

JDRF Walk A Success

On early May 7, 2005, Local 2108's officers, chief stewards, stewards, members and their families came out to support the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's "Walk to Cure Diabetes".

This is the second year that Local 2108 has sponsored a team with Vice President **Jenny Sylvester** as Team Captain. President **Morton Bahr** was the Union Recruitment Chair again this year and was joined by Locals 2108, 2336, 2300, 2222 and CWA Headquarters teams for the walk around "The Mall" in Washington, D.C. It was a gorgeous day to support such a worthy cause.

To date our Local has collected \$5,575 with more money coming in daily. Thanks to all that took the time to walk and donate to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. If you haven't yet paid your sponsor for your contribution, please do so as soon as possible!



Your Safety in Outside Plant: Buckingham Climbers Warning

In mid-April, the Company issued a Flash Release (Document number 2005-00172-OSP) concerning Buckingham climbers throughout Verizon land. We must CEASE using these climbers until a pending qualification with the gaff gauge inspection process detailed in this release can be performed.

All Buckingham Climbers MUST be inspected and qualified with a Buckingham gaff gauge tool that can be ordered to inspect for defects. While this inspection and re-supply requirements are in progress, NO replacement for defective Buckingham Climbers will be available. Buckingham Climbers passing the gaff gauge requirements will be suitable for Verizon techs use, provided the climbers meet the normal pre-use tests, which include the visual inspection and cut-out tests.

AFL-CIO Night at Camden Yards

Friday, June 17, 2005
Baltimore Orioles vs Colorado Rockies

Tickets are only \$5

We only have 100 tickets and they will be available on a first come, first serve basis. Tickets are for Local 2108 union members and their family and friends

Contact the Local TODAY for yours!

301.459.2108

Tickets are for Upper Reserved seating.



From The President's Desk

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL OR THE CHOSEN FEW?

As I write my article today, our own Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich will veto the newly passed "Fair Share Health Care Bill". This bill, pushed forward in the Maryland Assembly this session requires all employers in the state of Maryland with 10,000 or more employees, to pay 8% of their payroll into a health care fund.

Verizon, along with most other large employers pays in the range of 20% to 30% of payroll toward employee health care costs.

The newly passed law is aimed at employers such as Wal-Mart, which generates \$20,000 a minute in profits, to pay into a health-care fund to offset the cost Maryland taxpayers have to pay to provide free health care to those who cannot afford medical benefits. Wal-Mart employees eligible for the company's plan must hand over about a fifth of their paychecks to cover Wal-Mart's premiums, often more than \$200 a month per worker. This is a very steep price considering most earn between \$8 and \$10 an hour.



President Campbell and Vice President Jenny Sylvester meet with Howard Dean, Democratic National Committee Chair, at the recent Win Back Maryland rally in Bethesda.

Research by the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative indicates that Wal-Mart spends as little as 2 percent to 3 percent of its payroll on health care, draining \$30 million a year from our local economies in tax-supported benefits.

The announcement of the Governor's veto will take place on the steps of the Courthouse in Princess Anne County Maryland. Accompanying the Governor will be the Vice President of Wal-Mart. In a recent interview, Jimmy Lowthers, President of UFCW Local 400 stated, "Ehrlich has chosen to ignore the health care needs of Maryland's working families while agreeing to subsidize the poster child for bad corporate citizenship."

Health care was a very strong issue in our last round of bargaining with Verizon. At the expiration of our current 5 year contract in 2008, the cost of health care premiums for a Verizon family of two will reach \$21,150 per year. CWA has stated that we must get involved in changing the costs of health care to our employers, if we expect them to carry this burden of high premiums into the future.

I ask all CWA members to contact their State Representatives and urge them to over-ride the Governor's Veto and send the message loud and clear that the members of the Maryland Labor Movement are voters, and will

DO WHATEVER IT TAKES!

Bob

Communications Workers of America

2108 news

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RMC 2108: The Retired Members Club

By Dennis Strout, President RMC 2108

Unfortunately our scheduled speaker for our May meeting, **Sergeant Gethers** from the Prince George's County Crime Awareness Unit could not attend due to a last minute assignment. Fortunately, he supplied us with a last minute replacement.

Rick Dean, a member of the U.S. Secret Service spoke to us about identity theft and ways we can try to avoid it happening.

One of the fastest growing crimes in this country, identification theft affects one in twenty Americans each year.

How can your identity be stolen? Any number of ways according to Rick. Credit card theft, dumpster diving, stolen wallet or purse and computer hacking are the most common ways. Obtaining personal information over the internet is becoming the most common method.

All it takes is one piece of personal information and a thief can steal your identity.

The really sad news is that there is no one hundred percent way that you can keep this from happening. The good news is there are things you can do to greatly lessen the chances that it will happen.

Shred all personal information before you throw it in the trash. Even if all it has is your name and address, shred it. Do not give out your social security number to anyone; especially not to someone you are talking to on the phone. Do not give out any personal information over the phone unless you are absolutely sure whom it is you are talking to.

Check your credit report at least once a year. Beginning in September this will be a free service.

What to do if you are a victim or think your are?

Contact your credit card company and have a fraud alert issued. This means any time someone uses your card your must be contacted to make sure it is a legal transaction. File a police report. The police do not like to take these kinds of reports but some credit card companies require it.

Check your credit report every couple of months. It may cost you're a small fee to do this but it may be worth it.

What happens when someone is caught?

Not much according to Rick. Identification theft is considered a white-collar crime. It is way down the list on crimes to be prosecuted. Until the laws change you can only hope it doesn't happen to you.

If you are a victim of identity theft you can get help by going

to the following website.

www.consumer.gov/idtheft

You can also call **1-877-IDTHEFT**, which is the FTC's theft hotline.

A special thanks to Rick Dean for sharing this information with us.



Rick Dean from the U.S. Secret Service talks to members about identity theft at the May meeting.

Baysox

Tickets are now available for our trip to see the Baysox. We have 40 tickets with the option to get more if we need them. The date is June 25 and the cost is \$11.00. These are box seats. Get your money to **Janice Crowe** as soon as possible. It is gong to be a fun time for all.

Hope to see you at our June 8th meeting.



Members listen intently as Rick Dean warns about identity theft at our May Meeting.

2005 CWA LOCAL 2108 SCHOLARSHIP GRANT

CWA Local 2108 is proud to offer scholarships to our members and their families. Please read the rules below, and call the Local if you have additional questions.

1. Three \$2,000 scholarships are available.
2. Available to members in good standing since last negotiated contract, their spouse and dependent children or dependent children of deceased members.
3. \$1,000 will be mailed directly to the institution per semester.
4. Student must take at least 9 credits per semester.
5. Must have a letter of acceptance to college or accredited learning institution with application.
6. Drawing at July membership meeting as a raffle.
7. Community Service Committee will screen applications.
8. Applications must be postmarked by June 30, of current year.
9. Resignation from the union will forfeit scholarship awards.

NAME: _____ SOCIAL SECURITY # _____

RELATIONSHIP TO MEMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____ HOME TELEPHONE #: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

MEMBER'S NAME: _____ WORK TELEPHONE #: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

VIS Bargaining: "THE NEW BOSS...SAME AS THE OLD BOSS"

On the sixth day of bargaining and the 30th day in our 60-day bargaining schedule, Verizon proposed its new VISTA – EAST Sales Incentive Compensation Plan to the Union's bargaining team. You may recall that it was on the strength of a new sales compensation plan that the Company invited the Union to enter into early bargaining discussions.

Well, after going back to the drawing board last week to revisit their flawed West Plan, the new VISTA–East Plan looks just like VISTA–West – only worse.

After Verizon gave us a brief run-through of its so-called "Model Contract" that included 7 items, such as their proposed length of the new contracts (3 years), increased employee contributions towards Benefits, capped tuition assistance and even more flexibility under the PIP plan, the day was spent receiving explanations about the new "VISTA-East" Plan. For the most part, the Union asked only clarifying questions. Once we understood what was being proposed we requested additional data and recessed for the day.

The Company's "Model Contract" proposal did not address even one of the Union's concerns raised during the previous 5 days of discussions.

The formula Verizon insists on using to establish sales objectives remains completely subject to unreasonable expectations and GSM manipulation. In fact, based on Verizon's "Total Targeted Compensation" formula, Sales Reps will be under increasing pressure each year to raise revenues just to remain at their present level of earnings.

One of the hand-outs distributed by Verizon to the Union's bargaining team demonstrated that the new VISTA-East Plan would generate more earnings than the Encompass Plan up to the 100% performance level. At 100% the VISTA Plan and Encompass pay the same. At 125% some channels pay more under the VISTA Plan and others pay more under Encompass. At 150% and above all channels pay more under Encompass. So, what do you think they are trying to encourage? Because, we're confused!

The Union advised the Company that we will call them when we are ready to make a counter proposal on their Sales Compensation Plan.

CWA Local 2108 Members

Personals

We wish to extend sincere sympathy to the family and friends of:

Luther Jackson, father of **Annette Beverley** who died on January 26, 2005.

Josie Cunningham, mother of **Joanne Cunningham** who died on February 8, 2005.

Dorothy Teske, mother of **Debbie Teske** who died on February 12, 2005.

Alfred Smith, Jr., father of **Michael Smith** who died on February 24, 2005.

Wilbert Pridgen, grandfather of **Tia Pridgen** who died on April 7, 2005.

Robert Joseph Orphey, Sr., father of **Marinda Corum** who died on April 11, 2005.

Johnny James Stephens, father of **Greg Stephens** who died on April 22, 2005.

Delma Birgfeld, father of **Joanne Barrett** who died on April 27, 2005.

James Michael Madara, brother of **David Madara** who died on May 2, 2005.

Robert Lee Harrison, brother of **Charlene Harrison Batts** who died on May 7, 2005.

Alton L. "Roy" Phillips, father of **Jim Phillips** who died on May 8, 2005.

Roberta Scott, grandmother of **Deana Hill** who died on May 8, 2005.

Congratulations to:

Dorothy and **Daniel Lynch** on the birth of their son, **Dante' Lynch** on January 17, 2005.

Karen and **Conan Copeman** on the birth of their daughter, **Kaiya Copeman** on February 18, 2005.

Aliya and **Michael Kearney** on the birth of their son, **Donavan Alvin Kearney** on April 14, 2005.

New Members

Wes O'Barr

Steve B. Simpson
John C. Coulter

Debbie Boyle

Gary Bechdolt

Matt Verdin

Kevin Walker
M. Ryan Mager
William Laing, III
Bienvenido Angeles
Jennifer Howard
Keith Moore
James Bilbrue
Carolyn Dioses
Joseph Stratton
Brian A. Johnson

Carl Brogden

Carlos R. Butler
Lenell Truman
Anthony Sanders

Anthony Queen

Patrick Quarles

Larry Gibson

Carl McFadgion
Nathan Vann
Dominique Harrison
Andrew McCorison

Paul Goldbeck

Daniel Knight

Transferred

Paul Goldbeck

Danara McLaurin

Hank Allred

Brenda S. Hawkins

LaTasha Carpenter

Farooq Al-Farooq
Frances Brown

Larry Gibson

Bryan White
David Anderson

Roni Hamlin

Greg Krams

Gregory Farrell

Shakela Battle

General Membership Meetings

The Local 2108 General Membership Meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every month, alternating between the Local Office in Landover, and American Legion Post #268 in Wheaton. All meetings start at 6 pm.

Retired Members Club Meetings

The 2108 Retired Members Club Meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every month, at the Local Office in Landover.

All meetings start at 11 am.

2005 CWA Customer Service Conference

By Tonie Price, Chief Steward, RMCC

The CWA National Customer Service Conference was an extremely educational experience. We heard inspiring speeches from Rose Batt (Cornell University), CWA President Morty Bahr, CWA Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Easterling, Professor Jeffrey Keefe (Rutgers University), CWAMobilization Coordinator Hetty Scofield, and Dina Beaumont, Executive Assistant to President Bahr.

Rose Batt spoke about the difference the Union has made for customer service employees. She explained how the industry is changing with the constant number of businesses that are outsourcing and off-shoring work. She talked about the decline in the traditional Union regulated sector and the rapid growth in non-union centers such as at banks and airlines. She said that the union advantage is that we are highly skilled workers and we provide high quality service. However, our challenge is low-cost competition. More and more business are choosing to take the low-cost "low road" for customer service, instead of hiring highly skilled union customer service professionals.

All of the speeches were captivating but the speech that made everyone sit up and take note was from Morty Bahr. He spoke of the realities of the Bush administration. He reminded us that George W. Bush's first act as president was to repeal the laws providing ergonomic standards. In comparison, signing the standard into law was Bill Clinton's first act as President. President Bush has directed the Department of Labor to change the FMLA laws and regulations. The scariest reality is Social Security. President Bush is attempting to attack our retirement security. His administration is pushing for the privatization of Social Security with the 401k plans and other pension programs. Mr. Bahr really got everyone's attention when he stated, "There is nobody that the union can turn to for help. These problems are enormous. We have no time to rest. I will not rest until Ivan Seidenberg says UNCLE."

Barbara Easterling shouted, "We must stand together in solidarity because of the challenges in the workplace." She also spoke out against President Bush's agenda. She stated that more than 18,000 people die annually because they don't have health insurance. Ms. Easterling talked about the budget cuts for Medicaid. In her speech she denounced Bush for "taking food out of the mouths of babies and giving it to his millionaire friends."

Jeffrey Keefe, former Local 2108 Chief Steward, is currently a professor at Rutgers University. He spoke about the effects of outsourcing and off-shoring on call centers. He shocked the audience by telling us that America isn't the only country with this problem. Germany's work is being outsourced to East Germany and Poland. There are over 200 call centers in India. Britain also suffers with

this problem. Mr. Keefe also discussed the effects of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol). VoIP is a new way to make and receive phone calls using a broadband internet connection instead of a standard phone line. He stated that cable is 100% ready for this technology. Unfortunately, Verizon is nowhere near ready. A lot of money will have to be invested to play catch up.

Hetty Scofield discussed upcoming plans for Customer Service Professional Week, which will be celebrated in October. This year we will also be mobilizing around the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program. Today, TAA is only available to manufacturing workers who lose their jobs because of government policies on trade that have led to production being moved to another country. CWA wants the TAA benefits (which include cash benefits, job training assistance, job search and relocation expenses to name a few), to be expanded to provide assistance to service workers as well. Be sure to participate in the mobilization activities related to this issue when you are asked.

What do you call over four bus loads of pumped up, excited people in a sea of red? A SUCCESSFUL RALLY!!!! Thursday the conference attendees visited a Verizon Wireless store in an East Rutherford Circuit City. We wore our red shirts and chanted songs, making the New Jersey area stand at attention to hear our cry about the way wireless is treating their employees. The rally was exciting to attend, and was a big success!!!!

Dina Beaumont was the final speaker and she put the icing on the cake. She spoke about the plight of big business and the Republican party. She warned that the Republican party is out to kill the labor movement, not just the union. Her concern was that we have "dues paying" members but we don't have UNION members. She said "dues paying" members expect the union to deliver miracles with no accountability on their part. UNION members realize that they must be part of the solution. Dina spoke about the importance of our members attending membership meetings to keep informed on the issues that impact them. She reiterated how important it is that we all wear red on Thursdays to show our solidarity to the company.

The CWA National Customer Service was one of the most enlightening conferences I have attended. We tend to think the grass is always greener on the other side. However, as I listened to our non-Verizon members of CWA speak about the unfair treatment and lack of respect their companies have for their employees, I realize the benefit of working at Verizon. I also thought about our Local, 2108. We have our challenges. However, without our willingness to fight wrongs and stand in solidarity, we would not have the respect and stability we have earned through our blood, sweat and tears.

CWA and Healthcare in the USA: Medicaid

CWA opposes Medicaid cuts proposed in the President's 2006 Federal Budget proposal because it includes \$60 billion in cuts to Medicaid over 10 years. This proposal would ax millions of dollars that states receive for providing health care to the low income and poor. These cuts are simply not good family values. These cuts would add millions of people to the rolls of the uninsured. Over 53 million Americans rely on Medicaid for their health care including long-term services.

CWA opposes capping federal Medicaid spending for "optional" services or beneficiaries. Of all Medicaid beneficiaries, the percent that are considered "optional" are: 20% of kids, 43% of parents, 22% of the disabled, and 56% of the elderly on Medicaid. 65% of all Medicaid spending is "optional," meaning it covers either beneficiaries or services that states have the option to cover through Medicaid. 90% of long term care funded by Medicaid is for optional services or people.

CWA opposes President Bush's plan to change the current structure of the Medicaid program by converting it into a "block grant." This would cap funding to the states; shifting billions of dollars in health care costs to the already cash-strapped state and local governments. Even more alarming, states would be required to pay all Medicaid spending in excess of the block grant. Currently, federal Medicaid funding to states grows automatically according to the size of the state's eligible population, including the growth in the cost of covered health care services. Under this measure states would also be required to cover the Medicaid costs of Medicare services for groups mandated by federal law -- even when these costs grow faster than this block grant funding itself.

The proposal to cut administrative funds would limit Medicaid's ability to reach those that need it most. These cuts would hinder the states' ability to conduct new administrative responsibilities they now have as part of the new Medicare prescription drug law. States would find it difficult to improve information technology and efficiency in the Medicaid program.

CWA opposes President Bush's budget plan to target for \$40 billion in Medicaid cuts (of a total of \$60 billion in cuts) from mechanisms states use to increase their federal allotment of Medicaid money. This cut would surpass the total funding projected to be spent on the State Children's Health Insurance (SCHIP) Program.

The claim that \$40 billion dollars over 10 years in Medicaid federal funding cuts could be made by reducing fraudulent state transactions is overestimated. Currently, states use Inter-Governmental Transfers (IGTs) to maximize their Medicaid funding from the Federal Government so that they can draw down federal dollars. There is no proof that states are misusing Inter-Governmental Transfers.

Congress already acted to eliminate loopholes in Medicaid that allow for excess federal payments. These administrative interventions are already working. For example, the "upper payment limit" financing loophole was already reformed by Congress, resulting in a cut of 90 percent. The Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) spending dropped by 2.9 percent (2000-2003). It is estimated that DSH payments will grow at an average rate of 2 percent over the next decade -- less than the rate of inflation.

The "funding crisis" in health care is not because Medicaid is "out of control. It's because health care costs are out of control. Increases in enrollment are up, and drug costs are up too. Yet, the Medicaid program has proven to be cost-effective. In 2002, per-capita premiums for employer-based health care rose nearly 13% while per-capita Medicaid costs for a comparable population grew by 7%. Increases in Medicaid spending between 2001-2003 were a result of the economic downturn when 7.5 million people were added. Medicaid also fills in Medicare's gaps in coverage for low-income elderly and disabled individuals. A large cost of Medicaid goes to Medicare-eligible elderly and disabled beneficiaries. Medicaid is required to pay for drug coverage, long-term care, and Medicare deductibles and premiums for these low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

CWA supports the Kids Come First Act of 2005, S.18, introduced by Senator John Kerry (D-MA) and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) to expand Medicaid to all children up to age 21 and to pregnant women. It would provide health insurance for 11 million children who are without it today. It would give states the "option" to receive 100% of Federal Medicaid funding for children in poverty in exchange for expanded coverage of children of working poor families under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) or Medicaid (up to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level: between \$55,980 and \$74,640 in annual income for a family of four in 2003).

States must also agree to remove enrollment barriers, including eliminating the face-to-face interview for re-determination of eligibility -- work performed by many CWA members (e.g., New Jersey and Texas, etc.). This change should enhance caseload standards for these workers, not hinder them. It is expected that the number of new enrollees would outweigh the number of re-determinations that CWA members would have to do. Since more people will be entering the system, new caseloads will increase.

Local 2108 Union Calendar

June 2005

- 1 Chief Steward's Meeting CANCELLED
- 1-3 CWA Health & Safety Conference
Baltimore, MD
- 4 Local 2108 Annual Family Picnic 12pm-5pm
Mayo Beach
- 8 Retired Member Club Meeting 11am
at Local Office, Landover, MD
- 8 General Membership Meeting 6pm
at Local Office, Landover, MD
- 12 UniverSoul Circus 1pm
Capitol Plaza Mall
- 17 AFL-CIO Night at Camden Yards 7:35pm
Call Local Office for Tickets
- 19 Fathers Day!
- 22 Stewards Meeting CANCELLED
- 24-26 CWA Civil Rights & Equity Conference
Cleveland, OH

July 2005

- 4 Independence Day - Local Office Closed
Union Negotiated Holiday
- 6 Chief Steward's Meeting 9:00am
Local Office, Landover, MD
- 13 Retired Member Club Meeting 11am
at Local Office, Landover, MD
- 13 General Membership Meeting 6pm
at American Legion Post 268, Wheaton, MD
- 27 Stewards Meeting 6pm
At Local Office, Landover, MD



Visit Local 2108 On The Web: www.cwalocal2108.org

**Update:
VIS Bargaining
See page 4**

It Pays To Belong To CWA



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