

UNION



BUG

A Newsletter of the Beaver-Lawrence Counties Central Labor Council

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JULY 2020

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PA AFL-CIO Will Work For Justice And Equality In America

By Rick Bloomingdale, Pa. AFL-CIO Pres., and Frank Snyder, Pa. AFL-CIO V-President.
Posted June 18, 2020

The extrajudicial murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Memorial Day was another atrocity in the long pattern of violence routinely inflicted on black people in America. It was the latest tragedy in the story of America's troubled history regarding race.

In the last few weeks, good people of every race and ethnicity have come together to protest and demand action that has been too long overdue. Marginalized working people have experienced violence and hostility from systemic discrimination based on their color, not to mention their nationality, their sexual orientation, their ability, and their gender iden-

tity. The right to assemble, associate, and protest for social and economic justice is the foundation of the union. We, as the federation of labor unions in Pennsylvania, resolve to put equality at the core of our movement, and we are committed to solidarity with our



Labor Council Executive Vice-President Dan Onuska (left) with Beaver County Commissioner Tony Amadio, Pa. State Representative Rob Matzie and Beaver County Commissioner Chairman Dan Camp at June 13th Beaver County Unity rally. The rally was held at the Beaver County Courthouse.

sisters and brothers of color, whether they are union or not.

In the 20th century, unions stood with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., just as he stood with our union members. But oppressors and some misguided lawmakers still use similar tactics of fear

and suppression as in King's day, through bullets, real or rubber; attack dogs, water cannons, and now a military threat from our own government looms.

We can no longer allow the George Floyds of America to be forgotten; we will not wait for the next victim. What happened in Minneapolis has happened to far too many unarmed people of color for centuries. Racism plays an insidious role in the daily lives of all working people of color. Racism is also a labor issue because it is a workplace issue.

Racism is a community issue, and unions are the community.

Therefore, our federation is committed to changing society's undeniable culture of racism. We aim to establish a Civil Rights Committee that

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No One Should Have To Suffer Or Die Because Of Improper Healthcare Funding

Statement of Kerri Theuerl,
Labor Council Ex. Vice-President
at June 20th Medicare for All Car Caravan and
Rally from Aliquippa to Beaver

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Kerri Theuerl and I am a registered nurse. My intent is not to come here today to drown you in facts and figures but to share a personal perspective as someone who has worked in the healthcare industry for over 20 years.

As a home healthcare nurse, I have witnessed family members overwhelmed and overburdened with caring for their parents at home because their parents could not afford personal care or long-term care facilities. Their parents did everything they could to avoid being forced to apply for medical assistance because their parents worried that

Medicaid reimbursement claims against their houses would mean that they would leave nothing

for their children when they passed.

While working in a physician's office, I would see patient after patient prescribed medications that they could not afford. Staff would frequently need to obtain authorizations or find programs to assist in payment for prescriptions, creating delays in treatment that could lead to worsening of their health conditions and, at times, to depression and despair.

During the last 14+ years of my nursing career, I worked as a staff nurse and a nurse case manager in a county-owned, long-term care facility. I would frequently find myself arguing with insurance companies about payments for the treatment and care ordered by physicians. The payments made by insurance companies to the county-owned facility were often insufficient to cover the cost of higher levels of care ordered by physicians.

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P.O. Box A, Beaver, PA 15009

Editor - Victor Colonna
v.colonna@comcast.net

Asst. Editor - Steven Kocherzat
steven6700@comcast.net

NEWSPAPER COMMITTEE

CALENDAR OF EVENTS COMMITTEE

Jody Kohser
Mark Benkart

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

T Berry



The opinions expressed in Union Bug articles are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Beaver-Lawrence Central Labor Council or its officers.

President's Report

By Rick Galiano
Labor Council President

* The July Labor Council meeting has been canceled due to the continuation of the COVID-19 crisis. The Executive Board will meet via Zoom link on its regular monthly meeting date and time, July 20th at 6:00 pm. Please check with any Executive Board member or read the August UNION BUG Calendar or Events for the status of the August meeting. In person July Executive Board and membership meetings were held but no official business was conducted because a quorum of members was not present. Thank you to NW Pa. ALF Director Rosann Barker for attending the meet-

ings.

* The Labor Council Scholarship Committee has announced the names of the recipients of the two \$1,000.00 scholarships that are awarded by the Labor Council each year. The awardee of the first scholarship is Samantha Story of Oakdale. She is a graduate of West Allegheny High School and will be attending Westminster College. She was sponsored by James King of Insulators Local 2. She was awarded her scholarship based on her essay: "What is the AFL-CIO and what do they do?" The second scholarship has been awarded to Kiara Baker of Spartansburg. She is a graduate of Pa. Homeschoolers Accreditation Agency and will attend Tay-

lor University. She was sponsored by John Baker of Carpenters Local 420.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS

Thank you to Labor Council for its donation to the Lawrence County Historical Society in memory of my wife, Maryann. Maryann died on June 29th after a long and courageous battle against cancer. Also, thank you to the national and state AFL-CIO, NW Pa. ALF, USW International and staff representatives and local union representatives and members who have expressed their sympathy.

PA AFL-CIO Will Work For Justice And Equality In America

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will continuously engage union members and community leaders of the diverse places we live and work. We acknowledge that our own movement had forgotten the many injustices, wrongly believing that time heals all wounds. Time will not, and should not, heal these wounds. We will listen to the grievances that have festered for too long and take action, not just for today, but for every day.

This country is in desperate need of true leadership. It is time we look inward to find leadership that knows how poverty and prejudice are linked. Until

every man, woman, and child, regardless of their race, religion, region, or who they love, are treated equally as one, we will not rest.

Black Lives Matter. A lot. We must do better, and we will do better. We will no longer stay silent or stay still. That is our promise from the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO.

[Editors Note: SEIU Healthcare Pa. is organizing a Healthcare Heroes Car Caravan on July 20th in Beaver County as part of a "Strike for Black Lives" set to take place on that date. The "Strike for Black Lives" has been orga-

nized by multiple labor unions, including SEIU, IBT, AFT, United Farm Workers and the Fight for \$15, and multiple social just groups. It will take place in cities and towns across the country, including in Pittsburgh. The Beaver County caravan will begin at 1:00 pm at Beaver Valley Nursing and Rehab and continue to Providence Healthcare Center, Brighton Rehab & Wellness Center and end at Beaver Elder Care at 2:30 pm. For further information please contact Denise Cox, SEIU administrative organizer, at 412-393-9282.]

No One Should Have To Suffer Or Die Because Of Improper Healthcare Funding

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Our patients were being treated for various illnesses or health setbacks such as pneumonia, traumatic brain injuries, new joint replacements, open heart surgeries or new diagnoses of cancer with horrific side effects from chemotherapy and radiation.

The insurance companies wanted to hear that patients were making progress week to week.

It was a constant battle to obtain approval for necessary treatments such as IV fluids, physical and occupational therapy, and speech therapy for swallowing dysfunction. Please listen to that again – treatments ordered by physicians were contingent on the approval of insurance companies. It was a very frustrating point in my career.

There are now corporate insurance companies which not only provide the insurance, but also provide the care in the non-profit facilities they own. The non-profit status of these facilities allows them to operate without paying real estate taxes, directly impacting the communities where they are located.

Meanwhile, the corporate CEO's receive huge amounts of salaries and other compensation. For example, the UPMC CEO received a forty (40%) percent pay hike to the total of \$8.54 million annually in 2018. This continues to occur while Mr. and Mrs. Smith are denied treatment ordered by their physician.

More and more people

have become aware of the issues in long-term care due to the COVID -19 pandemic. The underfunding of long-term care has been a major factor for decades. 2.7 contact hours per patient per day has been an ongoing issue - that's 54 minutes in eight hours to provide care to someone who may not be able to get out of bed without assistance; who may not be able to feed themselves, dress themselves, or even swallow safely without somebody observ-



Labor Council Executive Vice-President Kerri Theuerl addressing Medicare for All Caravan and Rally attendees at Beaver County Courthouse on June 20th. The rally was sponsored by 17th CD Chapter of Progressive Democrats of America, BC Voice for Change, United Electrical Workers, BC Marcellus Awareness Community, W. Pa. Coalition for Single Payer Healthcare, W. Pa. Physicians for a National Health Program and BC Peace Links.

ing them. There are facilities which still have dormitory settings, four patients in one room with a bathroom down the hallway. That is our current healthcare system.

From reports about the COVID-19 outbreak given to me by nurses with whom I work, proper precautions were not immediately taken to test all workers to ensure they were not transmitting COVID-19.

Many workers still have not been properly fit tested for PPE. CDC PPE regulations have been lowered significantly to ad-

dress the pandemic. Facilities say they do not have access to pre-pandemic levels of PPE. For example, an N95 that previously had a one-time use can now be used up to a week - that is the mask that protects the caregivers respiratory system so they do not become ill which in turn could transmit the illness to more residents.

As of June 19, 2020, 4,345 Pennsylvania long-term nursing home residents have died of causes related directly to COVID-19. We have had 82 deaths along in Beaver County within our nursing homes. The first identified cases on the DOH website is around March 19. In 90 days, 4,345 men and women died, averaging 1,448 a month, 48 residents a day.

Maybe many of those who died would still be with us if their care had been adequately funded and their facilities had been properly staffed with proper oversight.

Our responsibility now is not only to all of those whose lives have been lost but also to all of those who are still living. We need universal healthcare. No one should have to suffer or die because of improper healthcare funding. Everyone needs to be responsible for voting and voting people in the office that care about human dignity and human rights in healthcare. Healthcare is a human right.

Thank you.

BEAVER/LAWRENCE
CENTRAL LABOR
COUNCIL



We're on the Web:
pa.aflcio.org/349

Calendar of Events

- 07/15 2020 Pa. AFL-CIO Community Services Institute: Online
TO
07/16 event beginning at 5:30 pm on 07/15 and 7:30 pm on July 16. Contact Pa. AFL-CIO for registration.
- 07/20 Supporting our healthcare Heroes Car Caravan: 1:00 pm start from Beaver Valley Nursing and Rehab and continuing to Providence Healthcare Center, Brighton Rehab & Wellness Center and Beaver Elder Care. Contact Denise Cox, SEIU Healthcare Pa. administrative organizer at 412-393-9282 for additional information. Also see flyer at end of this issue of the UNION BUG.
- 07/20 Beaver-Lawrence Central Labor Council in person Executive Board and membership meetings are **canceled** due to pandemic. Executive Board will meet at 6:00 pm via Zoom link.
- 08/17 Beaver-Lawrence Central Labor Council Executive Board and membership meetings: Please check with Executive Board members or read August UNION BUG Calendar of Events for status of meeting.

Calendar of Events submissions must be emailed to Jody Kohser, Calendar of Events Coordinator, at jkohser@verizon.net, by 6:00 p.m. on August 11th to be considered for publication in the August 2020 Issue of the **UNION BUG**.

Supporting our Healthcare Heros
Car Caravan July 20, 2020

1:00 pm Start point: Beaver Valley Nursing and Rehab
257 Georgetown Rd Beaver Falls pa 15010

1:30p Providence Healthcare Center
900 3rd avenue Beaver Falls Pa 15010

2:00 -Brighton Rehab & Wellness Center
246 Friendship circle Beaver Pa 15009

2:30 -Beaver Elder Care
616 Golf Course Rd Aliquippa pa 15001

For further information Please Contact
Denise Cox Administrative Organizer SEIU
412-393-9282



SEIUHealthcare.
United for Quality Care
www.seiuhealthcarepa.org