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The ACT Foundation is a division of The West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades Council. Steve Burton, President; Dave Efaw, Secretary-Treasurer; Steve White, Director.

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FACILITY HAS WATER TOWER AND HIGHWAY BRIDGE ON SITE

PAINTERS COUNCIL 53 OPENS NEW TRAINING CENTER NEAR WESTON

Painters District Council 53-JAC is currently retrofitting a former factory building in Lewis County into a state-of-the art apprenticeship and training facility.

The location, near Weston, had a ready-made training environment on site.

"When we saw the 150-ft tall water tower just behind the main building, we were immediately attracted to the facility," said Don Gundrum, Apprenticeship Coordinator/Instructor.

"We will use that tower to provide the skills and safety training our members need to be productive workers.

It is a real bonus to what is a great building."

Inside the 96,000 square foot steel and metal building staff has sectioned off large open spaces to providing very specific work environments in which people can train.

One area contains a 65-foot long steel highway bridge salvaged from Ripley, then transported and reassembled eleven feet above the building's con-

crete floor.

From cables rigged beneath the bridge, containment tarps and safety techniques will be installed in exactly the same manner as they would on a "real job".

"It's much better to train in a controlled environment before they get outside where things are not so controlled," explained

Gundrum, a 12-year veteran of the Joint Apprenticeship Council's training staff.

Training covers a number of areas including a wide variety of paint applications such as spraying and rolling, dry wall finishing, wall paper, sealers and varnishes, and of course safety.

Another area of the building

will have 24 dormitory-style rooms to allow extended stays for those in training.

Among those providing significant support are vendors like Sherman-Williams Paints, general contractor A.J. Vauter and the West Virginia Department of Highways.

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LEARNING AT THE new Painters DC 53 training center near Weston are apprentices (from left) Celeste Bivetto, Morgantown; Rachel Oliveto, Shinnston; Karen Novasat, Fairmont; and Cindy Kelley, Philippi. The facility will train painters from West Virginia, Ohio, Virginia, Kentucky and Maryland. (Photo by Joy Stalnaker.)

2009 WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE SESSION STARTS IN FEBRUARY

The 2009 legislative session starts a month later than usual.

That's because the state constitution calls for a month delay when there is an election for Governor.

The session will still last 60 days running from February 11

through April 11.

ACT and the State Building Trades are working on a number of measures to improve health care, crane safety and construction job site safety.

Another attempt will be made to pass a bill requiring contractors on public works projects to show most of their employees

have health care.

Health care costs remain one of the largest problems in the nation. One factor is uncompensated care - people without insurance or money to pay for health care. Hospitals must often shoulder this expensive burden and pass the cost onto those who have insurance.

On public works construction projects, money is allowed in each contract to pay for worker health care. However, some contractors don't have health care plans.

The Trades proposal is to make each contractor show their workers won't show up on un-

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500 THOUSAND STUDENTS REACHED IN 13 YEARS

TRI-STATE BUILDING TRADES COUNCIL SPONSORS EDUCATIONAL SHOW

Members of the building trades take pride in their unions as community-oriented organizations sponsoring scores of charity and service projects throughout the year.

The Tri-State Building and Construction Trades Council points with particular pride to a free educational event for grade schools about drug awareness and safety sponsored for the past 13 years.

According to Steve Burton, Business Manager for the Council, the "Character Counts" program has reached over 500,000 children in 32 counties in West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio with an entertaining and fun presentation about a serious message.

"I would venture to say we've had the program in every elementary school in our three-state service area," said Burton. "Illegal drug use, abuse of prescription drugs and alcohol abuse are problems that need to

be addressed, and the best way to address those problems is at an early age."

Garry Boothe, a retired businessman from Wayne, West Virginia, designed and presents "Character Counts", named because Boothe believes character issues like respect for others, honesty, and trustworthiness are what define successful people.

Boothe uses several performance talents to draw his young audience into the show - long enough to pick up on the message. He employs various magic tricks, ventriloquist "dummies" and unique balloon animals he creates on-the-spot. Boothe's show is sold to the students as a reward for participation in character development programs in the schools.

"You build character in children, and they'll have the skills they need to stay away from bad behaviors," said Boothe. "Good choices reinforce themselves when positive and fun things happen as a result."

Bullying and the sometimes tragic effects of bullying are also addressed by Boothe during the

program.

One young man had been near suicidal over the bullying treatment he received, and found help through the "Character Counts" message.

"I got a letter thanking me for teaching him that no one could make him feel bad without his permission," explained Boothe.

"He wrote that he still experienced some bullying, but now had the skills to deal with it."

The Tri-State Building Trades sponsors Boothe's work as part of their Labor Education And Development program. In addition to the educational program in the schools, LEAD organizes safety training and certified drug

testing for building trades members.

"We pick up the tab for "Character Counts" and are glad to do it," said Burton. "We get tons of letters from parents, school officials and others thanking us for the sponsorship. That's something we feel very good about."



BOOTHE PERFORMS HIS "Character Counts" program, funded by the Tri-State Building Trades, for an eager audience at the Matewan Elementary School in Matewan, WV.

LOCAL UNION OPERATES IN FOUR STATES

SHEET METAL LOCAL UNION 24 JOINS ACT

Sheet Metal Workers Local 24 starts the new year off as members of the Affiliated Construction Trades and the WV State Building and Construction Trades Council.

According to Jim Finley, Business Agent, the Local rep-

resents Sheet Metal Workers in five West Virginia Counties; Cabell, Lincoln, Logan, Mingo, and Wayne as well as Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana.

Based in Dayton, Ohio the local has around 1800 members and in addition to the WV territory covers 27 counties in Kentucky, 50 Ohio Counties and four in Indiana.

Finley works out of the

Local's South Point, OH office along with fellow Business Agent Charlie Whitt.

The Local is headed by Business Manager Michael More and has three bargaining areas; Dayton, Cincinnati, and Columbus.

Finley works in the Columbus area.

Finley sees a wide variety of work including commercial and

industrial HVAC, metal roofing and siding, and industrial lagging work (cover insulation with light gauge metal).

Finley also serves as Recording Secretary for the Tri-State Building and Construction Trades Council.

In addition to his other duties Finley is a Trustee on the Sheet Metal Workers Local 24 Columbus area Apprenticeship

School which has training in South Point and Columbus.

The Columbus area has about 120 apprentices in their four year program that also has a one year pre-apprentice component.

"We're glad to be part of the WV State Building Trades and ACT," said Finley.

"We've seen the good work that has been done and want to be a part."

PA WORKERS GET \$85 MORE PER WEEK

AVERAGE WV UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE WEEKLY BENEFITS LOWEST IN REGION

Many states face a budget crisis and that is being reflected in their Unemployment Insurance Trust Funds.

Fortunately West Virginia is in good financial shape currently, but officials are pointing to built in flaws to the unemployment insurance program that will lead to problems if not addressed.

Governor Manchin recently put together a task force to look into the Unemployment Insurance program and included former Building Trades Secre-

tary-Treasurer Roy Smith.

According to Smith a close examination has been made about Trust Fund revenue and expenses.

Current law requires employers to pay into the Unemployment Trust Fund for the first \$8000 of wages for each employee.

The benefits a worker can get are calculated each year at two-thirds of the average wage.

“As wages increase the maximum benefit goes up as it should,” explained Smith. “But the payments going in have been fixed at the first \$8000 of wages

since the 1980’s and sooner or later the fund will go broke if we don’t fix it.”

Smith supports increasing the \$8000 wage base each year, similar to the way the benefits are figured.

But employer groups would rather freeze or lower benefits.

These groups claim West Virginia’s benefits are better than surrounding states based on the formula used to calculate benefits.

But research from the National Employment Law Project shows the opposite.

Looking at average weekly

payments shows West Virginia’s unemployed workers receive the lowest weekly amount in the region.

The average West Virginia receives more than \$85 per week less than those on unemployment in Pennsylvania. Compared to Ohio, West Virginians get \$50 less per week. Even Virginia pays more, on average \$32.39 per week more.

Having a solvent fund is important for both employers and employees.

The unemployment insurance program helps keep a health economy and ease the financial

pain caused by economic downturns.

Average Weekly Unemployment Benefit Amounts, 2nd Quarter, 2008	
PA	\$328.77
OH	\$295.13
MD	\$294.10
KY	\$291.49
DC	\$289.15
VA	\$275.51
WV	\$243.12
Source: National Employment Law Project web site Resources section - http://www.nelp.org/site/issues/category/unemployment_insurance/	

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 596 HOLD WEEKEND RIGGING CLASS



86 MEMBERS OF Electrical Workers Local 596, Clarksburg, spent their weekend to be trained and certified in rigging during a class held January 10 and 11. Business Manager Darwin Snyder brought in instructor Dennis Collett from the Crane Institute of America, Inc., Sanford, Florida, to put together the two day event.

PAINTERS

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Rick Hackney, Business Manager and Secretary/Treasurer for IUPAT Council 53, said the International Union is very interested in the new center and has provided “early support”, donated materials, and expertise to the project’s design and development.

“The really big support they provide is sending members to participate,” said Hackney.

“When we are done, this will be the most lifelike training facility in the entire country.”

Training started in December and more than 100 workers per year will come from a five state service area surrounding West Virginia.

“Our goal is to make this true-to-life training which will insure more productive, more qualified workers,” noted Hackney.

Each successful apprentice will complete 432 classroom hours at the facility, attending the

training on weekends, while working 6,000 hours on the job before becoming a journeyman painter.

The apprentices are men and women between 18 and 50 years of age, whose starting pay is about one-half the journeyman’s wage.

As a journeyman, each union painter earns around \$22 an hour for commercial work and \$28 an hour for industrial work.

In addition benefits such as a health and pension are valued around \$10 per hour.

Council 53 is working with various state agencies to recruit new painters.

Four women from the West Virginia Women Work program in Fairmont recently signed on as apprentices following a presentation a Council 53 representative made to the group.

“We can teach skills, but the student has to have the right attitude.

That’s the bottom line,” observed Gundrum.

EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT TOPS LABORS' NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Strengthening the middle class by removing barriers to workers joining a union is a key to rebuilding the economy.

That is why the AFL-CIO is making passage of the Employee Free Choice Act its top legislative agenda in Washington this year.

Thanks in large part to the efforts of union volunteers, working families won a strong victory on Nov. 4, sending Barack Obama to the White House.

However, winning an election isn't the end of the fight.

Now, our elected leaders need to tackle the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Restoring a workers' freedom to form unions will allow them

to bargain for a better life with better wages and benefits.

According to the AFL-CIO the Employee Free Choice Act, will:

- Put real teeth in the laws meant to bar companies from intimidating, harassing - even firing - workers who want to form unions.

a fair chance to get one.

The Employee Free Choice Act will level the playing field that today leaves all the power in the hands of corporations.

Big Business and their front groups are preparing an all-out, \$200 million propaganda and lobbying war to block it.

In 2007, the U.S. House

passed the measure and it had majority support in the Senate, but a minority killed it with a filibuster emboldened by President George W. Bush's promise to veto the legislation.

President elect Obama has pledged to sign the Employee Free Choice Act if Congress passes it.

The impact on our communities and the economy could be significant.

Union members make 30 percent more than workers who do

not have a union.

They are 59 percent more likely to have health care and four times more likely to have a pension.

Communities with strong unions have higher standards of living for everyone.

"The Employee Free Choice Act means long-term shared prosperity," said Dave Efaw, Secretary Treasurer of the WV State Building Trades.

"It's essential to rebuilding the middle class and ensuring the survival of the American Dream."

DID YOU KNOW?

- How many Employers illegally fire at least one worker for union activity during organizing campaigns? 25%
- The number of Employers that hire consultants or union-busters to help them fight union organizing drive? 75%
- How many Employers force employees to attend mandatory closed-door meetings against the union? 92%
- The percent of Companies that threaten to close the plant if the union wins the election? 51%
- Companies that actually close their plants after a successful union election? 1%

Source www.EmployeeFreeChoiceAct.org

- Allow workers to form a union when a majority sign cards indicating that's what they desire.

- Make it easier to bargain the first contract.

- Fix a broken system that allows the 60 million workers who say they would like a union

als will be made to modernize the law.

Tower cranes are not specifically listed in the current law.

A new proposal will include tower cranes as a licensed category.

In addition some old terms such as small and large telescoping boom cranes will be changed to fixed-cab and swing-cab cranes following industry standards.

"Our changes are all meant to keep us current with the national standards set out by the National Commission for the Certification

of Crane Operators," said Charles Parker, Training Director for Operating Engineers Local 132 apprenticeship and training program.

Another safety measure proposal will be to expand the Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace law that requires contractors to have a plan in place meeting certain standards including drug testing.

Currently contractors on all state funded projects must have a plan.

A bill proposed by the Trades will seek to include County and

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LEGISLATIVE

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compensated care rolls.

The Contractors Association of WV has been strongly opposed to the measure and has been able to defeat it for the last few years.

Another legislative issue will be a revision of the crane operators certification law. The law was passed in 2001 and has proven to be a valuable part of improving job site safety.

In order to keep up with changes in the industry, propos-

City government projects as well.

A number of County Commissions have already passed resolutions in support of the measure.

"Illegal drug usage has no place on dangerous construction sites," said ACT's Wayne Rebich who has led the effort to educate county commissioners on the topic.

While passing new laws is one part of the Trades efforts, defending the rights of construction workers and working families is equally important.

"We expect another assault on

our prevailing wage laws," said Steve White, ACT Director. "The low wage salesmen never give up."

A debate about Unemployment Insurance is also being discussed.

Making sure infrastructure funding from Washington is used effectively and allows local union workers job opportunities will also be under review.

Various proposals on changing our legal system, the way judges are elected, and disclosure of political ad financing may also come up.