

PLUMBERS & PIPEFITTERS LOCAL UNION 354



Brothers and Sisters,

I feel that it is safe to assume that most if not all have heard that I have recently decided to retire and not seek another term as the Business Manager of Local 354. This decision did not come easily nor hastily. I have held this position for the last 14½ years and prior to that I was the Business Agent for what was the Region 2 area. Since 2003 I have served this local union to the best of my ability and I am extremely proud of the changes we as a group have made and I feel that I have left the local in better shape than what I inherited, just as each Business Manager has done over the last 42 years.

Just a few of the accomplishments we have achieved as a group are as follows:

World Class Health Care- Many of the older members can recall when our health care was an 80/20 plan which meant that the insurance would cover 80% of all costs and the member would be required to cover 20% of medical expenses, then add the quarterly cost of the Healthcare plan provided almost an unaffordable healthcare system depending on how much you utilized the health care. Shortly after I became Manager in 2011, I asked the question at a Trustee Meeting on how to eliminate the out-of-pocket expenses for the membership. Our healthcare consultant did his research and found that if we would go fully insured which meant that the insurance carrier would pay all the medical expenses and the premiums would be paid by the fund, which would eliminate the need for members to have to pay out of pocket for medical expenses. The quarterly cost would rise but it would be a savings to the members. The plan was adopted and worked quite well. When after the Obama administration taxed Cadillac plans under Obamacare, we were forced to go self-insured which meant that the fund would be charged per utilization. It still proved as a positive for the members that they did not have to pay out of pocket. Other items pertaining to Health Care and pension were implementing the HRA Benny Card System, converting annuity pension from a Money Purchase Plan to a Profit Incentive Plan, providing Freedom Blue dental benefits for all Medicare retirees and providing a vision program for retired members who are not Medicare eligible, Members assistance Program- MAP.

Combining the former Region 1 and 2 to make up the East Region- With the declining work opportunities along with contractors in the Dubois area the membership was tasked with the decision to incorporate Region 1 and 2 into one list and still have the out of work list in Region 3 or

combine the lists and have one out of work list for the local. In conjunction with the closing of the Dubois Training Center the membership voted to merge Region 1 and 2 and call it the East Region and the former Region 3 became the West Region. I don't feel that anyone wanted to down size the local, but it just wasn't good business sense to keep the Dubois school open, and I appreciate the discussion with the members to make this tough decision and in the end, I believe that the correct decision was made and has been working very well ever since.

Out of town work list - I and the officers listened and worked with the membership to revamp the out-of-town referral list to better serve the traveling members. As procedures change throughout the UA, we as locals must also change so we are not left behind. As was the case of how we dispatch members to sister locals must also change so we are not left behind. Up until a year ago, when a sister local was looking for manpower, the agent from that local would call our agents and specify what was needed and how many, along with all the other details for the job. The local 354 agent would then go through the list of 354 members that were looking to travel, find ones that accepted the job then call the sister local agent back with the names and then follow up with a bio for the members being sent. Recently it has become prevalent that sister locals are requiring bios sent to them of 354 members looking to travel to their project, then the sister local agent calls us and tells us who to send, which is not how we run the referral list. Our agents will inform the sister agent on how we run our list and most will honor our way but some are adamant that we send who they want. In other words, dispatching agent to agent is out the window!! Another change that was made during this process was allowing members to be called by name. The officers felt that if a member made a name for himself and the sister local wants him on their project, we should not deny that member the opportunity to work. It is my belief that these changes needed to be made and I am confident that we made the right decision for the members.

Unemployment Liaison – During the debacle of the PA Unemployment System many of our members were not able to file for unemployment or reopen claims, which is a lifeline for any Building Trades member. Our friendship with State PA Representative Eric Nelson proved invaluable as he was instrumental in obtaining Michelle Mills as pretty much our own Unemployment representative. Michelle helped countless LU 354 members with unemployment compensation issues and various situations. Many building trades locals came to us seeking advice on how we were ahead of the game on the issue, and it all boiled down to relationships and doing the right thing for the members. Although we should never have been put in this situation, it was because of a relationship with Representative Nelson that we were able to provide a valuable resource to the members of 354.

Implementing the Mechanical Service Equipment (MES) Training Program – If I am to leave a legacy, I feel that the MES program is the one project that fits the bill. Even as an agent I felt as if we were not working towards our goal to recover manhours within this sector of our industry. As manager I struggled with which comes first? Training or Contractors?! I reached out to contractors asking them to look about implementing service in their business plan but then they would ask me how I am going to get them qualified techs when they need them. This came at a time when we really weren't doing much organizing, and I didn't have an answer for them. That's when I realized that the training had to come first. Get some techs trained in hopes that the contractors will see the progress we are making, and they will think hard to utilizing MES within their business. Four years ago, with much help from Training Coordinator Chad Morrison and the JATC Committee, we took the plunge and went all in! We purchased a building, remodeled, purchased training equipment, supplies and hired MES Training Specialist Ed Andolina. We just recently took a very

small class for this school term which brings us up to 4 classes of MES apprentices. While we are still in the growing stage, I feel that its just a matter of time that contractors will see the value of service and implement MES service in their business model! It is also encouraging to see 354 members looking to start up their own businesses. We have had a few members branch out on their own and more are looking at taking the leap!! The most recent was Justin Ferrarini, he started his business along with his wife called "Sinks to Sewers" and Justin has been quite busy. I am hopeful that all members of Local 354 will utilize Justin and any other members who have gone into business, for your own HVAC and Plumbing Service needs!

Third Party Administrator (TPA) in house – When it comes to Third Party Administrators, I have often said that they all suck just some don't suck as bad as others!! When I became manager, we used Charlie Brietsman and Associates as our TPA, all our members loved Michelle and Kelly who worked on our accounts. Unfortunately, this firm made a huge error in regard to our 354 Pension and had to be terminated. We then went to Vaccaro and Associates and after a few not so smooth years the members got to know Nicki Sayles and became quite comfortable with her. Soon after there was a split with Vaccaro and a transition evolved to Beacon but Nicki stayed with our account. She was being pulled in many different directions and working on other accounts and we just felt like we weren't getting that personal touch. Members were starting to complain and Nicki was not really happy with how the transition was going, so after many discussions with plan consultants, trustees and Nicki, I proposed that the trustees of Local 354 bring Nicki in house and set her up here at the union hall and provide her with the tools and utilities so that she can do her job well and the big benefit was to the 354 members that she has serviced very well. It was a big win not just for the members but for the local, the Funds, and for Nicki. It seems every week a member will call and give praise that Nicki is working solely for the 354 members.

As with any type of accomplishments, there are always some hard decisions that must be made in this position. Probably the hardest decision I was ever involved with was the termination of Charlie Breitsman Associates. Charlie and I had built a professional and personal relationship over the years. Due to a major mistake made by his staff the trustees were forced to have a vote of confidence with this company. With only one descending vote the trustees voted to terminate Charlies company. That phone call to Charlie was probably one of the hardest things I had to do in my 14½ years as Business Manager. One other hard decision was termination of Jim Hargraves and Morgan Stanley. Jim and I have known each other for quite a long time and he worked with the 354 Pension for as long as I can remember. With the self-directed investments and Morgan Stanleys fee structure, it wasn't a prudent decision to keep him as an investment option. Again, the trustees voted to terminate and again I had to make a very uncomfortable phone call.

As with any career there will be lows and highs, I can honestly say that my career has had, many highs and very few lows, unfortunately the lows always seemed to be engrained in my head, and I forget about the highs! I have been blessed to enjoy the position of Business Manager and represent the members of the greatest Local in the UA. I can't say that I regret anything through the last 14½ years, if anything I am disappointed that the dues had to be raised to 5% recently. Myself and the agents tried diligently to keep spending at a minimum to keep that from happening, but with the lack of manhours needed to keep the local financially solid, it had to happen. I have been truly blessed to have such a long tenure as your Business Manager, but I would be remised if I didn't thank a few of the current and past team members that have helped me greatly throughout the years. Frank Deluca for his hard work in founding Local Union 354. Billy Smith for teaching me our trade!! Dave Donato for seeing something in me and choosing me to be the Agent for the

Region 2 area which gave me the start for a wonderful and fulfilling career. Lee Dolfi (God rest his soul), Dwayne Burns and Don Paulovich for mentoring and teaching me the proper way to handle man power calls and with jurisdiction. Charlie Fry, Paul Miller, Donnie Arena and Steve Koshar these four were exceptional team members and great friends and would keep me in check when situations got a little hairy. My current team, Chad Morrison, Steve Fearer, Bill Cononie and Eddie Andolina, we haven't always agreed on certain topics and debates could get somewhat tense, but rest assured we had each other's backs and came up with the good ideas that have served the members well. The current officers of the local! Each officer brings something different to the table and in my opinion, this is the best group the local has elected in my career. The membership, thank you for your support over the years. Your confidence in me did not go unnoticed!! Finally, a BIG Thank You to Office Professional Jayne Peoples, I wish everyone could be witness as to Jayne's professionalism and her work ethic. I really don't know where this local would be if Jayne wouldn't be where she is! Jayne, you made my job a lot easier than I deserved, we have been together a long time, and I will truly miss seeing you every day!! If I didn't personally mention someone who thought they should have been mentioned, please don't take it personally. To thank each and everyone of you, would have made this newsletter a 600-page book!! Thank you all again it has been an honor and a privilege to serve you and the local.

Fraternally yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Custer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tim Custer

Local News – It seems like a long time since I have been able to report some good news for the membership. It's better late than never! Kiewit has been chosen to build the biggest Gas Fired Power Plant in North America, which is located at the former Homer City Power Generation Plant. This will be the biggest project Kiewit has ever undertaken and will consist of 7 units with capacity to expand up to 12 units, provide 4.5 Gigawatts of power, will create 10 million manhours for Building Trades crafts, employ over 3,000 craftsmen on 2 shifts. The 3,000 craftsmen are just for Kiewit, we do not have the full scope of work for subcontractors. They are projected to have 4 units completed by 2028 and the other 3 completed by 2029. When the powerplant is up and running we will shift gears and start on the construction of a data center. At this time, we don't have any information about the data center but it very well could be a hub of multiple data companies building centers to meet their demands.

In addition to Homer City, we are getting conflicting reports about a reported Data Center to be built at the former Alcoa Plant in Lower Burrel. State Senator Joe Pittman stated that Tec Fusion is looking to start the project in a year or two, but we are being told that a few contractors had conversations with Tec Fusion and quite possibly something could happen before the end of the year. As we hear anything on this project we will inform the membership.

Election Time- Nominations were held Friday May 2 ,2025 at the regular monthly meeting at Ligonier Town Hall. The offices will be filled for a term of 3 years, in accordance with the Local Union By-Laws. The following are the **NOMINATIONS** for each officer's position:

Business Manager Financial Secretary-Treasurer – Vote for 1

1A. Mark Claypoole

1B. Chad Morrison

President – Vote for 1

2A. Jamie Byron

Vice President – Vote for 1

3A. Paul “Skinny” FitzGerald

Executive Board – Vote for 4

4A. Steve Fearer

4B. Bob Lovis

4C. Seth Pollacci

4D. Dave Singer

Recording Secretary – Vote for 1

5A. Bill Cononie

Finance Committee – Vote for 3

6A. J.D. Cramer

6B. Owen Markle

6C. Larry Miller

H & W Trustee – Vote for 2

7A. Eddie Andolina

7B. Darryl Ray

Examining Board – Vote for 4

8A. Thad Wilson

8B. Steve Smithley

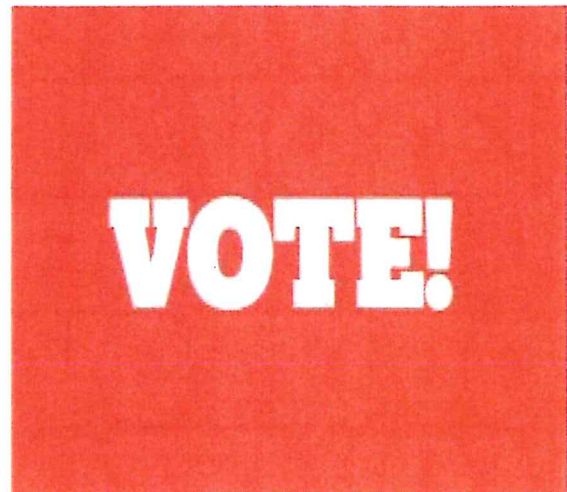
8C. Jeremy “JD” Mizera

8D. Mike Dalicandro

8E. Justin Buday

Inside Guard – Vote for 1

9A. Scott Reedy



ELECTION
June 7, 2025
10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
Ligonier Town Hall.

JATC LU 354 NEWSLETTER- May 2025

The JATC would like to Congratulate the Graduating Class of 2025!!

East Region:

David Campbell

Luke Hribar

Corey Johnston

Tylor Krause

Mathew Senft

West Region:

Isaiah Druga

Nathaniel Neiderhiser

Chayce Zoppetti

We would like to give a shout out to the three Apprentices that competed in the PA State Apprentice Contest this year:

Corey Johnston- Plumber

Tylor Krause- Welder

Luke Hribar- Pipefitter

These three guys represented Local 354 extremely well, Great Job Guys!!!

We would also like to recognize the New Class of 2025/2026:

East:

Cory Campbell, Nicholas Carr, Tanner Guenther, Max Kirkpatrick, Jeremy Krug, Thomas Morgart, Charles Small, Ian Stanick

West:

Chase Cicchetto, Aiden Keller, Donovan Kolembo, Roman Marchetti, Brock Mears, Matthew Moore, Daniel Pompa, Kolbe Roscoe, Zachary Rymarowicz, Jacob Smithley, Dominic Vitula, Jonathon Wahlay

During our orientation week with the New Apprentices the following classes will take place, if any Journeyman would like to join any of the following certifications, please call the JATC office 724-925-8108.

June 03 & June 04, 2025- OSHA 10, starts at 9:00am at JATC Youngwood Training Center (263 Armbrust Rd, Youngwood PA 15697)

June 05, 2025- ICRA-8, starts at 9:00am at the Latrobe Training Center (5095 Center Dr, Latrobe PA 15650)

June 06, 2025- CPR/First Aid, starts at 9:00am at the Latrobe Training Center (5095 Center Dr., Latrobe PA 15650)

Continuity Reminder: Moving forward all reminders for Weld/ Medical Gas Continuities will be emailed. If you have changed your email address or need one on file, please call the JATC, 724-925-8108, to make that change. The continuity form has been updated.

Forms: Weld Request Forms, Continuity Forms, Background Clearances and Apprentice OJT forms, can all be found on our website, lu354.com

On the home page, go to the very top of the page click Apprenticeship, then from the drop-down menu click forms.

Text Notifications- If you are not signed up to receive text messages through the Union Hall, call Jayne or Julie 724-925-7238 to be placed on that system. We will be making Class/ Certification announcements through the text system.

REMINDER

Don't forget to go and get your Drug Test!!

You can find the information on the Local 354 website.

Lu354.com

Go to Apprenticeship-forms-Drug Testing

Or

Benefits-Health & Pension-Forms & Documents-Drug Testing



MES News



It's hard to believe how time does fly by! It seems like only yesterday that I was writing the first of these newsletter articles introducing everyone to our fledgling MES program, and now we are preparing to indenture our third class of MES apprentices. Before you know it, we'll have a complete student body.

Since the last newsletter; We have had multiple classes encompassing both Apprentices and Journeymen on the new Low GWP/A2L refrigerants. Bringing all students up to date with the changes in equipment, laws, and proper techniques when working with flammable refrigerants. This was a certification course, and I'm glad to report that there was great participation, and everyone passed the test and received their certification. Please let me know if you are interested in getting this vital training. We have deployed the iPads in all three schools, integrated it into some of our training and seems to be going very well. We have had some guests in for seminars, such as FilTech out of Pittsburgh, built some new lab trainers such as: a Daikin RTU and BW water heaters, and of course the regular progression of apprentice training.

We have purchased the equipment and the installation of our Mitsubishi City Multi VRF lab is under construction as we speak. In the not-to-distant future we will be offering training on this ever-changing and growing type of HVAC system. I must mention the big help that Dave Heckler, President of CSI, (Comfort Supply) was in making this dream a reality. I must also mention that NONE of this MES program would exist were it not for the vision and hard work of Business Manager Tim Custer and Training Coordinator Chad Morrison.

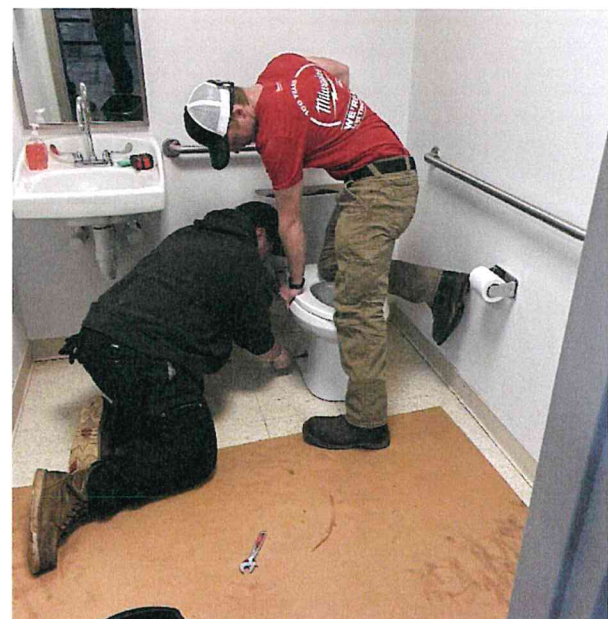
Some training offerings to look for in the near future: Water heaters, A2L certification, EPA 608 certification.

Make sure that your contact information, (email and cell phone number) is up to date at the union hall. If you are interested in any continuing education opportunities; the open classes will be offered through the local's texting system.

Fraternally yours, Eddie Andolina



Low GWP A2L Class



Toilet replacement training

East Region

Triple H Mech.: -5- Members-Working at SGL Carbon, GKN Sinter Metals, Mersen Carbon, Air Gas in Ridgeway and Mathison in St. Mary's, Brockway Glass, Graphtec in St. Mary's and Johnsonburg Wastewater Treatment Plant.

K & K Plumbing: -9- Members-Plumbing at Eisenhower Elementary, Northern Cambria School, Plumbing at Bedford School.

Baer Mechanical: -12- Members – Working at North American Hoganas on various projects, Johnstown School District, Plumbing job in St. Mary's and various other small jobs.

S.P. McCarls: -15- Members – Work in the Fab Shop, Sewar and steam line at VA Hospital, plumbing at the West Branch School, Plumbing at Penn State Altoona Maple Hall and a few projects out of town.

OSMI Mech: -3- Members – Penn Highlands in Dubois, Penn Highlands Elk, Penn Highlands Brookville, Penn Highlands Tyrone, Punxsutawney Hospital and a few small projects in the local.

Darr Construction: -3- Members –Northern Cambria School and misc. work at Somerset Hospital.

Somerset Steel: -3 Members –Various projects around local.

Renick Brothers -12- Members- Eisenhower Elementary, Mental Health Building at Indiana Hospital, Dubois Treatment Plant, New VA Outpatient in Indiana, Homer City Schools and Conemaugh Hospital in Johnstown.

Johnston Mechanical: -24- Members – Maintenance work at Conemaugh and Altoona Hospitals, Association for the Blind, VA Hospital, Plumbing at the new building at VA Home and Med Gas at Nason Medical Center.

Hallstrom Clark: -2- Niagara Cutter, SGL Carbon, and a few maintenance projects in the area.

John Hall: -1- Member – Various jobs in local.

McKamish: - 1- Member – Various jobs in local.

McClure Company: -5- Members- At Somerset Court House.

Fred Burns: -1- Member – At Dubois Treatment Plant.

Leibold Mechanical: -5- Members – At Theist Branch School.

Huckestein Mechanical: -3- Members – At Dubois School District.

Currently – There are 35 Journeyman off and 40 out of town working and 2 Apprentices are off.

Have A Great Summer!!

Business Agent
Bill Cononie



West Region

East West Manufacturing: - 2- Members- Working at CCA Carter School in Monongahela, PA and Cal U.

Fazio Mech: -5 - Members – Employed throughout Local 354.

Hranec: -4 – Members- At Technimark in Latrobe and other small projects in the area.

HLT: -1- Member – Working on Service.

Huckestein Mechanical: -1- Member – Working at Hatachi.

John Hall: -2- Members- Working service and some small projects.

Keystone Fabrication: -17- Members-Building Trades Employed at the shop.

Limbach: -15- Members – Excelsa Health at Latrobe, Nemacolin Woodlands, DNP, Westmoreland Hospital, Uniontown Hospital, Mon Valley Hospital, Power X and Westinghouse.

Lugaila Inc.: -14- Members- Working at Nemacolin Woodlands, Cal U., and Kiski School.

McCarls: - 2- Members – At Cleveland Cliffs in Monessen.

McKamish: -1- Member – Working on various small projects.

Mechanical Contractors: -6- Members- On projects outside the local in West Virginia Local 152 and a housing complex in Connellsville and other small projects.

Renick Brothers: -3- Members – At Hempfield School on boiler room.

Scalise: -2- Members – Working at Dicks Sporting Goods Warehouse.

Sentry Mechanical: – 3- Members – Working at this time on service, UPMC Community Service and St. Vincent and St. Vincent College.

Shumar Industries: -4- Members- Working at shop.

SSM: -14- Members – Working at ATI in Vandergrift, GE, DNA Lab and Service.

Unified Service: -4- Members – At Carpenter Technologies in Latrobe.

Wayne Crouse: -4- Members – At Youghiogheny Treatment Plant and Lock & Dam in Charleroi.

W. G. Tomko: -11– Members – Building Trades working at shop.

Wheels Mechanical: -6- Members- Working at CCA Carter School in Monongahela and DNA Lab in Greensburg.

Whitby: -6- Members- Employed at this time at Nemacolin Woodlands and other small projects.

Woods Refrigeration: -1- Member – Working on various service projects.

There are 28 members working out of town and 13 Journeymen and 0 Apprentice currently laid off at this time.

REMEMBER TO GO GET YOU DRUG TESTS!

Enjoy the Summer!
Business Agent
Steven Fearer



Members Profile

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>EAST</u>	<u>WEST</u>
Bldg. Trades Journeyman	387	208	179
Bldg. Trades Apprentice & MES	73	30	43
Spec. Hsg./Div. Housing & MES	21	15	06
Contr./Superv. Members	02	00	02
Metal Trades	08	00	08
Retiree (MT, BT Disability)	154	92	62
Life Members	153		
<u>Total Membership</u>	798	345	300

REMINDER:

Local 354 has started a TEXT SYSTEM to inform members active and retired of their Brother and Sister Members passing away and/or other important information that may need to be sent out quickly and without doing a mailing.

If you would like to be a part of the system, please contact the Local Union Hall Office at 724-925-7238 or send your name and cell phone number to jpeoples@uanet.org or mail to PO Drawer I Youngwood, PA 15697

Deceased Members

James E. Dean, Jr.
Gerald R. Eash
Douglas Haupright
Wayne J. Leventry
Richard E. Miner
Randon Mottern
David T. Rossbach



Recently Retired Members

Officially **RETIRED**
LET THE FUN BEGIN!

Donald M. Arena
Kevin R. Burgess
Jeremiah J. Hunt
Robert Lonero
Gregory Ott

Retire Luncheons

West Region

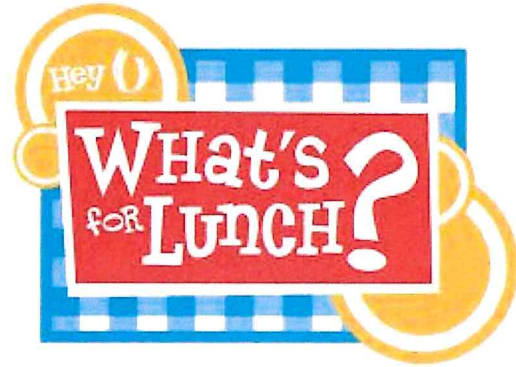
Wednesday – June 18, 2025
At the YOUNGWOOD JATC
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

East Region

Thursday – June 19, 2025
At the EBENSBURG JATC
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

East Region

Friday– June 20, 2025
At LUIGI'S RISTORANTE – 32 N. Brady St. DuBois, PA 15801
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM



DON'T FORGET TO GET YOUR RESERVATON IN!

**Plumbers & Pipefitter Local Union 354
Annual Family Picnic
Will be held at**

**DelGrosso's Park® &
LAGUNA Splash®**

More Information to follow