

## Rhode Island Local Takes It to the Max—Prevents Plant Closure and Saves Manufacturing Jobs

In June of 1999, IBEW Local 1196 was served with a WARN Act notice. Superior Telecom delivered notification that it was scheduled to cease operation of its wire and cable manufacturing plant, located in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, where some 136 Local 1196 members then worked.

Local 1196 Business Manager Joseph Menezes immediately contacted IBEW Second District International Vice President Frank J. Carroll and International Representative John L. Faria for assistance.

After careful planning, the IBEW team set up meetings to discuss the plant closing with the staff of U.S. Sen. Jack Reed and U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy, in an effort to lobby Superior Telecom not to close the plant, but instead to sell the facility to a qualified buyer.

Business Manager Menezes said that he and International Representative Faria “pursued every option, from an employee buyout to meetings with former wire and cable CEOs, investment groups, and area wire manufacturers.” Three qualified buyers submitted proposals, but two of those proposals failed to pan out.

“It was becoming obvious,” said Menezes, “that Local 1196, which was chartered in 1940, would only have one last chance of survival.”

Subsequently, a third company, American Insulated Wire Corp., an area wire and cable manufacturer based in Pawtucket, did in fact purchase the plant, recognize the union and negotiate in good faith. “Since the purchase, an additional 110 employees have been hired at the plant, with more hires scheduled in the coming months,” reported International Representative Faria.

“Local 1196 and its Negotiating Committee, with the support of Vice President Carroll and the guidance of International Representative Faria,” said Menezes, “were successful in negotiating a unanimously ratified 3½ year agreement with a 9 percent increase over the life of the contract, recognition of seniority, free dental and affordable health insurance.”

Ultimately, IBEW teamwork and creativity saved the jobs of all the Local 1196 members at the Rhode Island plant.

**Local 1196 Negotiating Committee: from left, back row, Paul Moth, Luis Taveira and Manuel Rei; front row, Business Manager Joseph Menezes, International Representative John Faria and Robert Sawyer.**



### UNION LABOR ‘WELCOMES’ ANTI-UNION ABC CONVENTION TO TOWN

Union labor rallied to stage a vigorous protest against the policies of the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) recently when the anti-labor organization of nonunion contractors held its national Electrical Convention 2000 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Phoenix, Arizona.

“Over 400 members of organized labor turned out on September 27, 2000, to ‘greet’ the delegates as they checked into the hotel and conference,” reported IBEW Local 640 Business Manager Steven M. Speer. “Local 640 members were bolstered by brothers and sisters from the Central Arizona Labor Council of the AFL-CIO and the Phoenix Building and Construction Trades Council.”

The demonstration involved an orderly march around the entire city block where the hotel is located. “Our pickets surrounded the building with chanting and singing,” said Speer. “Unfortunately, even though the local press was notified well in advance, they chose to ignore any demonstration by union people in this town. Nonetheless, our efforts did not go unnoticed.”

“Unbeknownst to the ABC convention delegates, two Local 640 organizers were accompanying them—we were salting their conference,” reported Speer. “The response to our picket line was immediate inside the hotel. Security personnel were stationed at every entrance, while the conference coordinator was kept busy explaining how and why the protest had happened. Many attendees expressed great surprise at such a show of union strength in Phoenix.”

Local 640 Organizer Al Gross formulated the plan and spearheaded the effort inside the convention with the help of fellow Organizer Roy Hamilton, said Speer. “When the other delegates

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# 'Volunteerism at Its Best': March of Dimes Presents Top Award

The March of Dimes Birth Defect Foundation presented its top annual award for volunteer service to IBEW Director of Personnel Peter Keenan. Each year the March of Dimes presents the Elaine Whitelaw Volunteer Service Award to an individual "who exemplified volunteerism at its best." Keenan accepted the award at the March of Dimes' annual Volunteer Leadership Conference held September 14-16, 2000, in Kansas City, Missouri.

IBEW members and staff across the country participate each year in the March of Dimes' annual WalkAmerica fund-raiser (as walkers, sponsors and volunteers) to support the organization's nationwide Campaign for Healthier Babies.

"Pete has demonstrated his enthusiasm for the March of Dimes in so many ways," noted Maureen Ryan, communi-

cations director for the National Capital Area Chapter, March of Dimes. "He was instrumental in securing the donation of not just one but two phone systems to the National Area Chapter. He is not only a top individual WalkAmerica fund-raiser, but he has encouraged his IBEW colleagues to raise more than \$300,000 for the chapter. Whether it's supporting the Gourmet Gala, coordinating the IBEW



**March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation President Dr. Jennifer L. Howse presents IBEW Personnel Department Director Peter Keenan with the Elaine Whitelaw Volunteer Service Award.**

donation of printing services for A.I.R.<sup>®</sup> Awards materials every year, or serving as a member of the chapter's board, Pete has always answered the call."

At the awards dinner, Keenan was asked why he is such a committed volunteer. "When you go to the hospitals and see newborns with problems brought back to health, or see a kid born healthy, that's what makes me so enthusiastic about the March of Dimes," Brother Keenan replied. ■

## IBEW Supports Skills USA-VICA— Sponsors Championship Wiring Contest

In keeping with its policy to promote training and quality, the IBEW is an ongoing sponsor of SkillsUSA-VICA, a national organization "for students in trade, industrial, technical and health occupations education." Once again this year, at the Skills USA Championships 2000, the IBEW sponsored the annual Residential Wiring Contest.

"Approximately 4,000 outstanding vocational students joined in the excitement of hands-on competition in 72 different trade, technical and leadership fields," said SkillsUSA representative Thomas Holdsworth, speaking of this year's championships event.

Robert Damiani, then-director of IBEW Council on Industrial Relations, again this year chaired the

national technical committee for the championship's electrical wiring contest. Also serving on the committee were co-chair Frank Patton, D.F. Patton & Associates; apprentice electrician Brent Gagne, IBEW Local 38, Cleveland, Ohio; retired

**Winners of the 2000 Residential Wiring competition at the SkillsUSA-VICA championships were, in the high school category, (first row, beginning second from left) silver medalist Nathan Nadeau, Jacksonville, Florida; gold medalist James Garcia, San Antonio, Texas; and bronze medalist Dustin Costello, Jefferson, Iowa. Winners in the post-secondary category were (back row, beginning second from left), silver medalist Nicholas Blakeley, Ogden, Utah; gold medalist David Valburg, Beloit, Kansas; and bronze medalist Anthony Kassa, Wadena, Minnesota. Others are IBEW CIR then-Director Robert Damiani (far left), who chaired the technical committee for the competition; Ed Kelly (back row, far right), of Griffin Electric; and Frank Patton (front row, far right), of D.F. Patton & Associates, technical committee co-chair.**



IBEW International Representative Everett Lehmann; A. J. Pearson, director of the National Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee; and Missouri contractor Robert Wascheneck.

This year marks the first anniversary of SkillsUSA-VICA's name change from the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America. The next SkillsUSA Championships will be held June 28, 2001, in Kansas City, Missouri. ■

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## **ANTI-UNION ABC CONVENTION...**

discovered Al's real identity, they tried to bar him from the convention meetings. Their efforts failed, and our organizers were able to remain for the duration of the convention." As participants, the IBEW organizers received copies of all printed information distributed to convention delegates, and they sat through an ABC attorney's presentation on future antiunion strategies.

"Roy even set up the IBEW/NECA convention display booth right in the middle of the ABC Craft Olympics to advertise for apprentices and recruit new members," said Speer.

"Local 640 has taken a stand against the anti-labor, anti-worker policies of the ABC. Their organization is committed to profit at the expense of working men and women. Their refusal to pay a living wage with basic health and retirement benefits so a family can survive with dignity stands as a grievous insult to all union members. We will spare no expense or effort to hold these employers responsible before the NLRB, Arizona OSHA, or any other body designed to protect the rights and safety of workers."

