

CWA 7250

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CWA 7250 Union Update - October 2022

2 messages

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Happy Indigenous Peoples Day! Happy Halloween!

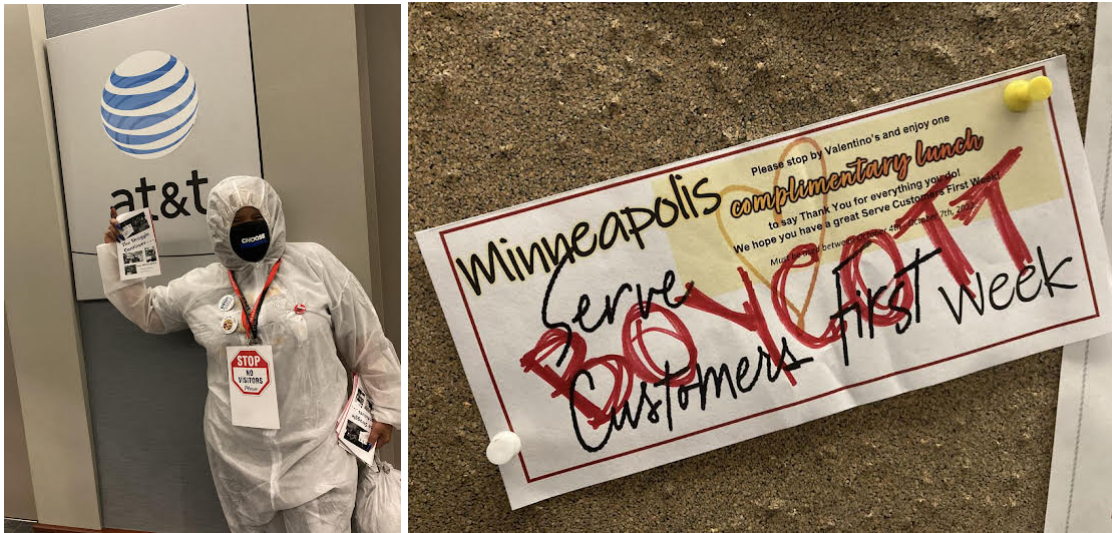
See below for Notes and/or Links on . . .

New AVP for AT&T Call Center - The Struggle Continues Over RTO/WFH at the Tower - Newly affiliated LOU/AppFolio workers fight for first contract - Rounding the bases: Updates DTV, Retail, Techs/VCC, & the Tower - ORGANIZE! - Solidarity Forever: CWA 7250 on the picket line with MNA Nurses - Local members at CWA District 7 Leadership School at the University of Iowa Labor Center - CWA 7250 at the Labor Notes' Troublemakers' School - MN Frontline workers pay - RIP Lorraine Bellanger, Marc Powell, and Elbert Branch - Native American Labor Heroes - Union-made Halloween

**1. Angela Bates Unanimously Approved as AVP - AT&T Call Center**

Charli Haataja - Our fierce, funny, caring, and wise Area-Vice President (Chief Steward) for the AT&T Call Center has decided to step down from that position after many years. We are sad to see her go - but she promises to stay connected to our future organizing and struggles. Charli nominated (and the Local Executive Board unanimously appointed) long-time member/steward **Angela Bates** to finish out the term (thru end of 2023). At the September Local Membership Meeting - Angela was unanimously approved for this role starting October 1st 2022. Angela has been a core member of the CWA 7250 WFH Committee and is one of the co-chairs of the Local's re-started Human Rights Committee. Angie is respected by so many for her honesty, smarts, and toughness - AT&T better look out!

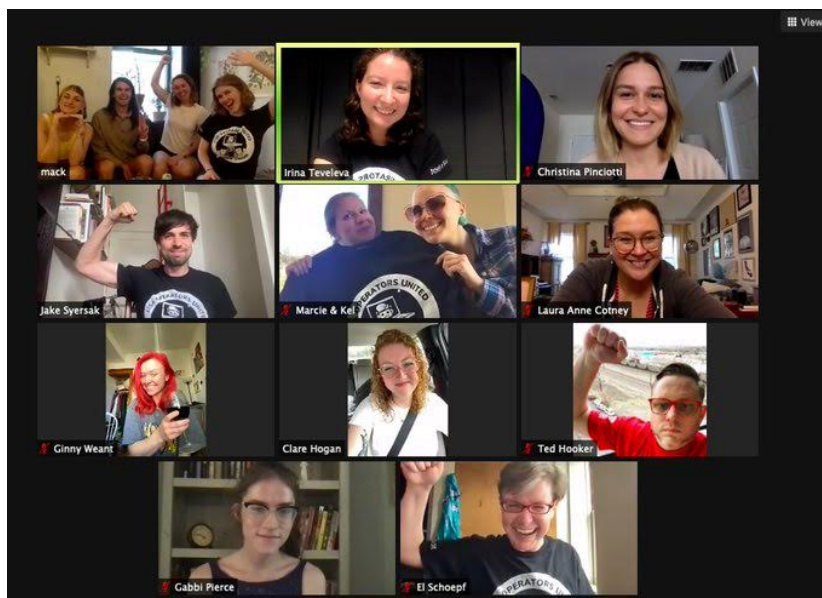
Angela Bates can be reached at: 612-804-6601 angie.bates@cwa7250.org



2. From WFH to WTF - The Struggle Continues

So far Edman Beek, Laura Inda and AT&T have succeeded in forcing all of our Call Center members back to the office - but not without a cost. Several COVID cases, more resignations, and a collapse in production numbers have followed. CWA members have not been taking it lying down. The Local produced a welcome -back pamphlet/zine "The Struggle Continues - From WFH to WTF" with a variety of centerfold posters for your cubicle wall like "I Could Have Done This At Home". "I Was Safer At Home", or "I Bet My Dog Misses Me". The union's WFH Committee has been extremely active and spontaneous "Collaboration Walks" have broken out with large groups of workers marching on 12, 11, and 8th floors carrying protest signs. Many members boycotted the company's hokey "Serve Customers First" week give-aways (After previously shaming the company into dropping their insulting, corny "Welcome Back to School" themed gimmick). WFH Committee member **Sara Fry** bravely and righteously questioned Ed Beek when he FINALLY showed his face on the floor. The union has filed two grievances so far (more coming) on the company denying WFH Job Accommodations to members with serious health conditions.

Going forward our new AVP secured a commitment from Beek to meet on the issue, and we got the CWA T&T office to commit to submitting formal Requests for Information (RFI) on the COVID numbers in the work groups across the country forced to return to the office. We will continue to file grievances and the Work from Home Committee will discuss next steps in mobilization actions while also networking with the other CWA Locals around the country that have stood up around this issue to strategize how to keep pressure on the company and the national union for an eventual return of a WFH option.



3. CWA 7250/Lisa Operators United Workers Announce Open Bargaining

Kel Smith, member of the union bargaining committee provides an update on the organizing at AppFolio: "After winning our election in early June, we're finally gearing up for bargaining starting this October. While we originally

had three dates on the calendar, the company cancelled the first bargaining date due to a "calendar conflict", so we're now set to meet for our first bargaining session on October 17th. We had fantastic engagement with our bargaining survey, with nearly 80% of our unit responding by the deadline. We're still analyzing the massive amount of data and working on finalizing our first set of proposals, focusing on non-financials first. A small group of member leaders attended virtual steward training and we expect to send an announcement to the company and our membership introducing all Union Stewards this coming week. Our unit's main priorities at the bargaining table are about fair compensation (zero Operators have ever received a raise aside from being promoted), consistent and equitable shift availability, and a workplace that prioritizes worker wellness, safety, and mental health. Anyone in our unit is encouraged to sit in on the bargaining sessions, and some members will be giving testimonies alongside the bargaining committee and **CWA Staff Rep Jana Smith-Carr.** LOU workers **Sierra Brown, Laura Cotney, Micah Gleason, Martine Kinkade, Kel Smith, and Nadejda Webb** will make up the bargaining committee along with **CWA D7 Staff Jana Smith-Carr, and Local President Kieran Knutson.**



4. Rounding the Bases: Updates from DTV, Retail, Techs, and the Tower

DirecTV Call Center Update: AVP **Ann Jensen** is back at work after a long stint on the bargaining committee. All DTV workers should have gotten their contract raise, back pay, and signing bonus. The full final text of the contract is still not available (we will add to our Local website as soon as it is). Details of the new permanent WFH positions are still being worked out. We are unsure how many WFH positions there will be (Management is telling us they believe it will still be 50% of the call center workers), and we don't know yet if there will be separate seniority lists, vacation books, etc. The union recently met with DTV management about the ongoing issue of the out-state attendance manager pushing back against our members requesting union representation for what the company deems non-disciplinary meetings. We emphasized that it's up to the member to determine whether they believe the meeting could reasonably lead to discipline or other harm - and that this particular manager was making every request into an unnecessary battle. Local management seemed to understand the issue and promised to talk with the out-state attendance manager to help resolve the issue. **Open Grievances:** None

AT&T Technicians Update: We added two new stewards to our Tech Steward crew - both Legacy T NTS: **Stephen Peters** out of North Dakota who has sat on safety committees previously, and **Steve Wilson** in Iowa who was previously a union officer in Arkansas - Welcome to both Steves! We now have stewards in all 5 states where we have Technician members - and 10 Tech Stewards total including AVP **Sean McCawley** and E-Board Member At Large **Dave Bennett**. Mobility Techs under the Orange contract should have all gotten their raise, back pay, and signing bonus. The union has been pushing for new trucks (which have supposedly been on order for some time) for some of the northern MN Mobility Techs. Techs up there are concerned about safety of vehicles with winter coming on - and the fact that the company stops authorizing minor repairs on the old trucks when new trucks are on order (thanks to steward **Ray Welch** for alerting us to this issue). We are also demanding the company pay a member in Nebraska who was injured on the job and missed their contractual raise in April (as well as carry-over vacation) because they were out. If we are not able to resolve this with first line management it will be grieved (thanks to steward **Piero Sutti** for bringing this to our attention). We continue to follow the issue of the company's outside locator ticket screening. The company has stated that this program (which takes decision making away from the techs on the ground and relies on sometimes outdated or inaccurate maps) will continue to be expanded to the entire country - but there have apparently been some major hiccups. We hear that the program has now ended in North Dakota but has been started up in Tennessee. Also rumors that the roll-out in New York state was such a disaster that it had to be ended prematurely. One manager told a union officer in Illinois that in August they already had double the number of lines cut nationally than the annual average. We will continue to monitor this issue and try to get CWA to coordinate information gathering and pushback nationally (Thanks to South Dakota steward **Gabriel Perez** for keeping his ear to the ground on this issue). We are down from three to one Comm Tech in the AT&T Teleconference Center in Minneapolis. One hd elected to transfer to Denver when the company advised us that the Comm Tech work would be going away ASAP and that there would be no VTP's offered. Of course after that tech had relocated, a VTP WAS offered afterall and one of the other Comm Tech's took it. For now the company states that the last Comm tech there will be doing "support work" until further notice. **Open Grievances:** None

AT&T Retail/Virtual Call Center: All our union RSC's should have now gotten their raises, backpay, signing bonus and

their title step adjustment. A group of alert RSC's in the Grand Rapids store reviewed their back pay and found that it did not appear to equal the 5% raises they should have got. We have escalated for an explanation of the backpay calculations and will grieve it immediately if it is indeed short. **PLEASE take some time to review your back pay totals and your hours worked back to 02/12/2022.** If this is a wider problem we need to know so we can RFI the entire state's payroll and make sure everyone has been paid what you're owed (Props to member **Eric Halverson** for doing the math in his store). An RSC member who is military reservist has had the company claim he as overpaid for the third time this year. We are escalating to make the company explain what happened and why it keeps happening before he agrees to pay back anything.

Last week CWA 7250 AVP **Larry Thompson**, Local VP **Kasie Garcia**, and Local President **Kieran Knutson** met (virtually) with the new Vice President General Manager over the Northern Plains (Bryce' boss) Amanda Seabaugh. Typically the local union does not meet with such big dogs, so she brought AT&T Mobility Labor Relations honcho Trent Schott to act as her lawyer. We had hoped to use this meeting to suss out her vision and plans and to raise the issue of the negative impact that the non-union "Authorized Retailers" and big-box kiosks are having on the brand. Ms. Seabaugh was not prepared for a serious meeting - she was unable to describe any kind of vision other than (and we appreciate the honesty here) that her sole mission was to "maximize profits" - so no fluffy BS about being a good partner to the community, delivering innovative technology - none of that. It's just money, money, money. Also despite her history in retail and her claims of being constantly "out in the field" she seemed to have no knowledge of (or much care about) the litany of issues that the A/R stores cause that Larry laid out so thoroughly. Several times Mr. Schott had to step in to just acknowledge the issues (A/R stores giving customers inaccurate information, no ability to escalate or report A/R mistakes/lies, time and money it takes to clean up these issues, the amount of resources the A/R stores get compared to union stores, etc.). Its clear that under this new contract the war between union and non-union in retail will continue. On the VCC front, CWA 7250 Steward **Thurston Wells** was denied his back pay under the new contract because the company claimed he was already being paid over the top amount - but this was only because he was still under the one-year "pay protection" that compensates RSC's for lost commission when their store is closed (flipped to non-union) and they are forced into the Virtual Call Center jobs. Once the grievance was filed, the company backed away from their position and agreed to pay Thurston the full amount owed under the contract for back pay. **Open Grievances:** Unjust discipline (customer mistreatment) at 2nd step with District 7 since June 2022; Unjust Discipline (company skipped steps and went right to Final Letter on attendance) being sent to 2nd step with District 7. Grievances over vaccine mandate suspensions and terminations have been closed by District 7 with one member opting to appeal.

AT&T Tower Call Center: As reported above, we have a new AVP in place - **Angela Bates**, sworn in on October 5th. **Charli Haataja** will continue to work with Angie over the coming weeks to finish out some grievances and further train on AVP duties. **Naomi Holmes** who has been a key part of the WFH Committee has been appointed steward - Welcome Naomi! This brings our count up to 14 in the Tower (not counting officers), though we may be losing some due to the forced RTO. Numerous issues have arisen from the forced RTO. The **WFH Committee** will continue to meet and plan actions. The **Health & Safety Committee**, chaired by **Kathleen Lamb** will continue to monitor the situation and press the company on ways to improve the work area. The re-started Local **Human Rights Committee** co-chaired by **Michelle Richardson** and **Angela Bates** will begin meeting again soon - this committee is open to members from all areas of the Local - not just the Tower (get in touch if you are interested). **Open Grievances:** Two grievances (discrimination and respect over Job Accommodation denials and the "Interactive discussions") - will be heard this week; Misuse of Articles 20 & 22 (AKA "Vacation Snatching") - at the CWA T&T office for Step 3 since May 2022; Unjust suspension (forced reporting of personal medical records vaccine status) at CWA District 7 for Step 3 since April 2022; Access to Alliance pre-paid funding - at the CWA T&T office for Step 3 since October 2021.



5. ORGANIZE!

So many of the battles that we fight are defensive - the employers are always seeking ways to maximize their power, control and profits. But we, as a union, a labor movement, and as the working class, NEED to change that dynamic. We need to go on the OFFENSIVE - we need to ORGANIZE. So instead of us protesting the company opening more A/R stores, or using contractors - they are having to deal with us ORGANIZING the A/R stores, and the contractors. The bigger percentage of workers that are unionized, the more leverage we have in negotiations. The larger our membership, the more we can do - the more the bosses and politicians have to pay attention to what we do. With our AT&T and DTV contracts behind us (for better or worse) and the LOU/AppFolio contract hopefully resolved in the near future - we need to turn our focus to organizing new members. We need to organize non-union cell phone retail stores, non-union telecom technicians and contractors, non-union call centers (telecom and not), and technical workers (like at AppFolio and Activision/Blizzard). The membership voted to direct extra funding in the budget this next fiscal into putting real time and resources into organizing. We will need contacts - Do you know someone working in non-union workplace that would like to unionize? We will need volunteers - both to do research and to get out and meet and talk to people. Some of this can be union-paid excused time from work - and some would be volunteering on your own time. **Please get in touch to get involved - the CWA 7250 Organizing Committee will be put together this month and will be humming by the end of the year!**



6. Solidarity Forever: Picketing with Striking Minnesota Nurses Association

When the Minnesota Nurses Association launched the biggest private-sector nurses strike in U.S. history at 15 hospitals in the Twin Cities and Duluth-Superior, CWA 7250 wanted to do everything in our power to make it successful. **Vince Opheim** - long time steward at the AT&T Call Center is an even longer-term volunteer at Children's Hospital was asked to head up or response. Vince served as solidarity picket captain/chant-leader/go-fer for the striking nurses at Children's in Minneapolis all three days of their strike. He was joined on the picket line by members **Joyce Sims**, **Kieran Knutson** (AT&T Call center), and **Zach Shaur** (DTV), while **Angie Bates** (AT&T Call Center) hit the picket line at North Memorial, **Brian Janes**(AT&T Call Center) walked at Unity in Fridley, and **Peter Hurtubise** (AT&T Call Center) picketed with nurses at Fairview Southdale. **Yolanda Olmo** and **Michelle Richardson** (AT&T Call Center) rallied with nurses at HCMC earlier in the week (where nurses are banned by law from striking). The strike had solid support from MNA nurses, other unions and the community. So far though, the contracts are not settled. When **MNA President Mary Taylor** joined our Local Membership Meeting to thank us and give an update, she advised that if the hospital bosses wont move on the nurses key demands around staffing, safety, and wages - another strike is possible. **To read Vinny's daily picket-line reports see:** <https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/member-section/reports/203-reports-from-the-2022-minnesota-nurses-strike>



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7. CWA Leadership School in Iowa

In September five CWA 7250 members attended the week-long **CWA District 7 Leadership School** run by the **University of Iowa Labor Center** in Iowa City. The School is an excellent opportunity to deepen one's knowledge and skillset around working-class economics, labor history, organizing tactics, grievance arguments, labor law, public speaking, and action planning. "Students" from Locals across D7 stay in dorm-like hotel rooms and attend classes and workshops all day on the campus of U of I. There are two tracks - one for first year students and one for second year students. Most of the current CWA 7250 Executive Board have gone through the School, as have many other stewards and members. This year we were able to send five stewards: **Joyce Sims** (2nd year) and **Yolanda Olmo** (1st year) from the AT&T Call Center, and **Traci Doll** (1st year), **Dylan Neubauer** (1st year), and **Nick Stryker** (1st year) from AT&T Retail. Traci's favorite part was the action planning, "We broke up into groups and worked together doing our specific jobs. I was on the communications team which was in charge of press, taking pictures/videos and social media. I loved it and would be very interested in doing that in future actions". Nick said, "My favorite part was being in class surrounded by other CWA member and learning things from each other. I thought it was cool that we got to be involved in the action at Ingredion." Dylan thought it was an amazing experience, "I learned so much and it really motivated me to be more active in the union and amongst my co-workers . . . The best part for me was the picket we took part in. I forget how amped you can get doing that sort of stuff." Yolanda said "The learning materials given was exactly what I needed to help with my understanding of my role and authority as steward. All of the speakers and instructors were very knowledgeable and spoke to us where it was easy to understand. All of the classes had a Q & A time at the end . . . The campus scenery was beautiful for walks and just to relax - and the accommodation was awesome as well."

To read the full reports from attendees see:

<https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/member-section/reports/202-reports-from-the-iowa-leadership-school>



8. Twin Cities' Labor Notes' Troublemakers' School

The first weekend in October, CWA 7250 members participated in the Twin Cities Troublemakers' School sponsored by Labor Notes magazine (see <https://labornotes.org/>). Described as an event "bringing together union members, labor activists, and local officers, a Troublemakers School is an incredible space for networking, building solidarity, and sharing successes, strategy, and inspiration. It's a real shot in the arm for newbies and seasoned activists alike". **Vince Opheim** (AT&T Tower) thought **Marcia Howard** was an amazing speaker and "what she's done for George Floyd Square and the teacher union is legion". He also attended the Beating Apathy workshop, "It really got me thinking about how do we bring people back. I had a great talk with Ann Jensen and I think the main reason honestly we don't have that big of a following locally is because of how the national really didn't give a shit about us during negotiation. We talked about how to move people towards supporting and doing actions with us." **Ann Jensen** (DirecTV) agreed, "Marcia Howard was incredible to speak about the realities that Black and Brown people are facing as a result of GF. She was passionate about a call to

action and being diligent about making sure members of all races are not disrespected. . . . I got to have a one on one group activity with Vince. It was nice to talk about a topic wearing different hats trying techniques that work for helping with apathy with members." **Sara Fry** (AT&T Tower) added, "Marcia Howard is an amazing speaker and I love what she was saying about intersectionality. And I'm glad that they are bringing the racism in union history to the light to be disinfected. It was also interesting to me to hear how Journalist **Chris Serres** talked about the similarities the Star Tribune has to other capitalistic companies. For example he mentioned how the death of Geroge Floyd and the pandemic increased readership, but they didn't use the money to hire new people or pay raises." **Shari Wojtowicz** (AT&T Tower), attended a meeting on Stewards led by Teachers union staff, "They talked about how quickly they were able to ramp up there steward force and mobilization, to make the MFT strike a success. The key was creating relationships with the workers in their building. And making sure the different units, (teachers and ESP were working together). Kip Hedges stressed never writing anyone off as a potential steward/activist because it takes a balance of people with different strengths, to make a successful steward workforce." **Kel Smith** (LOU/AppFolio) really liked the opening session, "My biggest takeaways were that we have to remember labor creates all wealth, it's unlike any commodity because it's attached to us as a human. We have to normalize talking about being a union member as part of our identities (so that someday, kids can grow up wondering what union they want to be part of in the same way they wonder what they want to be when they grow up)." **CWA 7250 Organizer Gabbi Pierce** co-lead a panel at the Troublemakers School on trans unionism and winning anti-discrimination protections for trans workers through union contracts. People gathered to hear about the struggles and experiences of trans workers, assess examples of existing contract language, and engage in group discussions on ways to organize and take the work for trans liberation back to our unions.

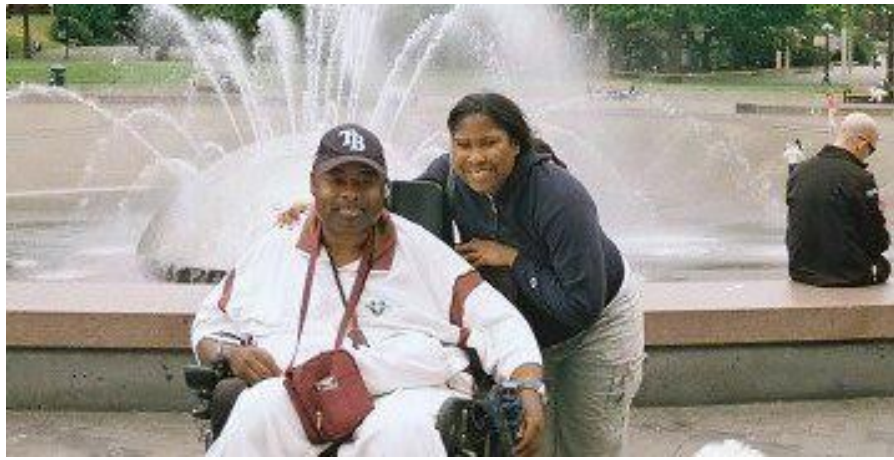
To read the full reports from attendees see:

<https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/member-section/reports/201-reports-from-the-twin-cities-labor-notes-troublemakers-school>



9. MN Frontline Workers Pay

Over 1 million Minnesotans who were approved for a one-time payment of \$487.45 for their service as a frontline worker during the COVID-19 pandemic will start getting paid this week. This benefit was fought for by Minnesota unions - and it should be much more. While many of us had the option of working from home - many more others including CWA Techs and Retail workers could not. At the height of the pandemic COVID was ripping through AT&T retail stores, with dozens and dozens of our member getting infected - sometimes multiple times. COVID has not gone away and while vaccinations are an important way of mitigating the spread and severity of sickness - they are not bullet-proof vests. Our members are still getting sick at work. We need to start a campaign to bring back hazard pay for all of our members that must deal with the public.



10. RIP Lorraine Bellanger, Marc Powell, and Elbert Branch

We lost three of our union family over the last month. May they rest in peace, may their families heal, and their memories be a blessing

Lorraine Bellanger, 66, Mom, grandma, wife, proud Red Laker, longtime worker at AT&T and activist in CWA 7250, retiring in 2020.

Lorraine was longtime chair of Journey of the Spirit - Inter-Tribal Council of AT&T Employees. Lorraine also chaired CWA Local 7250's election committee for many years.

Marc Powell passed away in Reno NV where he has been living for many years.

Marc worked at AT&T in Minneapolis in the 90's and was known as a funny and sweet person who brought a smile to all those he touched.

Elbert Branch, 46, of St. Paul. Father and husband, active in his church and community - and newly active in the union. Recent member of CWA 7250 and previously member of CWA 7200 at the Bloomington Mobility Center.



11. Native American Labor Heroes

On **Indigenous Peoples Day** (or the day after) lets commit to learning some labor history from the people whose land were on . . .

Like **Frank Ellis**, the Cherokee wobbly who was the key organizer of the Independent Union of All Workers that in the 1930's unionized Minnesota meat-pocking plants and their communities "wall-to-wall" in Albert Lea, Austin, Bemidji, Fairbault, Owatonna, Mankato, and South St. Paul - as well as Iowa, Wisconsin and the Dakotas. Many UFCW shops like Local 9 in Austin MN were originally organized by Ellis IUAW.

Or **Fred LeQuier**, the Ojibwe lumberjack that led the Timber Workers Union in Minnesota in the 1930's organizing "the most exploited group of workers in the state".

Or **Happy Holstein** (Ojibwe) and **Ray Rainbolt** (Dakota), both organizers and streetfighters in the historic 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters Strike. Holstein was arrested and charged with killing a deputy in the "Battle of Bulls Run", when the strikers defeated the cops attempts to open up the markets to the scabs. He beat the charges and went on to help the Teamsters win a militant strike in Sioux Falls - bringing living wages and union power into South Dakota. Rainbolt and a group of militants faced off with the Farmer-Labor Governor during the strike and demanded (and succeeded) in getting him to release the main strike leaders who'd been arrested and held in a prison camp at the State Fair grounds. After the strike, Rainbolt chaired the Teamsters' Union Defense Guard which protected the city from the nazi Silver Shirts.



12. Union-made Halloween

Did you know that when you do your Halloween shopping, you can use the power of your paycheck to support good jobs that pay well and respect the rights of working people? Here is a handy guide to the union-made treats that will make your holiday not only fun, but will help working people, too.

Annabelle Candy Company

Abba-Zaba peanut
Big Hunk
Rocky Road S'mores
U-No

American Licorice

Black vines
Red vines
Red vines ropes

Bachman

Jax Cheese Curls
Keystone Snacks Party Mix
Pretzels

Ferrero

Baby Ruth
Butterfinger
Laffy Taffy
Nestlé Crunch
Tangy Taffy

Ghirardelli Chocolate

All filled and nonfilled squares
All filled and nonfilled bars
Chocolate chips
Nonpareils

Hershey Products*

Hershey's Kisses: Milk Chocolate, Candy Cane, Cookies and Cream, White Chocolate, Special Dark Chocolate
Hershey's Milk Chocolate Bars
Hershey's Milk Chocolate with Almonds Bars
Hershey's Nuggets
Hershey's Santa Claus Shaped Chocolate
Hugs
Rolo Candies

Pearson's Candy

Mint Patties
Nut Goodie
Salted Nut Roll

Sconza Candies

Boston Baked Beans
Chocolate
Chocolate Covered Cherries
Chocolate/Yogurt Fruit and Raisins
Jaw Breakers
Jordan Almonds
Lemoncello Almonds

See's Candies

Assorted chocolates
Brittles and toffees
Candy bars
Lollipops
Nuts and chews
Truffles

Smarties Candy Co.

Smarties

Tootsie Roll Industries

Tootsie Pops, all sizes and flavors
Tootsie Rolls, all sizes and flavors

Wilbur Chocolate

Peter's Caramel

*Union-made only if produced in the West plant in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

OK, We're done!

As always - thank you for all that you do for your families, community, co-workers, the union, and the working-class!

Solidarity Forever!

CWA 7250 UNION UPDATE is sent out every month to all Local members and contacts, other CWA locals and other unions, and friends and allies in the labor movement and the community. The **UPDATE** is edited and produced by CWA 7250 Local 7250 President Kieran F. Knutson.

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Text CWA7250 to 33339 | Union Strong App: <https://unionstrong.app.link/cwa7250>

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To: Union Officers <union@cwa7250.org>

Wed, Oct 12, 2022 at 11:15 AM

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