

**SECURE JOINT VICTORY**

Following a joint organizing drive by IBEW Local 400, Asbury Park, New Jersey, and Transportation Communications Union Local 955, 72 employees of Tecom Vinnell Services voted union in August 1999 at Tecom Vinnell Services, a contractor at U.S. military bases.

The two unions conducted the cooperative drive because of a requirement that the employees, who operate under the Service Contract Act, have contracts completed thirty days prior to the end of the fiscal year, which in this case was September 1, 1999. With two unions on site for the election, it was unlikely the deadline could otherwise have been met, and the employees would have been without a contract for the year.

To meet the needs of the workers, the two unions formed a joint council to represent the supply technicians, inventory control clerks, warehouse workers, truck drivers and carpenters. This becomes the eighth unit organized by IBEW Local 400 at Tecom, which is based in Virginia and provides service support to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, and other military bases around the country.

## Great Strides in Teledata Organizing

Local 164, Jersey City, New Jersey, is doing a bang-up job of organizing the burgeoning teledata industry. In 1999 alone, the local signed 37 new telecom contractors, bringing in more than 200 new teledata technicians and trainees, swelling the local's ranks to over 900 members in the Telecommunications Unit.

Business Manager Richard K. Dressel said the local's gains are the result of a major, ongoing organizing campaign in the local's electrical and telecommunications divisions, coupled with a strong market recovery program and the capabilities of a new, cutting-edge training facility.

"On October 21, 1999," reported Dressel, "we initiated 151 new IBEW members employed by more than a dozen new contractors," a record for the local.

"Since our state-of-the-art training facility is

recognized by the industry as the place to go for training in this ever expanding industry, our members, employed by more than 150 companies, perform the majority of new telecom construction, maintenance and renovation in New Jersey," said the business manager. "Having this many employers, our members enjoy a healthy referral system and a single collective bargaining agreement providing high industry-standard wages and fringe benefits.

"When prospective employers witness our day-time apprenticeship program and night-



**In October 1999 Local 164, Jersey City, New Jersey, initiated 151 new telecom members employed by more than a dozen new IBEW contractors. Pictured with the new members are Business Manager Richard K. Dressel (standing, second from right) and President John David Milazzo (standing, left foreground).**

time telecommunications and journeyman courses, the message becomes quite clear. No one can match or even come close to the first-rate training programs we offer. Given these training opportunities, coupled with our extensive fringe benefit and wage package, Local 164 attracts the 'cream of the crop' in terms of journeyman wiremen and teledata technicians. Productivity levels have sky-rocketed, and the demand for our labor is at an all-time high."

Two major manufacturers of computer networking hardware—Cabletron Systems Inc. and Cisco Systems Inc.—have approved Local 164's training programs. The local's instructors complete a Cabletron train-the-trainer course to receive the required certification. Most recently, Cisco designated the IBEW local as a "Cisco Academy," for purposes of training local union members to obtain the mandated certification to work on Cisco equipment. "Local 164's training facility represents the first union training program these companies have approved, a fact of which Local 164 is very proud," said Dressel.

Among the 37 new companies Local 164 signed in 1999 is Unidata and Communications Inc., a firm which performs all the telecom work on every building that Prudential Insurance Company owns in New Jersey. Another of the local's new contractors is Mehl Communications Inc., which employs more than 150 technicians and trainees and recently completed one of the largest telecom installations in the country, an AT&T Corp. project in Bedminster, New Jersey. Another new contractor, Information Systems Inc. (IPC), performs similar large installations, and two Local 164 members, Denise Mandeville and Kelly Whalen, are project managers for this company.

"Local 164 is not about to sit back and merely enjoy its success," declared Dressel, noting that new COMET courses have recently been scheduled. He said that once companies see what the local union has to offer, they usually "see the light, sign up and take an active part in the advancement of our collective position" in the market place. In other instances, the local occasionally institutes the practice of stripping a nonunion company of its key employees.

"We have kept the nonunion at bay. Last year, for instance, our members earned in excess of \$20 million in wages and fringe benefits. We are committed to organizing and ensuring the IBEW'S position in the industry," said Dressel. ■

## Hollywood Local Adds Fourth TV Station

At KCAL-TV in Los Angeles, 51 news writers, assignment editors and production assistants voted overwhelming to join IBEW Local 45. This September 1999 victory marked the fourth California TV station organized by the Hollywood local last year. [See a report of the previous wins in the July/August 1999 *IBEW Journal*, page 8.]

"It's a great victory," said Local 45 Business Manager Lloyd Webster. "We look forward to meaningful bargaining with the company and coming to a mutually agreeable contract." The local already represents the TV station's camera operators and technicians. (The business manager noted that the September vote at KCAL was a two-part election. Six KCAL producers also voted, but that vote was challenged and, as of press time, those ballots remained sealed pending a ruling by the NLRB.)

In a 36-15 vote for IBEW representation, the 51 newsroom staffers dismissed the anti-union propaganda of the Nashville, Tennessee, union-busting law firm King and Ballow, brought in by the station to thwart the workers' right to join a union and gain a voice in the workplace. ■



Some of the 51 KCAL-TV newsroom staffers who won representation by Local 45, Hollywood, California, from left: Susan Hunt, Richard Lenti, Claudia Schatz, Nickee Liang, Ghee Chan and Rachel Chew.

### DO THE LOCO-MOTION

Nearly 100 employees who refurbish train locomotives at the Montana-based Livingston Rebuild Center have gained a union voice. In an October 1999 representation election, the workers voted overwhelmingly for IBEW Local 532, Billings, Montana.

The new IBEW members work as mechanics, welders, electricians, painters and marketing representatives at the company's plants in Livingston, Montana, and Richland, Washington. The plant is Livingston's largest employer.

Local 532 Business Manager Donald Herzog said the Livingston Rebuild Center's clients include Montana Rail Link Inc., Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp., Union Pacific Corp. and Alaska Railroad Corp., among many others.

"An important key to the victory was the commitment of the Voluntary Organizing Committee," said Local 532 organizer Scott Hudson. That committee included Robert Montoya, David Bilbao and Michael Stoltz. Eighth District International Representative Fred A. "Rocky" Clark led the organizing campaign, and the IBEW International Office assigned Local 44, Butte, Montana, organizer Rex Kendall as a temporary organizer for the drive. ■

(Continued on next page)

## ORGANIZED Voices

*Ronald C. Adams  
Local 38, Cleveland, Ohio*

I live in West Salem, Ohio, and have been an electrician for approximately 17 years. I worked for one particular nonunion electrical contractor since I was 16 years old (I am now 33). Although you would think that such time put into a company would guarantee my position, I worried that my job was unsteady. If I wished to maintain a good position with those in authority, I had to willingly do whatever job was asked of me. That included being away from home for long stretches at a time and sometimes working 16 hours a day. I was subject to all payroll and personnel cuts, which made my income very unsteady. I was constantly worried about my financial situation. My benefits were bare minimum, and with two small children, medical and dental care took a big chunk of my income. My wife and I worried about being able to pay our bills and whether I would even have a job the following week.

I contacted the IBEW in the fall of 1995 seeking to become a member, but I was skeptical. Was this the right move? Would I be welcomed? What kind of requirements would the union have? My fears were quickly put to rest after I attended my first meeting. They explained everything I would need to know in detail.

My wife and I read the literature the union provided explaining all the rules, regulations and benefits. We were amazed that something this wonderful existed! The health insurance plan would cover prescriptions, and vision and dental care. I would no longer have to worry about whether I could afford

medical care for my wife and children. The working conditions would be monitored, and I would no longer have to risk my life for my job. My pension would triple, and I would no longer have to sacrifice my pension plan for my children's education. My income would increase at least \$5 an hour! I would be protected against unlawful conduct by my employer. The union would be more than I had ever hoped for.

When I received the letter of acceptance into the union, I was elated. My wife cried. We wouldn't have to worry about my losing my job and consequently our house. We would be able to seek medical care for our children if they needed it. We would have a firm foundation on which to build a future. We would be part of a caring group of people who care for their fellow workers. I am proud to be union, and I would do it all over again. ■

*Dan Feagans  
Local 193,  
Springfield, Illinois*

I have been a member of Local 193 in Springfield, Illinois, for less than a year, yet I am very committed and believe in the union. Here is just one of the reasons everyone should be a union member.

I have been an electrician for 21 years. I worked hard while employed by almost every nonunion electrical contractor in Springfield.

One contractor promised me better wages, insurance and a retirement package that never came. Then we started a six-month job and halfway through we learned it was state funded and paid prevailing wage. My boss

actually laughed, saying that would never happen. The right people found out and he was forced to pay prevailing wage, plus back pay. He paid, but after that job, said he would be paying me minimum wage until things were even between us. If I didn't agree, he would send me home one or two days a week. I refused, and he sent me home until I got fed up and quit. The real topper is I found out later he deducted, but never paid, taxes, Social Security and unemployment on me. This is just one of many stories I have to tell, and I plan to tell them all and fight to organize this entire city. ■

*Rodney Hilton  
Local 303,  
St. Catharines, Ontario*

Following a career change from law enforcement to the electrical trade some three years ago, I began my apprenticeship in the nonunion sector. Although I took great pride and satisfaction in my work, I was growing frustrated with low wages, lack of benefits, and the "just put it up" attitude of nonunion employers.

In February 1999, "salters" from Local 105, Hamilton, Ontario, helped me see the light, and I began an effort, with fellow employee Barry Crothers, to organize our employer, Giessler Electric. In March 1999, we were able to register a vote to organize. After some delay, and getting dismissed for organizing, we won the vote and the company was certified on June 4, 1999.

Since becoming a member of Local 303, I have been impressed with the pride of the workers and the superior [skills] of the IBEW. I look forward to a long and prosperous career with the IBEW and am proud to be a member.

Many thanks to all involved in the organizing, especially Local 303 Business Manager Garry Sorley; Local 804, Kitchener, Ontario, Assistant Business Agent Brett McKenzie; the Local 105, Hamilton, Ontario, crew; the Newfoundland crew at Local 2303, Akron, Ohio; and Brother Al Van Schube, Local 1739, Barrie, Ontario. ■



## DISPATCHES

Twelve outside telephone workers employed by **Deposit Telephone Company** voted for IBEW representation in an election held August 26, 1999. The company is located in the small community of Deposit, New York. The employees are members of newly chartered Binghamton, New York, Local 83 (into which former Local 1125 was amalgamated in September 1999).

By a resounding margin of victory, a unit of 75 utility locating employees with **Central Locating Service Ltd.** voted for representation by Local 2150, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in an NLRB election held April 30, 1999. A utility locating service, the company determines the location of underground utilities, such as gas and electric, prior to excavation of an area.

CLS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Asplundh Tree Expert Co., a tree trimming service for electrical utilities. Asplundh and CLS are now headquartered in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. CLS provides service in approximately 14 states and Canada. The new Local 2150 members with CLS work in the state of Wisconsin.

Local 2150 organizer Randy Sawicki reports that the local scored another organizing victory in January 1999 at **Oakdale Electric Cooperative**, where 30 linemen, mechanics and maintenance workers voted for IBEW representation.

Twenty-nine employees of **Design Craft Inc.** voted by a margin of 20 to 9 on November 12, 1998, to be represented by Local 1922, Westbury, Long Island, New York.

## Organizing Milwaukee Electricians

Last year was a great one for organizing electrical workers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Earlier in 1999, four companies—Helt Wiring Services, Quest Electric, Quality Wiring Services and Y.E.S. Electric—signed Letters of Assent with Local 494 and became IBEW contractors. The progress continued in September with a successful organizing drive at McIver Electric, Engineering & Controls, a 15-employee shop. Local 494 welcomes all its new members, approximately 34 in total.

The McIver Electric signing shows what cooperation among IBEW locals can accomplish. That victory resulted from the continued assistance of organizers from three Wisconsin sister locals—Local 430 (Racine), Local 127 (Kenosha), and Local 890 (Janesville). Organizers from the four

locals have been working together on campaigns for the past three years, and the results of their cooperative efforts are evident in the growing membership in the southern part of the state.

The McIver campaign included top-down attempts, bottom-up contacts, salting, a favorable NLRB settlement, stripping, on-the-job organizing by salts, meetings with the entire company and, ultimately, success. The company is a thriving, well-situated electrical contracting firm that has a significant presence in the southeast

Wisconsin market. At press time, the company has already added five additional journeymen through the Local 494 referral hall. (Submitted by Leon Burzynski, organizer, Local 494, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.)



### HIGH TIME

#### FOR A BALLOT COUNT

Nearly two and a half years after a May 1997 representation election at three Northeast Utilities dispatch centers, the ballots were finally unsealed and counted on October 21, 1999. The tally showed that the 36 dispatchers had voted overwhelmingly for representation by IBEW Connecticut Locals 420 (Waterbury) and 457 (Meriden). The long delayed ballot count was the result of the company's appeal of the election based on its claim that the dispatchers are "supervisors."

Locals 420 and 457 already represent about 1,350 employees with Northeast Utilities in Connecticut. The two IBEW locals joined forces to conduct a joint organizing drive at the three dispatch centers, which are located in Waterbury (Local 420's jurisdiction), Hartford and Tolland (both in Local 457's jurisdiction).

Kudos to Locals 420 and 457 and the new IBEW members for their perseverance and dedication to securing their right to a union voice.