First-ever Local 728 Trustees Sworn In

Stephanie Choi  Jeremy Schonwald  Robin Strickland

Graff awarded unique 37-Year Service Pin in surprise announcement

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Local 728 is

MAKING HISTORY

by Alan M. Rowe, President

For the first time in our history, Local 728 recently swore in a Board of Trustees who will have the responsibility to review the actions of the Local on behalf of the membership. The greater labor movement is entering a time of struggle and while the first attacks will be on Federal Employees and Public Sector Unions, we will not be immune from scrutiny from an unfriendly administration. The addition of Trustees will give the members of Local 728 an additional level of oversight and will help us withstand scrutiny from the Department of Labor when it comes.

The three appointees – Stephanie Choi, Jeremy Schonwald and Robin Strickland – each went through a thorough interview, evaluation and selection process. They were selected not as individuals but as a group since the dynamic of the Board of Trustees will be very important as we move forward. These individuals complement each other and together they will demonstrate the ability to look deep into the actions of the Local without prejudice, bias or favor. I was greatly impressed with the enthusiasm that each of them showed towards serving the members, and their excitement about doing something for the Local that has literally never been done before.

The Trustees will be receiving training, then will largely be on their own to set the course for the present and future role of the Local 728 trustee. They will have the ability to act independently of the officers and staff of the Local, and I expect that they will weigh heavily upon how Trustees will be appointed/elected in the future.

We’ve highlighted the new Trustees in this publication. When you see them at membership meetings or on the set, please take a moment to introduce yourself. On behalf of the entire membership, Officers, Executive Board and staff, I want to publicly thank Stephanie, Jeremy and Robin for their service to the Local.

With the ever-changing political and corporate environment, providing the best possible representation in this climate is paramount.

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The Strength of Your Leadership Team

by Patric J. Abaravich, Business Representative-Secretary

As a nationwide effort to dismantle unions begins to take shape and really heat up through an aggressive Right to Work effort by the White House, senate and congress, we’re planning ahead on the Local level. Your leadership team is working hard to underscore the benefits of membership and to make solidarity and representation the obvious choice. We’re using all of our different skill sets so we can surround the situation and mitigate the damage we could possibly face. Each of us is coming at the problem from different angles and using each other’s skill set to fill in the gaps.

Never in our history have we had such strength and unity in our leadership, and our Executive Board, where we are working together as a team to preserve the Local and overcome any possible future changes so that we come out a better, stronger Local.

And nowhere in my memory have we had such strong, professional expertise and specialties in our leadership than what we have now. Alan Rowe serves as our President and has been our longstanding Director of Safety & Training. While wearing those two hats, he also has a role with the IA training program for all the entertainment workers within the International. He also serves as chairman on the ICAP (IATSE Craft Advancement Program) committee, and is currently developing member-only premium services not available to non-paying members should Right to Work become a reality.

In addition to overseeing union business and serving on different committees, Vice President Greg Reeves remains ever vigilant in how the Local appears to the public. He recently ran the L.A. Marathon and came up with the idea of having an IATSE team in the next marathon. It’s Greg’s creativity and vision in taking non-work related activities and turning them into something good and beneficial for all IA members. He’s great at making sure 728 is positively perceived out in the community and is recognized as a civically responsible and philanthropic Local.

Treasurer-Call Steward Pascal Guillemand’s computer know-how has streamlined and upgraded the Call Steward office and how we service the members. Our website now features ease of access and we’re working towards a completely integrated dispatching system that incorporates an individual’s skill or job classification with a specific job opening. Members can be matched for an opening based on availability and their skill set.

Additionally, Pascal has been diligent in overseeing the different aspects of soundly investing our treasury, and he’s taken the lead on the upkeep and maintenance of our building.

My years of experience include a focus in labor relations, knowledge of all the contracts, dealing with the studio heads and production companies, and organizing non-union shows. I attend regular continuing education training in arbitration, grievance filing, mediation, and contract negotiations so I can stay on the cutting edge to provide the highest quality representation. And for the first time in our Local’s history, we have a seat on the Board of Trustees for MPIPHP, and I also serve on the board of trustees for the MPI Health and Pension Plan. I also serve as Vice Chair of the MPI Health Plans, and sit on the Benefits Appeal Committee.

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First-ever Local 728 Trustees Sworn In

Local 728 made history on May 13, 2017 when the first-ever Trustees were sworn into the union. This milestone will help set the course for present and future roles of Local 728 Trustees and will help the Local withstand scrutiny from political and legislative changes on the state and federal levels.

“I am excited that we are entering into a new era of membership participation and oversight with the addition of Trustees to our structure. The rights of the American worker are under assault and the forces aligned against us will do everything they can to undermine labor unions,” Local 728 President Alan Rowe said. “Robin, Stephanie, and Jeremy’s work as Trustees will ensure transparency for the membership and help protect the Local from those who wish to see us stripped of the protections and benefits provided by Local 728 and the IATSE.”

The role of the Trustee is to provide oversight on behalf of the membership to ensure that the financial and legal responsibilities of Local 728 and its officers are met in a timely and legitimate manner.

Jeremy Schonwald has been a member of Local 728 since 2005. The ‘jack-of-all-trades’ has done just about it all on the set – rigging, best boy, lighting tech – and is extremely active behind the scenes for the union, as well. He was elected to the Executive Board last year, serves as chair of the Young Workers’ Committee and the ASC Selections Award Show Committee; he’s a delegate for the IA and D2 conventions; he created and carries the Instagram page for the Local and is very active in promoting the Local through all forms of social media. Moreover, he recently attended IA Officer Training in Denver.

“I am thrilled to be a part of a groundbreaking process that overall will protect our Local more so than it ever has been,” he said, noting his strong commitment to his craft and the Local. “I take this very seriously. I look at it as I have another 25 years-plus in this industry and I want there to be a union when that happens.”

Robin Strickland has been a member of the Local since 1999. Although he has sat in as the Call Steward in the past and has been around to help out where he can, this is his first board position. “I’m really looking forward to it,” he said following his swearing in.

Robin moved to California in 1975 and got his first job in the industry working at Metro Media Channel 11 (now Fox) as a page. That position led to a coveted electrician spot on the iconic All in the Family. He’s “done it all” but really enjoys multi-camera work and one-hour dramas.

“I’m passionate about giving back. The last 18 years have been wonderful, I’ve enjoyed it and made quite a few friends. Now I want to give back in my little way for the future of our industry,” he said. “I’m going to work hard and do my very best. Along the way I may make some mistakes but I learn quickly and won’t make the same mistake twice.”

Stephanie Choi was born in the Bay area and has been in Southern California since 2006. After graduating from UC-Santa Barbara with a B.A. in Film Studies, Stephanie made her way to So Cal with the sole purpose of getting into the entertainment industry. Currently between projects, she’s worked as a lighting technician and best boy. “I do it all,” she says happily, “whatever they pay me to do.”

Now she can add union Trustee to her resume. “I said yes to the position because I like working for the membership. I’m always looking for ways to get more involved and this was a good opportunity. More importantly, I like the fact that I’m giving back.”
As someone who works in the entertainment industry, you know how unpredictable life can be. Working on a movie or show doesn’t always mean security for people in the industry and their families, which is why it’s so important that MPTF is always there.

One of the best-kept secrets in the business, MPTF has been around for 96 years taking care of our entertainment family. By working in the business, we belong to MPTF already—an organization whose motto, “We take care of our own,” is as true today as when it was founded.

Here are three of the many ways MPTF can help you and your family:

Insurance Services: Having insurance means peace of mind, and in an industry that goes up and down depending on your job, finding the right plan with reasonable premiums can be overwhelming. MPTF offers competitive insurance options for uninsured industry members and can talk to you one on one to find the best way to keep you and your family covered. All you have to do is call (888) 558-4247.

Elder Connection: A spouse falls and breaks a hip. A parent gets diagnosed with dementia. Crises like these are critical and require immediate answers—and that’s where Elder Connection comes in to help senior industry members with free services allowing them to live safely and independently in their own homes. You can reach Elder Connection directly at (323) 634-3866.

Emotional and Family Support: Our social workers understand the challenges of a crazy industry with unpredictable employment and work schedules, so they can help navigate the ups and downs of stress, job loss, caregiving, health issues, and so much more. Get in touch with them by calling (323) 634-3888.

At the forefront of pioneering social services, MPTF is the #1 place to go if you’re in need in the entertainment industry. Find out more today! Go to www.mptf.com or call us toll-free at (855) 760-MPTF, or send inquiries to info@mptf.com.

Graff awarded unique 37-year pin in surprise announcement

Member Daniel “Danny G” Graff was genuinely surprised and openly moved when Local 728 President Alan M. Rowe awarded him with a one-of-a-kind 37-year Membership Service Pin at the May 13th meeting.

Danny G, an active member who rarely missed a membership meeting, has been a member of the Local since 1980. He will be leaving the area for family reasons and moving to Chicago. Local 728 proudly awarded him with a unique 37-year Service Pin to commemorate his time and dedication to his craft, and the union.
Social Security: History & Reforms, Past, Present & Future

Part Three of a Four-Part Series

Where Did the Money Go?

by Pascal Guillemard, Treasurer-Call Steward

Social Security revenues exceeded expenditures between 1983 and 2009. Where did the money go? For one, a big increase in the cost of Medicare came in the form of Medicare Part D, the prescription drug benefit. Without an increase in funding through increased taxation, the Bush administration proposed legislation that subsidizes the cost of prescription drugs and insurance premiums for Medicare beneficiaries (another socialist idea). Here’s where things get tricky; it’s during this time that the words “government entitlement programs” began being used in a negative way.

Until this point in time, Social Security tax revenue and the cost of benefit checks were fairly even from year to year. The great increase in revenue in preparation of the coming needs of baby-boomer retirees would temporarily leave a lot of surplus money in the pot.

By law, the original Social Security Act stipulates that after the payroll tax has been collected and current benefits have been paid out, any surplus has to be invested in U.S. government securities. The Treasury Department is required to take the excess money collected and not needed to cover that year’s benefit checks and issue accruing government bonds to the Social Security Trust fund.

Then the Treasury can use the collected revenue to pay for other government programs as approved by Congress. It turns into their piggy bank and pays for government works projects (commonly called pork barrel projects) and war expenses not covered by general tax revenue and provided for in the budget submitted by the President and approved by Congress. Thus Congress and the President avoid having to raise taxes. Borrowing from the future to pay for the present is never a good option.

The Social Security Administrator can demand a cash repayment of the bonds when deemed necessary. However, the bonds are really just piles of meaningless paper. That debt is similar to “loaning” a spouse money and later demanding its repayment.

As the debt owed to the Trust has grown to astronomical levels, there is no way that the Federal government can repay the trillions of dollars that it harvested from withheld Social Security taxes each year and replace the paper bonds with actual capital. The level of debt owed to Social Security doubled during the George W. Bush administration to $2.8 trillion.

The problems that we are facing today are two-fold: an accumulated one whereby several Presidents and Congresses going back to President Reagan used this surplus income to pay for non-budgetary items without raising income taxes (as had always been done in the past) and one where pork barrel projects, wars and the loss of taxation revenue from income and business tax cuts were paid for using Social Security tax revenue. Clever politicians!

A significant portion of the government bail-out of banking institutions was paid for from these funds.

In 2020, these bonds mature and must be repaid or additional revenue raised to replace the bonds.

This is not enough however. The number of contributors into the system is declining and the number of users is increasing. Birthrates are down and beneficiary numbers are rising as the baby-boomer class of 1946-1964 retires and lives longer. In 1960, 5.1 workers contributed into the trust for every single recipient. In 2014 the rate had fallen to 3.1 per user and by 2030 the rate will be 2.6 per user.

Some advocate the establishment of an individual right to irrevocably withdraw from paying into the social safety net and instead receive tax credits. In general, unless you are very wealthy or in excellent control of your financial matters at all times, most people have a very hard time keeping these types of credits in retirement savings investments and find themselves spending the money and winding up without retirement benefits upon reaching retirement age.

The 12.4% Federal Insurance Contributions Act, or FICA tax, applied to a dollar-capped wage base indexed for inflation ($118,500 in 2016) and split evenly between employee and employer is the sole support for the Social Security Trust Fund. Republicans are loath to increase the payroll tax, but many Democrats would like to solve the whole problem with taxes by raising the wage base limit or eliminating it altogether. Raising or eliminating the cap limit and thereby creating a new surtax on that income would solve the crisis without creating a new tax burden on lower income workers or reduce benefits to retirees.

The argument against this has always been that the additional taxes on higher income earners does not translate into higher benefits nor are benefits necessary or desired because of better retirement plans enjoyed by wealthy earners.

In the final part of this look at Social Security, we’ll examine “Where are we going with program reforms?”

Pascal
**Biz Rep’s Column**

Continued from Page 3

Each of us have quality skills and expertise that the membership, and the Local, need us to have. We provide a solid leadership foundation that combines all of our unique skills. We’re all in different corners representing different areas but each one of us has our strengths which makes our local more dynamic, and solidly managed.

I’m proud to be working with these professionals heading up your leadership team. We are all here to serve you. When you do have questions or concerns, rest assured you have a highly regarded, well trained and knowledgeable leadership team behind you. Just give us a call if there’s anything we can do for you.

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**IATSE Local 728 Guide to Retirement**

A Step-by-Step Guide on How to Retire from the Motion Picture Health and Pension Plans

I’m pleased to announce that Local 728 now has a brochure available which provides members with step-by-step instructions on how to retire from the Motion Picture Health and Pension Plans.

My biggest concern was that until now there was no real guide available explaining what you need to do to get ready to retire, let alone an easy to follow guide on how to start planning your retirement six months in advance. Moreover, anything you did find was written in a fashion that was hard to understand and added to the confusion and myths about what you needed to do to retire that we’ve all heard sitting around talking on tailgates.

I’ve put together a comprehensive, easy-to-read guide on what you need to do and when you need to do it. It takes you step-by-step to get you to the finish line, helping you avoid the pitfalls, common missteps and delays that have plagued so many in the past.

The guide includes a checklist of the documents you need to gather (this could take a while) and have on hand when you meet with a retirement counselor. It also includes contact information and phone numbers for a variety of professionals involved in the retirement process so you can easily get answers to any questions you may have during the process.

The brochure is available online at the Local 728 website, and printed versions available in the hall.

It took you a lifetime to get to this point in your career, and the last six months are the most important part of getting to your retirement. The Local 728 Guide to Retirement will help ensure the process goes as smooth as possible.

-PJA

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**Important Information Regarding Hiring**

Any Local 728 member representing an employer by filling calls or who is in need of assistance with such, must contact the Local office during business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday by calling 818-954-0728, texting to 818-438-0728 or emailing tcs@iatse728.org.

If you urgently need to fill a call outside of regular business hours, you must contact the Call Steward at 818-438-0728.

Members seeking weekend work should notify the Call Steward on Friday during business hours.

Anyone who hires off roster or hires any member who is not current with their dues may have charges filed against them and are subject to assessment penalties.

**www.iatse728.org**

1-818-954-0728

1-800-551-2158
President’s Column

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Members are advised that there will be Nominations for Elections at the General Membership Meeting on September 16, 2017 for the following positions:

Business Representative-Secretary (1)
Executive Board (4)
Executive Board Alternates (2)
Central Labor Council Delegates (3)
IA & District 2 Convention Delegates (23)