When Teamsters Airline Division Director Capt. David Bourne trekked across Scotland, what kept him going through the physically exhausting hike was the end goal—helping our nation’s veterans. The trek was part of a fundraiser for wounded servicemen and women through a program called iPods for Wounded Veterans. The organization, founded by Paul Cardello, a Vietnam veteran and retired Teamster with Local 170 in Worcester, Mass., provides iPods, iPads, e-readers and other materials to improve the quality of life for wounded veterans.

Last month, Capt. Bourne was presented with a “Medal of Honor Sponsor”-level recognition at Teamsters Union headquarters, and was joined by General President Jim Hoffa and members of iPods for Wounded Veterans. Bourne’s 230-mile hike through mountains and forests raised $10,000 for the all-volunteer organization. This is the highest honor given by the iPods for Wounded Veterans program to an individual.

“What we did was nothing compared to what our wounded troops have endured,” Capt. Bourne said. “I am so honored to have so many Teamsters and others step up to support my walk and support this program to help our wounded veterans. They deserve so much more than we can ever give them.”

Interacting with Veterans

Cardello explained that the program is about more than just raising funds—it involves interaction with the veterans. “We see soldiers who have had 20 operations or more,” he said. “It’s long-term care and the rehabilitation process is extensive. We provide electronics they can use to communicate and for entertainment. We see over 100 soldiers every time we go to a veterans’ hospital and they are always grateful.”
A NEW YEAR MEANS OPPORTUNITIES TO EMPower WORKERS

This month, the Department of Political and Legislative Action and the Training and Development Department will launch a new political activist program called Building Teamster Political Power. The goal of the program is to establish an army of engaged, active members interested in getting involved in politics—not only for the upcoming election, but for years to come.

For nearly a year, staff members from the Department of Political and Legislative Action have been meeting with Joint Council and local union officers and business agents to listen to ideas about how the Teamsters can improve on their already successful political program. The feedback received pointed to a need to focus on working family issues, and have consistent communication with members who have indicated that they are excited to be part of the Teamsters and believe in our political objectives.

All the ideas the union received have gone into the development of the Building Teamster Political Power program. Each local will be asked to identify members they would want to participate in Member Activist Trainings. At the trainings, members will be taught how to speak about political issues with fellow members, persuasion techniques to get around common objections and how to get involved in politics through their local unions and Joint Councils.

Working with the Training and Development Department, the union will complete trainings before the International Political and Legislative Action have been meeting with Joint Council and local union officers and business agents to listen to ideas about how the Teamsters can improve on their already successful political program. The feedback received pointed to a need to focus on working family issues, and have consistent communication with members who have indicated that they are excited to be part of the Teamsters and believe in our political objectives.

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Major Improvements Needed

Negotiations between the union and management started in October 2010. The company delayed responding to union wage and benefit proposals for more than 2.5 years. On Oct. 30, 2015, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan issued an injunction against the airline’s management and their customers, including DHL and potential customers, said Scott Nelson, the elected chairman of the Local 1224 Kalitta Air Executive Council. “Our members are prepared to strike over management delay tactics, violations of federal law, mistreatment of pilots and their continuing refusal to agree to a significantly improved labor contract.”

Pilots employed by Kalitta Air, LLC, have voted overwhelmingly, 213-7, to authorize a strike against the Ypsilanti, Mich.-based cargo airline. Kalitta operates a fleet of Boeing 747 aircraft in support of the global network of DHL Express, a division of the German logistics company Deutsche Post DHL. Ninety-two percent of eligible pilots voted in the referendum. The pilot group is represented by Local 1224 in Wilmington, Ohio.

“The pilots of Kalitta Air have sent a strong message to the airline’s management and their customers, including DHL and potential customers,“ said Scott Nelson, the elected chairman of the Local 1224 Kalitta Air Executive Council. “Our members are prepared to strike over management delay tactics, violations of federal law, mistreatment of pilots and their continuing refusal to agree to a significantly improved labor contract.”