

THE ELECTRICAL WORKER

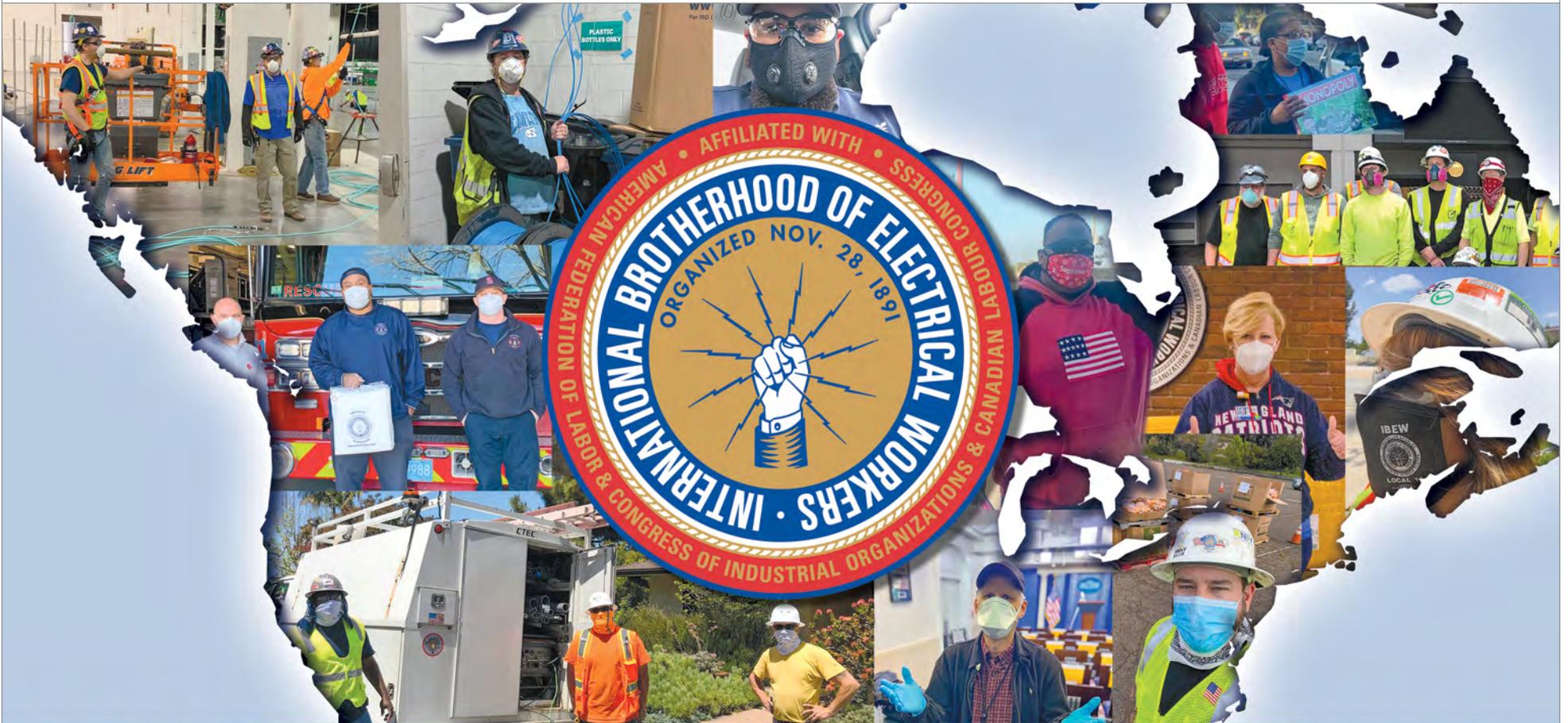
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IBEW Members Leading the COVID-19 Response



In This Issue

Editorials **2**

Letters to the Editor **2**

My IBEW Story **2**

Transitions **7**

2020 Photo Contest **8**

Across North America, IBEW members are building and running hospitals, maintaining infrastructure and producing and transporting the goods that keep society functioning. On and off the job, they're the backbones of the communities they serve, heroes of the COVID-19 crisis.

Rene Mata is a San Diego Local 465 gas service technician, and for most of his 16-year career, the biggest threats on the job were gas leaks. Explosions are uncommon but perilous, and leaks must be addressed quickly.

"We prepare, and we wear personal protective equipment, but we have a responsibility to work the orders," Mata said.

In the beginning of March, Mata was called to repair a leaking appliance, a service San Diego Gas and Electric provides to its customers.

But the gas leak wasn't the biggest danger Mata faced on this call. The homeowner was a sick man. All the symptoms pointed to COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus that came roaring out of China in the new year and circled the globe.

While the rest of the world was working from home or physically distancing, Mata was putting on an entirely new kind of PPE and preparing to go where everyone is told to stay away.

"Part of the job is to enter some hazardous situations," he said.

Mata is one of tens of thousands of IBEW members who have been called to keep North America functioning as all around them the familiar is shut down.

Across North America, hundreds of millions of

stores, restaurants and offices closed, and the economy was stripped down to its essentials. At the foundation were the men and women of the IBEW.

In Ontario, hundreds of health care workers kept hospitals running. Across the continent, wiremen worked through the night, night after night, to build dozens of temporary hospital facilities and accelerate completion of yearslong hospital expansion projects. In Indiana and Nevada, our members retooled and rewired factories to produce ventilators. Transmission and distribution system operators, the air traffic controllers of the power grid, said goodbye to their families for weeks at a time and bunked down in RVs stationed in office parking lots.

These are just a few of the ways that these jobs, so often hidden or taken for granted, became the

IBEW COVID-19 RESPONSE *continued on page 3*

FROM THE OFFICERS

Leading the Way



Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President

We are living through unprecedented times, sisters and brothers. Not since the Spanish Flu outbreak of 1918 has the world dealt with anything on the scale of COVID-19 and its devastating effects on both our health and on the world's economy.

Like you, I don't know what's going to happen next. The coronavirus could be with us for another year or longer, and that means more questions than answers for the foreseeable future.

But, what I can tell you — with 100% certainty — is that I've never been more proud to be a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

From the very start of this crisis, IBEW members have stood at the forefront and led North America's response.

When hospitals and testing centers needed to be built across this continent, IBEW members were there running electricity to lighting and critical medical devices.

When sick patients and vulnerable populations needed care, IBEW members were there too, working in hospitals and nursing homes, tending to the infirmed.

When power plants and distribution networks needed to be safely manned while the chaos of the outside world swirled around them, IBEW members moved in and did the job for weeks at a time.

When 911 emergency calls needed to be answered or law enforcement needed to step in and maintain peace and protect the public, IBEW members were there, too.

As much of North America was confined at home, IBEW members kept the power and the telephones and internet reliable, enabling us to teach our children, stay connected to our families and turn on a movie to escape reality for a few hours.

IBEW members stepped up to convert assembly lines to produce desperately needed ventilators and medical equipment, and manufacturing and rail members worked tirelessly to produce and deliver those goods to the people who needed them.

In cities across North America, IBEW members donned face masks and gloves and went to work as normal, maintaining infrastructure and keeping the machinery of everyday life functioning.

All the while, so many of you stepped up not just at work, but in your communities, donating critical personal protective equipment, feeding the hungry, ensuring our retirees and other vulnerable populations had what they needed to stay home and stay safe.

And all of that is ongoing. Every day I hear of the incredible generosity of our members, and I'm reminded all over again why I'm so proud to call each of you my IBEW sisters and brothers.

You'll read a handful of these simple acts of heroism both on and off the job in this issue of The Electrical Worker; there are far too many to list them all. But rest assured that we see you, your countries and your communities see you, and we're so grateful for the way you've risen to meet this challenge.

Thank you for everything you're doing, and know that we will come back stronger because of our solidarity and commitment to one another and to the communities we live in. In these uncertain times, I'm sure of that. ■

Responding to Crisis

So many IBEW members have risen to meet the challenges of this historic pandemic both on and off the job over the last several months. The stories in these pages, and the many more I've heard from members and local leaders, fill me with pride for this brotherhood of ours.

As so many of our two nations' people stay home to protect themselves and prevent the spread of COVID-19, we know that so many of you are continuing to work, keeping the machinery of the electric and communications grids and other critical infrastructure running.

Many construction sites are operating close to normal, and with such a large and diverse membership, we know feelings about that are divided. It's why we've taken steps to help members and local unions work with contractors to provide options both to those who want to work and to those who have family obligations and legitimate fears about potential exposure to the virus.

The absolute most important thing to me — and to everyone at the IBEW — is that you go home safe at the end of the day.

That's not new or unique to life during this pandemic. It's always been at the heart of the IBEW, from the time when 10 delegates gathered in St. Louis in 1891 to form this union.

It's why we work with state and federal safety regulators and press lawmakers to strengthen protections for workers on the job. It's why we collectively bargain for better working conditions and quality health care with our employers and contractors.

But we know that looks a little different right now. The usual worries are still there, but now every person we come into contact with is a potential risk to us and to our families.

That's why it's incumbent on every one of us to take the proper precautions to protect ourselves and one another. Personal protective equipment has always been important, but it's even more important now. You're not just wearing a mask or gloves for you. You're doing it for your own families and for the families of everyone you come into contact with, including your IBEW sisters and brothers.

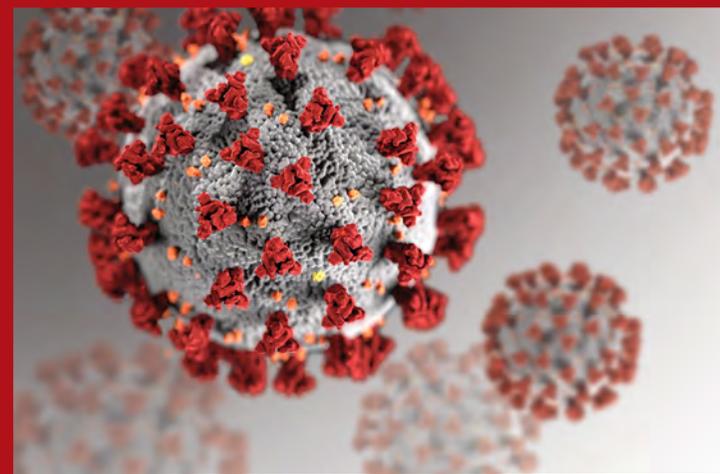
Many people spread this virus before they ever know they're sick, if they even show symptoms at all, so wearing a mask at all times is a small price to pay to save lives.

Rest assured, we're still working with officials and employers to make sure you have all the PPE you need, but it's on you to wear it, and to wear it properly. Taking care of one another is what union solidarity is all about.

Stay strong and stay safe, brothers and sisters, and thank you for proving every day that IBEW members are the backbone of the communities we serve. ■



Kenneth W. Cooper
International Secretary-Treasurer



A NOTE from The Electrical Worker:

This month's Electrical Worker is shorter than normal. Like so many of you, we're coping with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disruption to our lives and work. For now, Local Lines has been temporarily suspended, and many regular features of the paper like "North of 49" and "In Memoriam" will return in future issues.

For the most current information on how the IBEW is responding to COVID-19 and working on behalf of members and their communities, please visit [IBEW.org/COVID-19](https://www.ibew.org/COVID-19).

The page, as well as our Facebook and Twitter accounts, will be updated regularly over the coming weeks and months to keep you best informed.

Send us your stories of everyday IBEW heroes during the COVID-19 crisis at media@ibew.org.

"Letters" will return in next month's issue.

We Want to Hear From You: Send your letters to media@ibew.org or Letters to the Editor, The Electrical Worker, 900 Seventh Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

My IBEW STORY

Levi Cook, Journeyman Wireman/Training Instructor
Milwaukee Local 494



"I'm a veteran of the United States Air Force. Working in electronics coming out of the military was a low-paying career field. My family and I barely scraped by. I knew there had to be a path to a higher-paying career. Through the Helmets to Hardhats program, I was able to join the IBEW and work our way out of poverty.

Thanks to the IBEW, we're able to live comfortably with health care and peace of mind. After just 18 months as an apprentice, my family and I were able to move into our own home. I've been able to afford to take my children on vacations and we're able to spend time away from work hunting and fishing and doing the things we enjoy together.

And because of IBEW/NECA's training and safety practices, I know I will be coming home to my family at the end of the day.

Over my 20 years in the industry, I've worked as an apprentice, a journeyman, a foreman and a project manager. And now I'm able use some of what I've learned to help train the next generation as an electrical instructor. It's all because of my IBEW membership."

Share your story at [ibew.org/MyIBEWStory](https://www.ibew.org/MyIBEWStory)

Continued from page 3

IBEW Members Leading the COVID-19 Response

bright lights as the economy went dark in a global effort to slow the spread, flatten the curve and save lives.

For every story about the service rendered by an IBEW member on the job, there rises another about the role we play in our community. Untold masks have been sewn and given away; tens of thousands of meals delivered to medical workers. New Jersey and Massachusetts locals donated more than 100,000 pieces of PPE; in Gulfport, Miss., the local handed out locally made hand sanitizer in the only container they could find — red Solo cups.

“It is too soon to tell the whole story of the brotherhood’s response to the 2020 pandemic. We are still in the beginning stages,” said International President Lonnie R. Stephenson. “But we have done right by our communities, our brothers and sisters in the IBEW and our nations. We are living up to the high standards set by our founders and the IBEW responses during the World Wars, the Great Depression, 9/11 and the recession of 2008.”

Healing the Sick

Every person has a role to play in stopping the spread of the novel coronavirus, but only a few of us go into the heart of the struggle: the health facilities that are working beyond capacity to bring back those laid low by COVID-19.

Nearly 950 of the 4,000 members of Toronto Local 636 work in health care. They aren’t the doctors and nurses at the hospital; they are the people who keep the hospitals and in-patient centers across Ontario running. They are aides, clerks and the people who help you navigate the maze of the health care system. They are among the first people incoming patients meet, including those suffering from the COVID-19 virus.

Nearly 400 of them aid in-home patients across the province suffering from physical disabilities and acquired brain injuries. The community they serve is often poor; working conditions are, at times, unsanitary.

“They go to work every day with the fear of getting the virus and bringing it home to their families,” said Business



Local 636 members Sharon Holland and Jen Rocheleau are Unit Clerks in the Windsor Regional Hospital’s intensive care unit.

Manager Domenic Murdaca. “But they know they have to keep the clerical and critical needs of hospitals and the places where they work running. We’re really proud of them.”

As the crisis grew, Murdaca, like business managers across North America, faced the deep challenge of the early days of the pandemic: not enough protective equipment or enough reliable information about how the virus spread and how to protect yourself.

After a slow start, he said employers are doing all they can to provide PPE and keep his members safe. But long hours working in difficult circumstances require constant vigilance on the part of each worker to stay safe and protect themselves and patients.

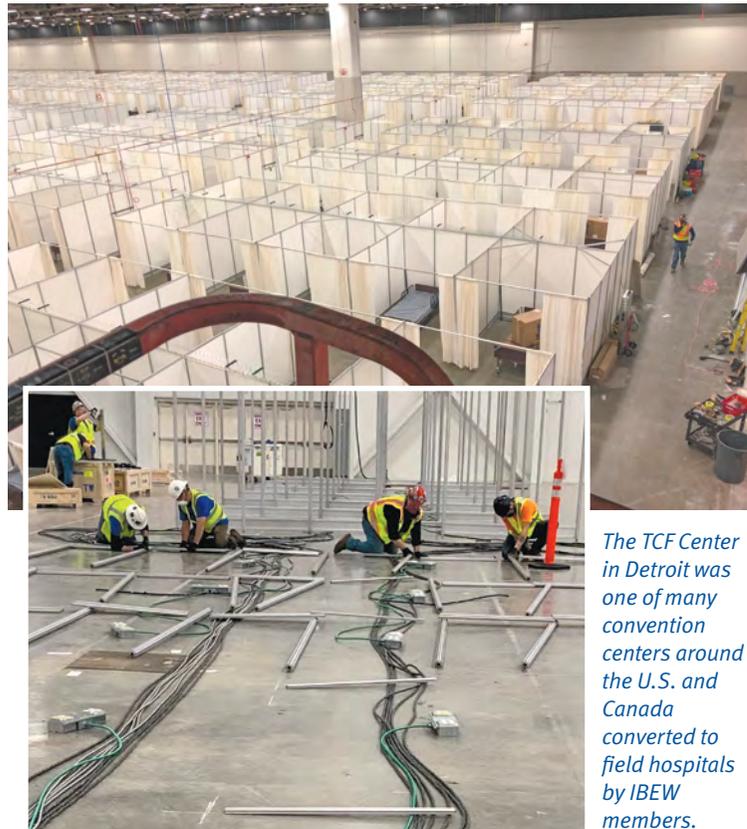
In early March, members of Downers Grove, Ill., Local 21 joined the legion of health care workers rushing to save lives. They were the nurses, nurses’ assistants, kitchen staff, housekeeping, janitorial, social services and laundry staff at the Heddington Oaks Nursing Home, owned and operated by Peoria County. To protect their vulnerable residents, the county locked down the nursing home, placing additional pressures on the staff.

“The workload has been overwhelming, yet they continue on,” said Business Manager Paul Wright.

Expanding Capacity

By now, everyone understands the phrase “flatten the curve” means slowing the infection rate so the health care system isn’t overwhelmed.

But the flip side of flattening the



The TCF Center in Detroit was one of many convention centers around the U.S. and Canada converted to field hospitals by IBEW members.

curve is increasing capacity. If hospitals have more ventilators, more rooms, more space, the curve can rise without more people dying.

Piedmont Atlanta Hospital north of downtown was scheduled to open a 13-floor patient tower Aug. 1.

Hospital administrators wanted it opened early. So, they asked Atlanta Local 613 and one of its largest signatory contractors, Inglett and Stubbs, if they could get it done faster and still keep people safe. The answer was “yes.”

“We had 100 people working around the clock,” said Business Manager Kenny Mullins. “We turned that four months into three and a half weeks.”

Local 613 also had hundreds of members working across the state building emergency COVID-19 tents, Mullins said — more than 30 total, each with the capacity to hold and treat up to 100 patients.

They were far from alone. Across North America, IBEW members were pressed into service to massively expand patient capacity. They built temporary

hospitals, morgues and testing centers in St. Louis, Milwaukee, Long Island, Albuquerque, in a Reno parking garage, at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds and in many other places.

Members of Hamilton, Ontario, Local 105 built Joseph Brant Hospital’s 87-bed temporary facility in only eight days, working around the clock. The local then donated \$10 an hour for every hour worked, more than \$15,000, to the hospital for critical COVID-19 supplies.

“It wasn’t a big job, only about a dozen members, but they needed it now and we delivered,” said Local 105 Business Manager Lorne Newick.

Vacant convention centers were transformed into field hospitals by IBEW members alongside the Army Corps of Engineers in New York, Chicago, Boston, Washington and more.

Detroit Local 58 remade the TCF Center into a temporary hospital, and members were called to the GM Tech Center Campus in Warren, Mich., to equip a revamped building with a fleet of 3D printers that will produce critical ventilator components and churn out the plastic “Ys” and “Ts” that can double and triple the capacity of ventilators already in the field.

Local 58 also installed two production lines in the shuttered Warren Transmission Plant to make N95 respirators, the kind medical workers need to stay safe. The facility was closed, but it had a “clean room” facility that was ideal for mask production.

While patients rely on hospital staff to care for them, hospital staff rely on the array of near miraculous medical devices to help them diagnose and treat those patients. The IBEW is there too.

New Jersey Locals Protect Hospital Workers, First Responders

No state except New York has been hit harder by the COVID-19 pandemic than New Jersey. And while media reports have largely focused on New York City’s overwhelmed hospitals and the Empire State’s astonishing infection and mortality numbers, New Jersey’s IBEW locals have focused their attention and efforts on their own first responders in need.

In April, the state’s six construction locals donated more than 100,000 pieces of personal protective equipment to health care workers and first responders, drawing praise from the recipients as well as from labor ally Gov. Phil Murphy.

State political director Ian Leonard, a member of Folsom, N.J., Local 351, initially sourced more than 60,000 Tyvek suits, which he and Local 351, Paterson Local 102, Jersey City Local 164, Trenton Local 269, Asbury Park Local 400 and New Brunswick Local 456 donated to Murphy for the state to distribute as needed.

But that was just the start.

Over the next days and weeks, Local 351 donated 5,000 masks and 1,000 protective gowns to local first responders and hospitals. Local 456 came up with another 500 Tyvek suits and 1,000 masks. Local 400 donated 9,000 masks along with 30 cases of hand sanitizer and \$3,000 in food to various community organizations. And Local 269 sourced 21,000 masks, 4,000 gowns and 2,100 pairs of safety goggles.

The six construction locals also donated \$120,000 to the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund.

“I’m just really, really proud of how all our brothers and sisters have stepped up on this,” said Local 351 Business Manager Daniel Cosner. “The IBEW is always there when people are dealing with the worst, and that’s when our members are at their best. I can’t think of a better example in our state.”

A delivery from Local 400 to CentraState Health was met with gratitude from the hospital system’s president and CEO John Gribbin, who tweeted his thanks to Business Manager Robert Shimko and Local 400 member and Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling for donations of masks and sanitizer.

Local 269 Business Manager Stephen Aldrich said delivering the desperately



needed PPE was a way to give back to the doctors and nurses his members work alongside frequently in the hospitals his local serves. “We have a connection with these hospitals because we do all of their electrical work,” he said. “The shortages mean some nurses are being asked to use the same mask longer than they should and to wear gowns for a couple of days instead of for just one shift.”

“The men and women in our hospitals and medical facilities have been working day in and day out to keep our community healthy in this tough time,” said Local 269 Assistant Business Manager Wayne DeAngelo, who is also an assemblyman representing New Jersey’s 14th Legislative District. “We need to back them up in this fight any way we can and to show our appreciation.”

And the local didn’t stop with life-saving PPE. They put a smile on the faces of the nurses and doctors at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital’s Hamilton Township location and two Capital Health Hospital facilities and at the St. Mary’s Medical Center, Jefferson Bucks and Lower Bucks hospitals in Pennsylvania with the delivery of more than 50 dozen sticky buns from the popular Fritz’s Bakery in Bucks County.

“As a friend once told me, ‘Remember the world is round,’” Leonard said. “We’re all in this together and we can’t hide from each other.” ■

IBEW Members Leading the COVID-19 Response

About 40 members of Milwaukee Local 663 maintain the assembly lines and facilities at GE Healthcare factories in Milwaukee and Waukesha, Wis., that make critical components for the CT scanners medical staff rely on to check lung capacity and monitor the spread of infection.

The factories are working three shifts, 24/7, said Business Manager Jason Olson, who works the second shift with eight other electricians.

"We're running at max capacity. When these machines break, they need the parts immediately," he said. "I think our members understand how important the work we're doing is."

Once the CT scanners are in the hospitals, in some of the hardest hit parts of the U.S., they remain under the care of the IBEW.

Imaging and diagnostic technicians from Boston Local 2222, New York Local 3 and Seattle Local 48 service MRI, CT, nuclear imaging/PET scanners, X-ray, lab equipment and ultrasound machines in medical facilities across New England, New York and the Pacific Northwest for Siemens Healthineers.

"The CT scanner at a hospital is like the third arm of the emergency room," said service engineer and Local 2222 steward Jack Kent. "Usually, when a hospital has more than one, they've got one for the ER that's almost entirely used by COVID patients right now and one CT scanner for the rest of the hospital."

Local 2222 Business Manager and International Executive Council member Myles Calvey said machine calibration — making sure the machines are accurate

and delivering the right results — is one of their biggest and most important jobs, especially given the need for quick and accurate COVID-19 testing and processing.

But the greatest challenge for many isn't the work, it's the waiting. ERs were always scoured and disinfected after every procedure, but now the cleaning staff sets up an ultraviolet strobe light to destroy any airborne virus. It takes longer, sometimes much longer and the maintenance techs — masked up and in varying degrees of goggles, lab coats and face shields — wait. And they watch, and what they see is often heartbreaking.

"These members are spending a lot of time in high-risk areas, which is worrying and then it is hard seeing all the COVID patients wheeled by," Calvey said. "It's a difficult job being done under very difficult circumstances."

Staying Connected

It has been estimated that the quarantine knocked nearly one-third of the economy offline. The impact has been cataclysmic; a former chief economist for the International Monetary Fund said it was possibly the most dramatic economic contraction since the Black Death nearly 700 years ago.

And yet, the lights must stay on and the telecommunications network must stay up, because the rest of the world hasn't stopped; it has just moved to the hundreds of millions of kitchen table schoolhouses and living room workstations.

There too, IBEW members are front and center. And, there too, their jobs are

"We have done right by our communities, our brothers and sisters in the IBEW and our nations."

— *International President
Lonnie R. Stephenson*

often transformed.

By early May, dozens of IBEW utility members were sequestered at their work sites to protect critical power infrastructure — and the people who run it — in California, New York, British Columbia and Nebraska. By the time transmission system operators from San Diego Local 465 began living and working on San Diego Gas & Electric property in early April, the IBEW had signed agreements with dozens of utility companies across the U.S. and Canada, setting the terms for housing grid operators and generation workers onsite.

New York control center operators — air traffic controllers for electrons instead of airplanes — from Syracuse Local 97, Johnson City Local 10, Niagara Falls Local 2104 and Massena Local 2032 were working shifts up to four weeks long, said Third District International Representative Julie Cosenza.

The 14-day shift of San Diego Local 465 members Blain Adams-Denner, Christopher Sullivan and Al Lagunero began April 6. They alternated 12-hour shifts before being replaced by another three-person crew on April 20.

All three volunteered, said Business Manager Nate Fairman, a difficult decision for each of them. But Lagunero explained his decision to volunteer simply.

"I feel this is my best contribution to my community," he said.

Some of the first generation workers to be quarantined were members of Grand Island, Neb., Local 1597. Most cases of COVID-19 have been on the coasts, in densely populated urban areas. But one of the worst hit parts of the country is Hall County, Neb., where the disease tore through the JBS meat packing plant there.

It was so worrying that the city-owned utility approached Local 1597 Business Manager Chad Holmes with a proposal to activate the pandemic action plan they had put in place a decade earlier after SARS and Ebola scares.

Two shifts — one for the night, one for the day — of two workers each worked for five days, sleeping in makeshift housing on site. While one group worked, a second sequestered for five days. When the second group rotated in, a third went into sequestration and the first quarantined at home.

After power, a connection to the internet is often the essential utility for most North Americans. It is the tether between their isolated homes and the world of work, school and basic human connection. That system, too, was often built and maintained by IBEW members.

"Keeping people connected is not a luxury now," said Broadcasting and Telecommunications Department Director Robert Prunn.

"The people our telecom members are dealing with are trying to save their

jobs in a very frightening recession, educate their kids, connect with distant loved ones and sometimes, just relax with a movie. And they are often feeling the pressure of all of that when they get on the line with our members."

For many, the voice they hear when the connection goes dark is one of the 550 members of Boise, Idaho, Local 291 at an AT&T-owned call center.

Many of them faced the same challenges as the people they were helping. The telecommunications goliath had to empty out the call center within days.

Business Manager Mark Zaleski said that only about 120 continue to come to the office, spread apart and now at assigned workstations. The rest are working from home, talking with other people in their homes, working through the new reality we all face.

"I've got to take my hat off to AT&T for working swiftly to get 400 people at home on short notice," Zaleski said. "I couldn't be prouder of how our members have adapted to help our customers."

Sometimes, problems can't be solved over the phone and technicians have to be dispatched.

Pruun said there have been some work rule changes. With rare exceptions for emergencies involving customers with medical needs, for example, Verizon has barred technicians from going into homes, and technicians rely on outdoor and temporary fixes to keep customers connected.

In Canada technicians at Rogers Communications, members of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Local 1615, were going into homes — at their discretion —

LA Local Provides Masks, Food — Even Entertainment — to Community in Need

From safeguarding members to community service, Los Angeles Local 11 is playing a leading role helping the nation's second-largest metropolitan area respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

That includes delivering specially made Local 11 masks to construction sites, staffing grocery giveaways, providing space for mobile food banks to park their trailers and handing out board games to homebound families, among other good works.

Even the mayor took notice, praising the Los Angeles County Labor Federation and the IBEW in a news conference. "They got members together at the IBEW training center to give out food and meals to more than 2,500 LA families and they're going to continue to lead these food operations," Mayor Eric Garcetti said. "They're also helping to organize volunteers to pitch in where we may need their help."

It's second nature for Local 11. "We've always reached out to the community and we will continue to do so," Business Manager Joel Barton said. "We should all be doing what we can to improve the human condition."

Volunteering is a big part of that mission, he said, but so is continuing to work — safely — on vital construction projects around Los Angeles.

In April, Barton was encouraging everyone who could to keep working.

"We're making sure that the job's actually the safest place to be," he said, describing the aggressive approach Local 11 is taking to social distancing, personal protective equipment and sanitizing work areas and tools.

Delivering Local 11-branded face masks to workers over several weeks gave Barton, organizer Tommy Faavae and business agent Gary Tomlin the opportunity to inspect job sites, including projects at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, Los Angeles International Airport, Cal State University, a VA hospital and at the Phillips 66, Torrance PBF Energy, and Valero refineries.

"What we've been experiencing is that they're going above and beyond the safety protocol," Faavae said. "They've stepped up on mak-



ing sure they sanitize all equipment, materials, hand tools. They actually have a couple of apprentices with sanitizing equipment on rollable carts that they take from unit to unit."

Local 11 Political Director Antonio Sanchez contracted with a union printer to produce the logo masks, the latest swag with a local design. "When we go to conferences, we tend to have a louder and bigger presence — our shirts, our sweaters, the culture of Local 11 is there," and the masks are a natural extension of that, he said.

Members love them. "They've been very enthused and are asking for more," Barton said.

The visits also give workers a chance to ask questions and raise concerns. "For their business manager to go out there and talk to them face to face is a good morale pick up for the men and women in the field," Faavae said.

Those able to work know they're among the lucky ones in a city where many of their brothers and sisters are struggling. Sanchez said 90% of hospitality workers are laid off, as are up to 70% of janitorial staff at high-rise buildings.

Local 11 has turned out dozens of volunteers for a Labor Federation program providing boxes of groceries to union families.

For the event that the mayor cited at the training center, "the food distribution didn't start until 10 in the morning, but we had people there at 7 a.m. to set up," Sanchez said. "What I hear from the guys is that they're grateful to be able to help because they know not everyone has a job."

On another day, as cars pulled up to a school for free packed lunches, Local 11 activist "Big John" Harriel and his band of volunteers handed out board games — Monopoly, Scrabble, backgammon, chess, Clue, Battleship, and more to delighted parents and children. "You name it, I had it," he said.

Harriel remembers how the "old school" games helped him bond and communicate during his own troubled childhood. "We didn't have cell phones, we didn't have internet," he said, adding with a laugh, "I learned a lot of cool words from Scrabble."

Through his own charity, Big John Kares, along with Local 11; his employer, Morrow Meadows; union carpenters; and Chapter Two, an organization for at-risk youth, Harriel purchased hundreds of games from a wholesaler who gave him an extra discount.

"We're going to do it again," he said. "It was a hit, an absolute hit." ■

after customers answered a series of questions about recent travel or contact with infected persons.

But then three times it was revealed the customers lied, said the local's labor relations assistant, Jenelle Harvey. One told the company they hadn't traveled but then answered a phone call while the technician was there and said they had just come back from Florida three days before. So, the company decided the safety risk was too great and that they wouldn't go into houses at all.

"At first, there was simply too much pressure placed on technicians by customers and the company to ensure service and installation needs were met, while technicians were already dealing with some irate customers," Harvey said.

But for some members, working in the homes of others has been unavoidable.

Newark, N.J., Local 1158 member Fred Shellhammer is one of nearly 300 union appliance repair technicians for GE/Haier. He has been working out of Philadelphia for more than 30 years repairing microwaves in suburban mansions, washing machines in city center condos and refrigerators on farms in the countryside.

With most of the country in some form of lockdown, all those appliances are the thin thread of connection to civilized life.

Shellhammer is still working during the pandemic, focusing on the most critical repairs.

"We are doing it as safely as possible," he said. "There are always more questions: how should I lay on the floor? What did I touch? There a lot of unknowns. Some people get changed in their backyard and wash their clothes every night. Some people have spouses that are more

susceptible. There are precautions we take off the job."

Manufacturing Director Randy Middleton described it more bluntly.

"Wipe the area down, fix it, and leave," he said. "In every email, I say there are no trophies for working unsafe."

Still more members have a sworn duty to put themselves between the public and potential harm, and these days, danger lies in nearly every interaction, even those that once seemed so benign.

Steve Erceg is a steward for the Linn Co. Sheriff's Department sergeants, who joined Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Local 204 in 2015. The unit of around 20 sergeants has taken extra precautions, but the job must be done and can't be done from home.

"We've always dealt with the potential for danger on the job," he said. "Our top priority is always coming home at the end of the day, and this is no different."

Local 204 also has members working in the Linn County jail and another 10 deputies in the Cedar Co. Sheriff's Department, where Austin Sorgenfrey is a deputy and steward.

"We often don't have a choice of going into homes, and they're not always comfortable situations, but we're all used to wearing gloves and using sanitizer and disinfectant during normal times," Sorgenfrey said. "Right now, we're concerned for our families, that we could get this disease on the job and bring it home and spread it to them, but we have jobs to do."

For 911 emergency center workers in Lake County, Ind., keeping up has been grueling, but they know the work is important. As people got sick or stayed home to protect vulnerable family members, shifts grew and grew. On some days

Local 21 steward Stephanie Sandilla said dispatchers worked 16-hour shifts to keep their community safe.

Delivering Necessities

Not everything is shut down. Food and goods still have to move. The people who still work still need to get there. The IBEW is there, too.

The members of Bellevue, Ohio, Local 2172 work on Norfolk Southern's diesel engines.

"If it wasn't for us, the things people need might not get to where they're needed. We carry everything, from band-aids and cotton balls to lumber for construction to food and fuel," said Local 2172 President and local Chairman (business manager) Dave Frost.

The IBEW also represents nearly 8,000 passenger and commuter rail members. Transit ridership is down by almost 90% compared with the same time last year, said Railroad Director Al Russo.

"But that means the people who are still riding are often in crucial positions and very vulnerable," Russo said. "In other words, our members and the people they serve are in the same boat."

Russo said they have put new procedures to keep everyone safe. System Council 7 workers, for example, implemented new cleaning procedures in place, including more frequent sanitizing of car air filters to prevent the coronavirus from circulating in cars' HVAC systems.

"Our members know they were considered 'essential employees' from the moment they were hired," Russo said.

Easter in Syracuse Was For Supporting Frontline Workers

Easter Sunday was a special day for members and leaders at Syracuse, N.Y., Local 43, who partnered with two local restaurants to provide more than 700 meals to frontline employees at area hospitals.

"We wanted to let the health care workers know we have their backs," Business Manager Alan Marzullo said, "because we know they have ours."

The meals were sent to employees of Crouse Hospital, Upstate University Hospital, St. Joseph's Health and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Syracuse along with the St. Elizabeth Medical Center and St. Luke's Hospital in Utica, N.Y. Local 43's signatory contractors have agreements with all those facilities.

Marzullo said aiding workers at health-care centers that have supplied work to Local 43 members over the years made the experience even more rewarding. So did purchasing the meals from two local restaurants — The Preserve in Syracuse and Aqua Vino in Utica — which, like most restaurants across the country, have seen their business plummet during the pandemic.

"The owners had shared with us that without this order, they would have had to let some of their workforce go," Marzullo said. "It makes you feel good to know you helped out someone who needed it."

Media coverage of the event "gave us a chance to tell people not to forget the men and women working in the electrical industry and the skilled trades," he added. "They're putting their boots on every day and keeping our electrical and communication systems going." ■



Credit: WSYR-TV

Local 1547 Steers Massive Mask-Making Project for Fairbanks Hospital

Amanda Mertes was online exploring the shortage of personal protective equipment and the viability of cloth masks when she got a phone call in March that turned her curiosity into a mission.

Could she rally volunteers to keep Alaska's Fairbanks Memorial Hospital stocked with home-sewn surgical-grade masks during the COVID-19 crisis?

"Of course," Mertes told Doug Tansy, a member of the hospital foundation's board and assistant business manager in Fairbanks for Anchorage, Alaska, Local 1547, which represents workers across the entire state.

"We had a virtual board meeting and I asked a bunch of questions to identify needs, such as masks," Tansy said. "I offered to access our RENEW group and the board said, 'Can you guys start today?'"

Mertes, a journeyman wireman and RENEW activist, was eager to help her community — and herself — get back to normal as soon as possible. She had time on her hands, forced to stop working last month due to a compromised immune system that puts her at higher risk for the virus.

RENEW, with NextGen in Canada, is the IBEW's organization for young members who want to get more involved with their union and in their communities.

"I'd been doing random research — 'How can I make this go away? What are other communities running out of?' — so that we can mitigate this, so we don't get quite as severe of a spread, and so I can go back to work," Mertes said.

She quickly built an army of sewing enthusiasts, from Local 1547 members and retirees to scores of other volunteers throughout the



sprawling Fairbanks area deep inside Alaska's interior.

Between mid-March and the start of May, they'd blown past their original goals and sewn more than 12,000 masks, providing disposable protection for non-clinical hospital staff and regular patients, while preserving vital N95 respirators for doctors and nurses treating COVID-19 victims.

At the local, Tansy and dispatcher Carrie VanDehei assemble kits for 20 to 42 masks depending on size. They slip patterns, instructions with a YouTube link and surgical wrap from the hospital — sterile fabric normally used to protect medical instruments — into Local 1547-branded plastic bags.

Twice a week, the local's parking lot serves as a drive-through for safely picking up the kits and dropping finished masks in bins.

"They pull up and we hold out the bag on a stick to maintain

social distancing," Mertes said. "Everyone laughs but they're also really appreciative."

Mertes sews some masks herself, but mainly deals with hundreds of emails a week, process management, and strict quality control. She runs a meticulous ship that includes inspecting photos of volunteers' first masks, making sure pleats aren't too deep or upside down, that one side is open for a filter, and that there's no damage.

"They can't use pins," she said. "They have to use quilter clips, paper clips, or binder clips, because we don't want to poke any holes in the material."

RENEW volunteers in Anchorage, Juneau and other communities around the state have been making masks, too, Business Manager Dave Reaves said. Members are stepping up in other ways, too, from shopping

for retirees to collecting PPE donated by contractors.

"We're facilitating those efforts to try to get ahead of the big outbreak," Reaves said. "We have been lucky that way; we're a little bit behind the rest of the country."

Mertes said thinking ahead is part of being an Alaskan — being ready for emergencies in a land with brutal weather and what can be hundreds of miles between gas stations and stores.

"Living in Alaska gives you a little bit of a different mentality, a preparedness mentality," she said. "Whenever we approach a situation or problem, we always try to be prepared for the worst."

Check out Local 1547's Facebook page and its RENEW page for updates and photos showing members' mask-making projects and other good works throughout Alaska. ■

IBEW Members Leading the COVID-19 Response

Keeping Us Informed

As the world has shrunk for most people, they are relying in ever greater numbers on journalists to bring the world to them. But TV journalists and producers are facing the same struggle to do their jobs safely and professionally.

When CBS shut down its New York broadcast facility after two people who'd been inside were diagnosed with the virus, Washington Local 1200 members were called on to perform a monumental task: transferring full production for the flagship CBS Evening News program to Washington.

Under normal circumstances, a move like that would take weeks or months, said Business Manager Geoff Turner, but it was done in just three and a half hours on March 11.

"It's a herculean lift, not only to get signals pointed in the right direction in complex broadcast facilities, but to recreate that comfort so the producers feel like they have everything they need and the anchors can see and hear everything correctly," said Turner, a former CBS sound mixer.



Washington Local 1200 member Stuart Ammerman shows off his PPE in the White House briefing room, where he works for CBS News.

Hollywood, Calif., Local 45 faced many of the same challenges, said Business Manager Elaine Ocasio, with KCAL-TV and KCBS members producing an extra four hours of daily local news for the New York affiliate in addition to the 10 hours they already produce at their Studio City location.

"We were basically rewriting our disaster recovery procedures on the fly," said Local 45 member Fernando Burruss, a technical operations supervisor at KCAL-TV and KCBS. "We were coming up with new procedures and different ways of doing things at a moment's notice. We had to do this right here, right now, and basically we were able with help from our brothers and sisters at WCBS to keep them on the air."

Local 45 members at the CBS broadcast facility at TV City in LA, which has always been set up as a backup to the New York broadcast center, also stepped in to take over network transmissions until New York was able to reopen.

Making History

As April turned to May, more than a million people were infected with the coronavirus and thousands were still dying every day of COVID-19. Across North America, unemployment statistics shattered every record that had come before.

Some states in the U.S. were opening businesses, often in places with the worst worker protections and rarely with plans to keep them safe. Plans have been floated by Senate Republicans and the White House to give legal immunity to companies who fail to protect their workers.

But most of North America remained under some kind of stay-at-home order, and worries were high about a potential deep recession and a second wave of outbreaks in the fall or sooner.

For more than a century, IBEW members have been the base on which the economy is built. We still are.

We guide frightened people to the care they need. We build the hospitals and maintain the equipment inside. We are the ones who keep the power on and the internet lifeline up and running. We

get the crucial workers to their jobs and back, safe and sound. We keep your refrigerators running and your ovens hot. We protect and serve our communities.

When our chapter in the IBEW's his-

tory is written, the beginning will say that our nations called on us to save lives, keep us warm, keep us safe, keep us working. And it will say that the men and women of the IBEW answered that call. ■

Boston Local Donates 20,000 Face Masks to Area Hospital

Boston Local 103 has stepped up to help address the shortage of face masks needed to combat COVID-19.

"Nurses are desperate for these masks," said Business Manager Lou Antonellis. "Local 103 is happy to take up the task of providing these much-needed items."

Among the dire headlines regarding the COVID-19 outbreak is the shortage of personal protective equipment in hospitals, including face masks. It's been especially disastrous for nurses and doctors who must come into close contact with patients who may or may not have the virus. So, when a retiree mentioned that his daughter worked at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and that they needed masks, Local 103 stepped up to the plate.

"You better believe we'll help nurses," said Local 103 President Bob Sheehan. "The support from our membership was absolutely overwhelming."

Working with the Massachusetts Nurses Association and Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Local 103 utilized a contact they have for PPE to fast-track an order of 20,000 N95 face masks at a cost of about \$30,000. Walsh is a member of Laborers' Local 223 and former head of the Boston Building and Construction Trades Council.

"Because of our contact, and because we bought in bulk, we were able to get them at rock-bottom prices," Sheehan said.

The majority of the masks were delivered on April 3 to Brigham and



Local 103 spent the weekend giving out bags filled with about 250 masks each to fire departments in the Boston area as well as other organizations in need.

"We care about the community we live in," Antonellis said. "Whether it's lighting a ballfield or donating masks, we want to give back. Our members want to give back. It's family to us."

Local 103 members also worked on construction of 1,000 intensive care units and overflow hospital beds at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center to help with the mounting number of people contracting COVID-19. ■

Women's Hospital with others going to Mayor Walsh for distribution among other first responders.

"The nurses were beyond grateful," Sheehan said.

Local 103 represents about 35 electricians and technicians at Brigham and Women's.

Antonellis says members from

Chicago, Iowa Locals Keep Communities Fed

From delivering groceries to retirees to helping feed their larger communities, efforts by members in Chicago and Dubuque, Iowa, are snapshots of the kindnesses that IBEW brothers and sisters have been extending around the country since the early days of the coronavirus pandemic.

In Chicago, a Local 134 crew that included Business Manager Donald Finn filled carts and pallets at Costco in late March with food for IBEW retirees and widows.

"We know that the older generation can be more susceptible to severe complications from this disease, so we wanted to make it as easy and safe as possible for them to get the supplies they need," said Elbert Walters, who coordinated the project as director of Powering Chicago, the local's labor-management partnership.

Apprentices and business agents headed to more than 100 homes throughout Local 134's large territory with care packages, mainly non-perishables such as peanut butter, tuna, crackers and granola bars. They set boxes on doorsteps, rang bells, and hustled away as grateful recipients shouted, "Thank you!" from a distance.

It felt a little like "reverse trick-or-treat," Walters said, calling it "an amazing experience for everyone."

In Iowa, Local 704 and the Dubuque Area Labor Harvest, a food pantry that unions have run since the 1980s, are helping meet their com-



munity's growing needs.

Business Manager Tom Townsend and his wife, Judee, have packed hundreds of boxes with everything from canned goods and pasta to meats, cheese and eggs.

Households on a list provided by a community service agency get a box of non-perishables and another with refrigerated items that

Townsend and other volunteers leave at the doors. Worried about older people managing the heavy packages alone, Townsend on occasion has carried them inside, keeping a safe distance. "If I'm delivering, it just depends," he said. "I struggle with that."

In addition to the home deliveries, the Labor Harvest still runs its primary programs: hot breakfasts served on Saturdays, except for once a month when there's a walk-in food giveaway. The difference now is that breakfast is packaged to-go, as are food boxes that people pick up at the door.

Retired Local 704 Business Manager Dan Hammel, an original Labor Harvest board member, is on hand every weekend. "Organizations in Dubuque have been very gracious, going out of their way to help," he said. "Businesses have been making extra donations. And we've got lots of volunteers — lots of union people, retirees, their sons and daughters."

Unions are family, after all.

"That's really how this all started," Townsend said, referring to the Labor Harvest's origins in the 1980s. "The unions started collecting food for unemployed members, and then as the economy started getting better and people started going back to work, they said, 'Why not start giving back to the community?'" ■

TRANSITIONS

RETIRED

Curtis E. Henke



After nearly 40 years of faithful service to the IBEW, Eleventh District Vice President Curtis E. Henke retired May 1.

Brother Henke was born in Bismarck, N.D., and raised in a farming community in the central part of the state. After graduating from Center High School in 1974, he attended the University of North Dakota, Williston — now known as Williston State University — and graduated in 1977 with a degree in building construction.

Henke started his career in 1980 as a utilityman at a Basin Electric Power Cooperative. He was initiated into Hazen, N.D., Local 1593 the following year when he started an apprenticeship to be a mechanic/welder.

“I never thought much of going any further in my career as a mechanic/welder,” he said. “However, I always attended union meetings and was always encouraged to be active and run for positions within the local.”

Henke became active with his local union, beginning with acceptance of an appointment as a steward in 1986 and then shifting into service as a unit vice president. In 1989, he was elected Local 1593 president; two years later, he was appointed business manager.

During his tenure in that role, Henke helped negotiate 17 separate contracts for utility workers and was active when it came to safety issues, serving on the apprenticeship safety and training committee of the North Dakota Rural Electric Association. He was also involved with the state’s labor movement, serving in executive roles with the North Dakota AFL-CIO and as chair of the state’s Labor Education Council.

In 2002, then-International President Edwin D. Hill appointed Henke as an international representative for the Eleventh District. There, he worked closely with then-Vice President William Eads to service locals throughout North Dakota and part of South Dakota, assisting members from nearly every branch of the brotherhood.

In 2008, Hill appointed Henke to be the Eleventh District’s vice president after his predecessor, Lindell K. Lee, was appointed International Secretary-Treasurer. Henke was unanimously reelected by at the IBEW’s international conventions in 2011 and 2016.

“I am always thankful for previous leaders such as Bill, Lindell and Ed for having the confidence to promote me into positions of leadership in the IBEW,” Henke said. “Without their foresight, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

Nor have his own contributions as a vice president been unrecognized. “Curt’s always reaching out to people,” said Tenth District Vice President Brent Hall, who has served as a vice president alongside Henke since his own appointment in 2015. “He’s one of the most positive people I’ve ever been around. I’ve never seen a frown on his face.”

Hall said Henke has been a good friend whose calming influence among the union’s executive leadership will be missed. “When Curt would make a point in one of our meetings, there would be a lot of wisdom there,” Hall said. “He thinks things through.”

During his time at the district office in Kansas City, Mo., Henke served as an executive board member of the Missouri AFL-CIO and on the boards of the National Utility Industry Training Fund and the Henry Miller Historical Society.

He’s also a fast typist, Hall said, noting one of the vice president’s more underrated on-the-job skills. “At the officers’ meetings, he would take really good notes, and within a week he would email them out to everyone so they could compare.”

In retirement, Henke plans to catch

up on some of the things he feels were neglected through his life and career, including spending more time with his wife and high school sweetheart, Charlene — affectionately known as Char. “I couldn’t have done any of this without her support,” he said. “So, now we can hopefully make up for lost time.” His son, Landon, is a member of St. Joseph, Mo., Local 545, while his son-in-law, Dustin, is a member of Henke’s own Local 1593.

As he retires, Henke is confident that the outlook for the electrical industry, and the luxury the industry provides, remains bright and promising. “But, as we look to new and innovative ways to generate electricity and clean energy, I still maintain we cannot forget where we came from and the value of baseload generation,” he said. “I believe there can be a reasonable mix of these things in our future.”

He also made sure to thank his brothers and sisters of the IBEW who supported him over his many years in the brotherhood. The officers, staff and membership, in turn, wish to thank Brother Henke for his service and wish him nothing but the best in retirement. ■

APPOINTED

Mark Hager



Eleventh District International Representative Mark Hager, a former business manager of Minot, N.D., Local 714, has been appointed

the district’s vice president, effective May 1.

Hager replaces Curtis E. Henke, a fellow North Dakotan who retired after 12 years in the position. The Eleventh District includes North and South Dakota, Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska.

“Curt has been a great guy to work for and an unbelievable mentor,” said Hager, who thanked International President Lonnie R. Stephenson for his confidence in appointing him to this new role. “Organizing has been a priority for him, and it will continue to be a priority for me. We have a great staff to work with here and a great group of business managers.” Henke said that Hager will be a “great vice president for the Eleventh District and the entire IBEW.”

“He has never shied away from an assignment and was always ready to take on a new challenge,” Henke added. “I have all the confidence in the world our members will benefit from Mark serving as an officer in our brotherhood.”

Brother Hager grew up in Minot — a town of 47,000 about a one-hour drive from the Canadian border — and studied electrical technology for two years at the North Dakota State College of Science.

At the time, Hager wasn’t quite sure of his career path, he said. But he appreciated the importance of unions. His father worked for the Great Northern Railroad and was a member of the United Transportation Union.

When he was accepted into Local 714’s apprenticeship program in 1982, he jumped at it, topping out three years later. But the energy boom was over, ending most of the work on coal-fired plants and oil fields and affecting construction work throughout 714’s jurisdiction.

So, Hager packed up his tools and spent the next six years working as a traveler on projects coast to coast.

“It was a good time,” he said. “I wasn’t married, I didn’t have any children, so it was pretty easy for me to do it. We kind of chased overtime all over the country. I would make money when I could and the rest of time, I would go hunting and fishing.”

By the early ‘90s, however, Hager was married and returned to work in his hometown. He regularly attended union meetings, but didn’t consider running for office until Local 714 leaders asked him to do so. In 1992, he was nominated to run for president, even though no one told him of their plans beforehand.

He won and served in that position for the next 12 years, during which he had stints as head of Local 714’s JATC and political action committees.

“Our local has always put a lot of emphasis on organizing, and when he was elected president, he understood that right away,” then-Local 714 Business Manager Richard Bergstad said. “We were also involved in the community and in politics and he recognized these were things we should be doing. He took over groups that were doing that and was a really effective leader.”

Hager joined Bergstad’s staff as an organizer in 2001. Three years later, Bergstad retired and Hager won the election to succeed him as business manager. He was re-elected in 2007 and left the position to join the district office in 2008. There, Hager serviced locals in North and South Dakota in a variety of classifications, including construction, inside and outside, utility, telecommunications, government, line clearance and tree trimming.

As vice president, Hager plans to continue to emphasize the importance of the IBEW’s Code of Excellence — which guarantees the best work in the safest environment — as the best way to continue attracting more employers, business partners and signatory contractors. Organizing nonunion workers and contractors also remains a focus.

“We really have to make sure we’re prepared so that once the economy takes back off and construction gets rolling, we’re in position to capture that work,” he said.

Hager’s leadership skills were evident almost from the start, Bergstad said, noting that he ran union meetings as efficiently as any IBEW leader he’s seen.

He also suspects Hager’s work as a traveler helped him during his career.

“I think for anyone, a little time on the road is good,” Bergstad said. “You get a better understanding of the needs of everyone and everything that goes on in the brotherhood.”

Hager and his wife Deana have two grown daughters and two grandchildren. In addition to his work with the IBEW, he

has served as president of both the North Dakota Electrical Workers Council and the state’s Building Trades. He was appointed by two North Dakota governors to serve on the state’s Lignite Research Council — on which he still serves — and has been active in Habitat for Humanity.

The officers and staff congratulate Brother Hager on his appointment and wish him the best in his new position. ■

DECEASED

Jack McCann



S.R. “Jack” McCann, who spent his career fighting for IBEW members as a business manager and Ninth District international vice president, died March 25 in Walnut Creek, Calif. He was 92.

“For Dad, it was always an honor to be part of the IBEW and to serve as an advocate for all workers,” daughter Linda Foley said. “He was a gifted communicator and negotiator who was passionate about improving workers’ lives.”

McCann was appointed to helm the Ninth District in 1979, then elected to three successive terms until he retired in 1997. He also served on the International Executive Council beginning in 1976.

He grew up in West Plains, Mo., raised by his grandparents and his aunt after losing both his parents by the time he was 3 years old. A standout athlete, he had nearly a dozen college scholarship offers but chose instead to enlist in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II.

McCann was still young enough that his aunt had to sign a waiver for him to join, Foley said. Marksmanship skills he’d honed while hunting with his grandfather led him to serve in a gunnery unit in the Pacific theater.

After the war, he returned to Missouri and began raising his family. There, he and young men he’d played basketball with since grade school comprised a champion community team that won every game — until the Harlem Globetrotters came to town to challenge them.

That one loss aside, “My dad was an amazing, wonderful man who accomplished whatever he set out to do,” Foley said.

Having shipped in and out of California during the war, McCann decided to move his family west. He enrolled at a community college where one of his instructors turned out to be the business manager of Martinez, Calif., Local 302, who encouraged his math-whiz student to become an apprentice. He was initiated into the local on April 25, 1958, his birthday.

Shortly after graduating as a journeyman inside wireman, an economic downturn sent McCann and an apprentice classmate, John Hunter, in search of electrical work at a Cold War missile site in Yuba, Calif.

TRANSITIONS continued on page 8

IBEW MERCHANDISE



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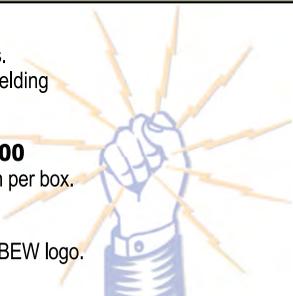
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TRANSITIONS *continued*

The men and their families became lifelong friends, with Hunter serving as McCann's assistant at Local 302 and the Ninth District. "Jack was deeply committed to the labor movement, and there was never a kinder or more gentle man," said Hunter's wife, Carol. "He was a true gentleman from the old days."

After returning from Yuba, McCann became assistant business manager for Local 302, ultimately stepping into the shoes of his retiring boss in 1968. In 2000, the local named its office building in his honor.

Throughout his career, McCann was active in numerous labor, training and building trades boards and councils, including serving on the state and national Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees; chairing the California State Association of Electrical Workers; and, by appointment by then-Gov. Ronald Reagan, serving on the state's Council of Industrial Relations and later co-chairing it.

Foley said he was an avid outdoorsman who spent many happy years in retirement camping, fishing, boating, waterskiing, horseback riding and more with his children, grandchildren and Jo, his loving wife of 75 years.

In addition to Foley and his wife, McCann is survived by another daughter, two grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and, as his obituary put it, "a large extended family at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers."

"He loved people, and people loved him," Foley said. "He was a wonderful role model who taught us kindness, honesty, integrity, equality for all and encouraged us to think beyond ourselves and truly help others."

On behalf of members, staff and officers, the IBEW sends its condolences to Brother McCann's family, with deep gratitude for the legacy he left through his decades of dedicated service. ■

APPOINTED

Alphonse Russo Jr.



International President Lonnie R. Stephenson has appointed Alphonse Russo Jr. to be director of the Railroad Department, effective May 1.

Brother Russo, who goes by "Al," began his railroad career in 1981 in his hometown of New Haven, Conn., helping to maintain and inspect the rolling stock of passenger cars and locomotives for Amtrak. In 1999, he moved over to work with the Metro-North Commuter Railroad.

"Railroad workers keep people and freight moving all over North America," said Russo, a member of New Haven Local 747. "It's our job to make our employers see that it's in their best interest to protect their workers."

A motivated union activist, Russo served as chairman of Local 747's executive board before becoming the local's president in 1998, and throughout his

tenure there, he consistently advocated on behalf of his fellow members to ensure their safety on the job.

As Local 747's president and local chairman, Russo was recognized by Metro North's commuter railroad managers as a tough but fair negotiator when dealing with work rule disputes, grievances, investigations, trials and other collective-bargaining concerns.

Russo even briefly dabbled in politics, raising several progressive issues in his 1998 union-endorsed campaign against a popular incumbent to represent Connecticut's 116th District in the state's House of Representatives. His loss in that race did nothing to dull his interest in politics.

"It's very important that members remember to vote for candidates who support us," he said, no matter what party those candidates belong to. "Imagine how much progress we could make with elected officials who are fully on the side of labor."

In 2013, Russo was appointed by then-International President Edwin Hill to serve as a Railroad Department international representative in Washington, and ever since then he has continued to fight on behalf of the union's railroad workers.

"Our industry faces numerous challenges," he said. Layoffs have been affecting hundreds of IBEW members in recent years, for example, due to several North American railroads' embrace of an efficiency scheme called "precision scheduled railroading."

That's just one of the many issues Russo and his department will face when negotiations toward a new national agree-

ment continue. The most recent pact expired on Dec. 31, but it remains in effect as talks toward a new contract are at a virtual standstill because of COVID-19.

When full national negotiation discussions resume, Russo said he is looking forward to working closely with the coordinated bargaining coalition's joint rail chiefs and the IBEW's system councils whose members are covered by the agreement.

"One of the biggest issues going forward will be freight-side sick time," Russo said. "COVID-19 has demonstrated how much workers need it. But we're all on the same page. I have a good feeling about this coalition."

Russo acknowledges that his appointment comes as the world deals with a historic pandemic. "Railroad workers know that they're essential employees from the moment they're hired," he said. "They might not have signed up to risk their lives day in and day out on the job, but they're doing it anyway because they know how important our jobs are."

Russo has an interesting perspective on the role of the international union's Railroad Department. "At our base, we're a customer service center and the members are our customers," he said. "We try to resolve issues and handle complaints."

He is looking forward to continuing that work. "When our members or our local leaders have a problem, I'm always a phone call away," he said.

Russo earned an associate degree in business management in 2004 from Albertus Magnus College in New Haven. He and his wife, Anna, live in Washington and are the proud parents of two daughters. ■



THE IBEW's 2020 PHOTO CONTEST

Enter Today!
Deadline: Oct. 1

1st Place: \$200
2nd Place: \$150
3rd Place: \$100
Honorable
Mention: \$50

The IBEW's annual photo contest is an opportunity for members from across North America to share the images that remind us why we're proud to be members of the greatest union in the world. Whether you're working on an awe-inspiring jobsite or capturing the simplicity and beauty of an everyday assignment, we want to see and share the images that move you. We can't wait to see who will take home the top prize for 2020.

See official rules and submission instructions at [IBEW.org/photocontest](https://www.ibew.org/photocontest).

Entries **MUST** be submitted electronically via the Photo Contest link on [IBEW.org](https://www.ibew.org). Please contact the Media Department at media@ibew.org or 202-728-6102 with additional questions.



The Electrical Worker was the name of the first official publication of the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in 1893 (the NBEW became the IBEW in 1899 with the expansion of the union into Canada). The name and format of the publication have changed over the years. This newspaper is the official publication of the IBEW and seeks to capture the courage and spirit that motivated the founders of the Brotherhood and continue to inspire the union's members today. The masthead of this newspaper is an adaptation of that of the first edition in 1893.

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We welcome letters from our readers. The writer should include his or her name, address and, if applicable, IBEW local union number and card number. Family members should include the local union number of the IBEW member to whom *The Electrical Worker* is mailed. Please keep letters as brief as possible. *The Electrical Worker* reserves the right to select letters for publication and edit all submissions for length.

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