

Hello Sisters and Brothers,

Each year the District Lodge No. 66 donates two (2) Scholarship Awards, one to a son of our Machinists Union Member and the other to a daughter of our Machinists Union member. The winning essays are published in this paper. The District Lodge Scholarship Committee has reviewed all the entries. This was a difficult choice as all the essays received were very well written. The District Lodge would like to thank all of the participants and wish them the best of luck in their endeavors in the future.

It is with great pleasure that I announce the winners of the 2005 Scholarship Awards. The female recipient is **Heidi Tabbert**, daughter of Don and Lori Tabbert. Don is a member of Local Lodge No. 21 and is employed at Trane Company. Heidi is a senior attending Onalaska Senior High School. The male recipient is **Jordan Urbanek**, son of Jim and Jean Urbanek. Jim is a member of Local Lodge No. 21 and is employed at Trane Company. Jordan is a senior attending the Westby Senior High School. Congratulations to you both. Following are the winning essays.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNIONS IN OUR SOCIETY

By, Heidi Tabbert, Onalaska Senior High School

Earning an income is extremely important in our society. Income is how a person puts food on their table, how they can pay for health care, and provide necessities for his or her family. Unions have been very important in ensuring that special right. They work to protect the many rights of the union worker. They protect the wages of employees, unfair treatment, and the health of the members. Without being a part of a union, many of the citizens in our community would be struggling to make ends meet to provide both themselves and their family with the most basic of necessities. Unions help to protect us and other employees from poverty.

Unions also help to set fair wages in a business. If employees are not paid enough the union works to raise that wage. For example, the school my mom teaches at used to be the fourth lowest paid school district in Wisconsin. However, the union helped her wages to raise so now she is paid a much more normal and average wage. By increasing wages, the community in general also benefits. This helps to support business owners and their employees and in turn it helps our economy.

Health care is vital for our well being. Being a part of a union has given my parents a way to provide the most effective health care for my sister and me, as well as themselves. Without the insurance policies they receive through their unionized jobs, we would not have the excellent health care that we have. Insurance has allowed us to have necessary procedures done that are important for our health.

When a person becomes older, it sometimes becomes more difficult for them to perform the tasks they used to do all the time. When this happens companies usually try to replace them. But, what happens to the old employee?

With the help of the union, they are not fired. The union makes sure that the business helps their employee find a job that he or she can participate in. This helps keep both their business and the economy strong. The union ensures that no one is fired unfairly. Members of a union are also protected from all employee biases. All employees have an equal opportunity to move into higher job positions. The job goes to the individual who has the most expertise and experience. The business is able to then run much more efficiently and smoothly because everyone knows what to do in order to bring the most to the overall productivity of the job.

It is very important that families be able to spend time together. Unions have made that possible. Every day union workers can only work a certain amount of hours. This allows them to go home and be with their families. Not only does it benefit family members, but it also benefits the worker and his or her business as well. He or she will not get as tired and worn out if the time is limited. They will be able to slow down and relax before their next shift begins. Limited schedules will also allow for improvement and more productivity in the work place. Unions have also ensured that employees receive breaks during the day. Breaks allow all union employees to relieve themselves mentally and to just take time off from their job. By being able to relax and have a lunch, employees are much more efficient in their productivity. A union also makes it possible for employees to receive extra pay if they work overtime. My dad has been able to use overtime pay to help our family pay for unexpected bills or for extra money for a vacation or holiday.

Unions have provided many things over the years for my family and many others of the community. They have worked to protect us from hardships we may have encountered had my parents decided not to be a part of the union. As a family, we all enjoy the many benefits we receive. Our health is protected, and we don't have to worry about whether or not we will see food on the table the next time we have dinner. Unions are extremely important to us and to the community; they protect our jobs and ensure that we will be able to live the best life possible.

UNIONS PROVIDE HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

By, Jordan Urbanek, Westby Senior High School

A machinist is working with a grinder, already weary from a long shift without breaks. The part of the compressor he is manufacturing snaps, rifling shrapnel in all directions. The laborer is not wearing safety goggles, and a sliver of metal drives itself into his eye. The damage is substantial, and the worker must take a leave of absence to recover. The company hires a new employee to fill the void. The injured man is not paid during his unproductive time at home, and his medical bills are to be financed entirely by him. The immense strain the bills and health concerns place on him cause him to eventually lose his job, his home, and the family he is no longer able to support.

Unions make certain this situation does not occur. The plight of the aforementioned fictitious man should not be a concern to machinists, factory workers, and anyone else included in a union. Power in numbers and group unity allow union to provide safety, care, and deserved wages for their workers. The strengths and benefits of a union trickle down through its workers to the community and the world outside the jobsite. By providing multitudes of assets to aid members, unions have allowed my family and community to live more productive and beneficial lives.

The benefits and services unions provide for their members are extensive and plentiful. They make the workplace safer for the laborers, as well as allowing higher wages and better working conditions. The example man would've had breaks, so he would not have had a numb mind while working. He also would have been wearing safety goggles, which would have saved his eye. The union would have bargained for him during contract negotiations, earning him higher wages and better health benefits. Had he been paid more and had better insurance, he would have had more funds to pay his medical bills. A union would have provided the fictional man with better job security, and the company would not be able to discard him so easily. The union could have fought for the man to retain his job and return to work when he was able, yet because no union existed in the example, the worker's world fell apart. Had he been a union member, he would have taken time off to recover, been compensated in the meantime, have had a portion of his bills paid for him, and regained his job when he could return to work.

Unions have particularly assisted my family with medical costs and the stress associated with them. Health concerns have plagued my family for several years, and check-ups, clinic visits, and pills are still routine. The health insurance of my father's union has allowed us to maintain our health and receive necessary care. If we were forced to pay our bills ourselves, I do not perceive it being feasible. Even if we could manage to provide for our health costs, most everything else in our lives would be discarded, as we could not pay for them. There were a few instances in the past couple of years when my father was unable to work. The union allowed him to receive disability checks, allowing him to remain home and still receive some money to provide for the family. Without the strength of the union and all of the facets it fights for, my family would more than likely be unhealthy and broke. I would like to thank the union for not allowing this to be the case.

The power of a union goes beyond my personal gains and the gains of solely the members. The influence of a union fortifies a community by supporting its members. Members of a union receive higher wages. They can then use their surplus money to purchase and invest within the community, boosting economy. Unions also sustain job security. The workers involved will have more stable lives with more stable conditions. This will keep the economy, as well as the morale of the population, regular. Lastly, the better jobs a union provides will attract more qualified workers. New faces of more capable people

will boost the community in every imaginable way. The power of the union continuously permeates throughout the area, strengthening every corner of town.

A machinist sits at his bench, refreshed from his standard fifteen-minute break. He is grinding part of a compressor, and it snaps, sending metal scraps through the air like bullets. They bounce harmlessly off his goggles. He smiles uneasily, a bit shaken, yet thankful for the safety precautions his union has taken. When his shift is finished, he goes home to his wife and kids in their beautiful home, a home financed by substantial wages gained during the last bargaining agreement. He can relax and spend time with his family because his union is taking care of his best interests.

Congratulations to both of our scholarship winners. From District Lodge 66, we wish them both the best in life and luck in their journey they are just starting.

Remember Saturday, August 5, 2006 is "Machinists Night at the Races" at the La Crosse Speedway. We are asking all members to attend and wear your colors. Look for the 2 for 1 admittance coupon in the July edition of the Union Herald. Have a great month. Fraternally, Rick Mickschl