

# The HERALD



A publication of the Christian Labor Association of the United States of America

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## Building Robots and Self Esteem

Mike Van Tubergen wears many hats. He has a hardhat for his job as an electrician for Parkway Electric. He has served on the contract negotiations committee, is Secretary for Local 18, and is a CLA National Board member. But Mike also wears the hat of volunteer instructor for the FIRST Robotics team at Wavecrest Career Academy, a charter school in Holland, Michigan. "The school serves students who are at-risk of failure, and who have had difficulty in traditional school settings," says Van Tubergen. "My role as a volunteer is assisting the student team with designing and building a working robotic project, while fostering positive mentoring relationships."

Teams are made up of five volunteers and 6-8 students. They have a six-week building completion time before entering into regional competition. During the week building time the team is preparing its robot for the regional competition. "The game design committee dreams up a competition that all teams must develop a robot to compete in," Van Tubergen said. "The rules outline the size, weight and control system the robot needs," he added. "But from that point it's up to the team - preferably students - to develop ideas for functions and features of the robot to compete in the game."

"During that six week period, we usually work at least 2 nights per week and Saturdays," says Van Tubergen.



Mike states that he also personally benefits from the teaching experience. "I work with machine automation on a regular basis. There are many similarities in the use of sensors and programming, mechanical devices, construction and build methods that can cross back and forth to benefit the robotics team and my work at Parkway Electric."



Mike (right) helps a student during the six week build process.

The regional competitions are three day events all over the country in March. The FIRST robotics team competed at Purdue University in Indiana and Grand Valley State in Michigan. At the regional competition, the game starts out with an autonomous period of about 15 seconds where the robot runs on pre-programmed instructions and sensors, without any control inputs. After that the students control the robot via a radio control system. When the match is completed, the teams retrieve their robot, the match score is calculated, and the teams go back to the pits to prepare for their next match.

Van Tubergen first became involved in FIRST Robotics in 2002, with Holland High School while his son was a senior in the program. In 2004, Mike joined another mentor from Holland High's robotics team to start a new program at Holland's Alternative High School. Due to budget cuts, the Alternative Education program in Holland was eliminated and the robotics team was without a home. Fortunately, the team was welcomed into their current location at Wavecrest High School. "It is satisfying to see a student make a transition from doubts and fears, to gaining confidence and a sense of accomplishment through the process," Van Tubergen said.

# Out To Pasture

In the 1800's Chancellor Otto von Bismarck of Germany brought into existence something called retirement. This was part of a social insurance program and he set 70 as the age people should stop working.

In the early 1900's Americans could expect to live until the age of 42! It was therefore unlikely that many people in the United States were even aware of something called retirement.

We can all recall retirement being referred to as being "put out to pasture". I believe that putting a productive worker "out to pasture" before that worker is ready to do so will have a negative impact on that individual's self-esteem. Most of us can remember friends or relatives who died within a few years of retirement, in many cases because they seem to have lost a sense of purpose in their lives.

Today, retirements cause many companies to wake-up when faced with the departure of their most knowledgeable and experienced employees leaving huge gaps in their workforce. Estimates show that through the year 2014 employment in all occupations will be increasing by 9 to 17%. It is also estimated that there will be a shortage of replacement workers for those retiring Baby Boomers.

Some industries have received an early wake up call. One of those industries is the health care industry which is attempting to deal with a huge nursing shortage. The health care industry is only one of the sectors that has been hit with worker shortages as the Boomer's begin their retirement exodus. According to the Department of Labor, ten million highly skilled jobs will go unfilled by 2010.

Many Boomers are opting for a con-

tinuing career and are staying in the work force in the employ of their pre retirement employer on a part-time or a consulting basis. Those Boomers simply want to scale back from the hectic normal work pace of a full time employee allowing them to do many of the things they have always looked forward to doing in retirement. They are finding that they can do all of the things they hoped to without having to

*Am I still looking forward to retirement? Most of us look forward to retirement from an early age on. Now that I am getting close I'm not so sure I want to be there!*

give up work that in many ways they still find stimulating and rewarding.

As one of those Baby Boomers who is drawing ever closer to that day of retirement, I face retirement with many questions and apprehensions. I have pass times, hobbies and interests that I look forward to pursuing in retirement. One of those pass times which I do enjoy is fishing -- yet one cannot go fishing every day! And, of course I would also like to venture into some volunteer positions within our church and community.

Whatever one desires or does in retirement is one big adjustment not only for the retiree but for the spouse of the retiree. Marion and I enjoy vacations together but retirement is a huge change in lifestyle. I have been working for the CLA-USA for a long time and the fear or question that I am facing is how well will this transition go? How will I adjust to retirement?

Marion and I have 3 married children

and 6 wonderful grandchildren that we will be able to enjoy more frequently than we can now. Then there will be more time for the 2 of us to do whatever we have been unable to do before.

Recently I attended a Staff Council Meeting of the Christian Labor Association which was held at Stillwood Bible Camp in British Columbia. At that camp they have a gathering spot that has a huge plank displayed with a verse from Psalm 46 carved into it. That verse says "Be Still and Know That I am God". OK, I will put my retirement in God's hands and that will remove my anxiety. Am I still looking forward to retirement? Most of us look forward to retirement from an early age on. Now that I am getting close I'm not so sure I want to be there! Yet, I do look forward to what the future brings and again "there is a time for everything, and a season for everything under heaven".

Boomers who keep working in their profession for their employer in a part time or consulting basis enables the newer, younger staff to really shine and grow into their work and responsibilities. And, the retiring Boomer can find a new way to work, maintain their self esteem and take a moment to take a deep breath, look back and then move forward.

To me that sounds a lot better than being put out to pasture!

*Doug Reese is the  
CLA-USA's National  
President.*



# Company Profile

**Name:** Selge Construction  
**Location:** Niles, Michigan  
**Type of Business:** Excavation & Underground Utility

**CLA Representative:** Clarence Merrill  
Selge Construction of Niles, Michigan performs excavation and underground utility construction in southern Michigan and northern Indiana. The company also has a concrete road and finishing division. Selge Construction joined Local 10 in 1984 with 4 union members. The company is owned by Marv Selge Jr., who purchased the company 15 years ago from his dad and grew up learning all aspects of the business.



## Local News

### Highway Construction Workers,

#### Local 78 (Minnesota)

The 2007 season has gotten off to a slow start for many members of Local 78. The combination of wet weather and a decrease in the workload has contributed to the slow start. Members and contractors are optimistic that work will start picking up as we hit the peak construction season.



*Scott Ash (left) and Scott Johnson from Mark Sand & Gravel.*

Three recipients were chosen for the Highway Construction Workers, Local 78, \$500 Educational Scholarship. The winners were:

Michelle Papadakis – Michelle graduated from Faribault High School this spring and plans to attend St. Cloud State University. Michelle is the daughter of Mike and Jennifer Schwanke. Mike works for Bituminous Materials in Faribault, MN.



*Papadakis*

Brandon Mongan – Brandon graduated from Pine River-Backus High School and plans to attend the University of North Dakota. Brandon is the son of Jay and Susan Mongan. Jay is employed by Anderson Brothers Construction in Brainerd, MN.



*Mongan*

Devin Hammer – Devin graduated from Ashby High School and plans to attend North Dakota State College of Science. Devin is the son of Allen and Kathline Hammer. Allen works for Mark Sand & Gravel in Fergus Falls, MN.



*Hammer*

Contract Negotiations - Members at Anderson Western in Bismarck, ND ratified a one year contract with a \$1.10 per hour increase. Employees of Mark Sand & Gravel in Fergus Falls, MN accepted a three year contract that will see wages increase by 6% and will pay years of service payments for years worked at the company. Bituminous Materials members ratified a two year agreement that will pay \$1.25 total increases for 2007 and 2008.

### United Construction Workers, Local 84 (Minnesota)

2007 is starting off a little slow for work acquired for Local 84 signatory contractors and members. Some of the contractors have work that will carry them through the summer and fall but then the winter work is rather uncertain. There are still a few shops that just do not have the work to keep everyone busy right now. However, rumor has it that there is going to be a significant amount of work that is going to be available to bid on within the next couple of months. We can only hope that Local 84 shops get their fair share of that work.

A few of the current collective bargaining agreements were



*Above, Jamie Traut and Josh Rommeling (right) from Avon Electric are busy working on the job. There are currently 11 electricians from Avon working on the Watertown High School project. Pictured below are, from left, Harold Abbas, Scott Christle and Mark Janni from Ahrens Heating in New Ulm, MN.*



open for negotiations this year. The settlements vary depending upon the location of the contractor (work availability) and amount of work that has been secured prior to the negotiations taking place. Some of the multi-year agreements have pre-determined increases that automatically go into effect. Those wage increases amount to an approximate average of 2 to 2.5%. In addition to the wage increases there are also increases that are negotiated that provide for increased costs in health insurance. Those increases are averaging between 8 and 12% increases on the previous

## Local News

year's health insurance costs. In addition to the wage increases and the health insurance increases the pension contribution rate for local #84's pension increased by \$0.10 per hour worked per employee. The pension increase in all cases is picked up by the signatory employer.

### United Construction Workers, Local 10 (Michigan)

Since the 2006 Annual Report Local 10 has shown modest gains in membership. The strongest sectors of growth were in excavation and underground construction, with some better than anticipated construction projects in carpentry and general construction in Michigan. There has been a number of organizing drives in the works. Local 10 processed two grievances so far in 2007, one individual grievance for wrongful termination, and one group grievance against an employer refusing to deduct union dues. Local 10 also filed two Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charges with the NLRB – one for an employer's refusing to bargain, and one against an employer's violation of several contract articles and federal statutes. The first ULP was resolved successfully, while the second is still under investigation.

### United Construction Workers, Local 18 (Michigan)

The economy in West Michigan has been difficult for many



Amy Herberg and Bob Woods from Roesse Construction review the golf scores at the Dan Etue fundraiser. Dan was a member of Local 10 before he died unexpectedly last year. Proceeds from the event will go to the Etue family. Below, Selge Construction employees Jim Morgan (left) and Brad Zache.



5/24/2007

of the Local 18 signatories. There was a slight decrease in membership for 2007, mostly related to the traffic control difficulties in the State of Indiana. Shortly after the Federal Court dismissal of United Rentals' anti-trust case, United sold its Highway Technologies division in a stock purchase by HTS Acquisition. Local 18 also said goodbye to TC One, who closed its doors this spring. Local 18 filed one individual grievance that was resolved successfully.

### Service Employees Union, Local 12

#### (Michigan & Indiana)

Membership numbers are unchanged from last report. The Minnesota office has been working on an organizing drive with a company that will hopefully result in a successful addition to this service local.

### Dairy Employees Union, Local 17 (California)

Local # 17 is now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a 3 year contract. We have had little precipitation and a long hot summer is forecasted for this year. Local # 17 signatories are having a difficult time due to the high cost of feed. One, if not the largest, expense on a dairy farm is feed. Costs are high due to lack of precipitation and the use of corn for Ethanol. On a brighter note, milk prices have also been on the rise. Cooperatives Working Together (CWT) had a fourth round of bidding. Local #17 did not lose any dairies to this bidding round. For more information on this visit [www.cwt.coop/](http://www.cwt.coop/).



Local 17 members Margarito Hernandez (left) and Jose Hernandez (right) work at the Dick Dykatra Dairy.

We have been keeping a watchful eye on the immigration dilemma we are having in this country especially in California. The agriculture industry claims there is a shortage of labor with some of the crops going unharvested and that Americans will not do the work. If this were true, one would see wages increase not decrease. The bottom line is the bottom dollar. Many immigrants will leave the agriculture field and find employment in other fields such as construction, factories, service industries, etc. Immigrants will work for less pay and very likely without benefits. And they are difficult to organize if they are not legal in the USA. Employers hire illegal immigrants with little fear of being caught. The law is seldom enforced and Yes a few token

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companies are targeted just to save face. In the past, I remember INS agents doing round ups or raids out by the dairies and vineyards. It has been about a decade or so that I have seen an INS raid in this area. Immigration in this country is complex and has been out of control for some time now.

### United Poultry Workers, Local 25 (California)

The Employer has reduced the work force by one person due economic pressures. A new Agreement has been negotiated through 2007 which resulted in an average increase of fifty cents per hour.



Diane Bruse

Loretta Falk

Jennifer Keegstra

Ever wonder who is on the other end when you call your CLA office? Diane Bruse and Loretta Falk both work in the Minnesota office and Jennifer Keegstra works in the Michigan office. Jennifer has been here for 5 years, Diane 11 years and Loretta recently completed her 30th year with the CLA! All together, these three have worked for the CLA for over 46 years. If you have any questions about your CLA membership, you can be confident that one of these three can answer your questions.

## 2007 Minnesota Annual Membership Meeting



Local #84 and Local #78 held a combined Annual Membership Meeting and it was a great opportunity for the members to meet together and make new acquaintances and learn more about each other's local and share in the fun. The fun being a Casino night and auction that was sponsored by Fiducia Benefits Group and Prudential Financial Services. Members played games with funny money and afterwards, an auction was held for door prizes with the winnings gained by the members. Everyone had a great time and is looking forward to next year's meeting.

# Top Ten Ways to Destroy Employee Morale

By Doug Reese

Every employer and employee dreams of a work place filled with happy, motivated employees. ... Dream on. Why are there bad or unhappy employees? It may be that the employee feels they are not receiving the treatment they deserve from their employer. Reports show that a lousy employer is the biggest reason for an employee's low morale.

The character of C. Montgomery Burns on the television show "The Simpsons," is a prime example of a bad employer. I can't imagine an employer that could be as bad as Mr. Burns. His management has to be absolutely the worst. But then Mr. Burns may have good reason to be cranky when considering the bad behavior of his most incompetent employee --- Homer Simpson.

In the last edition of the Herald we took a look at "The Top Ten Ways To Avoid Being Promoted". That article was pointed at the employee. This time - it's pointed at the employer. Let's take a look at the Top 10 ways for Employers to destroy Employee Morale.

**10. Do not recognize employee performance** - Recognition has nothing to do with morale. Make sure that you only emphasize mistakes. Don't recognize long term, hard working, and high performing employees.

**9. Do not spend time with employees** - Make sure the employees understand that you only want them to do a job and you really don't care about them.

**8. No feedback of any kind to employees** - The only time you give feedback is if an employee messes up. Then you should chew them out good! Don't let them explain what really happened. Do not give them any direction on how to avoid the problem next time.

**7. Management doesn't care what the employees think** - Make sure that the work environment is just that -- work. Make sure workers understand you want things to work the same as they are now. Do not allow them to even think you are open to new ideas or initiatives.

**6. Do not share information** - Do not share new ideas, initiatives, or the overall plan for the company with em-

ployees. These things are none of their business or concern. They are in your employ to perform a task.

**5. Management is just that - management.** There is no need for employees to know what is happening with the company - Keep the employees in the dark. You may have to share with them a decision when it affects them but not until then. Then they have to simply accept the change and adjust.

**4. High performing employees don't need to be recognized** - If an employee performs well, that is great for the company. Any recognition of that performance should be minimized. Besides, all of the employees should perform exceptionally.

**3. Avoid employees gaining a sense of ownership** -

This business is owned and run by you the employer. How can an employee even think they have any part in the success of the business!

**2. It is the employee's responsibility to grow and learn** - The employees need to be aware of new ways of doing their work, have new tools available to do their work and be active in searching out and learning new skills. It is the workers duty to stay on top of these things.

**1. Good bye** - When an employee leaves the company, simply let them go. You know how to run your business and if they were dissatisfied with the company and how it was run then they should simply leave. DO NOT go to the remaining employees and ask why people are leaving. The workers might start thinking that you are sensitive to what they are feeling.

Is your employer a morale builder or a morale buster?

**Is there a communication breakdown that needs to be corrected?** Contact your CLA representative and they will work with you, your fellow workers and employer to set up a labor management team to improve the work environment.



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## Eric Resseman wins 2007 Don Leep Memorial Scholarship



Eric Resseman was selected to receive the Don E. Leep Memorial Scholarship this year. Resseman is the twelfth winner of the scholarship.

Don Leep was president of the CLA at the time of his death in 1994. The scholarship is given in honor of his life-long commitment to integrity and Christian values. The CLA is proud to provide this scholarship as a tribute to Don's positive affect on the employees and members of the CLA.

Eric graduated from Rocori High School in Cold Spring, MN and he will be attending St. John's University in St. Joseph, MN this fall. He plans to major in Engineering. For the past 4 years, Eric has been with Cold Spring Electric Services as a part-time shop/warehouse employee. His parents are Gregg and Delores Resseman. Eric's mom Delores has been a member of United Construction Workers, Local 84 since 1994 and is employed by Cold Spring Electric in Cold Spring, MN.

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