



# CAPITAL REGION DISPATCH

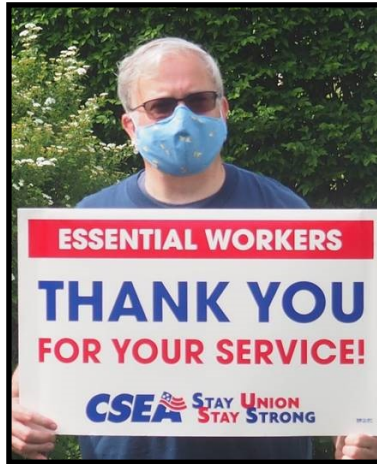
December  
2022

## President's Message

Recently, I read a shocking story of child labor violations. Thirty one kids, some middle school age, were working overnight shifts cleaning meatpacking plants. Some suffered chemical burns. This was not happening in a foreign country. This was happening in Nebraska and Minnesota! This wasn't happening in 1922 but in 2022!

I am happy the Department of Labor stepped in to stop this insanity and the company is now under injunction and facing charges, but I am also angry. Angry that this sort of abuse is taking place. And, sadly, we know, it is not an isolated incident. Every day across our country, workers navigate a labor system unfairly tilted toward profit and productivity. Sometimes, the "humans" in human resources are an afterthought.

Yet, we still have people saying, we don't need unions! Of course, workers need unions. Employers know this, which is why so many companies will spend so much money in anti-union campaigns. Look at Amazon or Starbucks dumping millions upon millions to fight organizing.



Ron Briggs  
CSEA Capital Region President

Even the meatpacking plant putting kids to work on overnight shifts hired "union-avoidance" consultants. They all know a strong collective voice for safety, wages and better working conditions for workers might cut into their obscene profits! Oh dear, a few billionaires have to make less so everyone else can make a living wage! The audacity of the working class!

While companies spend gobs of money to deter workers from organizing, other groups want to undermine unions to make us weaker and they are happy to spend millions to chip away membership, one person at a time. A Labor Day message I saw from them said we don't need unions because workers rights and wages have all been

resolved. Tell that to the kids getting burned in the meatpacking plant, tell that to the workers in nursing homes not getting paid overtime correctly, tell that to the person working next to you trying to make their family successful!

We all have a role to play in keeping our membership strong. Let's no longer ask what our union has done for us lately, but let's ask what we can all do to make sure that our union will be strong and vigilant, so our children or our children's children don't end up cleaning meatpacking plants.

Beginning this issue of The Dispatch, we introduce a new feature -- Union Fame, Management Shame to provide examples of why we all need unions. I hope you can take these examples and share them in conversations with co-workers, friends and family. Or send us your own example of why unions are needed. Workers, with a union or not, are being dissuaded from all angles. Each one of us has to remain vigilant and tell the story before more of our rights disappear!

Ron Briggs  
CSEA Capital Region President

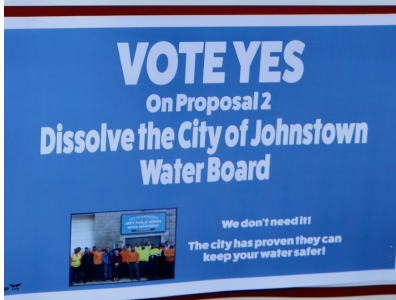
## THE BIGGEST MISTAKE

Johnstown -- The Johnstown Water Board found out what happens when you mess with union. Their biggest mistake was threatening 10 CSEA members jobs. We are union, we are STRONG!

For the past decade the City of Johnstown and the Johnstown Water Board have been in a power struggle over who should run the water department. The water board simply failed the City of Johnstown residents, small businesses, and industries. After a supreme court ruling gave the water board control of the water department in July the board showed its defunct way of running the water department.

They had a plan in place to privatize the water department which would have meant 10 CSEA members losing their jobs. The company they contracted with came to the water department and was shown the daily operations by the Class A Operator. That operator was set to retire due to the water board succeeding in the courts.

The company decided that the work entailed in maintaining the infrastructure of the water department was more than they could handle. They backed out and left the water board with no plan and no Class A operator. Enter the boil



water advisory that is required by the State of New York when there is no Class A operator at a water department. It lasted days. Major industries that rely on a safe, clean water supply were at a standstill and considered shutting down and moving. Residents were affected. Small businesses were affected.

The city of Johnstown decided to put in an emergency order to take over the water department that would last through election day in November. Their plan was to put a referendum proposal on the ballot for election day. The city had tried to do this in the previous election but ended up losing by a narrow margin.

This time was different. CSEA members' jobs were not at stake until this year. CSEA Local 818 Fulton County President Vincent DePalma, City of Johnstown Unit President, Eric Houser and Region 4 President, Ron Briggs started to take action. DePalma reached out to the Mayor of Johnstown, Amy Praught, to ensure that her plan was to keep the members at risk

of losing their jobs employed if the city successfully changed the charter and abolished the water board. Praught praised the DPW department and expressed how appreciative she was for all the hard work they do to make the city great.

Next step was ACTION... POLITICAL ACTION. Yes, political action is more than endorsements of candidates. It is also the avenue to make sure in an election our members jobs are secure.

Bryan Gorman, Region 4 Political Action Coordinator, Ron Briggs, Eric Houser, and Vincent DePalma put together a multi-layered plan that would stress the importance of voting on this referendum to our CSEA members and retirees eligible to vote.

The campaign came full circle on November 5th when Local 818 Fulton County put on a blitz going door to door to its members stressing the importance of voting YES. With signs posted at polling locations asking for a yes vote and social media posts created to encourage that vote Local 818 and the city of Johnstown was successful in abolishing the defunct water board. The results were not even close. The water board is done and the city will take over control, and keep 10 CSEA jobs!

-Vinnie DePalma

## UNION FAME, MANAGEMENT SHAME

### Is Child Labor coming back?

Does the idea of 13 year-olds working overnight shifts around heavy machinery seem like something from the 1920's? It might, but it's happening in 2022.

An injunction against "oppressive child labor" is in place while a federal suit is underway against Packer Sanitation Services, a private contractor hired to clean slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants in Minnesota and Nebraska.

Among the findings of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division:

The company employed 31 minors, in two states, on overnight shifts.

The minors' job duties included cleaning the killing floor, cleaning power-driven machines including meat and bone cutting saws as well as a grinding machine. A 13 year-old suffered serious burns from cleaning chemicals. Isolated incident or disturbing trend?

Also, this past summer... Hyundai came under fire when it was found that two of its parts suppliers had employed underage

workers as young as 12 years-old at its metal stamping and welding plant in Luverne, Alabama.

### Why hire minors?

The Fair Labor Standards Act allows for employees under 20 years of age during their first 90 consecutive calendar days of employment to be paid \$4.25 an hour.

Unions are the antidote to worker exploitation.





# Recipes by Kathleen Rider

## Cranberry Jell-O Mold

Ingredient list:

Jello mix

1 14oz can of jellied whole cranberries

1 20oz can of crushed pineapple undrained

2 3oz boxes of cherry Jello

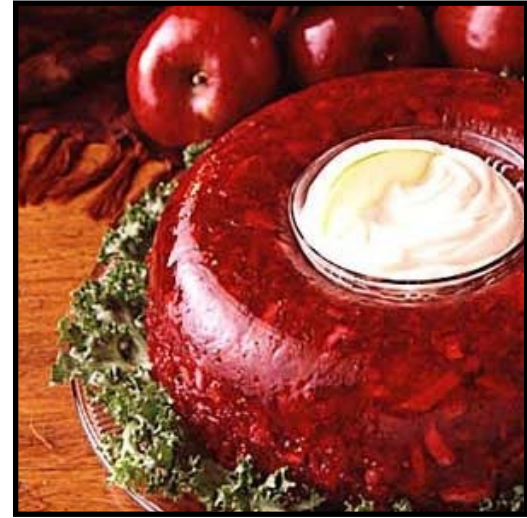
Topping

3/4 bag of mini marshmallows

1/2 pt of heavy cream

Steps:

- 1) Make Jell-o according to the box and while hot add the jellied cranberries and crushed pineapple mix till dissolved, Set overnight.
- 2) Soak marshmallows in the heavy cream overnight.
- 3) Whip the marshmallow mixture then add the topping to the top of the Jello mold before serving and enjoy!



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## Spiced Eggnog

Spiked eggnog is a traditional holiday cocktail that's easy and delicious if you use the right ratio of liquor to eggnog.

Ingredients:

1 quart Prepared Eggnog

4 ounces Dark Rum (or bourbon)

3 ounces Cognac

add Ground Cinnamon

add Ground Nutmeg

add Cinnamon Stick (for garnish)

## Happy Holidays!

## THE CSEA CAPITAL REGION CONTINGENT PREPARING TO MARCH IN ALBANY'S VETERANS PARADE



Front row left to right. John "Frenchie" Ekmalian, Treasurer, Town of Colonie B Unit, Emily Biers, R4 Veterans Committee member from Teachers Retirement, Anne Byerwalters, CSEA Retiree from NYS Teachers Retirement, R4 Exec VP Shana Davis and R4 veterans committee officer liaison, Bill Alund R4 Veterans Committee Member, Town of Colonie Unit B President, Cindy Stiles, R4 Secretary, Ron Briggs, Capital Region President, Tom Edwards Albany County Local 801 President, John Crandell R4 Veteran's Committee Co-Chair. In back -- navy shirt/sunglasses Michelle Kiuber R4 Veterans Committee Co-Chair and Workers Comp Local 671 President. On truck, waving flags - Benny Santos.

Michelle Kiuber is the co-chair of the region 4 veteran's committee and the president of CSEA local 671 with worker's compensation. She has been a part of the committee for 5 years and the co-chair since 2020. There are 10 CSEA members on the committee. The mission of the veteran's committee is to honor, support, and assist in our commitment as well as our membership. They are also providing support to the American legion. The committee combines with other CSEA locals and the community to support veteran initiatives. One of the accomplishments of the region 4 veteran's committee is working with Project Lifesaver in partnership with Stratton VA hospital to make a tracking brace-let for vets that can be used to locate them if they wander off. The current project for the committee is to fundraise for food pantries that are urgently needed during this time of the year.

"The veteran's parade was great as always and great to honor our veterans." - Michelle Kiuber

"It is sad that some people have forgotten those who fought for our freedoms and who deserve so much and our respect" - Michelle Kiuber

## RESOLUTIONS YOUR UNION NEEDS EVERYONE TO MAKE

How many resolutions have you made and kept? It's okay, be honest, we all have made them and fell a bit short at times. That time of year is upon us, where many of our union members will choose to make resolutions for the betterment of themselves in the new year ahead. If you are a leader/activist or if you are a member debating how to get more involved, the breakdown of the word "resolutions" may help you resolve to build union power.

**R** = RESPONSIBILITY

**E** = EVOLVE

**S** = SUSTAINABILITY

**O** = ORGANIZING

**L** = LISTENING

**U** = UNDERSTANDING

**T** = TRUST

**I** = IMAGINATION

**O** = ORDER

**N** = NEXT

**S** = SIMPLICITY

We all have a responsibility to those we represent and to those we will represent – our union brothers and sisters. It isn't easy trying to grow, however, if we can somehow evolve into a stronger

base...that is where the roots grow and evolving beyond those roots is necessary in success.

Moving forward is important and being able to hold on to sustainability is also key to growth and success. We have fought off the evil of the Janus decision and have advanced. Where do we go from here? Organizing. That term is complex. We can seek more members out by going after organizations interested in being a union shop or we can clean our in-house operations and make the process this union needs to succeed easier.

Another key component in building union power is listening to members. Have you ever talked to someone and felt they were not really paying attention to your concerns? There is no bigger deterrence to a fellow member that needs to express their concerns than the inability for them to be heard.

Hearing a member is one thing, understanding them is another. Empathy is a huge trait that can go a long way in helping a member feel their concerns are resonating with the person they have confid

ed in. It is crucial! Understanding is a definite way to earn trust. We all need the security of a trusting relationship. Not just relationships but friendship, and in all honesty even if you don't have a solid relationship with the person you are helping, they need to know they can trust you.

An essential part of planning is having an imagination that takes your ideas and turns them into an attraction for your members. When you can keep your house in order all of your thoughts will not just be heard but felt. Don't get locked in your house. Look around and recognize those in your membership that could be the next to lead. We need to have a plan in place so future generations of union members can continue building on the strength of prior generations.

While you work at all these key parts of a resolution, please don't forget that the most important part is simplicity. Nobody wants to have a part in taking over a mess. Difficulty is a hindrance to action. One of life's greatest lessons is KISS (Keep it simple stupid.) Take that as guidance and let's have the best year ever! 2023!

*Happy New Year!*