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(USPS 350-360)

Joy, Dr. King and a call to conscience





The Pilgrim church's praise singers at left and the Riverside High School choir raised back to back gospel thunder at the UAW's annual Dr. King celebration.

t was in the packed Laborers Local 113 meeting hall on ■ January 9 that the United Auto Workers held its annual tribute to Martin Luther King. But from that basement auditorium the gospel power of two choirs almost took the roof off the building.

The Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church Praise Singers, whose pastor, Kurt Boyd, also handled the invocation and benediction, first blew the place up, followed by the Riverside University High School Choir, whose school had been helped by UAW fund-raising to tour black colleges.

The singing not just inspired foot tapping and clapping but underlay the theme in celebration of Dr. King -- a call to conscience and to service.

Even more than worship dancers, hymns and ministry, the event focused on the lessons of Dr. King, whose sayings dotted the walls and the program - and on the original purpose of the UAW community attitude.

This was further emphasized by special awards in honor of some of the celebration's key founders. The late Janie L. Jackson, whose life experience and lessons as a UAW worker had inspired many in the hall, had presentations in her memory, witnessed by members of her family, to two people she had personally inspired.

The known recipient was Jay Reinke, a UAW member for 30 years, a human resources trainer and leader of youth

UAW continued Page 5



Supervisor Peggy West hugged close friend Jay Reinke as she presented his award, while MALC executive board member Tony Rainey did the honors for another longtime friend of Janie Jackson, Local 469's Anne Stabler.



Final remnants of Midwest hit the road

By Dominique Paul Noth Editor, Labor Press

The news came as no surprise to union workers accustomed to doubletalk but it clearly hornswaggled politicians who had accepted Republic Airlines' pledge to the mayor and the governor that it intended to rename but retain 800 Midwest Airlines jobs in Milwaukee.

Quietly in January, the company revealed it would consolidate Midwest and Frontier executive operations by moving headquarters to its home state of Indiana, retaining at best 200 backroom office jobs and call center operations in Oak Creek for now. The facility is already at half staffing given the transfer away or elimination of other jobs. Republic, Midwest and Frontier also currently have some 200 more jobs in various Milwaukee locations, airline industry sources indicate, though the future of that work depends on business volume. But at least the company will not rename its downtown landmark as the Indiana Convention Center.

Republic indicates it still intends to add 800 jobs in Milwaukee, but, if you examine the figures, half the jobs are contingent on growth and half would be transfers from maintenance operations for Frontier in Denver and call center workers from New Mexico. Aviation industry sources report many of these workers are resisting transfer without greater compensation - "Would you leave New Mexico



The last legacy flight, airport party and thank-yous came in November but in January came confirmation that Milwaukee no longer had a hometown airline.

for Milwaukee for \$8 an hour?" one call center worker asked -and Republic's plans clearly are conditioned on how well its various airline brand models perform in the face of extended competition at Mitchell Field.

Southwest has already emerged as a formidable competitor with AirTran, Delta and others for former business. The flying public has also become aware that Midwest Airlines today flies different planes with different, less experienced crews than the Midwest of the past, that the attentiveness and neighborly flavor that was the hallmark of former crews has clearly changed, that the cookies can be bought at the supermarket, and that even the website isn't as

nimbly updated.

Ironically, most of the local media has not corrected its reports from last November when Republic's promise of adding 800 jobs was described as "doubling" its locally-based workforce. At this point, until the promises are proven, the company has actually reduced its area workforce. Any "improvements" would be later in the year at best.

Meanwhile, the last round of 400 pilots and flight attendants who lost their jobs in the Republic takeover have either taken their families out of the community or are pursuing jobs of less pay that don't reward their skills and experience, according to spokespersons cleaning up the remnants of their furloughing.

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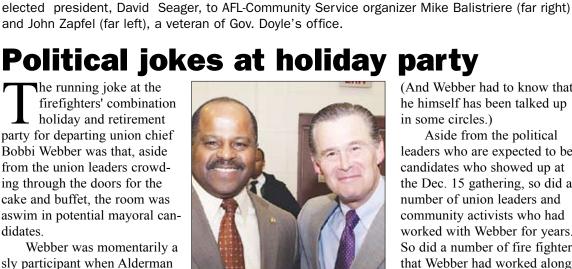
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At his retirement party, Bobbi Webber (second from left) introduces the fire fighters local's newly

Among the many aldermen at Webber's retirement party was Bob Donovan.

going to do now" Murphy asked the retiring union leader of Milwaukee Fire Fighters Local 215.

"Oh, I thought maybe I'd run for mayor," Webber said teasingly. Murphy is one of several aldermen political insiders are talking up should current Mayor Tom Barrett succeed in his campaign to become Wisconsin's next governor.

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(And Webber had to know that he himself has been talked up in some circles.)

Aside from the political leaders who are expected to be candidates who showed up at the Dec. 15 gathering, so did a number of union leaders and community activists who had worked with Webber for years. So did a number of fire fighters that Webber had worked alongside of over 33 years.

nd it was a perfect opportunity for him to introduce his successor elected by the fire fighters that

The new president, David R. Seager Jr., not only made the rounds at the party, he spent the following month introducing himself to the labor community and the general public, participating in events pleading for renewed financing of fire fighting services and to halt the shuffle of services at various Milwaukee station houses.

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Michael Murphy was among

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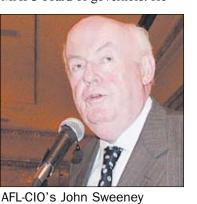
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MATC's Bill Thomas

n affable and creative teacher of physics, Bill Thomas was also leader of the teachers' union at the Milwaukee Area Technical College through some of the most turbulent disputes at the college, including a strike in the bitter winter of 1968 when teachers and counselors picketed in the cold to protest administration tactics.

Thomas, who died January 5 at age 79, taught at MATC for more than 30 years before his retirement in 1991. He served AFT Local 212 in many capacities, including president from 1968 through 1969 and then again from 1986-1990. Michael Rosen, the current local president, calls him one of the giants of MATC history. Interviews with Thomas will be included in a video tribute being prepared for Local 212's commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the strike in the spring.

Thomas was credited during his leadership for bringing other unions along to support the teachers, including big help during the strike from the United Auto Workers, and creative confrontations with other unions whose leadership served on the MATC board of governors. He



Sweeney to Harvard
The national AFL-CIO's president emeritus, John
Sweeney, has been named a resident fellow for the spring term at Harvard's Institute of Politics.
When Sweeney retired as AFL-CIO president in September, he vowed to become a "union warrior at large," and now he will share his more than 50-years experience in the union movement with Harvard students.

The institute is part of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, and resident fellows participate in the intellectual life of the Harvard community and lead weekly study groups on a range of topics.

a range of topics.

Sweeney, one of six resident fellows, will be joined by two mayors, Manny Diaz, former mayor of Miami and former president of the US Conference of Mayors, and Greg Nickels of Seattle, also a former Conference of Mayors president. Also resident fellows are Michèle Pierre-Louis, former prime minister of Haiti, former Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Okla.) and Mary Catherine Andrews, a former Bush assistant and director of the Office of

Global Communications.

In Memorium



The late Bill Thomas at a union gathering.

also pushed respect for teachers, helping end such required tasks as mandatory cafeteria monitoring and timecard punching.

During Thomas' tenure, the college also agreed to shared governance. Local 212 meets monthly with the MATC president, a process that will continue under the new president just chosen by the MATC board, Michael Burke, former chief of San Jose City College in California.

eteran AFT activist and colleague Charlie Dee delivered the touching eulogy at Thomas' funeral, recalling among other anecdotes that "Bill had a wicked good memory, an absolutely astounding capacity to remember details."

"I loved being in meetings with the administration, sitting next to Bill, when one of the human resources hacks would try to say the contract meant such and such, and Bill would very serenely recite when that language was negotiated, what problem it had addressed at the

time, and without saying, 'You're full of it!' which was my inclination, would simply shut the other side up."

Other AFT colleagues recall Thomas as quiet and unassuming, devoted to service and the power of education. "He made MATC and Milwaukee better places," Rosen said. "Those of us who knew Bill fully understand what he meant to MATC. Those of you who didn't know him benefit daily from his life's work."

(Sadly, just a few days after Bill Thomas' funeral, another former 212 leader and striker, Bob Sroka, unexpectedly died. As the local's retired financial secretary Mike Miliren recalled: "As a young instructor, Bob was one of only eight business division instructors who walked out and stayed out for the entire strike... This took a lot of courage in those times." Bob had remained active with MATC and Local 212, teaching part time and attending many Local 212 functions.)

n the choice this January of Burke as new MATC president, Rosen noted that the MATC teachers were "eager to begin working with Dr. Burke to address the region's growing economic divide."

He has "a solid track record and excellent credentials" devoting "his professional life to ensuring that disadvantaged students have educational access and opportunity," Rosen told the Labor Press.



For updated master list of events, visit www.milwaukeelabor.org

Wednesday, January 27 MALC Executive Council 2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, February 3
Monthly Delegate Meeting
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Wednesday, February 24
MALC Executive Council
2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, March 3
Monthly Delegate Meeting
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

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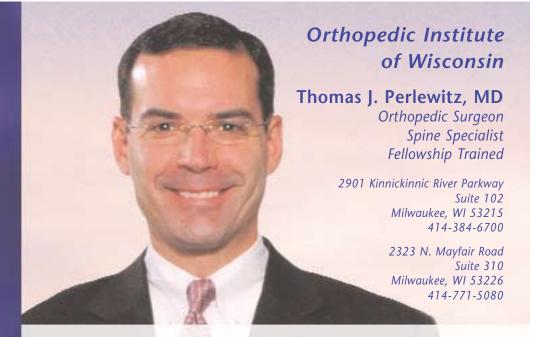
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Health industry pays for chamber's ad blitz

In some ways it has been the worst kept secret in American politics, that the nation's biggest health insurers were the folks funneling millions of dollars to the US Chamber of Commerce for those lie-filled, scare-mongering commercials about health care reform.

But while commercial mass media outlets hinted this was happening, they spent most of their time pursuing non-existent issues, negligible changes in health care legislative details, sloughing off major changes that were occurring to move the legislation forward and basically inflating conservative opposition where little existed. It was the respected nonpartisan and nonprofit news operations that kept busy providing revealing facts and respected analysis regardless of partisan divisions or audience-building sensationalism.

One major result was the National Journal revelations from Peter Stone, whose investigative report in January blew the lid off the issue. Stone revealed that the big money speeding to the US Chamber of Commerce for its ads came from the powerful trade group America's Health Insurance Plans (known as AHIP) - and arrived "just as dealings with the Obama administration and congressional Democrats soured last summer."

"Six of the nation's biggest health insurers began quietly pumping big money into third-party television ads aimed at killing or significantly modifying the major health reform bills moving through Congress.," Stone reported. "That money, between \$10 million and \$20 million, came from Aetna, Cigna, Humana, Kaiser Foundation Health Plans, UnitedHealth Group and Wellpoint, according to two health care lobbyists familiar with the transactions."

The funds "were solicited by AHIP and funneled to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to help underwrite tens of millions of dollars of television ads by two business coalitions set up and subsidized by the chamber. Each insurer kicked in at least \$1 million and some gave multimillion-dollar donations."

Dan Pfeiffer, White House communications director, noted that Stone's reporting confirmed "one of Washington's worst-kept secrets" which is big insurance companies are fighting tooth and nail to kill health reform that will wrest power from their hands and give it to American families.

The big AHIP members have long tried to maintain a positive public posture of supporting some type of health care reform -- just so long as reform proposals wouldn't do anything to end their strangle-hold on health care coverage and never-ending, always-soaring profits. Once it became clear that they wouldn't get a free hand under the new legislation, they switched tactics to a barrage of anti-health legislation ads.

Pointed out House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in her blog: "These big insurance companies appear to have gotten caught secretly bankrolling the effort to kill health insurance reform for millions of Americans, despite their disingenuous claims of support for the legislation. This duplicity is not surprising coming from an industry that has used every method to try to kill health insurance reform that would save lives, save money, save jobs, and save Medicare."

Underlying her view was Media Matters, a nonprofit that fact-checks media coverage. It dissected the claims being made in the Chamber ads -- including the one labeled "Hidden Taxes" and intended to stampede Chamber believers into thinking the new legislation contains secret funding.

To quote the ads: "Congress wants new hidden taxes - on your health care. Hidden taxes on medicines, medical devices, and health insurance. Increasing what businesses and workers pay. Hidden health care taxes that start right away, in the middle of a deep recession."

There's only one problem with such claims. They don't exist. Even amid the continuing changes, which mainly reduce taxes on the middle class, the details of the funding are transparent, not hidden. Details are quickly available online for all to see. Both the Senate and House versions are accessible and changes in negotiations are quickly detailed. One way of many to check is mediamattersaction.org/factcheck/

In his article, Stone noted that the health industry was using AHIP as a conduit "to avoid a repeat of the political flak that hit the insurance industry after it famously ran its multimillion-dollar 'Harry and Louise' ads to help kill health care reforms during the Clinton administration." Those funding sources were revealed after the Clinton era ads helped stop reform so the health industry was conscious that the media was looking for a connection to the Chamber of Commerce and seeking to avoid letting them find it. Now the tactics have been forced into the light.

Asked by Stone about the health-insurer funding for its ad blitz, the chamber's top lobbyist, Bruce Josten, responded: "No comment. We never disclose funding or what we're going to do."

However, after the story appeared, Josten confirmed the money transfer from AHIP to several news outlets that had previously missed the details.

From Page 1

groups and UAW civil rights groups and now an AFL-CIO Community Service employee as well as a choir member at the Grace United Church of Christ, which has just named him its man of the year.

A surprise recipient was UAW Local 469's Annie Stabler, who had worked with Jackson in starting the King tribute.

The keynote speaker was another lifelong friend and UAW co-worker - Sheila Cochran, now secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council. She gave a straight talk, recalling the "coalition of conscience" that had been a centerpiece of UAW social concerns and reminding the assembly that leadership came in "leaving things better." She said she was amused how many African Americans, looking at the US first black president, "seemed to be folding their arms and asking what he could do for them" as opposed to step-

Official notice

FSCME Local 82,the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employees, will hold nominations for all elected positions at two membership meetings: February 9, 2010, March 9, 2010, from 11:30 a.m.to 1 p.m. in Room 240 of the UWM Student Union.

Members should be sure to bring their verifcation cards. Any contested elections will be resolved at the April 13 membership meeting in the same place.

> Cecilia Lewandowski Secretary AFSCME Local 82

ping up and helping him do his

Sponsors of the event include various UAW units -Brewery Workers Local 9, Local 469, Local 75, the State and Southeast Area Cap Councils, plus the host Laborers Local 113, USW Local 2-2009, the Milwaukee chapters of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.



A crowd of more than 150 packed Laborers Hall for the King celebration January 9.

Essay contest returns

important to my family and my community because . . . '

The Wisconsin Labor History Society has announced its High School Essay Contest for the 2009-2010 School Year built around this annual theme. Wisconsin high school students (grades 9-12) are eligible to participate by submitting an essay of about 750 words by the February 15 deadline.

Cash prizes will be awarded in May 2010, including \$500 First Place, \$300 Second Place, \$200 Third Place and up to five \$100 Honorable Mention awards.

Teachers are encouraged to help with editorial and research advice for original work. Past winners have often talked to family members, friends or neighbors about the role of unions in their lives to develop personal stories.

The annual contest is operated by the Wisconsin Labor History Society (affiliated with the Wisconsin Historical Society), 6333 W. Blue Mound Rd., Milwaukee WI 53213 (414771-0700 extension 20)

The website is wisconsinlaborhistory.org

Essays will be judged on understanding, evidence of original research, writing style and significance. Essays must be typed, double-spaced, on white paper. Two copies must be submitted (One may be a photocopy.) Please be sure to provide cover sheet information in detail.

For more information you can contact Prof. Harvey J. Kaye (920-465-2355 or kayeh@uwgb.

Send completed essays postmarked by Feb. 15 to him at Center for History and Social Change, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Green Bay WI 54311

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For police uniforms, code of conduct seems elus

By Dominique Paul Noth Editor, Labor Press

t is a curious case of the City of Milwaukee not quite doing what the law encourages, not keeping manufacturing jobs in America, not quite opposing sweatshops and not accepting the lowest bid even

though it came from shops using a respected American manufac-

As a result this January, city purchasing agent Rhonda Kelsey signed off on a three-year \$1.18 million contract for police uniforms to the previous vendor, Badger Uniforms, and the police chief's preferred brand for secret pocket all-polyester garments made by Spiewak & Sons in Foshan City, China, at a plant under scrutiny for alleged labor law violations.

It's not quite a done deal, though the city signed the contract. Protests from the Milwaukee Clean Clothes Campaign and sympathetic aldermen are leading to further examination in a dispute that has already dragged out over a year, caused rounds of bidding and rethinking -- and raises serious questions about why the city passed a clean clothes ordinance in the first place.

The ordinance does not include a "buy America" component but it was clearly intended to protect the city from sweatshops and from questionable outsourced manufacturing when respected choices and good workmanship were available within our own shores.

The city may have benefited from a police "broken windows" philosophy - cleaning up the small stuff to prevent bigger crimes - but seems to have run headlong into difficulties with a clean clothes philosophy, especially one involving its own police department.

The problem comes in how to determine what is a sweatshop in foreign countries, where managers can't be investigated openly or by US legal rules, and how to measure technical specifications. Suspicion is not guilt and loopholes abound in any regulation, but such realities also encourage greater scrutiny.

elsey approved the Badger/Spiewak contract after rejecting lower bids for not meeting all specifications. She and the Milwaukee Police Department evaluator agreed.

It may have helped that the winning uniforms had continued support from Chief Edward Flynn and even from his police officers. The politic union officially stayed out of the issue though it had been supportive of other clean clothes campaigns in the past.

The initial language in the bidding process even specified Spiewak but was later refined to allow competitive bidding.

Now the city says it will await a city attorney opinion, which could take many months, on the legal issues. Some see that decision as a delay and that the Badger contract will be quietly approved. Others see a new fight emerging.

The losing companies are not complaining in public, which is not unusual. In uniform making, companies cater to the wishes of key clients, such as police officers-- and Milwaukee police officers as well as Chief Flynn have indicated a preference for Spiewak's made in China uniforms. Plus the local supplier, Badger, has been a long-time presence in the community.

Still, the case has left

many outside observers curi-

The rejected low bid involved as manufacturer Elbeco, a respected veteran provider of uniforms headquarters in Pennsylvania that had pledged in writing to use its US facilities for the Milwaukee contract. In fact it helped provide two lower bids that didn't win. Badger/ Spiewak came in \$157,000 higher than the Elbeco bid through local provider Goldfish, and the third bid from Lark Outfitters was in between.

After the bids were accepted, Kelsey said the police still found the Spiewak uniforms more durable and the other offers not 100% polyester. There were reports from the police department, denied by Elbeco, that its samples didn't include the valued secret pock-

There are other technical decisions that seem puzzling to the Clean Clothes Campaign, which also disputes Spiewak's assurances about its rights issues at its China facility. For instance, Spiewak has refuted worker rights investigations group about violations and has also pledged that its workers on the Milwaukee contract in China would be segregated from other work and paid according to ordinance concerns.

Which raises questions about how it operated in other cases and why the city would pass up an opposing bid more than 10% lower that came from Goldfish using a respected American manufacturer.

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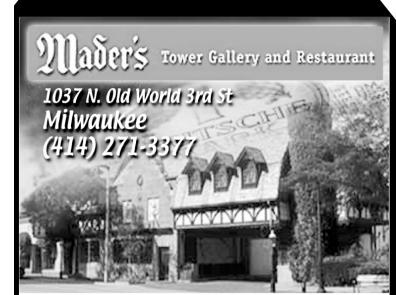
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A moment of tallness was captured at the AFSCME open house. **Left to right:** AFSCME state workers' leader Martin Biehl, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and state AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Phil Neuenfeldt.

RIGHT: Enjoying the always special appetizers were Citizen Action's Robert Kraig (left) and busy labor lawyer Mark Sweet.



Training honors to Local 139

His union didn't even know he was nominated but Daniel Sperberg, training director for Operating Engineers Local 139, received the 2010 Excellence in Apprenticeship Training Award from the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans at an awards ceremony January 11 in Las Vegas.

The award recognizes the "overall excellence" in the Local 139 training and education program, jointly managed by the union and its signatory contractors. Sperberg has served as training director since 2004 helping operate and maintain the state-of-the-art, Joseph J. Goetz Jr. Training Center for apprentice and journey-workers on a 400-acre site near Coloma.

Local 139 Business Manager Terry McGowan said the award



Daniel Sperberg

reflects a mindset among Local 139 instructors that the training they provide should be the best available to Operating Engineers anywhere in the United States.

The awarding foundation is a non-profit, educational association founded in 1954, and represents some 8,400 organizations.

Open house snapshots

RIGHT: Free trade activist Steve Watrous sneaks a glance at the camera during diverse table talk at the labor council open house. Visible are Jay Reinke and county supervisors Peggy West and Toni Clark. Below right, another table featured school board member Peter Blewett, Rep. Barbara Toles and Ald. Willie Wade. BELOW: Workers United leader Sam Gallo returned from illness to share a laugh with Sheila Cochran while (bottom) new Machinists District leader Russell Krings was see in the buffet line.











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Forget the bad and ugly, the good can truly help Haiti

ost citizens and union workers responded with immediate sympathy and action when massive earthquakes and aftershocks devastated Haiti's shacks, major buildings -- everything -- leveling its populace centers with still uncalculated dead. Even weeks later the numbers are not final.

Only now can governments and private relief organizations engage in long-term remedial action. And only now can human instinct respond with the full measure of support Americans have always demonstrated in the face of overwhelming natural tragedy.

Curiously and sadly, the normal reaction was not universal. Many in this country were as angry, mystified and distressed as President Obama's press secretary, Robert Gibbs, who was prodded by reporters into a personal reaction to TV evangelist Pat Robertson's suggestion that the earthquake was a curse on the Haitians because of a pact with the devil and to conservative kingpin Rush Limbaugh urging his listeners not to dig deep into their pockets to help the suffering because the Democrats will "use this to burnish their, shall we say, credibility with the black community, both the light-skinned and dark-skinned black community in this country,"

"I think in times of great crisis there are always people that say really stupid things," said Gibbs. In a further comment about Limbaugh, he noted, "I don't know how anybody could sit where he does, having enjoyed the success that he has, and not feel some measure of sorrow for what has happened in Haiti."

To Robertson's remark, Gibbs said: "It never ceases to amaze that in times of amazing human suffering, somebody says something that could be so utterly stupid."

But Robertson and Limbaugh were not the only cases of selfinterest ahead of common sense. The Haitian tragedy also brought out the scam artists preying on the generous who wanted to help.

But here are genuine sources. Donations were urged to the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center's Earthquake Relief for Haitian Workers' Campaign at http://www.solidaritycenter.org/. In Milwaukee, the labor council points out that donations marked Haitian relief can be sent to United Way of Greater Milwaukee, a council affiliate, to provide quick help. The website is www.unitedwaymilwaukee.org/

Other sources of help identified by the AFL-CIO:

Partners in Health: www.pih.org or P.O. Box 845578, Boston, MA 02284-5578

Doctors Without Borders: www.doctorswithoutborders.org or call toll free at 1-888-392-0392. USA Headquarters 333 7th Ave., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10001-5004.

American Red Cross International Response Fund: www.red-cross.org/org or 1-800-REDCROSS.

RN Response Network: www.NationalNursesUnited.org.

Special insights into census jobs

Fred Gordon explained the opportunity for \$15 an hour US Census jobs and special testing sessions at the MALC January delegate meeting. Gordon, a former alderman, joined another census specialist, Bill Morris, in detailing how special testing has been set up with the help of the MALC and the Graphics Communication Council on Tuesdays through Feb. 23 at 633 S. Hawley Rd. More training sessions for interested individuals and groups can be set up by calling the census bureau office, 414-203-3860. A story in the December Labor Press discussed the variety of duties being sought, from phone service to neighborhood follow-ups to data processing. Visit www.milwaukeelabor.org for more details about the testing opportunities.



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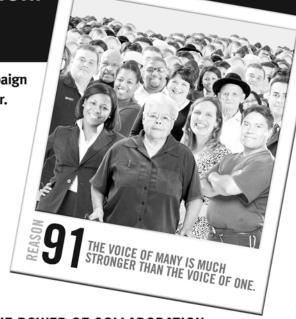
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Thank you to those unions which endorsed the Community Campaign. Your support is invaluable.

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AFSCME Local 587 AFL-CIO
AFT Local 8047 AFL-CIO
GMP Local 125B AFL-CIO
ILA Local 815 AFL-CIO
National Association of Letter Carriers
Pioneer Branch 2 AFL-CIO
Painters District Council 7 AFL-CIO



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We would like to acknowledge Lyle Balistreri and Scott Redman for securing a significant \$25,000 gift from the Power Plant Labor Management Trust and for Tim Sullivan for his generous match. Thank you for helping our community.

TOP-NOTCH LEADERS

Special thanks to Scott Redman and Anthony Rainey for their strong leadership as this year's Campaign Cabinet Labor Co-chairs. Their tireless commitment led to a successful campaign. Congratulations!



