WALLACE

Will be attending The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, as a Junior. His father, William Wallace, is a member of BLET Div. 362, and his mother, Jodi Wallace, is a member-at-large, and Alternate National Treasurer, BLET Auxiliary.

LEONA A. LOUIS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP, \$1000



CAMI PRICE

Will be attending Lake Erie College, in Painesville, Ohio, as a Freshman. Her father, Timothy Price, is a member of BLET Div. 607, and her mother, Tetianna Ruggles Price, is a member-at-large.

JOHN & BRENDA CASTEEL SCHOLARSHIP, \$1000

RACHEL McWILLIAMS

Will be attending Fresno State University for her second year as a graduate student. Her father, Robby McWilliams, is a member of BLET Div. 126, and her mother, Kathy McWilliams, is an Auxiliary member-at-large.



AUXILIARY \$1000 SCHOLARSHIPS:

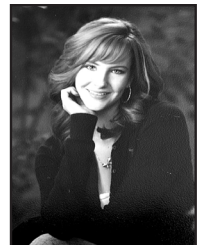
MARIAH BURROLA

Will be attending Arizona State University as a Senior. Her father, Oscar Burrola, is a member of BLET Div. 839, and her mother, Susie Burrola, is a member of Auxiliary 39 in Richmond/Stockton, CA, and National 1st Vice President, BLET Auxiliary.



ANNE MARGARET CHENCHAR

Will be attending the University of Wyoming as a Senior. Her father, Mark Francis Chenchar, is a member of BLET Div. 115, and her mother, Marta Chenchar, is a member-at-large.



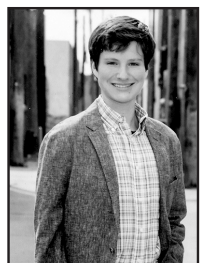
JONATHAN REED CHENCHAR

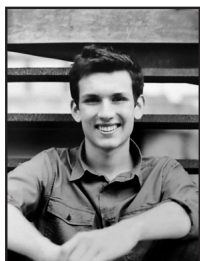
Will be attending the University of Wyoming as a Junior. His father, Mark Francis Chenchar, is a member of BLET Div. 115, and his mother, Marta Chenchar, is a member-at-large.



WILLIAM CHENCHAR

Will be attending the University of Wyoming as a Freshman. His father, Mark Francis Chenchar, is a member of BLET Div. 115, and his mother, Marta Chenchar, is a member-at-large.

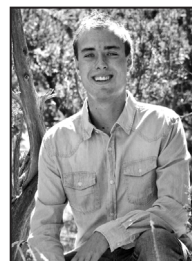


**MICHAEL CORDES**

Will be attending the University of Washington as a Senior. His father, Scott Cordes, is a member of BLET Div. 758, and his mother, Janet Cordes, is a member of Fort Vancouver Auxiliary No. 72 in Vancouver, WA.

DILLON MARTIN

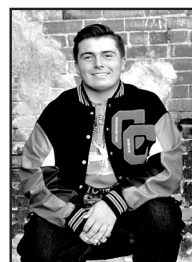
Will be attending Colorado State University Pueblo, in Pueblo, Colorado, as a Junior. His father, Troy Martin, is a member of BLET Div. 430, and his mother, Lisa Martin, is an Auxiliary member-at-large.

**ZOEY HALL**

Will be attending Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, as a Freshman. Her father, Michael Hall, is a member of BLET Div. 88, and her mother is a member of Auxiliary 8 in North Platte, NE.

BRENDEN LEE RUNION

Will be attending the University of Wyoming as a Freshman. His father, Cory Runion, is a member of BLET Div. 115, and his mother, Jackie Runion, is an Auxiliary member-at-large.



Scholarship Recipient Lobbies on Capitol Hill for BLET and Teamsters - By Cami Price

On July 27, 2017, my father, Tim Price, who is the Chairman of the BLET State Legislative Board in Ohio, and I went to Washington, D.C., to Lobby on Capitol Hill for the BLET and Teamsters. Upon our arrival, a class was being taught to BLET legislative representatives from around the country on how to lobby. For many of them, it would be their first time to visit the D.C. offices of their elected officials. The BLET was able to bring in a few great guest speakers, including Don Young (R-AK), who spoke about the world of politics, not only in Washington, D.C., but also in his home state of Alaska. After Congressman Young's presentation, BLET Vice President John Tolman informed everyone that we would be lobbying primarily for H.R. 233, which is the bill requiring two persons on the head end of a train.



Cami Price and Ohio State Senator Kenny Yuko at a fundraising dinner for the Democratic Senator

The next day, everyone got into small groups and we were given our lobbying assignments and locations. My group consisted of BLET members from Ohio and Missouri. The staff from the BLET Legislative Office did an amazing job organizing and scheduling over one-hundred appointments for the class participants that day! My favorite part of the day was meeting congressman David Joyce (R-OH), who is the representative for my district in Ohio. By the end of the day, we had walked over ten miles in dress shoes promoting the message of safe trains and safe trucks to elected officials in Washington.

I cannot begin to express to the BLET how thankful I was to have this opportunity to lobby on behalf of the million-plus hard-working BLET and Teamsters members. It was such an honor! One cannot truly describe what it feels like to be walking the Halls of Congress with so much history in them. This trip solidified my decision to make political science part of my college career.

New accidental death and dismemberment insurance benefits provided by BLET

On June 30, 2017, the BLET National Division published a Newsflash announcing that, as of June 1, they now provide all active and retired members with an Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) benefit at no cost to the member. This benefit is provided through Berkley Accident and Health Insurance Company, a top-rated insurer with an AM Best Financial Strength Rating of A+ (Superior), and is being administered by Cornerstone Benefits Management (Cornerstone). As of July 1, 2017, the \$4,000 AD&D policy previously provided by the BLET, through American Income Life (AIL), has been terminated.

The AD&D benefit remains \$4,000 for every active and retired member. A beneficiary designation card has been mailed to all members. Completing and returning the beneficiary designation will not result in any contact from Cornerstone, unless additional information is requested.

In addition to the \$4,000 AD&D benefit, the BLET and Cornerstone are currently working to create a new suite of voluntary insurance products. These additional products are being created by the BLET to give active, dues paying members and their families an affordable way to minimize the financial hardship often resulting from an accident, illness or loss of a loved one. These additional benefits will be available strictly on a voluntary basis to all active members and there is no obligation to purchase them.

For more information on the policy or how to submit an AD&D claim, call Cornerstone at (847) 387-3555 or e-mail info@uniondisability.com.

Meet Angela Pullekines, Manager, Member Relations UnitedHealthcare, Railroad Accounts

Angela Pullekines (Angie) joined UnitedHealthcare in March 2017 as Manager, Member Relations, and is focused exclusively on the National Railroad Accounts membership in all Railroad Plans and Policies. She is responsible for coordinating and representing UnitedHealthcare at all labor meetings and Railroad Benefits Fairs to assure members have a solid understanding of their current benefits and to explain any benefit changes for actively working Railroad employees and retirees. She is also responsible for assisting members approaching retirement to explain their medical coverage options and the process they need to follow to assure they get the most from their retirement benefits.



Although Angela is new to UnitedHealthcare, she has worked with the membership of the National Railroad Plans for the past seven years to help them understand their benefits. She has experience working in member service centers and has extensive knowledge about Medicare programs and how Medicare coordinates with other coverages.

Prior to joining UnitedHealthcare, Angie worked as a Member Sales Strategist at Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, conducting member benefit meetings across all lines of business and for several union groups.

Looking Back at Our History as we Celebrate 130 Years

By Sereena Hogan, National President

The following is a continuation of the timeline outlined by Sister Marcella Hackett in her article, "Helpmate for 75 Years," that appeared in the souvenir program for the BLE Centennial/GIA Diamond Jubilee celebration held in Detroit, Michigan, in May 1963.

The article that appeared in the Summer edition of this publication left off with the changes that occurred at the Convention held in 1908, at which time the membership roster totaled 15,387.

At the Convention held in 1912, a recommendation by the Ritual Committee that the rituals be changed no more often than every twelve years became law. The members also made the decision to meet once every three years instead of two, as a result of the BLE'S decision to hold their conventions triennially in Cleveland, Ohio.

At the First Triennial Convention, held in 1915, the Grand Chaplain of the Auxiliary, Sister G.E. Goodwin, announced: "Our order has been blessed with unprecedented prosperity and a membership of over 24,000; we should be a tower of strength and power for good . . . may the tie that binds

continue to grow ever stronger until we shall all be united in one grand sisterhood where charity, truth, and loving kindness will ever abide." The Grand Secretary announced that the GIA treasury contained nearly \$70,000 and that these funds could be used to help any of the members in need.

At the Second Triennial Convention, in 1918, Grand President, Sister Mary Cassell, stated that, "Never in the history of the order has there been such a period of unrest. Rents and living costs are soaring and it has been hard for small divisions to meet the demands . . . our different charities, however, have sent cheer in every direction." A motion was passed for the Grand Division, through Division One, to place flowers on the grave of Sister Letitia Murdock, who passed away in 1919. This was done for many years thereafter. Sister Murdock served as Grand President from 1887 - 1919.

At the Convention held six years later, in 1924, a law was amended permitting those who have no beneficiary to leave their insurance to the GIA Orphans Pension Fund. A fund was started to care for the aged and indigent members who have no home and no one to care for them. Also, a motion was passed to increase the age for keeping



These GIA sisters offered their services to help out at the celebration of the BLE's 100th anniversary and the GIA's 75th Anniversary in 1963.

children on the orphans pension fund from the age of 16 to 17.

In 1933, as the Seventh Triennial Convention was in session, depression was rampant throughout the world. Newly elected Grand President Ella D. Turner stated: "We must bear our losses. We have not lessened our charity work and no extra assessments have been made on our members."

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Greetings from your Editor Susie Burrola, 1st Vice President

Attending the Eastern Regional Meeting in Myrtle Beach reminded me why I am grateful to be a part of the Auxiliary. President Pierce's speech stressed the importance of unity. He stated that we may not all get along all of the time, and

it's okay to disagree, but at the end of the day we all need to come together to protect and preserve the history and benefits of our union.

Like many people, I too am guilty of sometimes becoming complacent or comfortable with how things are until something drastic happens. When politicians start cutting programs such as Social Security and Medicare, attacking Railroad Retirement, and supporting national right-to-work laws, the benefits that we and our forefathers (and sisters) fought for over decades are at stake. Union wages and benefits were never a "given;" they have been negotiated by our union officers through collective bargaining and/or generated from legislation that our officers and members have worked hard to push through Congress.

Railroaders lose out on so much personal and family time during their careers; they do not need to give up any of their benefits or wages that are the very things that make the sacrifices worthwhile. Please take the time and interest to get involved with your union or auxiliary. Learn about what is going on and how you can help. You may not think you have enough time, but when your livelihood, and that of your family, is on the line, you must find the time!

As a parent and a grandparent, I look back and can't believe how time flies. Your parents warn you, but as a teen or young adult, time has no value. Now I wish I could have that time back. I believe we all have wished that at one time in our lives. Let's not go another day just being comfortable with the status quo. Let's stand together and protect what we have earned.

We need to stay abreast of what is going on across the country with all unions, not just our own, and what is happening to the middle class. The fallout from the hurricanes in Texas and Florida have once

again reminded us as a nation what can be accomplished when we forget about our religious, social, and ethnic differences, and work together for the good of all. We need to get back to what our great country was made of—helping one another, not only when tragedy hits, but all the time. That's what makes America great—not building walls and tightening immigration. Working men and women built this great country together and we must stand together now as Americans, and as union brothers and sister, to maintain all that we have.

Looking Back at Our History... cont'd from Page 4

In 1947, the GIA official flag, which had been designed and presented by Sister Kirby, was accepted.

Ten years later, in October 1957, the 70th Anniversary was celebrated in Chicago. The only living grand charter member at that time was Alice Manning, of Division One. Grand President Emily Denny praised the pioneer members "who gave us a firm footing." She went on to say that, down through the years, had come great joys and great sorrows to the GIA women who banded together for their "mutual protection and in the interest of our loved ones in the BLE."

Sister Hackett's article goes on to say that the Auxiliary, through its dedicated, steadfast women, has made the world a brighter place by comforting its needy widows and orphans and by bringing together thousands of wives of BLE members in a bond of fraternal security.

The GIA Constitution of 1963 explained its purpose as follows: "Its aims and purposes shall be to dispense charity to its widows, aged dependent sisters, and orphans, render assistance in time of affliction or trouble, and to promote fraternal love and sociability within the families of its members" The purpose of our organization in our current Constitution is a little more comprehensive, but very similar: "The overall purpose . . . shall be: to provide support and promote issues that affect the health, safety, welfare, and quality of life of railroaders and their families; to promote higher education within the families of its full members; to give assistance to widows, widowers, sisters and brothers when needed, especially during times of duress; and to render assistance whenever and wherever needed to further our mission."

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

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vp3sereena@aol.com

The next issue will be published in December 2017. Please have your submissions to Sereena on or before November 20, 2017.

Going Green

If you would like to receive your newsletter as an e-mail attachment sent to you each quarter, please e-mail publisher Sereena Hogan at vp3sereena@aol.com to let us know. As always, our newsletter is available on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net even before the copies are mailed out.



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