

# IMPACT

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## TWO NEW TRUSTEES UNION FILLS VACANT POSITIONS

**Local 246 President Joe Colangelo recently announced the appointment of two members to serve as new Union Trustees.**

Jack Minerva (Auto Mechanic — DSNY) and Stanley Pirpinias (Auto Mechanic — NYPD) are taking over for Andrew Weinstein, who has retired, and John Cox, who has resigned. Colangelo said both new Trustees have been active within the Union for many years and will be welcome additions.

"Both Jack and Stanley take their jobs very seriously and have served members well as Shop Stewards," Colangelo said. "They have been involved, responsible, and responsive to member needs. Their determination and dedication are what we need in Union Trustees in order to keep us moving forward in a positive direction. They are both team players and we look forward to having them on board."

Minerva (top photo) was hired by NYC Sanitation on September 25, 2000, and has worked in various locations throughout the Department ever since. In 2009, he switched to the QBS shop. Minerva was always very active in the Union, attending meetings and familiarizing himself with the important issues. When a Shop Steward position opened in 2013, he ran and was overwhelmingly elected by his peers. Minerva was appointed to the Union's Negotiating Committee in March 2015, helping secure a deal after years of no contracts.

Pirpinias began working for the NYPD FSD in December 2000. He started as an Auto Mechanic in CRS in Queens before moving to Shop #3 in Brooklyn in 2001. He was elected Shop Steward for the Brooklyn, Manhattan & Staten Island repair shops in late 2012. Stanley also has served on the Union's Negotiating Committee.

"As Shop Steward, I did everything in my ability to serve my fellow employees," he said. "As a Trustee, I will always try to do my best for the entire Union. I look forward to this opportunity."

Colangelo said all the Local 246 officers look forward to working with Jack and Stanley as they have proven to be great assets to the Union and the membership. "I know they will continue to serve us all well in the future," he said.



Good & Welfare



Spotlight on Members



Members on the Job

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# Message from President JOSEPH A. COLANGELO



In last month's newsletter I discussed the concerns that our union and all public sector unions face with the Supreme Court decision in the case of Friedrich vs. California Teachers Association. The heart of the case centers on First Amendment freedom of speech. Defendant Rebecca Friedrich's claim is that her First Amendment right was being denied because she did not agree with the union's political views and because everything public employee unions negotiate is political in her view. She claims that even by being mandated to pay agency shop fees her rights were violated under the constitution Freedom of Speech clause.

Ms. Friedrich was joined in her lawsuit by nine other defendants in her case, which we believe is being

bankrolled by extremely right-wing conservative groups whose mission is to destroy unions and their ability to stand up for working people. What is even more bizarre is that Ms. Friedrich's claims she does not agree with her union's fight for class size, teacher tenure rights, and apparently even her own pension rights. Her reasoning is that all of these will raise property taxes and she doesn't want her taxes or the taxes of her fellow citizens to go up simply so she could receive more financial benefits. That sentiment by Ms. Friedrich is almost comical and leaves me wondering how someone could even say that with a straight face.

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in this case earlier this year. The nine justices were expected to render their decision early this summer. An obvious wrench was thrown into that plan, however, with the death of Justice Antonin Scalia last month. While his death is sad news all around, it leaves the outcome of this case up in the air. Scalia, who is conservative by nature, and his questioning during the hearing, lead us to believe he would most likely have sided against unions in this case. When the case was presented to the Supreme Court, and justices had their chance to ask questions, it appeared to labor as if a majority of the Court

## KOMNICK SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINE IS APRIL 30

Active Members applications to apply for our brother **Lawrence Komnick Memorial Scholarship Award** are now available. To receive an application for dependent children, active members should call the Union Office. The scholarships are for \$1,500 and are a one-time only grant. This year, the Executive Board is pleased to announce that there will be two drawings for scholarships. **Applications must be completed and postmarked by April 30, 2016**, and include an official transcript of SAT scores that is signed and verified by the high school. Members' dependent children graduating high school in June 2016 are eligible to apply. The names of those received with the top 10 highest SAT scores will be put into a raffle and two names will be picked to receive these scholarship awards. Drawing for these scholarships will take place at the May 2016 General Membership Meeting.

would side with the plaintiff — and unions were bracing for the worst. At this point, with just eight justices, the decision could very well be split. Labor is, of course, monitoring this case very closely and we are in touch with our attorney Harry Greenberg on a regular basis for updates.

There are many outcome scenarios being discussed since the death of Scalia, but it is our hope that the Court would not go against the precedent-setting 1977 case of Abood vs Detroit Department of Education. That case allowed for government employees to opt out of political costs in overall dues, but did require employees to pay agency shop fees that support the union's cost of negotiating contracts.

With Scalia's death, more than the outcome of this case is at stake. Politicians and many others are speaking out against President Obama being allowed to consider an appointment to fill the vacancy. There are many trying to shut the door on this president and demanding that the spot remain vacant until a new president takes office in January 2017.

Opposing politicians, however, quickly came forth claiming that it is the current President's constitutional right to nominate. This type of back and forth went on for weeks, just proving how dysfunctional our country's politicians have become when they choose to grandstand about the death of a Supreme Court Justice. Whatever side you agree with one thing is certain, the Friedrich case and other high-profile cases may not be decided anytime soon.

I've been asked by several members so far what a split decision will mean for labor. First of all, no decision is final until it is announced, meaning that the vote is not final until it's publicized. Secondly, a four-four tie decision results in the lower court's ruling standing, which means there would be no change in the law. The justices could also order reargument once the court has a full bench of nine. Taking the current political atmosphere into account, it appears a full bench may not be for a while, most likely 2017 after a new president is elected. Bottom line is that everything is in flux and that's why the next justice could change the direction of this case and many others.

As if all this upheaval and uncertainty for labor is not enough, there are many other similar cases winding their way through the courts.

Switching topics to something more positive, I was recently elected to serve on the Executive Board of the New York City Central Labor Council as a Vice President. This is a real honor for me. I want to thank CLC President Vinny Alvarez for considering me when the Council voted to expand its board from 36 members to 40. I will have the privilege of working with the Labor Council for all workers, both public and private sector, as well as non-unionized workers. The New York City Central Labor Council is one of the largest labor councils in the country. Other groups look to New York for guidance. I can't be more proud to have the opportunity to speak up on behalf of our members on such a prestigious board. The CLC is a unified voice for all of labor and speaks out in a number of important ways.

As some of you know, the Union has implemented an email blast system as a means of quickly disseminating important information and reminders to our members. We have been collecting email addresses for several months, and are hoping that more of you will sign up. If you have not already done so, please contact the Union office with a personal email address so we can be sure to include you. We will also be passing around a sign up sheet at the upcoming membership meeting. In today's day and age, it's all about how quickly we can get out the word, and this is just another way of keeping you all updated.

It's been a busy start to the new year and we have a lot to catch everyone up on. The March meeting is the first general membership meeting of the year so we are encouraging everyone to make an extra effort to attend. Besides, the meeting falls on St. Patrick's Day, and we will be having lots of food to whet your appetites. Don't forget it's also our Annual **GREENEST** Contest, so come wearing your best Irish outfit. Remember that your friends and co-workers will be voting on best Green costume, so put on your thinking caps. There will be great prizes for the winners.

## LOCAL 246 SOCIAL MEDIA



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SEIU Local 246



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@nyclocal246

## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING & ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION

Thursday, **MARCH 17, 2016**

6:00 p.m.

St. Stanislaus Church

61-17 Grand Avenue, Maspeth, NY 11378

- ▶ 50/50 Raffle
- ▶ Door Prizes
- ▶ Refreshments

## IN MEMORIAM MEMBERS

**Robert Stolte**  
Ret. Auto Mechanic — San

## IN MEMORIAM FAMILY

**Michael Cain** (Father)  
Machinist — San

**Alan Coffey** (Mother)  
Ret. Auto Mechanic — DEP

**Gerald Coffey** (Mother)  
Ret. Auto Mechanic — San

**Ronald Coffey** (Mother)  
Machinist — BOE

**Michael Marrone** (Mother-in-Law)  
Auto Mechanic — San

## NEW MEMBERS

**Christopher Bernhard**  
Auto Mechanic — Police

**Marvin Campos**  
Auto Mechanic — San

**Eric Cervino**  
Auto Mechanic — DOT

**Anthony Curotto**  
Auto Mechanic — San

**Rasharn Hall**  
Auto Service Worker — San

**Ezequias Matos-Ferreras**  
Auto Mechanic Diesel — San

**Anson Newton**  
Auto Service Worker — San

**Brian Salcedo**  
Auto Mechanic — San

**Nicholas Tanzi**  
Auto Mechanic — DOT

**Steven Walla**  
Auto Mechanic — Parks

**James Zabatta**  
Carriage Upholsterer — San

[www.nyclocal246.org](http://www.nyclocal246.org)  
for the latest news

# GOOD & WELFARE



## A WORD OR TWO OF THANKS

I would like to commend our current union brothers for keeping our city rolling on a daily basis. Along with that, a special thank you to our Union President Joe Colangelo, his executive board, and office for keeping our Union solvent, and always staying one step ahead of outsourcing, thus protecting the future of our members.

John Campanella  
Retired Auto Mechanic (San)



## NOW AND THEN



Former Shop Steward Gerard Femia (Retired Auto Mechanic — San) stopped by the Union office recently for a short visit and posed for a photo in front of a photo taken of him when he worked at the Sanitation Landfill on Staten Island, which we realized was displayed on the office wall. "The years have been good to you Gerard. You look the same as you did some 12 years ago," said Local 246 President Joe Colangelo. "Happy to know you're doing well and enjoying retirement."

## RETIRING MEMBERS

**Nazeer Ali**  
Auto Mechanic — Police

**George Heilig**  
Auto Mechanic — San

**Jorge Martinez**  
Auto Mechanic — DOT

**Andrew Weinstein** (Former Shop Steward/Trustee)  
Auto Mechanic — Parks

# NEWS & NOTES

**FIRST MEETING OF 2016** — Join us at the first General Membership Meeting of the year on Thursday, March 17 at 6:00 p.m. This is also our annual St. Patrick's Day celebration meeting, with plenty of great food and raffles. Don't forget to dress in your best **GREEN** attire for our **Greenest Contest**, with a chance to claim one of our special prizes.

## **LAST CALL FOR INCOME TAX BENEFIT**

— Time is running out for members who wish to take advantage of Local 246's income tax benefit as taxes are due by April 15. The benefit is administered by the accounting firm of Wendel-Walowitz Associates, Inc. and is available to both Active and Retired members. Members will be able to file their returns electronically. Those who file electronically will receive their refunds in about half the time of paper returns. Co-pay remains at \$100. To make an appointment, call 212.682.6003, ext. 1, and identify yourself as a Local 246 member. The last two scheduled dates on Long Island are March 17 and April 2. The final date in Queens is March 26. All Manhattan times are by appointment.

## **ACTIVE MEMBER SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS**

— Federal Law recently enacted in conjunction with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act mandates certain reports that must be filed with the Internal Revenue Service. A letter of explanation was mailed to all active members. It **MUST** be filled out, signed, and returned to the Local 246 office. We have included a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Any active member who did not receive this letter should contact the Union office immediately.

**RETIREE DUES FOR 2016** — Retirees' annual dues for 2016 are now past due. Secretary-Treasurer Ray Schacor requests that all retirees who have not yet paid their dues to please send a check or money order for \$60 to NYC Local 246, 217 Broadway Suite 501, New York, NY 10007. The amount is nominal and just covers the per capita and dues mailings. Once dues

have been paid, retirees will also receive their 2016 Local 246 membership card.

**DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME** — Daylight Savings Time begins March 13. Please remember to change your clocks. It's also a great time to change the batteries in both your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. If you don't have both of these in your home on every floor, this is a great time to install them. So many lives have been saved by having working detectors, and so many lives have unfortunately been lost by having detectors with dead batteries. Don't be a victim. Change the batteries when you change your clocks.

**NEW MEMBERS** — New members must send us a copy of their marriage certificate and/or dependent(s) birth certificate(s). Members who are divorced must send us a copy of their divorce papers. You will be responsible for any outstanding bills your spouse/domestic partner submits for reimbursement that they are not entitled to.

## **FUNDS EXTEND COVERAGE TO ACTIVE MEMBER'S CHILDREN UP TO 26**

— You may enroll dependents at the time they are becoming 19 years old, or at the time they lose benefits from their own or spouse/domestic partner's benefits. There is a time limit of 31 days from reaching age 19, or loss of other benefits. If you miss the time limit, you will have to wait until the following January 1st.

**COBRA APPLICATIONS** — If you are no longer in active pay status you may not be eligible for health benefits and/or welfare benefits. You must purchase these benefits directly through the COBRA program for welfare benefits you should contact the union office. For health benefits you should contact the agency benefits coordinator. You must enroll within 60 days from the qualifying event.

## **UPDATE YOUR BENEFICIARY CARD**

— It's important for our office and for you that we have the correct information for each member on beneficiary cards. Please

call the Union Office at 212.233.0616 to advise us of any changes so we can send you a change of beneficiary card.

## **ONLY MEDICARE-ELIGIBLE RETIREES ENROLLED IN APPROVED HMOS**

— Local 246 will prepare the second half of 2015's reimbursement payments for those Medicare eligible retirees currently enrolled and/or who have opted to purchase their drug rider through deductions in their pension checks. In order to receive reimbursement from the Retirees Welfare Fund, eligible retirees must forward to the Union Office copies of their pension stubs for the period of July 1-Dec. 31, 2015.

## **DOWNLOAD DENTAL CLAIM FORMS**

— Members can now download their dental claim forms and find a participating dentist by logging on the Union's web site at [www.nyclocal246.com](http://www.nyclocal246.com). Once you do find a dentist, please call the dentist to verify that they still participate with Heathplex.

## **LOCAL 246 EMAIL BLAST SYSTEM**

— The Union has implemented an email blast system for disseminating important information to our members in the fastest way possible. These email blasts will contain useful reminders, updates on pending issues, and calls to action. Your email address will never be used for any other purpose. Please sign up now by sending your name and email address to [nyc246seiu@nyclocal246.org](mailto:nyc246seiu@nyclocal246.org)

## **SEND US YOUR NEWS**

If you have news you'd like to share, send it to the Union Office for publication in this newsletter. Birthdays. Graduations. Trips. Honors. Community Service. New babies. It's all good news to share. Be sure to include photos, as well as daytime and evening phone numbers where you can be reached if we should have any questions.

# TIME IN THE MILITARY

## JIM LETOHC HAD SOME REMARKABLE EXPERIENCES

**What began as a two-year stint in the Army back in 1976, turned into decades of on-again, off-again service for Auto Mechanic — Diesel (DEP) Jim Letohic, who has served both stateside and overseas.**

From 1976-1977, Letohic was stationed in both Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and Fort Knox, Kentucky, before leaving with an honorable discharge. He then spent the next 15-20 years as a civilian, working at a variety of different jobs before joining the New York City DEP in January 1993, where he worked at CRS Maspeth and at Wards Island. But military service ran deep in his blood, and in 1997 Letohic joined the New York Army National Guard, serving with the 101 Cavalry 42 Infantry Division. That service put him at Ground Zero from September 12, 2001 to February 2002 performing security detail.

After the terrorist attacks occurred, his unit — stationed out of Staten Island — was brought down to Ground Zero to help secure the area, keep the streets clear, and check all vehicles for bombs that were entering and leaving the area.

While it was a difficult time for everyone, Letohic himself lost four good friends who were firefighters on 9/11. "They all made it look so easy, running in and out of the buildings, up and down the stairs, trying to rescue anyone they could, but it *wasn't* easy," he recalled. "This touched me personally and that's why I volunteered to serve in Afghanistan. I figured I owed those guys.

"That was time I won't forget," Letohic said. "You think you've seen everything when you are in the military until you saw Ground Zero after the attacks. I guess because they were in our own backyard they touched us all differently."

Three years later, in early 2005, Letohic found himself overseas in Iraq as a Machine Gunner on personal security detail. "I sort of wanted to go and I needed to go," he said. "I was almost 50 at the time and I was doing security for high value people. The next oldest guy on my team was 26. What you actually see when stuff hits the fan is so different from what you see in the movies. It's not what you are expecting."

From his time in Iraq, Letohic received two Purple Hearts for small shrapnel wounds. "Guys go through so much more than I did," he said. "Guys lose arms, they lose legs. I was one of the lucky ones in that my wounds were no where near that bad." He also received other Army commendations while serving in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Letohic returned home in November 2005, where he returned to City employment, but transferred upstate in January 2006 to Shop 66 in Grahamsville.

But even his wounds and his service overseas could not stop Letohic from military duty. In June 2007 he joined the 69th Infantry 27th Division out of Camp Smith, NY. And then it was back overseas he went, this time to Afghanistan in April 2008 as a Gunner and Driver doing border patrol and base security. Almost a year later, in February 2009, Letohic returned home for the final time, where he retired for medical reasons with an Honorable Discharge in April 2012.

Since then, he has continued to work in the upstate shop, but plans to retire this summer. And what will Letohic do with all his spare time? "I'll got hunting, fishing, play some golf, work in my yard, garden, and play with my grand kids," he said. "I'll have plenty to keep me busy. I'm looking forward to the time and not having to be someplace every day."

Letohic is married to Mary, a part-time custodian with DEP, and they have two sons, James, 32, and Joseph, 31. They also have three grandchildren, James, Jocelyn, and Adrianna.



*Top photo: Letohic in Iraq. Bottom photo: Letohic with his personal security detail.*

# UNION ROUNDUP

**CUNY members** were told they would be receiving their back pay and raises by the end of January, but that did not happen. The Union contacted CUNY labor relations and was told that sometime in March is the new target date. Since CUNY is not a Mayoral agency, we always have a problem with their pay dates after ratification of our contracts.

**Following last September's Executive Board meeting and General Membership Meeting**, a dues rate increase was approved that took effect in January's payroll. As a reminder, this is the first increase since 2010.

**Sanitation bids for Auto Service Workers** are being finalized. Local 246 Treasurer Ray Schacor met with John D'Angelo, Director of Field Operations, who said the bids will be released shortly.

**We are waiting to meet with OLR to finalize our tool language** from the contract, as well as the non-economic agreement. We still do not have a finalized Career and Salary contract, and as the Union understands, the UFT still doesn't have the final draft of its contract. That's how behind and understaffed OLR appears to be, but we will keep you updated.

**Shop Steward** elections in Sanitation 5th floor, DOT and Fire took place recently. Sal Brucculeri (San, 5th Floor CRS) and Richard Mazze (Fire) were both re-elected, and Peter Tucci is the new Shop Steward for DOT. Local 246 is now scheduling Shop Steward elections for Queens Borough and Police to fill the vacancies of Jack Minerva and Stanley Pirpinias, who were appointed as Union Trustee.

**The City Actuary** notified our lobbyist of possible delays for an actuarial analysis needed for our pension opt-out legislation. We've requested they put the legislation on the fast track for this session and I am hopeful we can get the bill passed.

**Welfare trustees** met at the end of January for the first quarterly meeting of 2016 and reported that the Funds remain in good financial position. However, Trustees are closely monitoring drug spending, as spending for last year was up approximately \$300,000 for actives and \$200,000 for retirees. The Trustees will be reviewing options in the next several months. The optical benefit increases will take effect July 1, 2016, and once all the final details have been resolved, a letter will be sent to each member.

**The Municipal Labor Committee** met in early February to discuss, among other topics, changes to our medical plans in order to meet labor's goals on health care savings that helped unions secure new contracts. There will be changes to certain co-pays and members will be notified before they take effect. One of the largest changes, however, is that emergency room co-pays, if not admitted, will increase from \$50 to \$150, which is an attempt to dissuade City workers from using emergency rooms as walk-in clinics. Both the active and retiree funds will be receiving a one-time \$100 payment.

**Local 246 is waiting on OLR** to reschedule a previously set meeting to discuss DEP and the increase in the utilization of the ARI contract. OLR requested we reschedule because the Mayor's office was getting involved after finding out what the Union was bringing up about our agreement when consolidation was presented. The last administration assured us the consolidation would not lead to an increase in outsourcing, but the opposite transpired, meaning the opportunity to bring work back in house was the goal.

## "GREENEST" OUTFIT Annual Contest

**The membership meeting on Thursday, March 17, 2016**, is our St. Patrick's Day celebration meeting. As in the past, Local 246 will mark the occasion with great food and fun.

### AND OF COURSE, OUR CONTEST FOR THE "GREENEST" OUTFIT

Put on your best green attire — shirt, hat, pants, tie or anything else you have that's green — **and join us at the March meeting.**

**Members will vote on the top three GREENEST outfits and prizes will be awarded. This is one meeting you don't want to miss.**



NEW YORK CITY LOCAL 246 • SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION, AFL-CIO

# IMPACT

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REMEMBER OUR TROOPS & PRAY FOR THEIR SAFETY

## ON THE JOB MEMBERS CONTINUE TO MAKE UNION PROUD



No matter what the conditions, or the temperatures, or the time of day, Local 246 members can be found on the job doing what they need to do in order to Keep New York City Rolling. And that includes sometimes working in less-than-ideal conditions to repair and maintain the City's fleet of vehicles.

Pictured from left: Nick Pindulic (Auto Mechanic) and Hector Aquino (Auto Mechanic) on the job in Queens in front of a snow melter; Henry Lara (Auto Mechanic) on top of a snow melter in Brooklyn; and Orin Abraham (Auto Mechanic) and Jose Vazquez (Auto Mechanic) in Brooklyn working on a snow melter.

"Our members continue to make the Union proud and shine a light on the value we bring to the City every day," said Jim Grillo, Local 246 Vice President. "While the skies looked bright and sunny, the temperatures were frigid as these members did their best to repair vehicles used during one of the few storms we experienced this winter. As we have said in the past, no one does our jobs better than we do and we prove that time and time again."