Organizing GE Plant in West Burlington

By Tracy Leone

More than 150 workers are trying to form a union at the West Burlington, Iowa GE Plant.

As you can imagine, they are being assaulted daily by anti-union tactics like threats to close the plant, threats to lay off workers, one on one meetings from management as well as meetings with anti-union people brought in from across the country for the sole purpose of intimidating the workers.

Please show your support by visiting their webpage and encouraging them to stay strong. They have a guestbook for you to let them know how you feel: http://www.wbgeea-cwa.com/Guestbook.php

They are in the final stages of organizing and the election date is going to be set any day now.

They are also asking if you are interested to write a letter to the editor in support of their right to organize. If you want assistance, please contact me for more information on their situation and on how to reach out to local and statewide media.

Topics discussed included the role of the steward, stewards’ rights under the law, and handling grievances. The class was taught by Paul Iverson with the University of Iowa’s Labor Center and sponsored by the Des Moines Henry County Labor Council and the Iowa Federation of Labor.

The Iowa Federation of Labor will cover the cost of up to four classes for every labor council each year, so long as the labor council can guarantee at least 15 students. The labor council is still responsible for covering the cost of class materials and any other re-
And any other refreshments it wishes to provide to the participants.

Originally, organizers were worried about being able to ensure that fifteen people would be willing to show up at 8:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning for a Steward School. But after doing outreach to several locals in the area and posting the flyer at job sites, the calls started to come in. By the week before the class more than 60 people had RSVP’d. Ryan Drew, Secretary Treasurer of the Des Moines Henry County Labor Council said, “I’m really happy with the turnout and look forward to putting on more of these classes this year. It’s a great opportunity to learn about each other’s struggles, too.”

Also attending the West Burlington Steward’s Class was Mark D. Jondal, long-time worker and union organizer at the General Electric Plant in West Burlington. Mark reported that he thought the class was informative and hoped that this sort of class “to be available to employees currently involved in union organizing drive.” During the break Mark was able to give an update on their organizing efforts.

It’s no surprise that the workers are facing increasing pressure from the company against their organizing effort, including an NLRB challenge on whether supervisors can be included in the bargaining unit. This is further delayed by GE’s timeline for submitting information to the NLRB. Of course these stall tactics will delay the election and give management more time to intimidate workers from joining a union.

But according to Mark, the workers remain strong, “We have been able to stay ahead of the company’s lies and half-truths.”

To lend some support to these workers organizing efforts, please visit their webpage and comment on their BLOG: www.wbgeea-cwa.com

New Meeting date and time

The Des Moines/Henry County Labor Council has moved their meetings to the 2nd Monday of the month at 6 pm, still at the Machinist Hall.

This will be through June 2012.

Be Union Buy Union
Workers Memorial Day at Capitol—Friday April 27th

Workers Memorial Day will be celebrated on the 27th of April 2012. We will be honored with the presence of Ken Sagar the President of the Iowa Federation of Labor, Michael Mauro the Labor Commissioner, and Father Kiernan. Also in attendance will be Governor Branstad, Teresa Wahlert, Director of Iowa Workforce Development. The event will be observed AT ELEVEN O’CLOCK A.M. IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT 1000 EAST GRAND AVENUE, DES MOINES IOWA.

Next Up Meeting

The South Central Iowa Federation of Labor is organizing a “Next Up” program. The first meeting is scheduled for the April 25th.

Holly to the rescue

United Way Liaison and VITA program director, Holly Sagar, found a way to make sure Iowa Veterans get tax assistance.

For several years AARP provided free tax preparation to Residents at the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown. AARP used to provide free tax preparation but opted not to continue.

Sagar will lead a team of United Way volunteers to spend a day assisting these veterans.

James Caffrey Scholarship

South Central Iowa Federation of Labor offers one $500 Scholarship to any high school senior in a South Central affiliated union household.

Application deadline is April 30, 2012.

The theme for the essay is “How has collective bargaining affected you way of life?”. The essay needs to be double spaced and at least one page in length. Winner will be notified by May 5th, 2012.

Mail applications form and essay to SCIFL, 2000 Walker St., Suite H, Des Moines, IA. 50317

Copies of the forms can be printed off the SCIFL web page at www.scifl.org or obtained at the SCIFL office.

Labor Park Clean up Day March 31st at 9 AM, 4640 Morningstar Drive

Don Brown elected to Regional Alliance for Retired Americans

Don Brown has been elected to a three year term on the Regional Board of the Alliance of Retired Americans (ARA). He will represent the states of Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota.

The ARA is a four million member strong organization working together to make their voices heard in laws, policies, and politics. Brown was instrumental in the initial organizing of the ARA in Iowa.

Brown retired from the Qwest in 2002 and was active with the Communications Workers of American, local 7102, for 48 years. He served as acting president for the South Central Iowa Federation of Labor, for two years. He also lobbied for 22 sessions for CWA Iowa State Council.

“For the Iowa ARA is a progressive state organization” said Brown. He said he was looking forward to being active and getting other retirees active.

For more information on the ARA, contact Midge Slater, Field Organizer, 2000 Walker, St. Suite A, Des Moines, IA 50317. 515-262-9571 or iowa.alliance@gmail.com.
CWA gathers across the Nation against Verizon

The Central Labor Council participated in an event on the 22nd of March with the CWA and IBEW in an action against Verizon. We had about 25 supporters participating from Occupy Des Moines, Citizens for Community Improvement, Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans and various affiliates of South Central. We had very good exposure and a lot of folks driving by were honking and giving us the high sign in support of our efforts.

99% Spring State Wide Summit in Des Moines to Confront Corporate Power

The event called 99% Spring will be held on April 14, 2012, 10 AM to 4 PM at the Central Library, 1000 Grand Avenue in Des Moines.

This movement will join 100,000 people, nation wide, together to work on a movement to train for non violent action, against abusive corporations.

For more information you can go to www.ia99spring.org.

Please RSVP if you are planning to attend at web page above or call 515-255-0800. $10 charge per person for lunch.

Easter Egg Hunt
Saturday April 7, 1—3 PM
Labor Park—4640 NW Morningstar Dr.
RSVP 515-265-1862 or mark@scifl.org
Trivia for COPE

On April 28, the Quad City Federation of labor will be holding a COPE fundraiser Trivia Night.

With union rights under attack in both Iowa and Illinois, it’s more important than ever that we do all we can to give voice to worker rights.

With your help we can let politicians know that when they stand up for dignity of the American worker, we will stand with them.

Share with your members, consider buying a table, sponsoring the event or just a round. Trivia nights are fun family-friendly.

Trivia night will take place at the Rock Island VFW Lodge 1303. Doors open at 6 PM, game begins at 7 PM.

Table of eight players cost $80.

Sponsor at $50, $100 and $250 levels.

The night will have a theme to recognize Workers Memorial Day, with 10 rounds of 10 questions.

For more information call Robyn Ferraro at 563-324-9414
quadcityed@netexpress.net

Teamsters on Strike at Nichols in Davenport

Teamsters Local 371 is on strike against Nichols Aluminum in Davenport. They have been out since January 20, 2012.

These Sisters and Brothers are in serious need of assistance. You can donate to their relief fund at:

Teamsters Local 371
% Teamsters Local 371/ Nichols Relief Fund
790942nd St West
Rock Island, IL 61201.

Make checks payable to Teamsters Local 317/Nichols Relief fund.
Black Hawk Union Council

Very Busy

It is shaping up to be a busy spring as we prepare for the upcoming election year and plans are being made for the April 21st COPE convention in Des Moines. We have also been busy planning for the Iowa State Community Services Conference to be held April 11th-13th here in Waterloo and the Empty Bowl fundraiser April 24th. This year’s Workers Memorial Day program will be held at Central Middle School at Noon in coordination with the District Democratic Convention being held there on April 28th as we know it is very important to remind politicians that it is also their responsibility to make sure that workers that leave their family at the beginning of their day should have every expectation to return home to their family at the end of their work day!

The Labor Bowl was held March 25th at Cadillac Lanes and members from the local unions who had collected at least $100 in donations for the Local MDA came together for an afternoon of food fun and fellowship. This year the Waterloo area beat the Cedar Rapids area in the amount raised at just over $17,000.

The MDA will use the money to help pay for treatment, education and support groups for people and families dealing with the various health issues the MDA works with including providing opportunities for children aged 6-17 to attend Summer Camp at Camp Courageous of Iowa another recipient of organized labor’s help. The Children really enjoy the camp and the families can spend time with other siblings know their children are safe and well looked after by people who understand their many needs.

Labor Bowl was held at Cadillac Lanes in Waterloo March 25th, where the Waterloo area local unions collected more donations than the Cedar Rapids. Waterloo raised $18,000 and Cedar Rapids raised around $15,000.
Quad City Federation of Labor continued

Junior Achievement Building Trades Expo Fair

Quad City area building trades along with Junior Achievement are doing a Building Trades Expo Fair for neighboring high school students to get a hands on experience on what each trade does and the information on what it takes to become an apprentice in the different trades. This event is on April 11th & 12th.

Quad City Federation of labor is relocating

As of May 1st, 2012, our new address will be 4600 Blackhawk Road, Rock Island IL. 61201

Office phone # 309-788-1303

Jerry Messer phone # 563-323-3655

Continued—Quad City Federation of Labor

Committee Strength
The Quad City Federation of Labor started a project within our group to strengthen our committees. There was folders made with information of QCF brochure, constitution, description of all committees and who the chair(s) were, Next Up, COPE fundraiser, ARA, United Way, and committee cards.

The goal is have every delegate participate on one or more committees based on their interests. It is an ongoing project. At our last meeting every delegate who attend returned the card before leaving. It was a good start.

QC Next UP meet the 1st Tuesday of every month at 6PM for location of meeting call Brett Utz 309-738-1521

April meeting is at Plumbers Local 25 Hall in Rock Island,

UFCW member Carl McGrone looks at the 100 year time line before the Labor History Class that was held as part of the “Labor Academy” which is a series of six classes taught by the fine instructors from the University of Iowa Labor Center with help from the Iowa Federation of Labor. The next class will cover Immigration on Sunday April 1st at Jameson’s public House at 2:00 PM for more information call Ritchie Kurtenbach at 319-233-8050.
I enjoyed meeting the determined workers from Teamsters Local 371 on their two picket lines Saturday March 24th in Davenport. They sounded determined to stay the course and was looking forward to the rally Monday at the Nichols Aluminum plant. After talking with these folks and telling my wife Doris about their rally she suggested we drive back Monday and attend the rally. I'm so glad we did. It was good to see so many Union workers (some of the usual suspects, but also some new) out there supporting their sisters and brothers.

I hope everyone will try to visit the picket lines of 371 or if your not close to Davenport please send a donation to help them fight this profitable greedy company who is toying with the workers families and their dreams.

Buddy Howard

Lee County Labor Council.

Members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers union (BCTGW) are still locked out of their jobs, by American Crystal Sugar. Send contributes to their Action Fund or Relief Fund at: Make checks to—Minnesota AFL-CIO, 175 Aurora Ave, St. Paul, MN 55103
Unions 101 for New Members

Sponsored by the Lee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO and the
Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
Presented by the Labor Center, University of Iowa

An interactive four-hour workshop, free and open to Keokuk-area
union members and their families. Discussion will include:

• Union values and labor’s history: What obstacles
did early unions face, and how did they establish
the rights we enjoy today?

• Can they do that? Introduction to
workers’ legal rights on the job.

• The “union difference” in 2012:
how union members are standing
up for workers and our
communities today…and how you
can help!

DATE:       Saturday, April 14th
TIME:       9am – 1pm
LOCATION:   Keokuk Labor Temple
            301 Blondeau Street in Keokuk

COPE Convention
April 21, 2012
Des Moines, Iowa
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

Research indicates that almost $65 billion in benefits go unclaimed by low-income working families each year. To help achieve our goal of cutting in half the number of lower-income families who are financially unstable, United Way of Central Iowa promotes and connects low-income working families with all the available income supports for which they are eligible and work with community-based organizations and agencies to streamline enrollment processes. Through these efforts, low-income working families will be better positioned to move towards financial stability.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program offers free tax help to middle and low-income individuals and married couples. The program helps ensure financial stability by maximizing use of existing tax code benefits and incentives, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, which one in four eligible families fail to claim each year. In addition to helping support families who may be struggling, the program helps bring more dollars into the local economy. Financial education and asset building programs can be integrated into a VITA site to reinforce good management of EITC and other tax refunds.

In 2005, United Way of Central Iowa, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines partnered to initiate outreach to individuals who might qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC). In 2009 United Way took full responsibility for running the VITA program. In 2011, volunteers staffed nine tax sites and prepared 2,893 returns and yielding over $4.3 million in refunds.

The number of trained volunteers went from 38 in 2008 to 160 in the 2011 tax season, with a 63% retention rate of volunteers from 2010. Of the volunteers who completed a survey, 90% said they plan to return in 2012. The IRS recommends that VITA programs recruit double the number of volunteers needed but United Way of Central Iowa experienced only a 30% drop from volunteers expressing interest in the program to making a commitment. They expect even fewer dropouts in 2012 because every prospective volunteer was interviewed over the phone and fewer signed up on a whim.

Our 2012 VITA program is well on our way to meet our goal of a 20% increase in returns and refunds. The total number of returns processed so far is over 2,500 returning more than $4 million in refunds, putting us on track to meet our goal. One of our very favorite volunteers is AFSCME member Burt Polzin who volunteers weekly for our program. The season will wrap up on April 17th. If you still need to get your taxes done, and your household income was $50,000 or less for 2011, give 211 a call and set up an appointment or find out locations for our walk-in sites. The 211 number is available state wide, so you can find a free tax site near you!

For more information on the vita program contact:

Holly Sagar
AFL-CIO Community Services Labor Liaison
South Central Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-
Mark your calendar!

2012 Midwest School for Women Workers

Wednesday, July 25 – Sunday, July 29
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

To receive updates, call 319-335-4144 or e-mail labor-center@uiowa.edu

Information also at
www.continue2learn.uiowa.edu/laborctr
www.uale.org

Hosted by The University of Iowa Labor Center in cooperation with the Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, and the United Association for Labor Education (UALE)
Black Hawk Union Council
President Cal Eckhoff
319-240-8145
**Meeting Info:**
1st Wednesday, 7:00 pm
Labor Temple
1695 Burton Ave, Waterloo

Clinton Labor Congress
President Dave Keefee
309-788-4569 Extension 232
**Meeting Info:**
1st Monday, 7:30 pm
Democratic Headquarters
226 22nd Place, Clinton

Des Moines/Henry County
President Sherri Riney
319-754-7034
**Meeting Info:**
2nd Monday, 6:00 PM
Machinists Hall
Hwy. 34, West Burlington

Dubuque Fed. of Labor
President Bruce Clark
563-599-7725
**Meeting Info:**
1st Wednesday, 7:00 pm
Labor Temple
1610 Garfield, Dubuque

Iowa City Fed of Labor
President Patrick Hughes
319-530-6248
**Meeting Info:**
3rd Thursday, 6:00 pm
Estdale Plaza, Suite 19
1700 S. First Ave., Iowa City

Lee County Labor Council
President Buddy Howard
319-524-3011
**Meeting Info:**
1st Thursday, 7:00 pm
Keokuk Labor Temple
301 Blondeau, Keokuk

North Iowa Nine Labor
President Mike Herman
641-430-6754
**Meeting Info:**
4th Thursday, 6:00 pm
Labor Temple 510 S.
Pennsylvania, Mason City

North Central Fed of Labor
President Dale Struecker
515-955-8301
**Meeting Info:**
2nd Thursday, 7:00 pm
Credit Union -basement
13 S. 3rd St, Ft Dodge

North Central Iowa Fed
President Mark Cooper
515-265-1862
**Meeting Info:**
2nd Wednesday, 6:00 pm
Machinists Hall
2000 Walker St, Des Moines

North Iowa Labor Council
President John Hamm
712-233-1218
**Meeting Info:**
3rd Thursday, 7:00 pm
UFCW Local 222
3038 S. Lakeport, Sioux City

Northern Iowa Nine Labor Council
President Steve Siegel
515-971-3325
**Meeting Info:**
3rd Monday, 5:00 pm
1305 E Mary
Ottumwa

Quad City Fed of Labor
President Jerry Messer
563-323-3655
**Meeting Info:**
3rd Monday, 6:00 pm
2835 7th Avenue, Laborers
309 Hall Rock Island, IL

South Central Iowa Fed
President Dave Keefer
319-877-4569 Extension 232
**Meeting Info:**
1st Monday, 7:30 pm
Democratic Headquarters
226 22nd Place, Clinton

Central Labor Councils
Contact & Meeting Information

**Central Labor Councils**
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**April Central Labor Council Events**

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