



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 7, Number 2

Summer 2016

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

Local Auxiliaries Staying Active

"What are we supposed to do now?" Once a new local auxiliary is established, we are often asked this question. Really, it's up to the officers and members to decide what kind of activities the auxiliary wants to organize. Many auxiliaries start their own scholarship funds, so they get involved in fundraising activities such as bake sales, yard sales, raffles, or casino nights. Some restaurants have fundraiser activities where one night is set aside for a specific organization and a percentage of the proceeds from sales that night are donated to the organization.

Holiday parties, picnics, bowling tournaments, wine tasting trips, camping excursions, beach parties, barbecues, and other social events are always encouraged. It is great for the BLET families to get together and get to know one another and you'll be surprised how appreciative they are when they are offered these opportunities. Those auxiliaries that participate in fundraising activities often hold their raffles and bake sales at these social events.

Some auxiliaries get involved in community projects. It's fun to get together as a group and donate your time and energy to worthwhile projects in your community. Or you may want to do something nice for the BLET members during the holidays, or anytime. Some auxiliaries get the permission of the Yardmaster to set up tables at the yard office to hand out homemade food or baked goods for the working crews that are going on duty, or returning to their home terminal.

Creating a "Survivors Guide" for your area is a good project. You may want to use the sample guide available on the Auxiliary website or create your own. You can then make the guide available to the families of all the BLET members in your area.

— continued on page 10



Members and family of Red Willow Rails Auxiliary 623 of McCook, Nebraska, enjoyed the 2016 BNSF Railway Special. The train, made up of 15 restored vintage passenger railcars from the 1950s and 1960s, began its three-week journey on June 2, 2016, in McCook. BNSF employees and their families were invited to board the train for a fun-filled ride. The 2016 BNSF Special will run through June 22 to cities in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska.

Tupperware Fundraiser



Thanks to Northern California BLET Division 839 Engineer Kenny Brown, who is also a Tupperware Dealer, we have a Tupperware Fundraiser underway. This is your opportunity to purchase some great products and support the BLET Auxiliary at the same time.

To access the fundraiser online go to http://www.tupperware.com/?fundraise_r=573f8deb3d159109284abc15. This will take you to Kenny's page. Click on the SHOP button and make your selections.

You can also access the fundraiser site from our Facebook page or from our website at www.bletauxiliary.net.

Forty percent of the sales will go to the Auxiliary. Happy shopping!

Thank you Kenny for setting this up for us!

The National Auxiliary now has a Paypal Account. It can be used for donations, payment of dues, fundraisers, etc. For more information, please go to Page 7.



From the President - BY SEREENA HOGAN

Greetings members and friends!

Here in Southern Arizona we were blessed with a beautiful spring season. Oftentimes temperatures can soar into the high 90s or low 100s in April or May; however, this year it didn't get really hot until the first week of June. And then it hit us with a vengeance, with daily highs

over 110 degrees! Oh well, that's to be expected in this part of the country.

In late March, I traveled to Green Bay, Wisconsin, to attend the Quadrennial Meeting of the Canadian National - Wisconsin Central General Committee of Adjustments (GCA). Thank you John Reynolds for the invitation and congratulations on your reelection by acclamation to serve a fifth term as General Chairman of this committee. Being in the same hotel where the 2009 International Western Convention was hosted by Brother Reynolds brought back many good memories. The GCA meeting featured a number of interesting speakers and presentations. Our own Twin Ports Auxiliary 6388 President Rose Surchik was also in attendance and did a great job of networking with the spouses in attendance.

Immediately following the Green Bay meeting, I traveled to Stevens Point, Wisconsin, to make a presentation about the Auxiliary to the spouses of Division 174 members. Eric Stroik and his wife Kate Giblin are working to get an auxiliary formed there in the Stevens Point area. Many thanks to Leo Puddy, Field Investigator for the Hunegs, LeNeave & Kvas Law Firm, for sponsoring the dinner meeting on April 1.

Later in April, 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Representative Kathleen Bisbikis and I attended the National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen's Meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas, hosted by Arkansas State Legislative Chairman Terry Todd (see story on page 6). From there, I traveled to Cleveland to attend the dedication of the new BLET National Division Headquarters Building in Independence, Ohio. The BLET, which had originally been formed as the Brotherhood of the Footboard in 1863, had formerly been headquartered in downtown Cleveland since 1870. The beautiful newly renovated state-of-the-art 40,000-square-foot building in Independence houses offices for the union's National Division officers and staff as well as the union's history museum, which contains railroad artifacts dating to 1855. Two display cases in the museum are dedicated to Auxiliary artifacts. The BLET is proud of the fact that all renovation work on the structure was done by a 100% union workforce.

In May, I was contacted by a gentleman who is a friend of the family of recently deceased Robert F. Aemmer, a retired member of BLET Division 937 in Toledo, Ohio. The family was inquiring about our

scholarship program and if there was a way for donations to be made in memory of Robert. We worked together and this interaction prompted us to create an online donations page for our Auxiliary Scholarship Fund, and also to create a Paypal account through which donations can be made. We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Robert Aemmer, and gratitude for considering our scholarship fund as a recipient of donations made in his memory to further the education of BLET members' children. Mr. Aemmer's obituary notice, that appeared in the *Toledo Blade*, is reprinted on page 6.

As auxiliary officers and members, we feel that an important aspect of our mission is to pass on the importance of unionism to the next generations. For the youth of today, the family is often the only source of information and education about what unions have done for our country. We must also teach them as much as we can about being involved in the legislative process, the importance of voting in local and national elections, and how the actions of the legislature affect every aspect of our daily lives. Kudos to Tami Reynolds, Secretary of K.C. Shield Auxiliary No. 422 in Kansas City, for taking the time to spend an inspiring day with her son Dakota in Jefferson City, Missouri, to tour the Capitol Building. (Article on opposite page).

A big thank you to FELA Attorney Jerry Schlichter for supporting our newsletter by placing an advertisement in this issue. For those of us who often attend BLET conventions and other meetings, we are able to meet and hear important information from these attorneys who are experts at representing BLET members and their families; however, not everyone has this opportunity. We are grateful to be able to share their information in our newsletter, as well as the information of some of the vendors who provide valuable services to our members. Please pass along their information to others in your area, whether they are auxiliary members or not.

Our Executive Council will hold our annual meeting this year during the week of the Eastern Regional Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, July 10-15. This means that all five of the national officers who are members of the Executive Council will be in attendance at the Eastern Region Meeting. We hope to see many of you there at our Auxiliary Meeting to be held on the afternoon of Tuesday, July 12, during the time that the BLET has their closed meeting. Our meeting is open to all spouses and family members. We will also have an information table and raffle in the display area - please stop by and say hello.

Thank you to Northern California BLET Division 839 Engineer Kenny Brown for setting up the Tupperware fundraiser for us! Items in the current catalog will be available until September. After that, a new catalog with different products will be available, so stay tuned!

Sereena Hogan, National President
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Kansas City Auxiliary Member takes her son on an educational excursion...

Our Trip to Jefferson City

*By Tami Reynolds, Secretary
K.C. Shield Auxiliary No. 422, Kansas City, Missouri*



Missouri State Senator Ryan Silvey shows Dakota Reynolds around his office.

I have a good friend, Ryan Silvey, who is a state senator in Missouri. He invited my 13-year-old son Dakota and I to spend the day at our State Capital, Jefferson City, on May 12, to explore and learn all about how the legislative process works.

Our first stop in Jefferson City was to the Missouri Highway Trooper Museum. It took Dakota a matter of minutes to find the railroad display that talked about how long it takes a train to stop and the consequences of trying to outrun a train. Next we visited the Governor's Mansion, which is filled with information about our former and current governors. Then it was time to head to the State Capitol Building.

First order of business was signing Senator Silvey's guest book. Ryan then gave a tour of his office. Dakota's favorite things in Ryan's office were the photograph of the Royals Stadium he had taken at a playoff game, and the air mattress he keeps there for the long nights of bill debates.

After that, while Ryan had a quick meeting with some fellow senators behind closed doors, his secretary gave us a personal tour of the Capitol. First she took us to the office where the Official State Seal is kept. Dakota got to make an official seal to take home with us. She also showed us where the Inaugural Ball is held and taught Dakota the waltz that is danced by the Governor and First Lady. Then it was time to go back and meet with Ryan.

He took us onto the Senate floor and explained to Dakota how the next day was the final day of the 2016 Session and that what we were watching was fellow senators debating bills. He explained that, at this point in the session, a senator is known to keep a debate going in an effort to "kill" a bill. If a bill is not passed in the current session, it is considered "dead" and an entire new bill will need to be introduced the next year. We also got to witness several votes.

It was interesting how some senators watch the debates in their offices via video, then rush onto the Senate floor to cast their vote, after which they then go back to their offices. One of the bills we witnessed being debated happened to be union related! It was the "Paycheck Protection Bill," which would have required employees to give written permission annually for union dues to be collected from their pay. I am happy to report that it did not pass. This bill would actually benefit politicians, not union workers. It would instead create barriers for union workers. Ryan had originally supported the bill, but after speaking to some of his constituents, he decided to vote against it. While Ryan is a Republican senator, he has actually been endorsed by local unions. He also comes from a union family. Unfortunately, we did not get to watch the Senate vote on this bill because that did not take place until almost midnight.

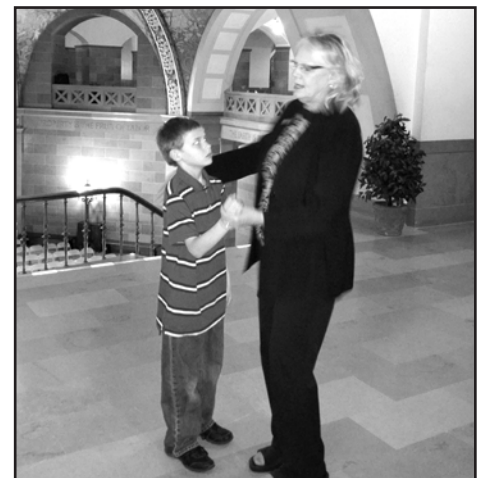
Ryan invited us to come back next year, and told us to make sure we plan our visit earlier in the session so Dakota can be introduced on the Senate floor and be a page for the day. Dakota is already making plans to do that. He enjoyed himself so much he said he might want to be a senator or even governor one day! He is also talking his dad into taking him to Washington, D.C.!



Dakota and Tami Reynolds.



Making an official state seal.



Dakota learns to waltz.



JERRY SCHLICHTER

Recent Case:

Recently, the firm obtained a \$12.5 million jury verdict against BNSF for a railroad worker who lost his leg under the wheel of a train, which is the highest reported jury verdict for a worker against BNSF. BNSF has lost all appeals of the case and is left asking the U.S. Supreme Court to take its appeal.



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Schlichter Bogard and Denton has a long track record of success for railroad workers including successfully handling a railroad injury case in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Improving Working Conditions for Railroad Employees

In addition to injury cases, we have also taken on important issues in the railroad industry on behalf of railroad employees, including:

1. Successfully defeating a Union Pacific lawsuit to punish railroad workers and union officers for a claimed "wildcat strike".
2. Participating in a Washington march in support of union-sponsored rail safety initiatives.
3. Successfully suing the Federal Railroad Administration to block unfair engineer-certification procedures.
4. Being the only firm in the country to sue a railroad to stop enforcement of a rule restricting injured employees' ability to talk to witnesses, resulting in successfully eliminating the railroad rule and assessing a large fine against the railroad.
5. Working hand-in-hand with rail labor to pass fair legislation affecting the rights of railroad workers.
6. Successfully handling many "whistleblower" cases for railroad employees wrongfully disciplined for reporting an injury or safety violation.

What to do if you are injured on the railroad:

1. Complete Injury Report
2. See Your Doctor
3. Do Not Give a Statement to Claims Representative
4. Talk to Your Union Representative
5. Keep Records of Lost Wages
6. Call Us at Any Time

Many railroad injuries are a result of the railroad's negligence, unsafe conditions, or unsafe equipment. With thorough investigation and skillful trial preparation, and using a team of knowledgeable investigators who themselves have decades of experience as railroad workers, we give every case an all out effort.

We understand the concerns of injured railroad employees, including loss of income and the ability to provide support to family members. Our team is particularly sensitive to these concerns, and we have extensive experience helping injured railroad employees with their financial concerns.

Jerry Schlichter
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National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen's Meeting

Held April 10 - 13, 2016, Little Rock, Arkansas



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

The 30th Annual National Association of state Legislative Board Chairmen's (NASLBC) Annual Meeting was held April 10-13 in a historic and beautiful area of Little Rock, Arkansas. National Auxiliary President Sereena Hogan and I were both honored to be in attendance.

On Monday, April 11, opening ceremonies commenced with the invocation and the seating of new members. John Brodnick (NY), Steve Facklam (KS), Gary Pedigo (TX), and Rusty Jones (TN), all took their places at the table. (Tim Price (OH) was not in attendance.) NASLBC Chairman Tim Smith opened the convention with a talk about inaccurate train lineups, fatigue issues, the super trains, rebuilding the PAC fund, and the two-person crew bill passed in California. He also updated everyone on the California High Speed Rail progress.

Guest speaker BLET National President Dennis Pierce spoke about the upcoming presidential elections, the FRA Two-Person Crew Proposed Rule, cameras in the cab, and the importance of voting your paycheck in upcoming elections. Lee Pruitt, BLET 1st Vice President, also spoke and

fielded questions from members in attendance about many issues, including the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, crew staffing, sleep apnea, and PTC.

A wonderful lunch was hosted by Mark Robb, International President of the BR&CF. After lunch, Mark Robb addressed the attendees, as well as Robert Lauby from the Federal Railroad administration in Washington, D.C. The final guest speaker of the day was Diane Thomas-Holladay, Director of Labor Education at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. Ms. Holladay gave a very riveting talk and slide show presentation about the history of the labor unions, its importance, and why we must all strive to keep fighting to keep labor unions alive and strong for future generations. She also got everyone involved when she chose ten members to show the absurdity of wealth inequality in the U.S. Also on Monday, a letter that had been received from Presidential Candidate Hillary Clinton was read to attendees. She sent her warm regards and praised the commitment of the BLET as well as the NASLBC for their hard work in the ongoing fight for today's labor movement.

Tuesday, April 12, began with a closed meeting for the election of officers for the NASBLC. Following that, BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative John Tolman discussed the national budget, Right to Work, the presidential candidates and the PAC Fund, urging the importance of PAC participation nationwide. A group photo was taken and another amazing lunch was hosted, this time by Jerry Schlichter of the Schlichter, Bogard and Denton Law Firm.

The afternoon resumed with a presentation by Jerry Schlichter. BLET Auxiliary President Sereena Hogan spoke next giving an update on the status of the Auxiliary. In my address, I stressed the importance of union solidarity, teaching our youth about unions, and what has been sacrificed in order for us to be where we are today, as well as the fight to continue to grow and stay strong in our union beliefs. Vince Verna, Director of Regulatory Affairs and Bob Hagen, Director of Legislative Affairs, also spoke about the current happenings in Washington D.C.

Next year's NASLBC Meeting will be hosted by Florida State Legislative Board Chairman Dave Lavery, April 23-25, in Clearwater, Florida.

Robert F. Aemmer, Dec. 19, 1946 - April 4, 2016

Obituary, as posted on May 29, 2015, in the Toledo Blade

A native of Toledo, Bob had a forty-plus year career with CSX Railroad and retired as an engineer. Bob attended the University of Toledo and had a commitment to lifelong learning, pursuing many interests. He was an avid reader and enjoyed travel. He was preceded in death by his loving wife Susan and brother Tom. He is survived by brothers David and John (Beth), sister-in-law Kathy; nephews Tom Jr., Jason, and Joshua; nieces Kathryn and Caroline; six grandnephews and nieces; and Susan's children

Wendy, Kristin, and Matthew, and grandchildren Elizabeth, Madeline, Kelsey, Braylen, Alexander, and Exavier.

In lieu of flowers, the family respectfully requests that donations be made to either: Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen Scholarship Fund, BLET Auxiliary, Lawana W. Poss, National Secretary, 1394 Bywood Court, Suwanee, GA 30024 (on the web at www.bletauxiliary.net/scholarship-donation), or Toledo Lucas County Public Library, 325 Michigan Street, Toledo, OH 43604 (on the web at www.toledolibrary.org (click "Donate" tab)).

Tidbits from National Secretary Lawana Poss

Summer is approaching and that signals the beginning of the 2016 Conventions! This year, meetings will be held in Chicago, Illinois, in July, and Long Beach, California, in August (see page 11 or check the BLET website at <https://www.ble-t.org/regional> for more information.) I do hope you plan to attend! Please stop by the Auxiliary table in the display area and say hello! I look forward to seeing you!

MAL REMINDER

Thank you to the members-at-large who have sent in their dues. Second notices have been mailed. Please mail your dues to me and I will get your 2016 Membership Card and receipt to you.

AUXILIARY REMINDER

2015 year-end Report and dues are past due. Please contact me if you need more information or help filling out the report.

CARE AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Established in 1921, the Care and Assistance Program (CAP) is our organization's way of saying thank you to long-time members. These members are usually elderly and their incomes are such that some of life's little pleasures are out of their reach. The CAP provides financial assistance to qualifying members and helps them to maintain a little bit more of the dignity they deserve. Our CAP recipients are grateful for what we do.

In some circumstances, the CAP fund may be able to temporarily help auxiliary members through a rough patch should the railroad wage earner be without income due to an illness or injury.

Contact me for applications! Members-at-large are eligible also!

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST AUXILIARY!

Gateway Auxiliary 4448, St. Louis, MO – Organized March 9, 2016.

Members: Doug and Tracy Pope, Brian Young, Steve and Tammy Poole, Bradley and Tracy Meers, and James and Carol Wray.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations are in order for Terri and Chuck Fleming. They have a beautiful new granddaughter. Eleanor Lucille was born on Monday, May 2, in Midland, Texas, to Chuck and Terri's daughter and son-in-law, Tiffany and Micah Gillaspy. Eleanor weighed 5 lbs. 15 oz. at birth. Big brother Howard is just turned five on May 16. Congratulations to all the family!

PAYPAL ACCOUNT!

Thanks to the efforts of our 2nd Vice President/ National Legislative Representative Kathleen Bisbikis, we now have a Paypal account established for the auxiliary. We can accept dues payments, donations, etc., using this account, either on our website or in person. We will have a credit/debit card reader at the conventions this year that can be used to accept payments for MAL dues as well as for our fundraising activities there. We are pleased to be able to offer this convenience to our members and others who support the Auxiliary. Thank you to also to our webmaster Will Wallace and everyone else who helped get this in place!

IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

We are sending our heartfelt thoughts and wishes for a speedy recovery to Sister Sereena Hogan and Sister Debbie Kertesz. They both have been diagnosed with breast cancer and are undergoing treatment. Please keep them in your prayers. Sending love and hugs to you both.

Sister Bettye Dollar has been under the weather and in the hospital. She is home now and feeling much better.

Please call or e-mail me or any National Officer when there is a death of a member or the death of one of their family members. We want to be able to send our condolences to the family. We would like to also share in the joy! Please let me know of any exciting happenings!

I hope you all have a safe and fun-filled summer!



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.

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!!

— Lawana

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

BY KATHLEEN BISBIKIS, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE



"The empowered woman is powerful beyond measure, and beautiful beyond description"

— Steve Maraboli

FRA Proposes Two Person Crew Minimum

On March 14, 2016, the Federal Railroad Administration issued a notice of proposed rulemaking establishing a minimum requirement of two crew members for all railroad operations. The exception would be in operations where the FRA does not believe a crew of less than two people would pose a significant safety risk to the public, the railroad employees, and the environment.

This FRA proposal on the federal level could be a huge step forward for ensuring safety for train crews as well as the communities through which they travel.

The proposed rule is currently open to public comment for people to voice their support of the rule, as well as any concerns, changes, or additions they would like to see added to the rule. The deadline for submitting comments is June 15, 2016.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce wrote a compelling and fact-filled article in the winter 2015 issue of *The Locomotive Engineers and Trainman Journal* entitled, "Two Person Crews Are the Safest." I encourage all members to take a

moment from their day and read this article. The battle for a two-person crew on every locomotive is not over and we all need to continue to push forward with this important legislation for the safety of all of our brothers and sisters on the rail. An excerpt from the article can be found at: <https://www.ble-t.org/pr/news/newsflash.asp?id=5837>

Colorado Two Person Crew Bill HB16-1136 Update

On March 4, 2016, in Denver Colorado, HB 16-1136 the Two Person Crew Bill passed 34-31 in the House Transportation and Energy Committee. The bill was assigned to the Senate on March 9, 2016, and, despite hard work on the part of Colorado State Chairman, Brother Jim Wilmeshire, and all the BLET families in the state of Colorado, the bill has been postponed indefinitely.

Maryland HB 92 Two Person Crew Bill

Congratulations to members in Maryland who saw victory on March 14, 2016, when HB 92, passed in the Senate with a vote of 32-14. The bill now moves to the House. This bill passed the same day the FRA proposed their two-person crew minimum on the federal level.

Republican Sen. Stephen Hershey says, "the action at the federal level makes the Maryland measure unnecessary." He asked to delay the vote to allow more time to see what the proposed federal rules look like. But Sen. Brian Feldman, a Democrat, says "it's unclear when the federal government may enact the rules or how they could be changed. Feldman says Maryland shouldn't play public-safety Russian roulette waiting on the federal government."

Illinois HB 3755 Two Person Crew Safety Bill

HB 3755 the Illinois Two Person Crew Bill had its third reading in the House of Representatives on April 20, 2016. After just a short debate it was passed with 74 yeas and 39 nays. Congratulations to Brother Paul Piekarski, Legislative Chairman for the State of Illinois for all his hard work on this bill. We will all stand in support HB 3755 as it now makes its way through the Senate.

Supreme Court Decision a Win for Labor Unions

On March 29, 2016, the Supreme Court handed down a deadlock decision of 4-4 in support of labor in the case of *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*. Ten California teachers and one teachers' group, Christian Educators Association International, presented a lawsuit asking the Supreme Court to overturn the *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* decision. *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* dates back to 1977 and says employees who are represented exclusively by a public employee union but are not union members must pay "fair share" fees for bargaining costs related to wages, benefits, and working conditions. Rebecca Friedrichs and the other parties to the lawsuit claimed that the agency fees were a violation to their first amendment right, saying the CTA does not represent their interest on bargaining issues covered by the fair share fees.

The case was argued prior to the death of Justice Scalia, however he died before a decision was handed down. Upon his death, only eight Justices were left to decide the case. The eight remaining Justices returned with a 4-4 split decision leaving *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* in place and protecting the power of the union members.

FRA Announces it will provide \$25 Million in Grants

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced in April it will distribute \$25 million dollars in grants to help with repairs to railroad infrastructure throughout the U.S. The money will be used for safety improvements such as crossings, bridges, tunnels, etc. This funding for improvement, combined with that of the \$525 million for TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grants from the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, will help to increase the funding for infrastructure passenger rail improvements, thereby helping to provide commuters across the country with a safer, more reliable transit system.

Amtrak helps the people of Flint Michigan

An Amtrak train filled with over 30,000 bottles of water rolled into Flint, Michigan, to help the residents there who are in need of clean drinking water. The Amtrak employees in stations from New York, Philadelphia, Newark, Chicago, and several other locations, all donated pallets of water as part of the Amtrak Cares Initiative.

The Mayor of Flint, Karen Weaver, expressed her thanks to Amtrak, stating: "It's too great to have so many people and organizations, like Amtrak, supporting the city of Flint, the donations keep coming and we are very thankful. While we look forward to the day that we can feel comfortable using the water coming from our taps, we're just not there yet. So we appreciate those who continue to donate bottled water and filters. We appreciate the generosity and support."

FAA proposes change to benefit passenger rail near airports

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recently proposed a funding

change that could benefit passenger rail near airports. While it may often go unnoticed on your airline ticket, there is a tax labeled PFC (Passenger Facility Charge). This tax collected from passengers of airlines grossed \$3 billion dollars in 2015. In the past, this fee was only used to fund projects or improvements on airport property for travelers and employees making their way around the airports. However, because of a challenge in 2014 by the Dulles International Airport in Virginia to use the funds for expansion beyond the airport, connecting passengers to city metro systems, the FAA has proposed a funding change that would potentially allow the PFC funds to be used to build passenger rail that would connect travelers from the airport to larger metro systems such as D.C.'s metro system.

Since Virginia first asked for PFC funds in 2014, Miami, Denver, and New York have also started building rail links around their airports and would benefit from PFC money to help with costs. These PFC funds would prove beneficial in helping cut the cost of providing more passenger rail to and from cities located several miles from the airports and would help travelers get to their destinations cheaper and faster than the current systems in place.

Operation Lifesaver 2015 sees drop in crossing collisions

In a recent report by Operation Lifesaver, CEO and President Bonnie Murphy reported the number of vehicle train crossing collisions declined in 2015 by 7.6 percent, from 2,280 to 2,096 in 2013. Crossing related deaths also dropped 7.6 percent, from 264 to 244 in 2014. Unfortunately, deaths due to rail trespassing increased by 7.6 percent in 2015, to 512 from 475 in 2014.

The states reported to have the most crossing collisions in 2015 were California, Indiana, Georgia,

Texas, and Illinois, while the states with the most trespasser casualties in 2015 were California, Florida, New York, Texas, and Illinois.

"Our 'See Tracks? Think Train!'" campaign will continue this year, with a strategic focus on emphasizing that it's illegal and extremely dangerous to use train tracks for recreational activities," Murphy continued. "Operation Lifesaver, in partnership with freight railroads, passenger, and commuter rail systems, state and local law enforcement, and transportation agencies, will combine new educational materials with innovative outreach to key audiences, including new drivers, to encourage lifesaving behavior around tracks and trains," she concluded.

Railroad Crossing Safety

The Federal Railroad Administration, in an effort to cut back on the number of railroad crossing fatalities, has asked state departments of transportation to verify that each railroad crossing warning system interconnected with traffic lights is working properly.

Since 2013, 96 people have died and another 419 were hurt at intersections where stoplights are interconnected with railroad equipment. According to the FRA, across the US there are close to 5000 interconnected railroad/traffic light crossings.

FRA Administrator Sarah E. Feinberg wrote, "I have made improving railroad crossing safety a top priority of mine because I know that we can and must do better, but the Federal Railroad Administration cannot solve this problem on its own. Unless we work closely with state and local officials, law enforcement, railroads and transportation officials, and other stakeholders, we will not have the impact we are striving for and we will not save as many lives. But working together, I know we can do more to prevent these incidents."

The 15 Most Dangerous Railroad Crossings in America

In the U.S., there are more than 200,000 railroad crossings. It is the job of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to track and determine the potential for injuries and loss of life due to repeated accidents in each location. FRA Administrator Sarah E. Feinberg, in February of 2016, sent letters to state Department of Transportation Secretaries asking for cooperation to improve the safety at crossings across the country. In conjunction with asking the states' DOTs for cooperation and help, the FRA has also released the list of the 15 most dangerous crossings. Five of those 15 are located within Arizona, with the others being spread out between the states of Arkansas, New Jersey, Indiana, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Ohio, Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas, in that order. Each of the 15 crossings listed have had at least 10 incidents happen, not necessarily fatalities, in the last decade. "I urge our state partners to join FRA in taking additional actions to improve crossing safety. I know that, together, we can do more to save lives," Administrator Feinberg wrote to states in a letter. "FRA is ready and willing to help our partners in any way we can." The link below provides the listing of the top 15, with their specific location and number of incidents in each state.

http://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/details/L17404#p1_z5_gd_IPR

Railroad Retirement Board News:

RRB Appropriation Request for 2017 – Call to Action: Our Brothers and Sisters at the National Association for Retired and Veteran Railway Employees (NARVRE) have put out a Call to Action and requested support of the Railroad Retirement Board's appropriation request for 2017. The Railroad Retirement Board has requested that their administra-

tive budget be increased for the fiscal year 2017 by approximately \$11 million. The increased funds would be used to update computer mainframe systems for better service and also for the protection of information of all railroad retirees they serve. Secondly, the funds would be used to maintain the level of staffing that they currently have in place, as well as any additional staffing that is needed, so that they might maintain their reputation for superior customer service. The Railroad Retirement Board currently serves over 558,000 beneficiaries. The importance of their continued success and ability to service all retired railroaders cannot be ignored. To support the RRB request for additional funding, please contact your representative in Congress and urge them to support this fiscal increase.

The Effect of Buy-Outs on Railroad Retirement Benefits: Railroad employees frequently ask the Railroad Retirement Board how the acceptance of a buy-out from a railroad employer affects their future eligibility for benefits under the Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts. A list of questions and answers providing information on this subject can be found at: https://www.rrb.gov/opa/qa/pub_1604.asp

RRB Change in Service Hours: Effective at noon on June 1, 2016, Railroad Retirement Board field offices around the country will be closed to the public on Wednesday afternoons. Field office representatives will not be available to assist walk-in customers or to answer the phones during Wednesday afternoons only. All RRB offices will remain open from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays, and during their usual hours of 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on the remaining weekdays, except for Federal holidays. These changes are being made as a result of reduced staffing levels and increased workloads, and will allow the field office staff to focus on processing

Legislative Update, continued

applications for benefits, conducting necessary verifications for pending applications or claims, resolving complex cases, and reducing backlogged workloads.

2016 Elections

As we continue to prepare and educate ourselves for the upcoming election this November, or look for information about primary results and voting registration information, most of us will turn to the internet for help. There are several good websites available where we can find the information we need. Thankfully, one of them has gathered the best of the best and put it all in one place. By simply going to <https://www.headcount.org/issues-and-candidates>, you can learn about the candidates, the primary dates, if you're registered to vote, important information about the political issues that concern you, and so much more. If you have any questions or concerns about the upcoming elections, give it a try.

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.

Express Scripts Mobile



Graphic Designed by Freepik

Express Scripts has recently made some improvements to their website to make it easier to manage your medicine. You can find everything from your prescription history and order updates, to savings opportunities and more on their site. And now you can download a mobile app that makes it easy to manage your medicine on the go and even find local participating pharmacies when you are out of town. To learn more, log in to your account on the Express Scripts website at www.express-scripts.com and scroll to the bottom of the home page to find the Express Scripts Mobile box.

Local Auxiliaries Staying Active - continued from front cover



Nor-Cal 39 Annual Bowling Tournament - March 11, 2016 - Manteca, California

Many of the newly hired railroaders, and sometimes even those who have been employed for some time, and their spouses or other family members, have never had the opportunity to hear information about their benefits, rights, etc. Organizing a seminar at which you bring in speakers from the Railroad Retirement Board, FELA attorneys, or insurance carriers is a good way to offer an educational experience for the BLET members and their families. Oftentimes the FELA attorneys in your area are willing to offer financial assistance for worthwhile activities or projects.

Get in touch with the legislative board chairman for your state to find out if he needs any help with legislative matters. Some of the chairmen are more receptive to working with auxiliary members than others, and some have even taken the members of the local auxiliary to the state house to meet their state legislators or to help with lobbying certain bills they are trying to get passed. The perspective of an auxiliary member is very valuable for a variety of reasons... we represent more than just the railroad employees... we represent the families, the extended families, the entire community! To keep all your members up to date on current legislative matters of importance, your auxiliary's legislative representative should give a report at each meeting about what is going on nationally and in your state. A monthly "Legislative Update" is posted on our website that the legislative rep can download and share with the other members.

Some auxiliaries put together a plan or "play book" at the beginning of each year to map out what their plans for the coming year. This can serve as a guide for what you hope to accomplish, but it's good to be flexible. Sometimes things don't work out exactly as we envision them, but with a plan in place you at least have some direction in which to move forward.



To raise funds for their Scholarship Fund, Guadalupe Auxiliary 28 held a bake sale at the Annual BLET Div. 28 "Old Timers' Picnic" to honor retirees, on April 21, 2016.

Railroad Lingo Deciphered for the Railroad Spouse

Ever wonder what in the world he (or she) is talking about? With the help of several BLET Division 777 members in the Kansas City area, the members of KC Shield Auxiliary No. 422 compiled the following list of common phrases that they hear their spouse use when talking about the railroad.

Going Dead – Crew had been on duty for 12 hours.

Dog Catch – Crew that is relieving a crew that has gone dead.

Deadhead – Crew that will be transported by taxi or train from one location without operating a train.

Grip – Crew member's bag.

Pool – Assigned to a specific location.

Extra Board – Unassigned engineers or trainmen used to protect vacancies.

F.R.A. (Federal Railroad Administration) – A government agency that enforces rail safety and regulations.

RSIA (Federal Railroad Safety Improvement Act) – Individual has 6 starts and is required to have 48 hours off.

Start – On Duty

Smart Rest – After four consecutive starts, an employee has as an option to take 24 hours off

Foot of Board (FOB) – Choosing to place your job turn to the bottom of the pool board, in order to receive more time off. Such an action does not penalize a worker.

Called – Individual has been called to work and accepted job.

Times Out – Where the individual is on their assigned board.

Mark Off – When individual lays off from work.

Mark Up – When individual becomes available to be called for a train.

Claim – When carrier violates agreement.

Run Around – An employee is behind another employee, and gets called ahead.

Dope – Crew's train paperwork.

Old Head – Long term railroad employee.

New Hire – New railroad employee

Hog Head – Engineer

Piglet – Student or new engineer.

Hump – Where rail cars are pushed up a hill, uncoupled, and then rolled downhill into remotely controlled sorting tracks.

Joint – Where two cars are hooked together. Also known as a coupling.

Knuckle – The moveable portion of the coupler.

Main Line – A track that is used for through trains.

Double Tracks – Two main tracks.

Bad Order – Rail car that has a mechanical defect.

Spotting – Placing a rail car in a specific location on the track.

Holding Train – A time period scheduled in advance when no train operates. Also known as Window.

M.O.W. – Maintenance of Way or Maintenance in the way. Maintenance of track and railroad inspections.

Dark Territory – A series of rail miles ungoverned by signals.

Track Bulletin – Notice containing information of track conditions or other

conditions necessary for the safe operation of trains or engines.

Track Permit – A form used to authorize occupancy of main track.

Track Side Warning Detector – A detector that provide conditions such as overheated journals, dragging equipment, excess dimensions, shifted loads, high waters and slides.

Intermodal – Container, or truck trailers.

Distributive Power (DP) – Locomotive consisting either of midtrain, or rear of train running remotely from lead locomotive.

Consist – Locomotives coupled together to make a consist.

Siding – A segment of track off of the main track for trains to pass.

PTC (Positive Train Control) – A safety enhancement system designed to monitor and stop train movement.

Types of Trains:

Z Train – Priority intermodal train.

Unit Train – Train composed entirely of one commodity.

Coal Train – Train composed of coal.

Q Train – Quality Priority Train.

Pigs – Truck trailers on a train.

Junk Train – Anything that is not a high priority Intermodal Train.

H Train – High Priority Manifest Train.

M Train – Low Priority Manifest Train.

S Train (Stack Train) – Low Priority train, consisting of all containers.

CHALLENGING TIMES IN THE RAILROAD INDUSTRY - *Easing the Pain of Furloughs*

We are hearing it from many of our members - the downturn in business on the nation's major railroads has led to increasing numbers of employees on furlough or temporary layoff. The Q&A information below, published by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) in July 2015, may be helpful to those employees and their families who find themselves in this position. The information also applies to those who are on extended leave due to illness or injury.

1. What are the eligibility requirements for railroad unemployment and sickness benefits?

A new benefit year for unemployment and sickness benefits begins every July 1. To qualify in the benefit year beginning July 1, 2016, you must have base year earnings of \$3,600 in calendar year 2014, counting no more than \$1,440 per month. In the benefit year beginning July 1, 2016, these amounts will increase to \$3,637.50 and \$1,455, although they will then refer to annual and monthly earnings in calendar year 2015. If the base year was your first year of railroad service, you must also have worked in 5 months of that year. Those who were first employed in the rail industry in 2014 must also have at least five months of creditable railroad service in 2014.

Under certain conditions, employees who do not qualify on the basis of their 2014 earnings may still be able to receive benefits in the new benefit year. Employees with at least 10 years of service (120 or more cumulative months of service) who received normal benefits in the benefit year ending June 30, 2015, may be eligible for extended benefits, and employees with at least 10 years of service (120 or more cumulative months of service) might qualify for accelerated benefits if they have rail earnings of at least \$3,637.50 in 2015, not counting earnings of more than \$1,455 a month.

In order to qualify for extended unemployment benefits, a claimant must not have voluntarily quit work without good cause and not have voluntarily retired. To qualify for extended sickness benefits, a claimant must not have voluntarily retired and must be under age 65.

To be eligible for accelerated benefits, a claimant must have 14 or more consecutive days of unemployment or sickness; not have voluntarily retired or, if claiming unemployment benefits, quit work without good cause; and be under age 65 when claiming sickness benefits.

2. What is the daily benefit rate payable in the new benefit year beginning July 1, 2015?

Almost all employees will qualify for the new maximum daily benefit rate of \$72. Benefits are generally payable for the number of days of unemployment or sickness over four in 14-day claim periods, which yields \$720 for each two full weeks of unemployment or sickness. Sickness benefits payable for the first 6 months after the month the employee last worked are subject to tier I railroad retirement payroll taxes, unless benefits are being paid for an on-the-job injury. (Claimants should be aware that as a result of a sequestration order under the Budget Control Act of 2011, the RRB will reduce unemployment and sickness benefits by 7.3 percent through September 30, 2015. As a result, the total maximum amount payable in a 2-week period covering 10 days of unemployment or sickness will be \$667.44. The maximum amount payable for sickness benefits subject to tier I payroll taxes of 7.65 percent will be \$616.38 over two weeks. Future reductions, should they occur, will be calculated based on applicable law.)

3. How long are these benefits payable?

Normal unemployment or sickness benefits are each payable for up to 130 days (26 weeks) in a benefit year. The total amount of each kind of benefit which may be paid in the new benefit year cannot exceed the employee's railroad earnings in calendar year 2014, counting earnings up to \$1,860 per month.

If normal benefits are exhausted, extended benefits are payable for up to 65 days (during 7 consecutive 14-day claim periods) to employees with at least 10 years of service (120 or more cumulative service months).

4. What is the waiting-period requirement for unemployment and sickness benefits?

Benefits are normally paid for the number of days of unemployment or sickness over four in 14-day registration periods. Initial sickness claims must also begin with four consecutive days of sickness. However, during the first 14-day claim period in a benefit year, benefits are only payable for each day of unemployment or sickness in excess of seven which, in effect, provides a one-week waiting period. (If an employee has at least five days of unemployment or five days of sickness in a 14-day period, he or she should still

file for benefits.) Separate waiting periods are required for unemployment and sickness benefits. However, only one seven-day waiting period is generally required during any period of continuing unemployment or sickness, even if that period continues into a subsequent benefit year.

5. Are there special waiting-period requirements if unemployment is due to a strike?

If a worker is unemployed because of a strike conducted in accordance with the Railway Labor Act, benefits are not payable for days of unemployment during the first 14 days of the strike, but benefits are payable during subsequent 14-day periods.

If a strike is in violation of the Railway Labor Act, unemployment benefits are not payable to employees participating in the strike. However, employees not among those participating in such an illegal strike, but who are unemployed on account of the strike, may receive benefits after the first two weeks of the strike.

While a benefit year waiting period cannot count toward a strike waiting period, the 14-day strike waiting period may count as the benefit year waiting period if a worker subsequently becomes unemployed for reasons other than a strike later in the benefit year.

6. Can employees in train and engine service receive unemployment benefits for days when they are standing by or laying over between scheduled runs?

No, not if they are standing by or laying over between regularly assigned trips or they missed a turn in pool service.

7. Can extra-board employees receive unemployment benefits between jobs?

Yes, but only if the miles and/or hours they actually worked were less than the equivalent of normal full-time work in their class of service during the 14-day claim period. Entitlement to benefits would also depend on the employee's earnings.

8. How would an employee's earnings in a claim period affect his or her eligibility for unemployment benefits?

If a claimant's earnings for days worked, and/or days of vacation, paid leave, or other leave

in a 14-day registration period are more than a certain indexed amount, no benefits are payable for any days of unemployment in that period. That registration period, however, can be used to satisfy the waiting period.

Earnings include pay from railroad and nonrailroad work, as well as part-time work and self-employment. Earnings also include pay that an employee would have earned except for failure to mark up or report for duty on time, or because he or she missed a turn in pool service or was otherwise not ready or willing to work. For the benefit year that begins July 2015, the amount is \$1,440, which corresponds to the base year monthly compensation amount used in determining eligibility for benefits in each year. Also, even if an earnings test applies on the first claim in a benefit year, this will not prevent the first claim from satisfying the waiting period in a benefit year.

9. How does a person apply for and claim unemployment benefits?

Claimants can file their applications for unemployment benefits, as well as their subsequent biweekly claims, by mail or online.

To apply by mail, claimants must obtain an application from their labor organization, employer, local RRB office, or the agency's website at www.rrb.gov. The completed application should be mailed to the local RRB office as soon as possible and, in any case, must be filed within 30 days of the date on which the claimant became unemployed or the first day for which he or she wishes to claim benefits. Benefits may be lost if the application is filed late.

To file their applications -- or their biweekly claims -- online, claimants must first establish an RRB online account at www.rrb.gov. Instructions on how to do so are available through the RRB's website. Employees are encouraged to establish online accounts while still employed so the account is ready if they ever need to apply for these benefits or use other select RRB Internet services. Employees who have already established online accounts do not need to do so again.

The local RRB field office reviews the completed application, whether it was submitted by mail or online, and notifies the claimant's current railroad employer, and base-year employer, if different. The employer has the opportunity to provide information about the benefit application.

After the RRB office processes the application, biweekly claim forms are mailed to the claimant, and are also available on the RRB's website, as long as he or she remains unemployed and eligible for benefits. Claim forms should be signed and sent on or after the last day of the claim. This can be done by mail or electronically. The completed claim must be received by an RRB office within 15 days of the end of the claim or the date the claim form was mailed to the claimant or made available online, whichever is later. Claimants must not file both a paper claim and an online claim form for the same period(s).

Only one application needs to be filed during a benefit year, even if a claimant becomes unemployed more than once. However, a claimant must, in such a case, request a claim form from an RRB office within 30 days of the first day for which he or she wants to resume claiming benefits. These claims may then be filed by mail or online.

10. How does a person apply for and claim sickness benefits?

An application for sickness benefits can be obtained from railroad labor organizations, railroad employers, any RRB office, or the agency's website. An application and a doctor's statement of sickness are required at the beginning of each period of continuing sickness for which benefits are claimed. Claimants should make a special effort to have the doctor's statement of sickness completed promptly since no claims can be paid without it.

The RRB suggests that employees keep an application on hand for use in claiming sickness benefits, and that family members know where the form is kept and how to use it. If an employee becomes unable to work because of sickness or injury, the employee should complete the application and then have his or her doctor complete the statement of sickness. Employees should note that they must indicate on the application whether they are applying for sickness benefits because they were injured at work or have a work-related illness. They must also indicate whether they have filed or expect to file a lawsuit or claim against a third party for personal injury. If a claimant receives sickness benefits for an injury or illness for which he or

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she is paid damages, it is important to be aware that the RRB is entitled to reimbursement of either the amount of the benefits paid for the injury or illness, or the net amount of the settlement, after deducting the claimant's gross medical, hospital, and legal expenses, whichever is less.

If the employee is too sick to complete the application, someone else may do so. In such cases, a family member should also complete Form SI-10, "Statement of Authority to Act for Employee," which accompanies the statement of sickness.

After completion, the forms should be mailed to the RRB's headquarters in Chicago by the seventh day of the illness or injury for which benefits are claimed. However, applications received after 10 days but within 30 days of the first day for which an employee wishes to claim benefits are generally considered timely filed if there is a good reason for the delay. After the RRB receives the application and statement of sickness and determines eligibility, biweekly claim forms are mailed to the claimant for completion and return to an RRB field office for processing. The RRB also makes claim forms available for completion online by those employees who establish an online account. The claim forms must be received at the RRB within 30 days of the last day of the claim period, or within 30 days of the date the claim form was mailed to the claimant or made available online, whichever is later. Benefits may be lost if an application or claim is filed late.

Claimants are reminded that while claim forms for sickness benefits can be submitted online, applications and statements of sickness must be returned to the RRB by mail.

11. Is a claimant's employer notified each time a biweekly claim for unemployment or sickness benefits is filed?

— continued on next page

Easing the Pain of Furloughs, continued

The Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act requires the RRB to notify the claimant's base-year employer each time a claim for benefits is filed. That employer has the right to submit information relevant to the claim before the RRB makes an initial determination on the claim. In addition, if a claimant's base-year employer is not his or her current employer, the claimant's current employer is also notified. The RRB must also notify the claimant's base-year employer each time benefits are paid to a claimant. The base-year employer may protest the decision to pay benefits. Such a protest does not prevent the timely payment of benefits. However, a claimant may be required to repay benefits if the employer's protest is ultimately successful. The employer also has the right to appeal an unfavorable decision to the RRB's Bureau of Hearings and Appeals.

The RRB also conducts checks with other Federal agencies and all 50 States, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, to detect fraudulent benefit claims, and it checks with physicians to verify the accuracy of medical statements supporting sickness benefit claims.

12. How long does it take to receive payment?

Under the RRB's Customer Service Plan, if a claimant filed an application for unemployment or sickness benefits, the RRB will release a claim form or a denial letter within 10 days of receiving his or her application. If a claim for subsequent biweekly unemployment or sickness benefits is filed, the RRB will certify a payment or release a denial letter within 10 days of the date the RRB receives the claim form. If the claimant is entitled to benefits, benefits will generally be paid within one week of that decision.

However, some claims for benefits may take longer to handle than others if they are more complex, or if an RRB office has to get information from other people or organizations. If this happens, claimants may expect an explanation and an estimate of the time required to make a decision.

Claimants who think an RRB office made the wrong decision about their benefits have the right to ask for review and to appeal. They will be notified of these rights each time an unfavorable decision is made on their claims.

13. How are payments made?

Railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits are paid by the U.S. Treasury's Direct Deposit program. With Direct Deposit, benefit payments are made electronically to an employee's bank, savings and loan, credit union or other financial institution. New applicants for unemployment and sickness benefits will be asked to provide information needed for Direct Deposit enrollment.

14. How can claimants get more information on railroad unemployment or sickness benefits?

Claimants with questions about unemployment or sickness benefits, or who are seeking information about their claims and benefit payments, can contact an RRB office by calling toll-free at 1-877-772-5772. Claimants can also access an online service, "View RUIA Account Statement" on the "Benefit Online Services" page at www.rrb.gov, which provides a summary of the unemployment and sickness benefits paid to them. To use this service, claimants must first establish an online account.

See you in Chicago!

By Terri Fleming

BLET National Auxiliary Treasurer



I can't believe how fast this year is flying by! Summer is almost here and so are the BLET regional meetings. I always look forward to attending these conventions, and most of all, attending the BLET Auxiliary meetings there. It's a great opportunity to see old friends and meet some new ones. I have learned countless things at these conventions over the years through the talks and seminars offered there on insurance, retirement, legal matters, important legislation, and numerous other subjects concerning the railroad industry. If you have never attended a regional meeting, I highly recommend you do so.

The most important thing to me at these meetings is the assurance that I don't have to feel alone in this unique life of a "railroad spouse." As most of you know, being a spouse of a railroader is very different and sometimes challenging. After becoming active with my local auxiliary and also with the National Auxiliary, I now know how important it is to have this support system with other spouses. We as spouses have a great avenue through the BLET Auxiliary to join with an entire community of railroad spouses year round for support, education, and friendship. Through the BLET Auxiliary meetings, I hope that you will experience the feeling of being connected, learn new things, and have fun at the same time. See you in Chicago!

Going Green

You can help reduce our footprint on the environment by going green. As always, our newsletter is available on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net even before the copies are mailed out. We now offer readers the option to receive the newsletter in digital format. 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.

In Memoriam

Jeffrey A. Harsh, a member of BLET Division 882 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was killed in a railroad accident on March 26, 2016. Brother Harsh was 43 years old.

He is survived by parents Sandra and Peter Harsh; sisters Laura and Liana; close friends Kevin A. Williams and Jake Weber; and countless other friends, relatives, and co-workers in his close-knit railroad family.

Our hearts go out to the family and friends of Brother Harsh.



Greetings from your Editor, Susie Burrola

to teach them to work hard, and that anything is achievable.

What better example of work ethics could we show to our children than that of railroaders? Whatever path our young adults choose, be it to join the military, to go to college, or to start a job right after high school, you can believe they have seen the sacrifices their parents have made for them. Some children may be able to see it now and for others it may take awhile for them to realize that they are fortunate to have been raised in a union family.

For the younger generations, however, many of them are unaware of the sacrifices that have been made by so many throughout the history of the BLET and what unions have done for us as a nation over the years. It is so important for us to educate our youth about the importance of unionism for they rarely learn about it in school. Railroad families involved with the Auxiliary have an advantage in that regard. Many of our children see the union as something in which their parents are involved, but the Auxiliary is something that includes the whole family. The exposure they get to the union that represents the railroader in their family, and the values they learn through those experiences, carries on as they get older and gives them a more positive attitude toward unions.

This has certainly been true in my family. My oldest child, after getting out of the military and college, sought a job in a union as an underwater welder. Today he is in the Pile Drivers Union and regularly attends his union meetings. My second and third children are both in college and love to debate about the importance of unions with their professors and classmates. My youngest, who is graduating this year, recently started working part-time at Safeway and joined the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Division 8.

I am proud of my husband for being so active in the union and setting a good example for our children. I am also very thankful

that he encouraged me to get involved in the Auxiliary. We have learned so much as a family and are able to share information and our experiences with others.

The election year is upon us - we are the middle class, the ones who need to keep passing the torch and do what we can to keep our union strong. Let's all remember to be mindful of which candidates support our issues when we cast our votes.

*"We are all broken, that's how
the light gets in."*

— Ernest Hemingway

2016 Regional Meetings:

Eastern Region Meeting - July 11-14, 2016
The Drake Hotel, Chicago, Illinois

For more information and to register, go to:
<https://www.ble-t.org/regional/chicago/>

Western Region Meeting - August 22-25, 2016
Hyatt Regency, Long Beach, California

For more information and to register, go to:
<https://www.ble-t.org/regional/longbeach/>

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

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