



Drive Up Standards

NEWSLETTER

Connecting School Bus & Transit Workers From Coast to Coast

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At Local 955, Rank-and-File Members are the Key to Victories



In September 2018 workers at Apple Bus in St. Joseph, Mo. voted overwhelmingly to join the Teamsters after a five month organizing campaign.

"Our goal was to be ready to file for an election on the first day of school, and that's exactly what we did," said Jerry Wood, Local 955 President. "We even had a worker who was so dedicated to voting yes that she made time to vote even though she was on her way to pick up her baby from the hospital."

The Apple Bus campaign was driven in no small part by Local 955 school bus drivers and monitors. Stacey Arbuckle serves on the Local 955 Member Organizing Committee, and she has been a shop steward at First Student for three years. She also used to work at the St. Joseph bus yard and knows a lot of the drivers and monitors there, so she was the perfect person to

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When Her Student's Life was in Danger, Local 512 Member Christina Tanner Sprang into Action



Christina Tanner is a Local 512 school bus driver for Student Transportation of America (STA) in Jacksonville, Fla. If there's one thing she's learned in her 19 years of driving a school bus, it's that you need to keep your cool. It's something she always does, and on September 19, 2018 it may have been the difference between life and death for one of her students.

Tanner was driving her regular morning route when she stopped and noticed that one of her students was standing on the other side of the street, across from his bus stop.

"He was walking really slowly and holding his chest; I knew something wasn't right because he's not usually like that," Tanner said. "When I opened up my door he fell in the stairwell. I asked him what was wrong, and he told me that he had been shot."

Tanner shut the door and immediately drove to a nearby fire station. She knew that there was an ambulance on the premises, and the injured student was on his way to the hospital less than a minute after the school bus arrived. The EMTs told Tanner that the young man was in critical condition, but the bullet had missed his heart.

"I had my seven year old son on the bus and I was really scared," Tanner said. "I guess I just went into mom mode; I just did everything that I could. It's one of those situations where you don't think, you just act. You can't plan for things like this."

Tanner emphasized the importance of keeping a cool head under pressure at her job.

"You've got to keep your head straight," Tanner said. "If there are issues on the bus, you can't call the dispatchers frantic and panicking. Stay focused on what you need to handle, try to stay calm."

The police made an arrest for the attack within a few days. Tanner's student survived the shooting and is back to school after having recovered from his injuries. Tanner said that she still sees him around town, and that he always expresses his gratitude.

"He got a job working at a fast food restaurant," Tanner said. "I saw him at the drive-thru; he pointed at me and was telling everybody, 'that's the bus driver that took me to the fire station! She saved my life!'"

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Long-Lost Mother and Daughter Find One Another at Local 777

Teamsters often refer to their fellow members as brothers and sisters, but it's not every day that the union brings together actual blood relatives. That's what makes the story of Mary Kay Krekan-Trout and her daughter Sandra (Sandee) Dumas so extraordinary, because that's exactly what happened: the two had been separated and searching for one another for decades, and they were re-united through their work as Teamsters Local 777 school bus drivers.

"They both look alike and you can tell that they are related," said Local 777 President Jim Glimco. "They've got a great relationship and it's one of those magical stories... It's really great."

Mary Kay Krekan-Trout gave her daughter up for adoption when she was born. The adoption was supposed to be an open adoption, meaning that Krekan-Trout would regularly receive letters and pictures as updates on how Sandee was doing. Krekan-Trout and Dumas say that sadly it was treated as a closed adoption because of a legal mix-up.

After taking a DNA test from Ancestry.com, Dumas found out her mother's name and looked her up on Facebook. Dumas found out that she and her mother knew people in common. She was able connect with her and they

made plans to meet in person at a restaurant in Glen Ellyn, Ill.

"The time between reaching out to be put in contact with my mother and then meeting her, that Thursday through Friday, I think that was probably the longest time of my life," Dumas said.

"It was amazing. I thought I would never be able to find her, and then I found her," Krekan-Trout said. "We took each other off each other's feet. The first thing we said to one another was I love you and I've been looking for you."

They stayed at the restaurant until it closed and then sat in the car for four hours talking to one another. They found out that they were both gaining more family members—Dumas now has additional brothers and sisters, along with many more aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. Through Dumas' adopted family, Krekan-Trout is gaining another daughter (Sandee's sister) and a grandson, Dumas' biological son who she placed in an open adoption at birth.

Since reuniting, Krekan-Trout and Dumas have found out that they have a lot in common. Both of them love horses and horseback riding. They have similar mannerisms, they finish each other's sentences. Both of them are proud

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conduct worker outreach on behalf of Local 955.

"The membership understands what school bus drivers are going through every day because we're out there driving a bus just like they are," Arbuckle said. "We're able to relate

to them better than anyone because we encounter the exact same issues."

Arbuckle said that the organizing drive started the same way most campaigns begin – by setting up weekly meetings with workers and listening to their issues. They also put together a "blitz" – a weekend push where the organizing committee visited as many workers as possible in a short period of time.

"Missouri is the Show Me state," Arbuckle said. "People have a mentality of, 'don't just come out and talk to me, show us some action.' So that's what we did. We found strong people who were reliable and good to work with, and they went out and got cards signed."

More and more workers got involved and over time the campaign gained momentum. Arbuckle said that she was nervous, but also confident because she knew that there was a strong core of workers at the yard. When Arbuckle got word that the campaign succeeded, she was elated.

"It was a great feeling to know that I was a part of this, that I was one of the people that drove the effort," Arbuckle said. "A win is a win, and you always feel good when you have a win."

Jerry Wood and Stacey Arbuckle are part of a growing movement of elected officers, organizers and members in the Teamsters Union who are growing their membership by putting organizing campaigns in the hands of rank-and-file school bus workers, and it's a trend that's good for everyone in the industry.

"Our members are in a unique position to make our organizing campaigns successful because increasing our density isn't just good for school bus drivers and monitors who are just joining the Teamsters, it's also good for the drivers and monitors who have been members for years," Wood said. "The more members we have in a given area, the better our collective bargaining agreements become. A rising tide lifts all boats."

Teamster School Bus Drivers Continue Fight for Unemployment Insurance



Teamsters have been stepping up their efforts to ensure that laws in all 50 states ensure that school bus drivers are able to collect unemployment insurance (UI) during the summer months the same way seasonal workers in most industries are able to. Last edition we covered the push for UI at the beginning of the legislative session in St. Paul, Minn. In this edition, we'll bring you up to speed as that fight continues...

Kansas

On February 19, members of Locals 838, 696, and 795 were joined by at the Kansas State Capitol by Gov. Laura Kelly and other elected officials as they lobbied to pass SB 38 and HB 2315, legislation that would extend UI to school bus drivers employed by private contractors. Kelly spoke to the drivers before they visited elected officials.

"Just because you're not driving in June and July doesn't diminish the fact that you need to be there in August, so we've got to figure out a way to make this happen," Kelly said.

On March 15 Kansas Teamsters testified at a hearing support Senate Bill 38. Local 696 Secretary-Treasurer Matt Hall told the committee that SB 38 would improve safety and reduce turnover in the school bus industry.

"This is an industry that demands the highest safety and background check standards," Hall said. "Retaining and recruiting safe, professional drivers is key to the well-being of our children and the public at large because they haul our most precious cargo."

Minnesota

On March 12 school bus drivers represented by Locals 120 and 638 testified at the Minnesota House of Representatives about the importance of passing H.F. 988. Local 120 Member Steve LeFerber and Local 638 Member Dawn Petersdorf were at the Jobs and Economic Development Finance Division hearing where the legislation was being considered.

"Currently the annual turnover in drivers is in excess of one-third of the workforce annually," LeFerber said. "If you have consistent drivers who keep the same routes year after year, kids remember their drivers and it's a stable place for them. We can't provide that with turnover as high as it is."

Petersdorf noted that it was unfair for school bus workers to be singled out.

"Payments, bills, groceries, transportation and fuel costs do not stop during the summer; school bus drivers still have to pay for them," Petersdorf said. "Construction workers who are laid off during the slow season are able to collect unemployment insurance, why not us?"

KANSAS FIRST STUDENT SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS SPEAK OUT!



"In addition to transporting children to and from schools, many of us play a role as mediator, concerned counselor and caring authority figure. Overall, we aim to be a positive influence and make differences in children's lives, and in my opinion all people who seek to fill such a role should be compensated accordingly."

—Mimi Horn, Local 696



"When drivers don't have economic security in the summer months it's a real struggle to make ends meet – some of our best drivers are forced to take other jobs and many times they do not return to drive in the fall. Workers in other industries are able to collect unemployment when they are laid off; even the bus monitors who work alongside us are able to collect unemployment when they are laid off. Why not us?"

—Ray Alvarez, Local 838

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Teamsters.

Krekan-Trout is a shop steward at her Illinois Central school bus yard, and she said that being a Teamster has made her a stronger advocate for her fellow drivers. Her daughter is also a strong union supporter.

"If you've got a union backing you, you don't have to take out a bus that's unsafe," Dumas said. "Working for a union shop versus a nonunion shop, the union makes conditions safer and better for everyone, and everyone has a voice."

Sandee Dumas and Mary Kay Krekan-Trout say that after all they have been through, they will always be part of one another's lives.

"Our interests have been pretty much parallel; our lives have been pretty much parallel, unbelievably so," Krekan-Trout said. "She's a bus driver, so am I. Miracles do happen, and this is one of them. The one up above had something to do with this, but the school bus industry and the Teamsters did too. It's the luck of Local 777."



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Local 332 Member Pam Marme

Pam Marme is a Local 332 member from Flint, Michigan who works for the Vocational Independence Program (VIP), a non-profit that provides a variety of services for people with

intellectual and developmental disabilities in Genesee County. Marme has been working at the VIP for over thirty years as a bus driver, taking people with special needs to and from the VIP. Marme said that the persons served, along with their parents and guardians, are very grateful for the bus service that the organization provides because it is the most reliable transportation available and that attendees of the VIP enjoy taking the bus.

"The people we serve are some of the most loving, caring people," Marme said. "They are great to work with, and they are very

appreciative of the service that we provide. They are all friends and during the bus ride they make weekend plans, hang out, talk, laugh. It's their social time."

The mission of the VIP is to help the people they provide services for to become as independent and integrated into their communities as they possibly can. To that end, one of the most important services provided by the VIP is employment skills training and placement into full-time jobs. Attendees of the VIP work in a variety of places, including a race track, an auto plant, restaurants, grocery stores and a number of other businesses throughout Genesee County. This wouldn't be possible without drivers like Sister Marme.

Marme is a shop steward and was an important part of the organizing drive when drivers and counselors organized with the Teamsters back in 2002.

"Things have gotten better since we organized with the Teamsters," Marme said. "We've gotten more money and we have a contract since we organized, but the biggest thing is the fairness. I wanted to be a union steward because the drivers needed to be represented equally, not separately. I wanted to make sure no one person was treated any different than another."

Organizing Round Up

Here are just a few of the locations where school bus workers have joined the Teamsters within the past several months...

Wattsburg, Pa. Drivers at Durham School Services voted overwhelmingly to join Teamsters Local 397. Lisa Larson, a driver at the Wattsburg yard, said that the election brought her and her fellow drivers closer together. This was the first election victory for the Teamsters under the recently negotiated Memorandum of Agreement with Durham's parent company, National Express.

"I'm so happy to be a Teamster," Larson said. "I feel that this is going to be a good thing for us."

Charlton, Mass. Drivers from First Student (Bay Path) voted overwhelmingly to join Local 170. The workers provide student transportation for the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District.

"The solidarity that these First Student drivers maintained from start to finish in this organizing campaign is something to be very proud of," Local 170 Secretary-Treasurer Shannon George said.

Everett, Wash. Drivers at Durham School Services voted by more than a three-to-one margin to join Teamsters Local 38. Driver Dan Jones is one of the 127 workers at the yard and a member of the organizing committee.

"I am proud of my fellow co-workers and the results of this election," Jones

said. "This wasn't just a 'yes,' this was a resounding yes! This is the way we want to move forward with Local 38."

North Hampton, N.H. First Student bus drivers voted overwhelmingly to be represented by Teamsters Local 633. The workers provide student transportation services to the New Hampshire seacoast.

"It was a team effort by all involved; we welcome our brothers and sisters at this location into the Teamsters' family and we look forward to negotiating a strong contract for our newest members," Local 633 Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Padellaro said. "I am proud to announce that First Student is now wall-to-wall Teamsters throughout the state of New Hampshire."

Have a question or story idea?
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