

# THE CONNECTOR



Iron Workers Local 498 - 5640 Sockness Dr., Rockford, IL 61109 – 815/873-9180

September 2024

## From the Business Manager

Dear Brothers and Sisters,



I hope the newsletter finds you happy and sassy. Work has been pretty good so far this year, the list has been pretty thin. It appears that the casino in Beloit is getting closer to starting it looks like under a partnership between CCI and Miron Construction. There are several larger projects on the horizon from Stelantis, to some data centers, some big boxes, and a couple near the Winnebago Landfill. There will also be bridge work and WWT work as well. Some of these projects are hinged on funding from the federal government. Overall, it looks to be a pretty decent future for work.

We will be having a Pension Education Seminar on October 12th at 8:30am. We will be inviting the ones that are closer to retirement first and the younger ones after, but I encourage the younger ones to come to both and apprentices will be required to attend unless working. We will send out a reminder via text and email prior to the date, so please mark your calendars for Oct 12th .

The Labor Day Parade and Picnic was a great turn out. I think we may have had 130-140 people here. Food was great thanks to Jason and the Rusty Nail. I would also like to thank Keith and Dee that really di the most background work that made it such a success, if you see them thank them for the hard work they did.

I have recently gone through the demographics of our local to plan for our changing membership. Just this year alone we have seen or will see (6) retire (some are not yet) and (8) in the last couple years have retired. We will likely see another (7) or so in the next year. We need about 6-8 new JIWs per year to maintain our membership and we know that we need to start with more than that as this is not for everyone. We know some will quit or be told this is not for them for various reasons. I mention this because it is important that we train and show the younger generation what we know in the field where it is the most useful. I am well aware of the need for contractors to make money but while our training program is excellent, they can only get so much from books and controlled environment learning. That is why the old seasoned JIWs need to take the time to show them the things they have learned over the years that make the jobs easier, smoother, and quicker as often as possible. Once that knowledge leaves the field it is gone. The same goes for safety on the job; we all want to go home the same way we came in, but sometimes the apprentice or young JIW doesn't want to say anything. It is important for the ones that have been around a while to show them the way. This job can be dangerous on its own even while practicing good safety habits, but sometimes shit just happens through no fault of anyone. It is usually better to do the work the safest way possible but occasionally you are in the jaws of death. All this is important for your life, the longevity of the craft, the local and your retirement.

I need to address the probationary apprentices. It is getting pretty old hearing lame excuses for not showing up to work, not having ALL your tools with you when you come in for work/to the job, or me apologizing to contractors for someone who couldn't get up and put their little booties on in the morning because they were too tired or hung over, man or woman up and start doing some adulating. You should be carrying ALL your tools with you everywhere so you can do ALL aspects of work whenever the need arises. You are Probationary Members for 1500 hours which means the program

can be terminated by the Business Manager, the Apprentice Coordinator or the Contractor for any reason.

To all the apprentices that get their starter kit of a small structural and basic rod belt, (which should be paid back in a timely manner) and that is where your tools purchasing ends, that is not how this works. This is an assist to help you get started but not the end of purchasing tools. You being there with the various tools needed to do the job is how you make money, so when a journeyman lends you his tool or you see what tools are needed for the job you are doing you should be purchasing these throughout your apprentice program. When you take your journeyman's test and graduate and you can show the Examining Committee that you have the tools of a Journeyman Iron Worker (JIW), having the tools of a journeyman is part of the test. **Also**, when one of us is dispatching you to work, **DO NOT** tell us, "Oh that's too far." You are specifically asked in the interview about good reliable transportation and letting you know we cover 14 counties in Northern IL and Southern WI. I am done listening to the excuses we will just replace you with someone who wants to be a REAL Iron worker, not a day room or bar stool iron worker.

As I am sure you all know it is an election year. One of the other things the International is asking is that we encourage our members that are not registered to get registered to vote. I will be sending links via text to all those on the list that I show are not registered (I show 36 working members not registered). The link is pretty self-explanatory, and you can register on your phone for either IL or WI with a voter ID card coming to your home. I encourage all of you to get out and vote, elections have consequences. I for one think there is a clear choice for labor, your way of making money, and your pension for when you get to be of the age to collect. Trade unions jobs are one of the few jobs that have an actual pension as opposed to just a 401k (retirement savings) and we have two pensions AND a SMA (401k). If the republicans at the federal level would have their way, we would be without that, they want us all to be working poor, with the illusion of 'someday' retiring and most cannot do it without social security. Another piece of the retirement puzzle the republicans (though not all) would like to do away with. They call it an "entitlement" though you have paid into as well as the companies you work for have paid into on your behalf for a guaranteed monthly amount at starting at 62 (kind sounds like a pension).

President Biden has been the most Pro-Union President in History and I believe Kamala Harris will continue that trend.

- He signed an executive order requiring project labor agreements (union only) on federally owned construction.
- Stood up for unions, collective bargaining, and the dignity of work as the most pro-union president in history – Since taking office, President Biden has visited more union halls and training centers than any sitting president before him.
- Became the first sitting US president in history to walk a picket line with striking workers when the United Auto Workers struck the Big Three auto companies.
- Empowered federal agencies to take an official stance in support of working people and collective bargaining, including establishing the White House's Taskforce on Worker Organizing and the Department of Labor's Good Jobs Initiative

Wages, wealth, and the share of working-age Americans with jobs are all higher today than before the pandemic. Though I do understand it doesn't feel like it. It does take a bit of time for the economy to get back to normal. It has to happen at a gradual pace, or it could revert back to higher inflation. Little by little the interest rates have been coming down, but again too fast and it could go backwards. Gas prices are also coming down. Some of you have even been a direct recipient of the Biden Infrastructure Law that passed with bipartisan support. Many water treatment projects that are being worked on, the I39/20 reconfiguration came on sooner than scheduled due to the Infrastructure Law along with the ones over by Magic Waters that are coming soon or the Rockton Rd over the Rock.

There are 56,000 projects nationwide identified or are currently underway (something that was promised under the previous administration but never delivered). We don't have to fight to keep our Apprentice Program intact like we did under that last administration. Some of you may recall writing letters to the Department of Labor to protect our Certified Apprentice Programs from any company that claimed to have an "apprentice program" without any proof it was real or any graduates from various states in the country to come here and compete for YOUR job. I am not in 100% agreement with either candidate (no one ever is) nor am I telling you who to vote for, but I will always vote for the one (regardless of party) that I feel will do the most for you and me and our way of making a living that protects our future and the future of the trades. A little reminder, just like in the trades the ones who have to tell you and anyone that will listen how great a connector, welder, or rod buster they are the more likely they are average at best. The choice is clear this election and it isn't the one who claims to be smarter than everyone, with the biggest brain, and wants loyalty above all. That is not a real leader, that is a weak individual.

In Solidarity,  
Mark



Dear Brothers and Sisters:

The work picture so far this year has been pretty good, and from all indications it should continue into next year and after. We are very fortunate that we live where we live. Our union density here around the Rockford region is some of the highest in the country. I would be willing to bet that our market share is better than Chicago's. With all the work coming up it is important that we all do our best for the contractors that you are working for.

Recently I had a chance to put one of our members to work for a company from Kentucky. They would not hire directly so I proposed working with one of our signatory contractors. They worked with one of our contractors and agreed to use one guy. On the day he was to start the member called the contractor and said he was sick and would not be able to make it today. The owner of that company advised the member that they should show up for work because of the deal I had set up. He made it the first day but called into work the next day. That member is no longer with us. It is important that you show up for work. Going to work and being on time is something that no one can teach you. You must care about what you are doing. I know that this does not represent the majority of the members of this local, but it does seem like it is a problem. It is hard enough to convince contractors to use us, it is even harder when you don't care enough about your brother and sister Ironworkers to even show up. Ironworkers Local 498 has a good reputation around this country and I think every member would like to keep it that way.

Unions in general will always be attacked for the money we earn, the benefits we have, and the way we stick together. We must all take an active role in doing the best we can do on the job and educate our friends and family on what it takes to be a good union member.

As always, I can be reached at 815-721-3058 with questions or concerns. We have a pretty good size local, and it will take all of us to keep Ironworkers Local 498 strong and growing.

In Solidarity,  
Keith Gahl

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The fall semester is underway at this point with only a few hiccups. If you have made it this far into the newsletter, I want to reinforce some of the comments Mark had for the Apprentices. I'm not sure why this is a problem, but you apprentices need to go to work. This calling in because your sick is getting old! I NEVER called into work while I was an apprentice because I was sick,(or hungover). Did I get sent home because I was sick, maybe once or twice, but that was it. You are all aware that your raises come from hours worked in the field so I would have thought that would be enough of a reason to GO TO WORK. This is no different than any other job in that if you don't go to work you won't have a job. I don't think that's that hard to understand. We have gotten rid of a few apprentices this year and almost all of them are because they couldn't make it to work either on time or at all. You need to be the first one out of your car after both breaks and at the start of the day, and if you are driving off while things are being put away at the end of the day you won't be in this program long. As Mark stated, enough of the excuses! And as far as the tools go, It's called a starter kit for a reason. It's the bare necessities to get out on a job site. You will need to buy many more tools throughout your career as an Ironworker.

On a different note, I want to thank and congratulate Jake Brothman for putting in the time and effort to compete in the District Council Apprentice Competition. You did a great job representing 498!

I also want to thank Keith Gahl, Nick Helm, Haley O'Leary, and the Ornamental class for their help in the Black Hawk Fire Station stairs project. It was a lot of work, but everything turned out nicely for what we were given to work with. Their Training Director called me and said the Firefighters beat the snot out of them a couple weekends ago and that it was great that they could finally access the whole training tower.

We have a weld test scheduled for 9/28/24 so if there is anyone who is looking to certify/recertify let Dean Markee or myself know so we can get you on the sign-up sheet.

In Solidarity,  
Paul  
Paul



### **Local 498 Calendar**

9/17/24 E-Board-Union Meeting  
8/28/24 Weld Test  
10/12/24 Retirement Planning  
10/15/2024 E-Board – Union Meeting

Reminder, the Executive Board meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month. The retirees' meeting is the second Tuesday of each month at 8:00 a.m. at the Alpine View Restaurant (Charles St. and Albine) in Rockford.

### **Death Announcements 2024**

Robert Coon 2/23/24 No DB Payment Required  
James "Shortman" Wright 3/13/24  
Mel Johnson Jr. 4/13/24 No DB Payment Required  
Michael Milligan 5/4/24 No DB Payment Required  
John Gilmore 6/18/24 No DB Payment Required