

LOCAL 284



*We provide a clean, safe, nurturing place for children to learn and grow.*

*We support teachers, faculty, and families.*

*We work hard to provide for our families and we give back to our communities.*

**WE ARE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES AND WE ARE PROUD OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO!**

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

- Meet Mike Pikel
- Summer Fun with SEIU
- Regional Summer Steward Standard Meetings
- Affordable Care Act Law
- A Note from Senator Al Franken
- School Board Elections Across the Metro
- Laying the Groundwork
- 2013 Fall Leadership Assembly & Officer Nominations

Check us out on the web for more information:

\* Upcoming events

\* Member Stories

And Much More...

[www.seiu284.org](http://www.seiu284.org)

# The Communicator

A publication for SEIU Local 284 Education Workers Across Minnesota

STRONGER TOGETHER

FALL 2013



## Meet Mike Pikel!

Mike is a custodian in the Wayzata School District. He is being honored for his work with students at the Wayzata Football Game on October 4.

For the past two years Mike has mentored middle school students, helping them improve their grades and navigate the challenges of middle school life. Mike has each student come up with an individual goal and for those students who reach their goal—they get to come to a special lunch celebration at the end of the school year. Seniors on the football team each got to pick a staff member to honor for their work and Mike was one of the few selected for the great work he has done.

A video about Mike and the impact that members, like him, have on the lives of students will be released at the Leadership Assembly being held on October 12. Be sure to be there to see it first! To RSVP for the Leadership Assembly, you will find a form to complete at [www.seiu284.org](http://www.seiu284.org). We look forward to seeing you there!

## Summer Fun with SEIU

This summer, SEIU provided a number of great opportunities for our members to connect with fellow SEIU members and their families.

- On Tuesday, June 11 we had an SEIU day with the St Paul Saints. We tailgated with burgers and hotdogs before attending the outdoor baseball game between the St Paul Saints and the North Dakota Red Hawks.
- On Sunday, August 11 we had the SEIU Zoo Day at the Minnesota Zoo. Over 5,200 SEIU members and their families enjoyed free admission to the Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley.
- During the months of July, August and September, SEIU held regional member picnics across the state—Buffalo, Cambridge, Crosby, Minneapolis, Rochester and Sauk Rapids. Members enjoyed burgers, hotdogs and good conversation.

I hope that you were able to attend one or more of these fun events. If you were not able to attend, our hope is that you will be able to attend one of these events next year. Best wishes for a successful 2013-2014 school year!—*Keith Niemi, President SEIU Local 284*



## Regional Summer Steward Standard Meetings

In July and August of this year, several Executive Board members lead a discussion on the role of stewards with stewards, bargaining team members and members in 11 regional meetings. The majority of members attending the meetings were stewards who overwhelmingly identified a set of common criteria that should be an expectation for all stewards. Clarifying the expectations of stewards and formalizing it within policy has been discussed over the years but has never been pursued.

Earlier this year, several Board members and stewards brought this up after experiencing significant differences in what the stewards they spoke with saw as their role and this conversation was launched at our April Leadership Assembly. Members attending in April responded very positively to better defining the expectations of stewards, with an interest in looking at non-traditional roles stewards might play. Our union is made up of bargaining

units of under 10 members to units of over 300 members, there are a variety of differing needs in bargaining units and our union.

The basic belief this conversation is grounded in is that the stewards' role is a very important elected position in each bargaining unit. This key position can and, in many instances, does make a significant difference in the strength and activity in a bargaining unit and in our union as a whole. Other elected positions that are compensated in some way have expectations defined with the By-laws of the Local. The steward's role is compensated for with dues revenue and, therefore, it is time expectations for this important role is clearly defined.

A report from the Steward Standards regional meetings will be give at the October Leadership Assembly. An open discussion will follow on next steps that could include a recommendation for a policy change.—*Carol Nieters, Executive Director*

## The Affordable Care Act Law: A Law for Working Families

The affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, is a new law that makes changes to the US healthcare system. Most of the changes are positive and will greatly increase access to health insurance for millions of Americans.

The ACA increases access by: expanding Medicaid, setting up an online health insurance marketplace (known as an Exchange), and requiring employers with more than 50 employees to offer affordable insurance to their workers.

Under the new law, an employer is required to offer insurance to any employee working at least 30-hours per week. The insurance must be affordable, which means that an employee should not pay more than 9.5% of their family income on health insurance. If an employer does not comply with the law, they could face significant tax penalties.

The ACA also increases the quality of health insurance. For example, an insurance company can no longer impose lifetime limits on insurance, deny coverage or increase costs because of a pre-existing condition. The law also requires that each insurance plan include "essential health benefits" which include: hospitalization coverage, ambulatory/emergency services, prescription drugs, preventative services and more.

While the vast majorities of both employees and employers will not notice any changes, this law does a lot for the 32 million Americans currently without insurance. If a person is not eligible for employer sponsored health insurance, depending on family income, that person may be eligible for significant subsidies towards the cost of purchasing insurance on the exchange. The exchange in Minnesota is known as MNSure and more information can be found at [www.mn.gov/hix/](http://www.mn.gov/hix/).

Local 284 is a registered navigator and may be able to assist you in purchasing insurance on MNSure. If you would like to see if you qualify for insurance subsidies or have any other questions regarding the ACA, please contact Nic Frey at [nic@local284.com](mailto:nic@local284.com).—*Nic Frey, Contract Organizer*

## A Note from Senator Al Franken



As your U.S. Senator, I am committed to making sure that health reform works for Minnesota—and it's already doing a lot of good.

One of the things I am most proud of, which has already helped millions of people, is a provision I wrote into the health reform law: the Medical Loss Ratio or MLR. Because of my provision, this summer over 9,000 Minnesotans benefited from health insurance company rebates averaging \$300 per family. That's a total of \$1.4 million in rebates for Minnesota families. Nation-wide, Americans received some \$500 million in rebates.

MLR has already helped save Americans billions of dollars in rebates and is one of the largest consumer cost savers in the health reform law. Before my provision, insurance companies could spend as much as they wanted on things other than health care like administrative costs, marketing, profits, and CEO salaries. The MLR rule simply says that a health insurance company must spend at least 80% of your premium dollars on actual health care. If they don't they have to rebate the difference to customers.

Last year, consumers received \$1.1 billion in rebates, nearly double this year's total, meaning that more and more insurance companies are meeting the requirements outlined in my provision on the front-end, which ultimately means consumers benefit in the form of savings on their premium dollars.

There is a lot of other good stuff in the health reform law as well. Right now, no child can be denied health insurance because of a pre-existing condition, and starting January 1, 2014, that extends to adults too. Moreover, thanks to the health reform law, being a woman will no longer mean health insurance companies can charge you more for insurance than a man. Also, young people can now stay on their parents' health insurance plans until age 26.

This law is doing exactly what it's supposed to—improving our nation's health care system, and I'm particularly proud that my provision is playing a key role in making insurance companies more efficient and helping keep health care costs in check for Minnesotans.

Please don't hesitate to contact my office if I can ever be of assistance, or you just want to give me feedback, at (651)221-1016.

—*Al Franken, MN U.S. Senator*

## Local 284 Prepares to Select Candidates in School Board Elections Across the Metro

While this November may seem like an off-year for elections, many school districts are ramping up to elect school board members. The position of a school board member—while less glamorous and garners less media attention than President or Congress—can have a larger impact on your life and your job than those high positions.

Remember this Spring when we won huge increases in funding and funding equity for K-12 education at the Capitol? That money has one more stop before it reaches students and schools. School Boards have local control over the majority of money that comes in from the state. They get to decide how much goes where. *Should administrators get double-digit wage increases? Should we reduce class sizes? Should you and your co-workers see contract improvements?* Make sure you are voting for the candidate that shares your views.

This fall, Local 284's members are planning to endorse in five different school board races: Eden Prairie, Hopkins, Moundsview, West St Paul and White Bear Lake. The candidates will fill out a questionnaire to show where their priorities lie and then a panel of members will interview them to further understand their position and intentions. If you would like to be a part of this process, please contact Libby Kantner at [libbyk@local284.com](mailto:libbyk@local284.com) or (612) 860-7823. Our endorsements will be published by mid-October on the Local 284 web-site.

## Laying the Groundwork for a Successful 2014 Legislative Session -

The legislature doesn't go back into regular session until February 25, however, here at Local 284, we are already hard at work laying the groundwork for our 2014 legislative priorities. This winter we will be focusing on four top issues:

- **Retirement security for all:** While many union workers have pensions and retirement plans, many private employees do not. For a long time the question has been, "Why should they have them if we don't?" In order to improve the state as a whole and change the message this session we are asking, "We have them, why can't you?" If more employees have retirement funds we will be a more secure state and the public will look to labor as a leader—not as a threat.
- **Support for low-wage workers:** The fight to increase the minimum wage will be front-and-center at the Capitol in 2014. We stand beside our labor, faith and community partners raising our voice in the cry for equitable, fair wages for every Minnesotan. As we learned last session, this isn't going to happen unless we all come together with one voice. This session we will do just that.
- **Block community-crippling privatization:** Over the past decade your jobs have increasingly been contracted out to big out-of-state companies that pay lower wages and provide worse services. This session we are going to introduce a Bill asking school districts to complete a "Best Value Comparison" prior to contracting out. This comparison will not only look at cost, but quality, ensuring that we are looking out for more than the bottom line—we're looking out for kids.
- **Introduce an anti-bullying, healthy workplace bill:** An abusive boss or work environment can greatly impact your work. Across the nation, states are working to strengthen their laws to protect employees against mistreatment. Local 284 is currently exploring the possibility of introducing a bill in Minnesota, while at the same time exploring other avenues (such as improved management trainings) to cut down on bullying in the workplace.

These four priorities were chosen because you came to us and told us what was important. Thank you for your input. If we work hard together we can be as successful as we were last session with our education equity campaign. We are starting the work now—reaching out to allies and legislators—building coalitions. If you want to be a part of the team please contact Libby Kantner at [libbyk@local284.com](mailto:libbyk@local284.com) or (612) 860-7823. Together we win!

## October 2013 Leadership Assembly and Local 284 Officer Nominations

Per Article V, section 1 of the SEIU Local 284 Constitution and Bylaws, SEIU Local 284 will be holding its bi-annual Leadership Assembly on Saturday, October 12, 2013, at the Carpenter's Hall, 710 Olive St, St. Paul, MN. During this meeting we will be discussing many issues and breaking out in groups to learn about: *The Affordable Care Act, Community Benefit Bargaining, Privatization and Retirement.* During this meeting we will also be taking nominations for the Local 284 Executive Board positions that are up for election in 2013.

### Office up for Election

2nd Vice President—3-year term

Trustee—3 year term

Member-at-Large—3-year term

Senior Member—3-year term

**Article V, Section 2**—Any nominee who is unopposed shall be deemed elected without the necessity for further procedures.

**Article V, Section 5**—No member shall be eligible for nomination or election to the office of Trustee or Member-At-Large unless the member is actively employed under a collective bargaining agreement in Local 284's jurisdiction at the time of the election. . . . No member shall be eligible for nomination or election to the office of Senior Member unless the member is 55-years of age or older, or retired from active employment in this Local Union's jurisdiction. No member shall be eligible for nomination or election as an officer in this Local Union unless he or she has been

a member two (2) years immediately preceding the nomination and continuously in good standing of this Local Union and is paying at least the minimum dues required for working members.

### Carpenter's Hall

710 Olive St., St Paul, MN

Registration: 8:30 am

Meeting: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

*Join Members from around the state as we plan for a better tomorrow*

## LOCAL 284



SEIU Local 284  
450 Southview BLVD  
South Saint Paul, MN 55075  
Phone: (651) 256-9100  
Toll Free: 1 (877) 304-6042

If you have an article or suggestion for the newsletter, please contact Andy Running:  
[andrear@local284.com](mailto:andrear@local284.com)

### LOCAL 284 OFFICERS

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Executive Director: | Carol Nieters  |
| President:          | Keith Niemi  |
| Vice Presidents:    | Mark Hanson<br>Sandy Ringler   |
| Trustees:           | Anna Angeles-Farris<br>Desiree Hemstock<br>Steve Miltich                     |
| Members at Large:   | Chris Michaelson<br>Bob Cook<br>Donna Morris<br>Mark Krey<br>Valerie Rolstad |
| Sergeant at Arms:   | Terri Buttleman  |
| Senior Member:      | Ginia Klamecki   |

The Officers of Local 284 make up the Executive Board. Executive Board meetings are open to all members in good standing. Please contact Union headquarters if you would like to attend.

### Local 284 Meetings

October 10 Executive Board Mtg: 3pm (Local 284 Office)  
\*October 12 Leadership Assembly: 9 am to 1 pm

*Carpenter's Hall, 710 Olive St., St. Paul, MN*

*\*Includes nomination of Officers*

November 21 Executive Board Mtg: 3pm (Local 284 Office)  
December 19 Executive Board Mtg: 3pm (Local 284 Office)  
December 19 Budget, Dues & Finance Cmte Mtg: 6pm  
(Local 284 Office)

### Change of Address or Phone Number?

Please let us know by contacting our office at (651) 256-9100  
Or by emailing Terri at [terrib@local284.com](mailto:terrib@local284.com)