



MICHIGAN PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTER

The official publication of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union

www.mpffu.org

Volume 33

Number 1

Spring/Summer 2008



MPFFU 48th Biennial Convention
"Rally in Bay City"

Bay City • May 7-9, 2008

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— FYI —

You too can be a contributor

It's very easy to do. Just send us a story, a picture, or both. It can be about anything that is going on in your local or general information that has something to do with unionism or being a firefighter (union event or of fire, rescue or EMS incidents involving local members) and we will publish it on the web and/or magazine.

Please submit your material ASAP to:

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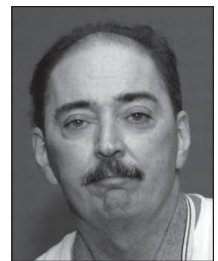
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Features

- 5 President's Message
- 7 Secretary-Treasurer's Report
- 9 Hot News From The Districts
- 14 48th Biennial Convention
The 48th Biennial Convention of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union was held on May 7-9, 2008 at the Doubletree Hotel in Bay City. Two hundred and twelve (212) delegates, fifty-eight (58) alternates, and 116 guests attended the Convention. Elections were held for two-year terms for all positions.
- 26 Kentwood Local 3174 and Kentwood Fire Department Host Citizen's Academy
We all sit around the firehouse and discuss why our customers do not understand what we do. We wonder why we continue to be cut and no one seems to care until they dial 911. Have we done anything to help educate our citizens and commissioners?
- 28 Thank You Michigan Professional Fire Fighters
Over 150 firefighters were in attendance for our 5th Annual MDA / MPFFU Boot Camp in Mt. Pleasant on June 4th!

Editor's Note

An individual that deserves special thanks and our appreciation is **Gary Gasta**. Gary is a member of Local 116 – Bay City. On very short notice, Gary offered to be our convention photographer and he spent many hours before, during, and after the convention business sessions taking the pictures that you see throughout this magazine. Thank-you Gary for a job well done!



POLITICAL ACTION FUND CONSENT FORM

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Section 55(6) of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act provides that a "Labor Organization may solicit or obtain contributions for a separate segregated fund established on an automatic basis, including but not limited to a payroll deduction plan, only if the individual who is contributing to the fund affirmatively consents to the contribution at least once in every calendar year."

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Educating taxpayers about emergency services

While Michigan's economy has lingered in a recession for the past six years, the state has lost hundreds of career firefighters in communities across the Michigan. Most of these positions were simply not filled when vacated by retirements and eliminated through attrition while other firefighter positions were reduced through layoffs.

Last week, the Michigan Senate refused to support the Governor's proposed four percent revenue sharing increase in the state's 2008-09 budget even though this revenue is essential in funding core social services like the fire and emergency medical services.

As calls for emergency services continue to increase, some state and local elected officials are looking for ways to cut services that are critical to a community's safety and quality of life. Many times they simply ignore basic safety requirements and standards for providing fire and emergency services, refusing to even consider them in determining the level of safety in their communities.

From a recent edition of the Bay City Times... "Bay City Commission approved the 2008-2009 fiscal year budget of \$133 million dollars Monday. The new budget means the fire department will not replace three fire firefighters up for retirement."

Another recent article in the Jackson Citizen Patriot reported that the city of Jackson's... "Charter Review committee is being encouraged to discuss a change to the charter that would allow the city to merge its police and fire departments (i.e., public safety officers) or become part of a metropolitan fire department."

Our task is to ensure that citizens are aware of how proposed reductions in services will affect them, including emergency response times and alleged savings in tax dollars. Some of the questions (from the Commission of Fire Accreditation International manual) that taxpayers and firefighters must ask of elected officials and fire chiefs, and hold them accountable for in budgeting emergency services funding, include:

- What is the communities' expectation of

how many minutes will pass from the time a call is received reporting an emergency to the time that a fire engine or ambulance arrives?

- Does the fire department have a response time goal? How close is it to expectations? What factors went into setting the goal, such as fire loss data, areas of greater fire hazard and water supply? Has this goal been adopted and published by the community's elected leaders?

- What percentage of the time does the fire department meet that goal right now?

- Are there areas where there are frequently longer response times? Which parts of the community are not within four minutes drive time of a fire station? What about within five minutes? Does the fire department use GIS (computer mapping) to evaluate current and future station locations?

- How long does it take for firefighters to get on the road once they are notified they have an alarm?

- What statistical reports does the fire agency produce on its response time performance and the extent of local fire losses and potential exposures that are covered? How do you make these reports available to the public?

- What is the department's goal for staffing for a fire/rescue response?

- What percentage of the time do they meet that staff goal? Does each engine and ladder company have four firefighters? Can the department muster between 12 to 15 firefighters at a fire within 10 minutes of an alarm?

- What role do simultaneous calls play in response times and staffing? If there is a medical call, how many firefighters are available for a fire alarm or additional EMS call?

- How many calls did the department handle 10 years ago and how many in the last year? What kind of growth has the community experienced and how have staffing levels changed to address those changes?

- What level of service does the department provide for fire prevention, public education, fire investigation, technical rescue,

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hazardous materials, and disaster planning? How does the department measure performance in these areas?

- Are your physical resources adequate, including fire stations, training facilities, fire apparatus, and personal protective safety equipment to meet the level of risk in the community? Do you have adequate training and personnel safety programs? What's the plan to pay for repair or replacement of fire apparatus?

- What is the community's ISO rating for fire protection and building code enforcement? Have these ratings changed? If money was spent to improve fire department services, how much of that money would come back to the taxpayers in increased safety and insurance premiums?

All too often, city managers and elected officials cut critical emergency services in a vacuum under the guise of saving money. They fail to consider the increased risk to the safety of residents, property loss, and increased insurance costs to taxpayers. As municipalities decrease emergency services paid for by taxpayers, there is no decrease in taxes. Many times there are additional costs in insurance premiums and other fees.

The responsibility for the loss of emergency services in cities across Michigan does not fall on local officials alone. The state legislature has reduced Revenue Sharing to local governments by more than \$3 Billion over the past six years resulting in many cutbacks in services.

It is imperative that we continue to raise these issues and others at both state and local levels of government. We need to educate taxpayers about emergency services, how they are delivered, and ensure that decisions made by politicians on the delivering these vital services are open and factual. ■

MPFFU FIRE PAC

Thank You To All Of The MPFFU FirePAC Contributors

The following have contributed November 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008

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SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

The Perfect Storm

Like the movie, several different factors have emerged simultaneously and are creating very turbulent times for our membership. We are being attacked from every different direction.

Public Relations

For decades, firefighters have been held in high esteem by citizens in their communities. Much of this "Good PR" came naturally and it was justified and well deserved. Our members not only did their jobs in a courteous, professional manner, they willingly took on new responsibilities such as EMS, Haz-Mat, confined space, public fire education, etc. in order to protect the taxpayers in their communities.

In addition, it was very common to see our members active in community organizations, schools, and churches. They also donated much of their off-duty time to raising funds for various charities. Because of this, we had the good fortune of being seen as heroes and leaders in our communities.

Because of this "Good PR" it was relatively easy to garner public support whenever we faced the threat of reductions in staffing or the elimination or contracting out of emergency medical services. Oftentimes, without any prompting, citizens would storm city hall and demand that elected officials leave "their" fire department alone, especially when it involved reductions in service to the community.

Elected officials were frequently stymied whenever they tried to bring up PSO, automatic mutual aid, or fire districts. Oftentimes, we even enjoyed public support when it came to contract negotiations, especially when attempts were made to reduce our wages, pensions, or health insurance. Many citizens in our communities believed we deserved to be treated and paid a fair wage for dedicating our lives to such a dangerous profession.

Political Action

Many of our locals also benefited from an additional layer of insulation by being proactive in recruiting and supporting candidates for mayor, council, or township

boards. Having elected officials that understand the work that firefighters do made it much easier to get the necessary equipment and staffing levels that we needed to do the job safely and efficiently.

Strictly Business?

For a long time, it was also very common to see a local union president remain in office for 10, 15, or even as long as 20 years. And many local elected officials also remained in office for two or three terms. This dual longevity provided an opportunity for us to develop relationships and build an atmosphere of trust and respect between union and management. Don't get me wrong, we still had labor-management disagreements, but it was "just business".

How Bad is it?

Like so many aspects of our job, it's amazing how things can change so dramatically, so quickly. Without a bit of exaggeration, I can safely say that things have not been this bad for at least the last forty years. Many of our current battles are driven by the downturn in our economy, but there are some other factors that have intensified our problems.

There's a New Sheriff in Town
Many long time elected officials and city managers have moved on and a new breed of public officials have taken over the reins. Many of these people got elected to office by promising to reduce taxes and eliminate "fat" in the budgets. This has happened at the federal, state, and local levels of government. Newly appointed city managers got hired by assuring their new employers that they could keep the public employees, including firefighters, "under control".

Now that's Personal!

It's only my observation, but lately it seems like many of these "new" people spend a good portion of their work day trying to figure out ways to screw with us. That's not business...it's personal!

As a matter of fact, you may not have noticed it yet, but there appears to be a concerted effort nationwide by many management and media people to inflict damage to our image with the public.

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I recently attended a meeting with presidents and secretary-treasurers from other states and many of them reported that they are noticing an all out effort by the media to discover and publicize any dirt or "negative PR" that can be found on public employees, especially firefighters. Think about the bad stories about firefighters in Boston, New York, and Chicago that have recently made the national news. In all of these incidences, it was obvious that they were making a deliberate attempt to discredit all firefighters, not just those individuals that were allegedly involved in these incidents. That's not business...it's personal!

Think about the stories that have been published about our so-called "lucrative" pensions and retiree benefits. Think about how one sided the reporting was in those stories. That's not business...it's personal!

Recently, even some legislators in Lansing have jumped on board and are trying to abolish or change PA 312. They do so thinking they are doing something positive to assist city's and townships financial burdens. No one can actually show PA 312 has done anything to give employees an unfair advantage, but it doesn't matter. The Michigan Municipal League has been saying it so often that suddenly it becomes a believable urban legend. That's not business...it's personal!

Pensions

After years of fantastic investment returns, some pension systems have struggled to keep up with inflation. Cities that enjoyed the benefit of years of reduced contributions to pension systems because of record setting investment returns were now forced to contribute more. Almost overnight, there was an obvious trend by employers to convert defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans, even in places where there weren't any apparent financial prob-

Continued on next page ➤

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

lems. Employers have tried to strengthen their bargaining position by publicizing examples of some rare incidents of pensions being more than 100 percent of the employee's income. That's not business...it's personal!

Health Care

The continual increases in the cost of health care has caused employers to shift the costs to us, and in many places, they even want to reduce or even eliminate health care for new hires and retirees. Even when our members researched solutions to reduce costs and proposed them at the bargaining table, employers demonstrated time and again that they would rather just "share the cost" instead of agreeing to solutions that would mutually benefit everyone. Once again, they tried to gain support for these cuts by pointing out to the public that "everyone needs to share the pain." Some even went so far as to blame retirees because they were using the health care benefits they rightfully earned and obviously needed. That's not business...it's personal!

Staffing

All across the state, locals have faced reductions in the total number of members in their departments with the assurance that the daily minimum staffing complements would remain. At the time, employers claimed that it was much cheaper to pay overtime rather than hire more people. Because of this new management philosophy, almost every local has seen a reduction in its total membership. But lately, after saving thousands of dollars by not replacing employees, municipalities began to complain about the large increases in overtime. They then used the overtime excuse as justification to reduce daily staffing levels. In some locations, they have publicized our members W-2 amounts criticizing them for working they very overtime that the city created. That's not business...it's personal!

Workers Comp

We all realize our job is dangerous and no matter how careful we are or what equipment we have, there is always going to be a risk of injury, but it's obvious to anyone with half a brain that if you are forced to

work with less people, more injuries are bound to occur. Well guess what? Almost every community in the state is automatically rejecting almost every workers comp claim submitted by our members. That's not business...it's personal!

Simply Terminate

In almost any work environment, workers occasionally will make some bad decisions. Most of our locals have strong contractual language to insure that workers are not subjected to unjust discipline. In spite of this, there have been a few recent situations in which the employer by-passed progressive discipline and simply terminated the employee. Even though they knew that the employees would eventually get their job back, they terminated him/her anyway, knowing it would take several months, and a lot of money, to get their decision reversed by an arbitrator. That's not business...it's personal!

Should We Just Give Up?

Because of this continual harassment from management, I have observed many of our members withdrawing from participating in the very activities that provided us our strength in the past. Charities, forget it. Hold a union office, why should I? Involvement in politics, what good does it do? Morale has never been worse. Even our newest members just want to put their time in and retire. Is that what our profession has become—just a job?

Back to the Basics

In order to win this battle we all need to get back to the basics. Help make your local union stronger. Hold an office in your local union or at the very least attend and participate in union meetings. Share your thoughts and YOUR TIME in making your local union stronger. Attend a few council/township meetings. If they want to make it personal, then we can make it personal. Don't just be a "number" or a "name" on a personnel roster. Make sure they know you are a real person that is affected by their actions or inactions.

Get involved in your local's charitable events. Get out in the community, on duty and off duty. Don't just let a few of your

members carry the load for your entire local. We all have a responsibility to do our share. Be a recognizable face in your community. Don't give your citizens a reason to believe the propaganda that you just sit around and play cards, exploring the internet, or watching TV.

Get involved in politics. Seek out and support candidates that will support firefighters. Writing a FIRE PAC check is a great place to start but being directly involved in helping a candidate get elected is worth a lot more than any check you could write. If you don't reside in the community where you work as a firefighter, consider running for office yourself, especially if the MPFFU has a local in your town. And of course, the bottom line is that you actually have to cast your vote in elections to get our candidates elected. It's embarrassing to realize that many of our members don't even take the time to go to the polls to vote.

We need to stop the spread of apathy among our members now, before it's too late. We need to stand up and shout out that "We are mad as hell and we are not going to take it anymore."

If we are ever going to turn this around, it's going to take all of us working together to do it. That's the very meaning of the word Union: "an organization of workers formed for the purpose of advancing its members' interests in respect to wages, benefits, and working conditions."

As the saying goes: "We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."

Point of Personal Privilege

Two long time members of the MPFFU Executive Board, former 6th District Vice President, Ed Rigley and outgoing 3rd District Vice President Greg Weisbarth, were given MPFFU "Lifetime Member" status at the recent convention in Bay City. Although both of these brothers were well known for the service work they did in their districts, these gentlemen did a lot of their work under the radar, without a lot of flash or fanfare, on MPFFU Executive Board issues. The contributions they made and the input they provided were invaluable. On a personal note, I want to say that it was my honor and privilege to not only work with them but to say that they both remain my good friends. ■

HOT NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS

1st District

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The locals in the first, much like all others, continue to face budget problems. Currently the locals are maintaining their fire department staffing levels; Menominee and Marquette have seen reductions in other city departments. Menominee recently had two members retire, with the city replacing both positions with new hires as agreed upon in the collective bargaining agreement. They still continue to run Auto Aid with neighboring Marinette.

In Iron Mountain, last November's election replaced three council members with firefighter friendly council members. However, since then many of the council votes have split 4 to 3 including a failed motion to dismiss the city manager that has supported the move towards public safety. This, in addition with many other issues, has led to an effort to recall the remaining incumbent council members. The election is set for August.

The Iron Mountain Local 554 is currently in negotiations and has worked for the past year under an expired CBA. The local has been in a PSO battle with the city and their last contract took more than three years to settle. The local has been reduced to nine members with each member paying \$40.00 per week in dues. Their dues have been at this level for the past four years in an effort to build their legal fund should they have to go to arbitration.

With summer rapidly passing by it is now time to turn our attention to the November election. The presidential campaigns are heating up and certainly this will be a turning point for this country's future. During the MPFFU convention I had the opportunity to discuss the upcoming election with General President Schaitberger. His candidness was refreshing in selecting candidates, regardless of party affiliation,

that support union firefighters. As union leaders, it is our responsibility to select candidates that are best for our member's jobs. It is not the place of a union to make those selections using criteria that is far more personal.

All of us will soon be receiving the campaign literature and phone calls that come with such an important election so please take time to review each candidate and make an informed decision. ■

2nd District

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I would like to start by thanking Bay City Local 116 for hosting such a great convention. We were able to have productive meetings in the day and party into the night. It is always nice to see so many brothers and sisters from across the state. Has anyone seen Brother Abbott? I think he is still on Midland St. I would also like to congratulate Third District VP Chris Reynolds and Northern Trustee Aileen Pettinger on their new roles. I look forward to working with both of them over the next two years. I would also like to personally thank lifetime member and past Third District VP Greg Weisbarth for your leadership, guidance, and friendship. You will be missed. One of the highlights of the week was when the entire body marched on city hall. Nice job organizing this important march and thanks to the Axe Men for the escort.

As you have read in the past, I like to discuss constitution and by-laws. These rules govern your local and our entire organization. Many issues can be resolved just by following or interpreting the constitution and by-laws. At the convention, a resolution was passed that states that all locals will provide a copy of their local constitution and by-laws to the MPFFU office. This will be helpful in several ways. First, every local will have to dust them off and check them out. Second, members from the local will be able to access their lo-

cal constitution and by-laws online. Third, other locals will be able to use your C&B's to modify their own. After convention is a great time to have a committee review and update your C&B's. Ask your district vice-president if you need direction or assistance.

On that same topic, I decided to review a few by-laws that we already have from the IAFF and MPFFU C&B's. Most of you will know all of these and some will not.

- MPFFU by-laws provide for lifetime membership. We have 12 including our newest, Ed Rigley and Greg Weisbarth.

- MPFFU by-laws state that the MPFFU president or another executive board member shall lobby in Lansing at least six days a month.

- MPFFU by-laws recommend waiving dues for members deployed for active military duty.

- MPFFU by-laws encourage all members to participate in the National Bone Marrow Donor Registry and the Secretary of State Organ Donor Program.

- MPFFU by-laws require locals to submit PA 312 awards and grievance arbitration decisions to the MPFFU office.

- IAFF by-laws require every local to have an annual audit and to provide this to the General Secretary-Treasurer within 180 days from the end of the fiscal year.

- IAFF by-laws state that locals will provide a fair way to resolve tie votes. If none is present, then it will be decided by the drawing of lots.

- IAFF by-laws urge locals to affiliate with their state organization, AFL-CIO, CLC, and local council.

There are many interesting by-laws already in place. Check them out.

Around the District

First off, I would like to thank the locals in the second for giving me the opportunity to serve another two years. I appreciate your support. I will continue to do my best to service our district and the MPFFU. I would also like to thank my local president and good friend Michael Navetta for the nomination. The locals in the second continue to be involved. We had over 75 percent attend the spring district meeting and over 50 percent at the convention. It was great to see so many of you at

Continued on next page ➤


HOT NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS

these important events. Several locals continue to negotiate contracts. This includes Grand Rapids L-366, Muskegon L-370, and Traverse City L-646. Norton Shores L-2559 just recently came to a tentative agreement on their CBA. Manistee L-645 is in the process of exploring possible options to secure their staffing. Locals across the second continue to work tirelessly to fight for our members' rights and benefits.

Have a great summer. Enjoy your time off and stay safe on the job. Go Tigers!!! ■

3rd District

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I would like to begin my first article by thanking the members of the 3rd District and the delegates and alternates who attended the 48th Biennial Convention in Bay City for your support. My election to the district vice-president position by acclamation would not have been possible without your support. I am humbled and very proud to be the firefighter chosen to represent the 3rd District on the MPFFU Executive Board. I would like to thank the members of the 3rd District who gave their time and served on the various committees at our recent convention: Pat Moore, Nate Papinaw, April Fuller, Aileen Pettinger, Juan Yrlas, Christian Perkins, Roger Bebeau, and Tony Lelo. And last but not least, I would like to thank MPFFU Secretary-Treasurer Terry Chesney and the members of Local 116 for all of their hard work in putting together the recent convention. Specifically from Local 116, I would like to recognize Brothers Mack Smith, Kurt Wagner, Todd Shorkey, Jeff Bloom, Paul McBride, and Tim Meagher. Job well done guys!

When I began calling around to the locals and getting brought up to speed, I realized that it is a busy time in the district. Several locals are in different stages of ne-


gotiations but the one constant most of you are facing is the problem of shrinking budgets. Maintaining our staffing levels is not just a problem in the district, but throughout the entire state. That is why it is important to complete the GIS project, as well as the Municipal Financial Analysis, with the IAFF. The waiting list for these is quite long so if you haven't had either one of these projects done you need to begin the process as soon as possible. For those of you that have done these already you know their value when it comes to contract negotiations or budget talks. If you need help I would be happy to assist your local in getting these projects completed.

Politically there is so much going on. Cancer Presumption is stuck in the Senate and as of this writing; the four percent increase to Revenue Sharing passed by the House has been zeroed out in the Senate and is now in conference committee. It's also a presidential election year. I would anticipate the IAFF to make their decision on an endorsement in the coming weeks. Regardless, once the campaigns begin rolling there will be events where we will need to get our members to so we can wear our trademark gold and black and show support for our candidate.

Finally, I would like to recognize two people. Congratulations to Sister Aileen Pettinger on being elected to the position of Northern Trustee. Sister Pettinger has been an asset to her own local, Saginaw Local 102 for years. She is committed to our profession and this union and I know she will do well as a member of the MPFFU Executive Board. The second person I would like to recognize is outgoing 3rd District Vice President Greg Weisbarth. Congratulations on being awarded lifetime membership within the MPFFU at the recent convention in Bay City! Brother Weisbarth has been a mentor to me for as long as I have been involved with this great union. I don't know what I would have done without his guidance and leadership. It has been an honor to serve with Brother Weisbarth but most of all, I am proud to call him a friend. I hope you and your families have a great summer! Stay safe. ■

4th District

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Moment of Silence

Since the last issue of this magazine, five active members of the 4th District have passed away. Todd Stanaway of Westland, Darrell Branch, Dave McDowell and Lavelle Shaw of Detroit and Bob Gerlach of Frenchtown Township.

All of our MPFFU family mourns their loss. We will always remember them and the service they provided to their communities, their families and their brothers and sisters in the fire service.

MPFFU Convention

In early May we were fortunate to have our MPFFU Convention in beautiful Bay City. We all enjoyed the great hospitality and friendship they provided us. As picturesque as it is, there was a labor problem while we were there.

As we all are aware of now, the Bay City Fire Fighters were looking at drastic cuts and changes to the service they provide. On two opportunities MPFFU delegates joined with their brothers and sisters to walk the picket line in support. Reminiscent of actions we all took in St. Louis as IAFF Convention attendees, we stressed our concern for the safety of the firefighters and the citizens they serve as well as showing the strength of unity. Good job to Chris Reynolds and his group for their perseverance and resolve.

The convention itself provided some good results despite its lack of punch and excitement. Due to strong belt tightening, no per capita or dues increases were passed other than the ones in place. Everyone worked hard these past years to get to this point and now we can rest awhile knowing our financial ship is currently in a safe harbor.

All current officers were reelected by ac-

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HOT NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS

climation. Greg Weisbarth, 3rd District Vice President stepped down and former Northern Trustee Chris Reynolds has stepped up to the plate. Aileen Pettinger has replaced Chris. Greg worked hard for his district and always made our needs a priority. We will miss Greg a lot. Thanks for all you did and good luck in your new endeavors. Chris and Aileen bring a lot of energy and experience to the MPFFU.

I would also like to say thank you to the 4th District for giving me the opportunity to serve you for another two years. It is a great honor and responsibility. I will do my best to be the representative you need.

This next term is sure to be very busy considering the financial situation of Michigan. Many of our locals have, and continue, to face threats of consolidation, cutbacks, closings and more.

IAFF Industrial Local 35

Eleven years ago, as I started as 4th District Vice President, I was calling the locals in the district for their reports. When I called I-35 I received an unusual response. Due to interesting circumstances, they had been disaffiliated with the IAFF, their fire engine was being threatened to be closed and many, many issues with Ford Motor Company were developing.

The disaffiliation with the IAFF was found not to be accurate but their former fire chief/president was working against their aims. A representative from the IAFF flew in and we all met off site fearing repercussions. At this meeting issues were identified, rumors clarified and a resolve to stay as strong IAFF members came through loud and clear.

Because of their legal circumstances, they operate under the National Labor Relations Act, not our Act 312. They could be forced to strike and take other actions that the rest of us do not. Since the beginning, they have fought tooth and nail for their jobs.

They operate as structural firefighters that perform Haz-mat, confined space, inspections, medical and other highly specialized duties. Forming out of a guard union in the early 1900's, they, at one time, numbered near 100 members. After the steel plant was bought, they split into I-72 with

approximately 6 members next door and I-35 which has 16 members.

Since this first time, they have been engaged in prolonged and costly legal battles with Ford Motor Company, losing their ability to transport medical victims off the site. They have recently emerged with a 10 year deal under the Guardsmark Company. Therefore, Ford Motor Company is now their secondary employer. All our battles now are with Guardsmark. And battles they have become.

The Friday before the MPFFU Convention they received a letter stating that their fire station would be closed down of May 30th. They would renegotiate their pay and benefits as incipient firefighters in buildings with only MFR status. All Fire and Medical would permanently be handled by Dearborn and/or private since geographically they are inside of Dearborn's coverage.

Wow! A letter telling you that you will be going down to about \$17.00 an hour and lose most of your benefits as well as any dignity you might have left! At the convention, I was aggressive on the MPFFU and IAFF going full out to help them. I guess I offended some people, certainly not purposely, with my direction. To any I might have slighted, I again apologize if you feel offended. I will not, however, apologize for trying to have this organization react to the losses they are facing. This isn't a temporary pay cut or change in benefits, it is the loss of MPFFU/IAFF members jobs.

We allowed them to join our club and they have always paid the same amount of dues as the rest of us. They should have reaction from us just as if it was a PSO, consolidation or other challenge put upon our locals. Sometimes one has to be unconventional to get attention to a problem. Whatever, people are on board work hard for them. I don't believe, from the bottom of my heart, that they are any different than any other local in the MPFFU. They just go about things differently. When the call comes, they strap on like everyone else. All of our locals' contracts mention equal treatment for all members.

At the convention, Carlos Tumpkin, president of I-35, met with Tom Miller, IAFF 8th District VP. He assigned me to

serve as an IAFF rep with them. IAFF General President Harold Schaitberger personally agreed to call Ron Gettelfinger to interject and have the UAW help them out. GP Schaitberger called him twice and had continuing talks with Tom during this time while traveling throughout the United States servicing member locals of the IAFF.

The first meeting between the parties came quickly. Attorney Mike O'Hearon, Paul Hufnagel, myself and representatives of Local I-35 met with Guardsmark. Since that time, many negotiations have gone on. The city of Dearborn's political leadership was called in. Bruce Hamilton, president of Dearborn Fire Fighters, has been a big help with his support and hands on.

As I write this article, June 23, 2008, a new deadline of June 30 has been set. May 30 has come and gone. I-35 continues to use everything they have to ward off this dangerous action that leaves the plant open to major safety hazards to all their employees and visitors.

All of us hope that a magic bullet appears for them. This change in the very structural way they perform their duties and live their personal lives resonates on all of us. If you read this and care, call I-35 at 1.313.337.8000 and give them a shout out. They might not be there very much longer. I can only ask...who's next? Which local is the next line in the sand? And, what will we do for them? ■

Get More
Up-to-Date
Info @
mpffu.org

HOT NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS

5th District

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This report is not like others I have written over the years. This one is on a more personal note. As many of you know one of my local's members was recently diagnosed with Stage 3 Mesothelioma. Brad Wilson, whom I have known and worked with for 25 years was having some respiratory problems and when his doctor did a biopsy, found Brad had cancer in his lungs and around his heart and aorta. There is no treatment in Michigan for this type of cancer and Brad, by the time you read this, will have gone to MD Anderson Hospital in Houston Texas for evaluation for possible experimental treatment.

Brad is one of those rare individuals that who always is available when another person needs help. When I got divorced and decided to build my own house, Brad was there helping with the construction almost daily, without ever asking for anything in return. He supervised the project and helped me get sub-contractors when they were needed. I never could have built this home without him. Most of the finishing work was also done by Brad who is a quality craftsman at this type of work.

In 1993 my son was in a car accident and was thrown from his car on his way to work and was pinned under the overturned car. He broke his back in three places and was in severe pain waiting for fire personnel to arrive. Brad was the first firefighter on the scene and my son would later tell me that he calmed down and was relieved when he saw Brad, knowing that he was going to take care of him.

Brad has been a part of Portage's Honor guard, taking time from work to attend classes in Indiana to be proficient at this also. He has also donated time for MDA "Fill the Boot" and any other fund raisers when they come up. If you want to read more about Brad go to the Portage Firefighters website. There is

a link on the MPFFU website.

We don't have a cancer presumption bill yet in Michigan and the State and our lobbyists are working hard at getting one in place. We all feel, as well as his doctor, that Brad's cancer is work related but as we have no presumption bill and it is Brad's responsibility to prove that it is work related. Due to the time involvement and stress involved, Brad has opted to apply for long term disability as he will not be able to return to work.

I am asking for your help with both the State's efforts to pass the Cancer Presumption Bill so members like Brad and his family will get the assistance they deserve and also to ask for any other help by donating to: Brad Wilson Fund c/o Portage Commerce Bank @ 800 E. Milham P.O. Box 727 Portage, MI 49081-0727. ■

6th District

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Well, another convention has come and gone. As most of you know, I was unable to attend the convention due my father's illness and subsequent passing. I greatly appreciate all of the kind and supportive calls, emails and cards I received. It's nice to know you're not alone when times get tough. I would also like to thank Terry Chesney and Monte Nye for stepping up and assisting my locals that needed help while I was unavailable.

I would like to congratulate Chris Reynolds the new 3rd District VP and Aileen Pettinger the new Northern Trustee. They will both make a great addition to the team.

I would also like to thank all the locals of the 6th District for allowing me to have another term representing them. Although it has been a lot of work, I have greatly enjoyed working with everyone. I hope I have been able to provide a level of service which has benefited the district and I look forward to another two years. Times are tough and we need to work together and stand united to

protect the wages, hours and working conditions we fought so hard to get.

Just when we thought the *public safety* push was starting to die out, it has come back and many of our locals are facing this issue and are fighting to survive. Harper Woods Local 1188 is one of those locals. This local has been faced with this issue for over 15 years and has managed to survive. With this tough economy, the city is making their greatest push as of yet. The Local, MPFFU and IAFF are committing all of their resources to fight this change. If this happens in Harper Woods, it will definitely have a domino effect on other cashed strapped cities in the area.

I would like to welcome seven new presidents over the last year to the 6th District: Dave McLeod- Novi, Gordon Truzinski- Chesterfield Twp, Scott Walsh-Eastpointe, Pat Rollison-Harper Woods, Mike Barnhard-Harrison Twp, Larry Prohaszka-Hazel Park and Walt Jenuwine-St Clair Shores. All of these guys have stepped up and committed themselves during some very difficult times. I just want to say thank you to all the new and current presidents leading the fight in protecting our interests.

The upcoming presidential election is proving to be a very exciting election. On the horizon is potential change that could greatly increase our chances of getting our Federal Legislation passed. The most important issue is our National Collective Bargaining bill, which if passed, would provide another layer of protection for us in Michigan and provide basic rights to our brothers and sisters in states the don't have any rights to bargain. At time of writing this article the IAFF has not endorsed any candidate for president. Although once they do so, I hope we can come together as a union and commit our full efforts to get our candidate elected. This country needs a new direction and we need to turn the economy around. Until the economy comes back we will continue to have our pay and benefits eroded.

Lastly, remember that the MPFFU and the IAFF have many resources available to utilize, although if you don't contact your district vice president, you may never know it's available. If you are unsure of something please give me or your district vice president a call, you're not alone in your fight! Have a safe and fun summer! ■

Another Fire Mural In Livonia!

By Tom Kiurski, Livonia Fire Fighters Local 1164

I hope that your fire department holds an annual open house event. They can bring the residents out in droves to see all the exciting fire trucks, equipment and people who do the job of a firefighter in their city. You can educate the adults about the jobs performed by firefighters in their city (firefighter, paramedic/EMT, extrication, CO investigation, fire alarms, etc.) and give the children a great day they will not soon forget.

In Livonia, we hold two annual open house events (June and October) and take part in a mall event called "Passport to Safety". This is in addition to visiting schools and businesses when requested and approved. We also get involved in local special events when they come up. Over the years, and across the pages of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighter, you have been exposed to a number of the things we do in Livonia to "reach out" into our community. We sincerely hope that you have used many of those ideas in your communities.

Recently, we hired an artist to paint another mural on the inside wall of our fire station # 3, where we hold our open house events. The idea was to look like the poster for the movie "Backdraft", where the firefighter was silhouetted in flames passing through a doorway. This was explained to the artist we contacted, and she knew exactly how to make this picture on our computer screen come to life in a ten-foot tall interactive mural.

The flames and doorway were painted on the wall, while the firefighter was cut out of wood and painted to look like a



firefighter in full gear. With a face cut out, all open house attendees have to do is stand behind the firefighter prop and snap the picture. The end result is that the person is now the star of the firefighting show!

If you would like further information about our mural, the artist, or any other idea you have seen in these pages, feel free to contact me at 734.466.2431. ■

Local 1252 Conducts Informational Picket



Left to Right: Ryan Husch, BTFD L-3045; Steve Kuzmanovich, L-3045; Mike Morin, L-3045; Mark Perkins, Pontiac L-376 and Karl Kuss, Southfield, L-1029.



MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Opening Ceremonies

The 48th Biennial Convention of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union was held on May 7-9, 2008 at the Doubletree Hotel in Bay City.

Two hundred and twelve (212) delegates, fifty-eight (58) alternates, and 116 guests attended the Convention.

Elections were held for two-year terms for all positions. The following individuals were elected by acclamation:

- President: Paul Hufnagel
- Secretary-Treasurer: Terrence Chesney
- 1st District VP: Kevin Pirlot
- 2nd District VP: Shaun Abbey
- 3rd District VP: Chris Reynolds
- 4th District VP: Daniel McNamara
- 5th District VP: Jim Leve
- 6th District VP: Mark Docherty
- Eastern Trustee: Edward Hosmer
- Western Trustee: David Weisenberg
- Northern Trustee: Aileen Pettinger

Detroit-Local 344 and Ann Arbor-Local 693 were competing for the bid to host the MPFFU 2010 Convention. Both locals made a presentation to the delegates. Delegates selected Detroit for the host by a vote of 116-92. The 2010 Convention will be held at the MGM Grand Detroit on May 5-6-7, 2010.

Delegates also heard the remarks and presentations of several guest speakers throughout the course of the convention:

- The Honorable Charles M. Brunner, Mayor – City of Bay City
- Harold Schaitberger, General President – IAFF
- Paul Hufnagel, President – MPFFU
- Thomas Miller, 8th District Vice President – IAFF
- The Honorable John Cherry, Lt. Governor – State of Michigan
- Dennis Cawthorne, Kelley-Cawthorne
- Andy Neumann, State Fire Marshal & Director-Bureau of Fire Services
- Leon LaBrecque, Labrecque, Jackson, Price, & Roehl, LLC
- Michael O'Hearon, MPFFU General Counsel
- Carrie Tucker, Director – IAFF Financial Corporation
- John Piper, National IAFF Program Director Nationwide Retirement Solutions
- Michelle Damstra, Regional Coordinator – Muscular Dystrophy Association
- Marsha Kerr-Walatka, Union Plus Mortgage/Chase
- Brent Gillette, National Political Director for the Michigan State AFL-CIO
- The Honorable Senator Randy Richardville received the first "Presidents Award for Outstanding Legislative Service."



MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

- Ed Rigley, past MPFFU 6th DVP was awarded "Lifetime Membership" in the MPFFU.

- Greg Weisbarth, outgoing MPFFU 3rd DVP was awarded "Lifetime Membership" in the MPFFU.

- Deward Beeler, retired Region Supervisor of the Fire Fighters Training Council was awarded the status of "Honorary Member" of the MPFFU.

- The Bay City Fire Fighter Honor Guard opened the convention accompanied by the Metro Detroit Police and Fire Pipes & Drums. Lillian Asiala, a student at Bay City Central High School sang the national anthem and Father Bill Rutkowski gave the invocation.

Delegates took action on 21 Resolutions. Additionally, one resolution was withdrawn and one resolution was rejected by the Resolutions Committee because it did not meet the requirements for submission of a late resolution. Listed below is a summary of the action taken on the resolutions that were acted on at the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union's 48th Biennial Convention. A copy of each of the resolutions in their entirety will be available for viewing on the MPFFU website.

A complete verbatim transcript of the entire convention will soon be file at the MPFFU Office and it will be available for review upon request.

Resolution Action Taken at the 48th Biennial Convention

| Title | CostFactor | Committee Action | Committee Assigned To | Final Recommendation |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Memorial Resolution | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 2. Elimination of mailings to Locals | None | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Adopted |
| 3. Thanks to Local 116 – Bay City | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 4. Lifetime Membership for Edward Rigley | Minimal | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Adopted |
| 5. MDA Fill the Boot Weekend | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 6. Convention Committee Pay | None | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Withdrawn |
| 7. Requesting Assistance from MPFFU Locals | None | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Adopted |
| 8. Recognition of Cearfoss | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 9. Lifetime Membership for Greg Weisbarth | Minimal | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Adopted |
| 10. Labor Issues Committee | None | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Adopted |
| 11. Endorsement of Tom Miller | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 12. Endorsement of Harold Schaitberger | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 13. Endorsement of Vinnie Bollon | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 14. Endorsement of Mark Ouellette | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 15. Convention Registration Deadline | None | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Adopted |
| 16. Honorary Membership for Deward Beeler | Minimal | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Adopted |
| 17. Recognition of Ron Zawlocki | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 18. Elimination of Proxy Voting | None | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Rejected |
| 19. Opposition to the National EMS Education Standards Version 3 | None | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Adopted |
| 20. Review of MPFFU Compensation Language | None | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt | Adopted as amended |
| 21. Fire Fighter Social Security Fairness | None | Resolutions | Adopt | Adopted |
| 22. Submission of Local Union Constitution and By-Laws | None | Constitution and By-Laws | Adopt as Amended | Adopted |



MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION



Taking Care



MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION



of Business



MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Speakers & Special Guests



MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

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| BACKDRAFT PRODUCTS | MARWILL & ASSOCIATES LLC |
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| COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY | PAUL HUFNAGEL |
| RETIREMENT PLAN ADVISORS | TERRENCE H. CHESNEY |
| GREAT LAKES BURN CAMP | KEVIN PIRLOT |
| APOLLO FIRE EQUIPMENT CO. | SHAUN ABBEY |
| GREAT LAKES BENEFIT SOLUTIONS | GREG WEISBARTH |
| MICHIGAN FIRE INSPECTORS SOCIETY | DANIEL McNAMARA |
| TOTAL POWER SPORTS - GAYLORD | W. JAMES LEVE |
| TOTAL POWER SPORTS - 989-705-8260 | MARK DOCHERTY |
| NATIONWIDE RETIREMENT SOLUTIONS | EDWARD HOSMER |
| BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD of MICHIGAN BLUE CARE NETWORK | DAVID WEISENBERG |
| MICHIGAN PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS UNION | CHRIS REYNOLDS |
| Serv Pro - "FIRE & WATER CLEANUP & RESTORATION" | |
| DETROIT FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION - LOCAL 344 | |
| ANN ARBOR FIRE FIGHTERS - LOCAL 693 | |
| GREGORY, MOORE, JEAKLE, HEINEN, & BROOKS | |
| FOUR POINTS by SHERIDAN - ANN ARBOR | |



MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Time to Relax



MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Committees



MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Recognition of Senator Richardville

The delegates assembled at the 48th Biennial Convention of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union in Bay City recognized Senator Randy Richardville for his work as a member of the Michigan Senate and for being a strong legislative ally of our organization.

Randy Richardville was elected to the Michigan Senate in November, 2006. Prior to his election to the Senate, Randy served three terms in the Michigan House of Representatives from 1999-2004. He held a leadership position in the House in each of his terms—serving as the House Majority Floor Leader during his final term.

MPFFU President Paul Hufnagel presented the first annual “Presidents Award for Outstanding Legislative Service” to Senator Richardville due to his strong support of firefighter issues.

In presenting the award to Senator Richardville, President Hufnagel said: “His support for us was very crucial during re-



cent attempts in the Senate to take worker's protections out of the Urban Cooperation Act and Public Act 312.”

Senator Richardville said: “This is the



coolest trophy I ever got. Anyone coming into my office will see this and know that firefighters are important to the Senate office of Randy Richardville.” ■

Recognition of Ronald T. Zawlocki

*Submitted by: Brad Riggs,
Pontiac Local 376*

The delegates assembled at the 48th Biennial Convention of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union in Bay City voted to give recognition to Ron Zawlocki, who recently retired from the Pontiac Fire Department. Ron was a long time member of the MPFFU Safety and Health Committee and a frequent contributor to the MPFFU magazine and website. Listed below is the complete resolution honoring Brother Zawlocki.

Whereas: The members of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union wish to recognize Ronald T. Zawlocki for his years of dedicated service and the contributions he made to the fire service, and

Whereas: Ron Zawlocki first joined the fire service in the City of Detroit in 1974

where he was assigned to Engine 10 at West Grand Boulevard and Vinewood, and

Whereas: Two years later he came to the Pontiac Fire Department where he served for 30 years before retiring as Battalion Chief in October of 2007, and

Whereas: Ron held many positions within the Pontiac Union Local 376 from President down, choosing to be an active board member most of his career. Many of the issues he worked on remain today in our contract, one such example being minimum manning. He was and remains a strong advocate of four-man engine companies, realizing that reduced staffing is perilous for with victim's lives and an increased danger to firefighters, and

Whereas: In 1988, Pontiac experienced a commercial structure fire which collapsed, resulting in a firefighter fatality and several

serious firefighter injuries. Realizing the need, Ron has worked to develop and deliver numerous technical rescue and firefighter survival courses since that time. Hundreds of firefighters from across the State have benefited from his acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities. Many technical rescue incidents requiring multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional responses have been successfully mitigated using techniques that “Z” developed and/or instructed, therefore be it

Resolved: That the delegates assembled at this 48th Convention of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union publically thank Ronald T. Zawlocki for his contribution to our Union and to our Profession.

MPFFU 48TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

Recognition of Behrendt V. Cearfoss

*Submitted by: Tom Johnson
Menominee Local 604*

The delegates assembled at the 48th Biennial Convention of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union in Bay City gave posthumous recognition to Behrendt V. Cearfoss, a former member of Local 604-Menominee. Tom Johnson, a current member of Local 604 discovered some interesting information about Cearfoss and decided to bring this information to the attention of the members of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union. Listed below is the complete resolution that was submitted by Brother Johnson.

Whereas: Over the years there have been many people responsible for the wages, hours, and benefits that we enjoy today, and

Whereas: Behrendt V. Cearfoss was one of the unsung heroes that never received the recognition he deserved for the contributions he made to the State Fire Fighters Union, and

Whereas: Behrendt V. Cearfoss was a

member of Local 604 – Menominee for 39 years when he retired in 1978, and

Whereas: Behrendt V. Cearfoss served as Secretary of Local 604 for 25 years and as 1st District Vice President of our State Union for 18 years, and

Whereas: Behrendt V. Cearfoss spent many years trying to improve the working conditions of fire fighters in Menominee as well as the entire state of Michigan, and

Whereas: Behrendt V. Cearfoss was required to work 84 hours per week and he was only paid \$90 per month when he started working for the Menominee Fire Department in 1941, and

Whereas: One of Behrendt V. Cearfoss's accomplishments was the result of a convention resolution he wrote and submitted to direct our state union to seek legislation to reduce the workweek of all fire fighters in Michigan to 56 hours, and

Whereas: Behrendt V. Cearfoss was responsible for negotiating the first contract between Local 604 and the City of

Menominee, which was one of the first fire fighter contracts in the entire country, and

Whereas: Behrendt V. Cearfoss was directly involved in getting the Heart and Lung Law passed in Michigan and he was one of the few individuals present in the Governors office when the bill was signed, and

Whereas: Behrendt V. Cearfoss also was the main force in convincing the citizens of Menominee to adopt a pension system for the members of Local 604, paving the way for other Locals across the State to gain pension benefits from their employees, and

Whereas: Brother Cearfoss recently passed away on March 24, 2008 and the currently members of Local 604 were honored to be members of his honor guard, therefore be it

Resolved: That delegates assembled at this 48th Convention of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union honor Brother Cearfoss by giving a moment of silence and by taking this opportunity to reflect on his accomplishments as a great union leader. ■

Recognition of Deward Beeler

The delegates assembled at the 48th Biennial Convention of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union in Bay City voted to make Deward Beeler an Honorary Member of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union due to his distinguished public service and for being a strong advocate of training and safety for firefighters throughout the State of Michigan.

Deward Beeler recently retired from his position of Region Supervisor for the Office of Fire Fighter Training/Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council, after serving for more than 20 years. During the time he was employed by the FFTC, Deward served in many positions within the Train-

ing Council as well as representing the FFTC on many committees, including the MIOSHA General Safety Standards Part 74 Revision Committee. Deward was directly and indirectly responsible for the training of thousands of firefighters in Michigan as well as a strong advocate for firefighter safety.

MPFFU Secretary-Treasurer stated that "Deward was a great mentor and advisor for me when I served as an appointed member of the MFFTC. He always carried out his duties with the highest degree of commitment, integrity, dignity, dedication, and honor." ■



Rally at City Hall



MPFFU Convention Thank-You

It is hard to believe that it has been two years since we won the opportunity to host the 2008 MPFFU biennial convention. Hopefully, everyone who attended had a good time in Bay City and left having a positive experience. With the convention now in the books, there are many we would like to thank, for without them, the convention would not have been possible.

First and foremost, we would like to thank Terry Chesney. His help and guidance were invaluable. Thank you also to Michelle Chesney for all your help. The DoubleTree Riverfront also deserves a pat on the back and a big thank you. The staff there bent over backward to make sure we had everything we needed and if there was a problem, they were right there to take care of it. Great job! To everyone who supported our fundraising 4-wheeler raffle either by selling or purchasing tickets, especially Saginaw Local 102, thank you. To all of the individuals, locals and businesses that purchased ads in our convention program/ad book, thank you. Your support was greatly appreciated.

We would also like to give a special thank you to MPFFU Legal Council Michael O'Hearon, Ken Kelbel from Nationwide, Saginaw Firefighters Local 102, and from Midland Firefighters Local 1315, Roger Bebeau, Jr., Ryan Bebeau, Chris Coughlin, Jim Case, Greg Weisbarth, Mark Laux, Bob Arnold, Greg Grobbel, Ed Peake, Tony Lelo, and Tim Longlet. The above mentioned co-sponsored our party at the Westown and we are very grateful for your help and support.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to each and every Brother and Sister who marched with us to the Bay City Hall. All we can say is Wow! This was true unionism and solidarity and this is what we will always remember from the convention. What a proud moment. Local 116 cannot thank each and every one of you enough for what you did that day. If there is ever anything our local can do for you in the future, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We apologize if anyone was not recognized. There were so many involved and we are grateful for the support we received. We will see you in Detroit for the 2010 Convention!

Sincerely and Fraternally,

Bay City Professional Fire Fighters Union

IAFF Local 116

Kentwood L-3174 and Kentwood Fire Department Host Citizen's Academy



By Shaun Abby, Second District VP

We all sit around the firehouse and discuss why our customers do not understand what we do. We wonder why we continue to be cut and no one seems to care until they dial 911. Have we done anything to help educate our citizens and commissioners? By no means is this a new concept. Fire departments have been doing citizen classes for years. In Kentwood we have held a media/policymaker academy for the last six years. We developed and delivered this program as the IAFF was starting to develop "Fire Ops 101." They are very similar and very successful. This past year our Mayor, Richard Root and our Michigan House Representative, Glenn Steil attended the class with several other local commissioners. It has been very well received by everyone that has attended. Our local decided to take this class to our customers by adapting it into a citizen's academy.

At a union meeting a motion was passed to spend up to \$500 to promote a citizen's academy. Local leadership met with department administration to discuss the feasibility of hosting this type of a class. The Fire Chief was supportive of the project and assisted with the class. A group of local members was put together to or-

ganize a curriculum and develop classes. Because this was the first class we have done, we had to put together everything including power points and a class binder.

The group met several times to finalize the curriculum and lock down instructors. One of the members met with the police department to discuss their academy. We found out what has worked for them and what has not. This gave the group some direction. We decided on a five week program comprised of six classes. Five were held on Wednesday nights from 1800 hours until 2100 hours. The last class was on a Saturday morning from 0800 hours until 1200 hours. It was also decided that the class would be taught by on-duty personnel. Originally members were going to come back off-duty to teach the classes because we felt the benefit was worth the time. Our concern was having everyone leave the class to go on an alarm. The class was told that this may occur and that they could go to the scene to observe from a distance. As it worked out, only one class was disrupted by a house fire.

The class was promoted by placing a sign in front of one of the stations and another on the digital sign at city hall. We also used print media to advertise the class. Trifold flyers were placed at each station,

city hall, the library, the parks and recreation office and Woodland Mall. Applications were accepted and they had to sign a waiver. They also agreed to a background check. This was a recommendation from the police department. We did have one applicant get rejected because of a felony conviction. We had fifteen citizen's attend the class.

We organized the class into sessions. The first week was introductions and a fire department overview. They were issued name tags, name table tents and their binder. Mayor Root welcomed them to the class and gave them a look at what is going on in the city. Chief Carr did a section about how the fire department is funded and operates from an administrative angle.

The second week was a complete power point overview of what the Kentwood Fire Department does daily. After class, citizens were shown through the station and apparatus.

The third week was done at our Haz-Mat station. The night was broken up into an EMS section and a Haz-Mat section. Citizens were shown all of our EMS and Haz-Mat equipment. They were able to do some hands-on things as well as see members simulate a Haz-Mat scenario.

Week four was done at our Tech Rescue



station. This was the class that was interrupted by a fire. There was going to be an extrication section and a technical rescue section. We had a vehicle staged in the back of the station with a rescue dummy in it. Crews were going to extricate and package the patient. Next time...

Week five was an overview of our fire prevention programs and PPE. Our Fire Marshal did a chemistry of fire class and extinguisher demonstration. Each participant was able to dress out in full PPE and don an SCBA. The last class, on Saturday, was held at a training house. Using artificial smoke, they were able to pull lines, search a building, use a thermal imaging camera and ventilate a building. They really enjoyed the hands-on instruction. It really helped them understand why we need enough firefighters on scene. At the end, they all received a certificate and souvenir helmet.

All of the participants were given an evaluation to mail back. We received 13 of the 15. Some comments included, "I had no idea the fire department had a Haz-Mat team." Another wrote, "I learned so much! It was a great class!" Another citizen said, "This class increased my respect for the Kentwood Fire staff."

As you can see, the class was very successful. In these times it is important to let our customers know what we do and that any cuts will affect the services we provide. It is too late if we try to educate our citizen's when our budgets are on the chop-

ping block. We need to be proactive and let people know what we do every single day. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. We do not crave the limelight and we say it's "Just doing our job." Those days are over; we need to brag about what we do just to keep our people so we can continue to do our job safely and effectively. If anyone would like more information on this program feel free to call or e-mail me.

Special thanks should go to Local 3174 members: Capt. Jim Harkes, Lt. Steve Sandholm, Fire Marshal Tim Maday, President Michael Navetta and the rest of the members that assisted. I would also like to thank Fire Chief James Carr, Deputy Fire Chief Brent Looman and Administrative Assistant Nancy Shane. All of these people helped make the class a success. ■



Thank You Michigan Professional Fire Fighters

Over 150 firefighters were in attendance for our 5th Annual MDA/MPFFU Boot Camp in Mt. Pleasant on June 4th!

Special thanks to Andrea Abraham - MDA Michigan Goodwill Ambassador, Michael Chambers - MDA Patient, Dr. Gelinas - MDA ALS Clinic Co-Director, Kristy Kehl - Grand Rapids Local 366, Terry Chesney - MPFFU Secretary-Treasurer and Monty Nye - MPFFU/MDA Liaison!

Thank you so much for your participation and enthusiasm! Our hope is that you left Boot Camp feeling inspired and FIRED UP for the 2008 Fill the Boot season! Your continued support is greatly appreciated! Looking forward to seeing you all again next year! ■



2007 Award Highlights

District 1: Marquette Local 634

District 2: Grand Rapids Local 366

District 3: Bangor Twp Local 1682

District 4: Detroit Local 344

District 5: Meridian Twp Local 1600

District 6: Warren Local 1383

Most Improved: Grand Rapids Local 366

Highest \$/Member: Bangor Twp Local 1682

Golden Boot of Michigan: Detroit Local 344

2007 Robert D. McAlvey Memorial Award:
Jon Jacobs, Bangor Twp Local 1682





News From The Office of Fire Fighters Training

Fire Fighters Training Council Approves Federal Funded Courses

At the June 12, 2008 regular meeting, the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council approved six new courses which will qualify for federal homeland security funding. The six Michigan Urban Search and Rescue (MUSAR) courses are currently conducted at the Howell Training Center. The action taken by the Council was necessary in order for the courses to be eligible for reimbursement of costs and manpower.

The Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union representative and MFFTC chair Kevin Pirlot brought the issue to the table after consulting with Sterling Heights Fire Captain Chris Martin and fellow Council member Lansing's Assistant Chief Tim James. Chairman Pirlot's proposal to recognize the courses that are currently administered at the Howell Training Center earned unanimous support. The confirming vote will accelerate the grant application process. The Office of Fire Fighter Training will be working with the MUSAR Training Advisory Council to assure that the courses meet the latest NPFA standards and that course managers follow MFFTC rules and procedures.

For more information, visit their website at mfftc.org

Bureau of Fire Services/Office of Fire Fighter Training Join MDA "Fill the Boot" Campaign

The Bureau of Fire Services was invited to attend the MDA/MPFFU boot camp in Mt. Pleasant. The camp was put together to encourage fire fighters across the state to participate in the annual "fill the boot" drive. The sessions emphasized the dramatic lifestyle changes those afflicted with neuromuscular diseases will face. The

gradual decline of basic muscular control results in constant change in the patient's medical status. The change makes constant update of available equipment in order to attempt a near normal life. This is so important for those that face losing the basic gifts we take for granted. The equipment and aids provided by the Muscular Dystrophy Association give the patients the hope that is needed to continue their fight to live a fulfilling and rewarding life. The costs for the equipment and aids, whether it is a high tech wheel chair or a communication device, increase as the disease progresses. Dollars rose through this campaign and other MDA events, help offset those costs. Governor Granholm has endorsed the firefighters efforts proclaiming the weekend of July 25-27, 2008 as the "MDA / Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union Fill the Boot Weekend" and encourages all fire fighters to participate in the program.

Inspired by the emotional camp sessions and the message that was delivered; the Bureau of Fire Services has decided to participate in the drive by placing a fire boot in our lobby at the MEDC building in downtown Lansing. The Bureau staff will be encouraging the employees of our five story building to help this noble cause. The boot will be in the lobby from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm from July 21 to July 25. With what we hope will be a generous donation, the bureau hopes to promote participation in the "Fill the Boot Weekend" and celebrate the 50 year partnership between fire fighters and MDA.

The address of our home, the Michigan Employment Development Building in downtown Lansing is 300 N. Washington Avenue. If you are in the area, please stop by and make a contribution. Help us help those, both young and old, that are afflicted with this hideous disease.



Joe Grutza is the Director of the Office of Fire Fighter Training. The Office of Fire Fighter Training (OFFT) serves the training and certification needs of the states 1,071 fire departments and 31,825 firefighters and officers. The office prepares and publishes training standards, establishing courses of study, certifying instructors, establishing regional training centers, cooperating with state, federal, and local fire agencies to facilitate training of firefighters, and developing and administering mandatory certification examinations for new firefighters.

Fire Service Connection

Just a reminder the Bureau's *FireServiceConnection* newsletter is now available online. The FSC is getting rave reviews, kicking out the latest news in the fire service. You can sign up to have one sent to you. Go to our website at michigan.gov/bfs and sign up. In addition if your department or fire organization has an article that they would like to share, contact the newsletter editor, Karen Towne at townek@michigan.gov. ■

Two Social Security provisions that impact employees who don't pay FICA taxes

*By Vonda VanTil, Public Affairs Specialist,
Social Security Administration*

When it comes to Social Security, employees that do not pay Social Security taxes have a lot of questions about two provisions of the law that may affect them. These provisions are the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

Some government employees, whether federal, state or local, are affected by GPO and WEP. The Government Pension Offset (GPO) reduces potential Social Security spouse's and widow(er)'s benefit amounts someone could receive if he or she also receives a pension from a federal, state or local government for work on which no Social Security taxes were paid. The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) can reduce a worker's monthly Social Security retirement and disability benefit, if he or she also receives a pension from work not covered by Social Security.

GPO and WEP are designed to ensure that all American workers are treated equally under the Social Security system. GPO stipulates that any Social Security spouse's or widow's benefit that a worker might be entitled to must be reduced by two-thirds of that worker's government pension. Why? Well, GPO removes an advantage that some government workers once had. Before GPO, a person who worked in a government job that was not covered under Social Security could receive, in addition to a government pension based on his or her own earnings, a full Social Security spouse's or surviving spouse's benefit. No other workers had this option because Social Security benefits payable to a person as a spouse or surviving spouse must be offset, dollar for dollar, by the amount of that person's own Social Security benefit.

Similarly, WEP takes away an advantage that the regular Social Security benefit 'for-

mula' would give people who have substantial pensions from non-Social Security covered jobs. Without WEP, a worker who spent most of his or her career in employment not covered by Social Security and who worked for a short time to get Social Security coverage would end up with much higher benefits than if all of his or her work were done under Social Security.

Last year, out of more than 49 million Social Security beneficiaries, only about 440,000 were affected by GPO. Also, last

year there were more than 880,000 retired and disabled workers who had their Social Security benefit partially reduced by WEP.

For more information, including examples of just how the two provisions work in real-life situations, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov/gpowep. At that site you will find, amongst many things, an online WEP calculator which can provide estimated retirement or disability benefits if affected by the WEP. ■



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