

As we head towards Thanksgiving, I think it is important to recognize acts of kindness and generosity, both individual and group, that truly exemplify what it means to be a NAGE, IBPO, IBCO, or IAEP, sister and brother. Some actions of our members are heroic, while others are morally just. Your union work, something that may be simply leading a union discussion, often results in justice in the workplace. Meanwhile, public employees of every stripe continue to be unfairly characterized by the media and cast as an entire class into a small pond in which only a few deserve to swim. It is time to give thanks to those among you for your selflessness and recognize some of your achievements.

Two IBPO Members Honored for Bravery While Saving a Young Life

Officers Kevin Fitzgerald and Thomas Liebel, members of IBPO Local 364 representing police officers in Springfield, Mass., New England's fourth-largest city, received George L. Hanna Memorial Awards, honoring police officers for bravery in the line of duty.

Officers Fitzgerald and Liebel responded to a call of an unruly teenager in 2008. Arriving on the scene, they encountered a 14-year-old boy, who unknowingly was armed and suffered from mental health issues. The teen stabbed Officer Fitzgerald in the chest near his heart, but acting together the two officers struggled with the boy and Officer Liebel subdued him. Officer Fitzgerald earned the Hanna Medal of Honor, while Officer Liebel received the Medal of Valor. Officer Fitzgerald recovered and today is back on the job. The annual awards honor the memory of Massachusetts State Trooper George L. Hanna who was shot and killed while making a traffic stop in 1983.

Selfless Vote Saves 75 Trial Courts Jobs

Members of two NAGE locals that together represent more than 1,000 employees of the Massachusetts Trial Courts voted to take eight furlough days, an act that saved 75 of their colleagues' jobs. Voters knew exactly which jobs would have been lost because of seniority registers. Probation Officers, represented by Local 229, and Assistant Chief Probation Officers, represented by Local 118, cast nearly 800 votes.

Going into the holiday season, these sisters and brothers, many with lengthy careers with the courts, had agreed to take what essentially amounted to a 20 percent pay cut for the next eight weeks to save 75 jobs.

The vote demonstrated that given the current unemployment rate, members of both locals placed the welfare of their colleagues above their own self-interest. Local leaders who attended the count were shocked by the results. "I can't believe this has happened," an elated local officer said. "I have never witnessed anything like this before." Brian Quinn, president of Local 118, said he never expected members to vote in favor of furloughs, while Jack Alicandro, president of Local 229, said, "This is a proud moment for all of us. This is what unions are about."

Perseverance Pays: Six Years Later NSPS is History

Department of Defense workers can now exhale: The 2010 Defense Authorization Act finally removes all funding for the most controversial personnel system to strike employees in decades. The brainchild of former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the National Security Personnel System passed into law in

November 2003. NSPS systemically removed any meaningful collective bargaining rights from DoD employees, and it was the intent of the Bush administration-although it later issued a denial-to use this personnel system for all federal workers. Simply, this is an example where persistence pays off and, were it not but for the selfless actions of many union leaders working together urging their membership to stay the course of unity, it is likely that many DoD employees today would be suffering the harmful effects of this notorious law.

One example, Dale Dandrea, president of NAGE Local R1-144 representing scientists and engineers at the Newport Naval Undersea Warfare Center and a NAGE executive board member, spent countless days breaking down DoD proposals and illustrating the flaws for all our members to see. The father of three young children, he sacrificed hours with his family for six years to improve the lives of many. He is one of many among us who responded.

Florida EMS Locals Rally For Brother

Chris Bayer, an officer of IAEP Local 84 representing EMS professionals employed by Rural Metro in Orlando, continues to endure testing for an undiagnosed medical condition that may prove to be multiple sclerosis. He has used all his vacation and sick leave. He faces financial ruin. Local 84 knows that Chris is in for a fight.

In a recent letter to Local 84 members, Tom Murphy, a fellow Local 84 member, asks his colleagues to not only think about helping Chris meet his financial obligations, but also look towards offering other services that will help make his life better. "All of us come from varied backgrounds and have different skill sets and talents," wrote Murphy, "I hope that all of you will step up and offer what you can."

IAEP National Representative Bret Cyr took the cue from local members and went to each of the IAEP local executive boards he works with and asked them to reach out to their members to help Chris fight back. For more information about helping Chris, please email Bret at bcyr@nage.org.

Police Donate OT Pay Earned Protecting Cop-Killer's Free Speech Rights

Police officers employed by the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, the state's flagship university, vowed to donate all overtime pay earned protecting the security of the campus during a speaking engagement by a 1970s domestic terrorist. The terrorist was found complicit in a series of crimes including the 1976 bombing of Boston's Suffolk Superior Courthouse, which injured 22, and the 1981 traffic-stop killing of New Jersey State Trooper Philip Lamonaco. As many as 300 police officers from neighboring communities and New Jersey planned to protest the speaking engagement, however, at the 11th-hour a parole officer from Maine refused the parolee's request to travel across state lines. "The patrol officers were called in to work the event and we decided we didn't want the earnings from this," explained IBPO Local 432A President Kevin Shaw. "We thought that the money should go to a good cause and that the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund was appropriate."

To Each of You Who Do Your Union Job Every Day

Often in this world of union work, it is difficult to see the forest for the trees. To each of you, I understand that you never quite get the credit due to you. Each day brings a new challenge. When you win something for one of your members, your member most likely believes you were successful because the member's position obviously was the right choice. When you suffer setbacks, members often believe it's your fault and if you had worked harder, you would have achieved their desired results. Sometimes it seems thankless. As you can see from only a few short events that occurred this month, we share a unity of purpose. Working together we achieve wonderful results and sometimes we add a measure of justice to this world that otherwise, without us, would be absent.