



On The Move

June 8, 2016

Official Publication of TWU Local 234

www.twulocal234.net

Fund Raisers for Union Member Facing Criminal Charges for Homicide by Vehicle

On July 1, 2016, Local 234 will sponsor the first of several fund raisers being planned to support the legal defense of Midvale Operator Katrina Sanders who is facing criminal charges for homicide by vehicle, and a number of lesser offenses. On April 2, 2016, Sister Sanders was involved in an accident that resulted in a tragic fatality. She was charged by the D.A. in Montgomery County.

As we all know, what happened to Sister Sanders could happen to any SEPTA driver. That's why it's important for us to get behind her, especially when it comes to her costly legal defense. More than ever, Sister Sanders needs the support of her union brothers and sisters.

As a result, **Local 234 is holding a fund raiser at the Union Hall on Friday, July 1 from 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.** The "Chicken/Fish Fry" includes your standard side dishes. Seating will be available at the hall or platters can be taken back to the locations. Section Officers and Location Safety Committee members are encouraged to play a role in this event--by selling tickets at their locations and by helping with food deliveries. The Local is also raffling off a "65 inch" LED, high definition TV at the event.

Tickets to the Chicken/Fish Fry are \$15, this includes a raffle ticket for the 65" high definition TV. **All of the proceeds from the event will be turned over to Sanders' Defense Fund.** On July 8, Midvale District is hosting a fund raiser at Lou & Choo's. Hopefully, the members at other locations will get behind both events in support of Sister Sanders.

The outcome of the Sanders case could have a significant impact on how other counties, including Philadelphia, handle pedestrian accident cases in the future. Sanders' case is therefore important to everyone driving a SEPTA vehicle, including maintenance employees. Please express your solidarity with Sister Sanders by making a \$15 donation to her Legal Defense Fund.

Slate Operators Treated as Second Class Citizens

A Slate Operator is a transportation employee without enough seniority to pick a run. Instead, the runs and reporting times for Slate Operators vary, oftentimes on a daily basis. Slate Operators tend to have grueling schedules and suffer from fatigue. The fatigue problem and the safety concerns it raises is something that SEPTA must address in contract negotiations. One step that can be taken is the creation of a picking, by seniority, for an "A.M. Report" or a "P.M. Report." This would result in more regular work hours from one day to the next and give Slate Operators sufficient time to recover between reports.

While Slate Operators don't have a run, they are *entitled to work* under the contract. Dispatchers are required to assign Slate Operators the first open piece of work that becomes available. But this is not always how it's done. Some district managers like to make up their own rules. They figure that Slate Operators are mostly new to the SEPTA system and management can get over on them. One thing these managers do is assign work to regular operators on the overtime list, when the work belongs to a Slate Operator---since it is the "first open work." Why? Why pay overtime when you can utilize a slate person at a lower rate to do the same work?

Because SEPTA's anti-union managers are schooled in fighting Local 234. They want to sow dissension between our new members and our more senior members. They want to divide and conquer, the oldest trick in management's playbook! The "first open work" language must be strictly enforced by Local 234 Section Officers. If you are a slate person and you're getting screwed, demand action from your section officers. If you don't get results, call the union staff. We also need to negotiate stricter rules to enforce the rights of slate operators.

Getting to Work in a Severe Weather Emergency

At SEPTA, everything turns into a fight. And the fights management starts often defy both logic and common sense. Take SEPTA's position on severe weather emergencies.

A Callowhill operator lives in New Jersey, thirty miles from the depot. A severe storm hits, dropping 25 inches of snow. The Governor declares a state of emergency. No cars are permitted on the roads. There is no public transportation available. So the operator calls the depot and explains why he *can't get to work*. He gets SEPTA's robotic answer---"Keep Coming," "Keep Coming." But he can't get to the depot, *it's impossible*. So SEPTA charges him with an AWOL, assesses him 10 points, and he winds up at the discharge step of progressive discipline!

This is just one example of SEPTA's asinine AWOL policy, a punitive policy that defies good sense and is not in keeping with the AWOL provision of the labor agreement. The Union recently won an arbitration award over an AWOL given under similar circumstances. The meaning of the award is that an employee who calls-in during a severe weather emergency to explain why he *can't get to work* cannot *unreasonably* be denied leave. As a result of the award, SEPTA had to rescind the AWOL from the employee's record. The Union intends to arbitrate others cases to clarify and nail down how the rule is applied. The dispute will be over what is a *reasonable* basis for being excused. After all, some people do get to work in weather emergencies.

SEPTA's AWOL rule is a bad one that must be fixed, so it will be on the bargaining table. Our goal is this: No AWOLS for employees who *cannot reasonably be expected to get to work* due to a severe weather emergency and who *call in prior to the start of their run or shift*. If SEPTA has any regard for the safety of its workforce, it will recognize that forcing employees to risk life and limb to get to work is a ridiculous, *cold-blooded* policy, not fit for the 21st century.

WE MUST AND WE WILL