WASHINGTON, D.C. The train ride will demonstrate his support for passenger rail and will also replicate the last leg of Abraham Lincoln’s historic inaugural journey to Washington in 1861. ¶

On January 17, President-Elect Barack Obama and his family will take an Amtrak train from Philadelphia to the inauguration ceremony in Washington, D.C. The train ride will demonstrate his support for passenger rail and will also replicate the last leg of Abraham Lincoln’s historic inaugural journey to Washington in 1861. ¶

The railroad has daily coal train runs and mixed-use service runs between Meadville and Olean, N.Y. Other local businesses served include Dad’s Pet Products, Meadville Metals, Universal Well Services, Lord Corp., and Erie Plastics.

The railroad serves 17 shortline railroads since 2002. Several BLET members are now enjoying retirement, including long-time General Chairman Ray Wallace.

Summary Annual Report
For BLET Disability and Welfare Benefit Trust Fund. pg 4

Scholarships
The annual BLET Scholarship Directory helps children of BLET members prepare for college. pgs 6-7

Last Runs
Several BLET members are now enjoying retirement, including long-time General Chairman Ray Wallace. pg 5

WNY&P shortline workers say YES to BLET

Train and engine service employees at the Western New York & Pennsylvania (WNY&P) Railroad have voted overwhelmingly to join the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

The National Mediation Board certified the election results on November 17. BLET First Vice President Paul Sorrow said the union is anxious to begin negotiations with management of the roughly 110-mile short line.

“Our goal is to get off on the right foot and begin positive negotiations with management as quickly as possible,” Sorrow said. “A good union contract will demonstrate to the WNY&P workers that they made the right decision by saying ‘yes’ to the BLET and Teamsters. Also, thanks to Tommy Miller for a job well done.”

Miller, the BLET’s Director of Organizing, thanked all WNY&P workers for attending the BLET’s informational meetings during the six-week organizing campaign. He also thanked New York Susquehanna & Western General Chairman Ben Martin for his expertise and assistance throughout.

“Following the organizing campaign, work now begins on negotiating a fair and equitable union contract to give workers the protection and respect they deserve,” Miller said.

The WNY&P operates roughly 350 miles of track, running east and west between Hornell, N.Y., and Rousseville, Pa., and north and south from Olean, N.Y., to Driftwood, Pa., and from Olean to Machias, N.Y.

With the WNY&P victory, the BLET has successfully organized more than 20 shortline railroads since 2002.

Continued on page 2

Continued on page 2
BLET names Steve Bruno director of regulatory affairs

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen has named Stephen J. Bruno to the position of Director of Regulatory Affairs. He was hired in November and will work out of the BLET’s National Office in Washington, D.C.

Brother Bruno joined the BLET in 1985 after earning promotion to the position of locomotive engineer by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). In 1987, he became the Local Chairman of Division 71 and held that position until 2002. He held the position of General Chairman from 1999-2002.

During his many years of BLET membership, he also held the positions of Alternate Vice President, Chairman of the Eastern General Chairmen’s Association, and chairman of the joint caucus at the 2006 National Convention.

“I look forward to working with the Legislative Department,” Bruno said. “I am going to do my best to make the workplace safer for all BLET members.”

In his new role as Director of Regulatory Affairs, Bruno will represent the BLET on numerous collaborative endeavors (such as the Rail Safety Advisory Committee with the FRA), prepare the union’s comments submitted in response to various agencies’ proposals for rulemakings and proposed rules (such as the Federal Railroad Administration, Department of Transportation, Transportation Security Administration and Surface Transportation Board), and prepare comments submitted in response to petitions for waiver from Compliance with FRA regulations.

Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman welcomed Bru- no to the staff.

“I believe Steve brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to the position of Director of Regulatory Affairs and I look forward to working with him,” Tolman said.

“He has held many positions within the BLET and, in all of them, he has worked hard and implemented many innovative ideas, which I am sure will serve the National Legislative Office well.”

Bruno fills the position previously held by Tom Pontolillo, who was named Director of Research and Assistant to the President in April of 2008.

“Brother Bruno will do an excellent job in his new post,” BLET National President Ed Rodzwicz said. “The BLET National Legislative Office made a wise decision in hiring him and I am sure he will work tirelessly in serving our membership.”

A Hard Working Brother. Steve Bruno, a member of Division 71 (Philadelphia), at work in his new role as BLET’s Director of Regulatory Affairs.
The Rail Workers Hazardous Materials Training Program will conduct the following hazardous materials transportation/chemical emergency response training programs on the George Meany Campus in Silver Spring, Maryland:

- February 23-27, 2009
- April 26-May 1, 2009
- May 4-8, 2009

The training, eligible for three academic credits from the National Labor College, addresses OSHA and DOT required procedures and different levels of response and worker protection in a hazardous materials emergency or release, weapons of mass destruction awareness, and the incident command system, as well as components required to complete OSHA 10-Hour Outreach Training card for General Industry standards. Training includes advanced classroom instruction, small group activities, intensive hands-on drills and a simulated hazmat response in full safety gear.

The Rail Workers Hazardous Materials Training Program is funded to provide this training by a federal grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and also sponsored in part by funding from the North American Railway Foundation (NARF).

This funding will provide transportation, lodging, and meals for training participants. In addition, participants who are unable to secure regular pay through the railroad to attend training are eligible for a stipend of $550.00. Completed registration forms should be faxed, mailed or e-mailed to the Hazmat office as soon as possible. Check the Rail Workers website for schedule updates and to register online: http://www.nlc.edu/bcntrell/register.htm

The application is available as a PDF: http://www.blw.org/pr/pdf/08-09-hazmat.pdf

Railway Workers Hazardous Materials Training Program
10000 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20903
(301) 439-2440
(301) 628-0165 fax
hpyma@nlc.edu

The application is available as a PDF: http://www.nlc.edu/bcntrell/register.htm

The application is available as a PDF: http://www.blw.org/pr/pdf/08-09-hazmat.pdf

BLET Auxiliary

There is no “I” in Brotherhood

BY BECKY SCHNEIDER

As we make our New Year’s resolutions, how about considering a new one? One that has something to do with getting better shape or eating right, although those aren’t bad ideas. It involves making the effort to remember what the Brotherhood means and why it came about.

Corporate greed and outrageous CEO salaries have made a comeback, driving our economy to the brink and leaving behind the dedicated working men and women who made their extraordinary profits possible. The robber barons who started railroads in the late 1800s have not really changed much. They have only found new ways to work around Federal regulations. At times it seems we may have forgotten the strides made by our predecessors who stood together, literally giving their blood, sweat, tears, and in many cases, their lives to create a safer work environment and living wages for those that followed. Our founding fathers had to meet in secret for fear of losing their jobs. And while many did lose their jobs, they forged ahead with resolve and unity dedicated to a cause much greater than any individual cause. They supported one another on the job and in their communities in the true spirit of Brotherhood. They were bound together, fully realizing that the strength of the Union is much greater than the individual components from which it is comprised, and that we are stronger together by the principles of Brotherhood.

The insidious threat facing our members today is the loss of those unbreakable ties that bound railroaders together in solidarity to fight the untenable railroads they worked for. We must never allow complacency, ideologies or any personal differences to erode our resolve to protect and defend one another. There is no “I” in Brotherhood. It’s about all of us standing together, united as one, to make the Union stronger and every one’s life a little bit better.

While we have made progress from those days of old when railroaders died on the job by the thousands while working for starvation wages, let us never forget that in times of peril it was our unity and spirit of Brotherhood that enabled us to survive and ultimately prevail. If ever there was a time in our history that demanded solidarity that time is now. There is no magic wand that will erase the problems, but through unity and adherence to the principles of Brotherhood we can manage the problems and collectively find solutions to such problems that will serve our members.

As we begin the New Year, let us reflect on the past and profit from our mistakes. Let us look forward to the future with renewed energy and strength dedicated to the principles of Brotherhood with total support of our Union and its elected Leaders. We are, after all, our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.

Teamsters Rail Conference will fight proposed rule weakening regulation of toxic chemicals

The Teamsters Rail Conference pledged to fight a new Labor Department rule proposed by the Bush administration that a rail corporations offer workers, despite their exposure to materials that they are not trained to handle or eating right, although those aren’t bad ideas. It involves making the effort to remember what the Brotherhood means and why it came about.

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Year 2009 Railroad Retirement and Unemployment Insurance Taxes

The amounts of compensation subject to railroad retirement tier I and tier II payroll taxes will increase in 2009. However, the tier I tax rate on employees and employers remains unchanged. Under the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001, tier II tax rates are determined annually by an average account benefits ratio. Based on this ratio, the tier II tax rate on employees and employers will remain at their 2008 level in 2009. Railroad unemployment insurance tax rates paid by employers will continue to include a 1.5 percent surcharge in 2009.

Tier I Medicare Tax — The railroad retirement tier I payroll tax rate on covered rail employees and employers for the year 2009 remains at 7.65 percent. The railroad retirement tier I tax rate is the same as the social security tax, and for withholding and reporting purposes, the maximum amount of an employee’s earnings subject to the 7.65 percent rate will increase to $106,800 in 2009 from $102,000 in 2008, but there is no maximum on earnings subject to the 1.45 percent Medicare rate. The increase in the amount of earnings subject to railroad retirement and social security taxes is based on indexing to increases in average national wages.

Tier II Tax — The railroad retirement tier II tax rate on employees will remain at 3.9 percent in 2009, and the rate on employers will remain at 12.1 percent. The maximum amount of earnings subject to railroad retirement tier II taxes, however, will increase to $79,200 in 2009 from $75,900 in 2008. Tier II tax rates under the 2001 Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act are based on an average account benefits ratio reflecting railroad retirement fund levels. Depending on this ratio, the tier II tax rate for employers can range between 8.2 percent and 22.1 percent, while the tier II rate for employees can be between 0 percent and 4.9 percent.

Unemployment Insurance Tax — Employers, but not employees, also pay railroad unemployment insurance taxes, which are experience-rated by employer. The basic tax rates range from a minimum of 0.65 percent to a maximum of 12 percent on monthly earnings up to $1,330 in 2009, up from $1,280 in 2008. However, the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act also provides for a surcharge in the event the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account balance falls below an indemnity threshold amount, and such a surcharge of 1.5 percent applied in 2004-2008. Since the accrual balance of the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account was $122.5 million on June 30, 2008, which was less than the indexed threshold of $190.1 million, a surcharge of 1.5 percent will again be added to the basic tax rates in 2009, but will not increase the maximum 12 percent rate.

The unemployment insurance tax rates on railroad employers in 2009 therefore will range from 2.15 percent (the minimum basic rate of 0.65 percent plus the 1.5 percent surcharge) to a maximum of 12 percent on monthly compensation up to $1,330.

For 80 percent of covered employers, the unemployment insurance rate as assessed will be 2.15 percent in 2009.
Division 511’s D.E. Massie still going strong at 73

After 55 years of working on the railroad, and at the age of 73, Brother D.E. Massie finally decided he’d had enough. A member of BLET Division 511 (Pompton, Ohio), Brother Massie retired on December 9, bringing to a conclusion his railroad career that began in 1953.

Born September 30, 1935, Brother Massie achieved further distinction by working full time for Norfolk Southern railroading. He was qualified on the route from Portsmouth, Ohio, to Bluefield, W.Va. The tracks along that route pass about 100 yards from his home, so he will still be close to the railroad even during retirement.

He hired out on the Norfolk & Western in 1953 and witnessed first hand the industry switch over from steam to diesel locomotives. The first engine he ever worked on was N&W steam locomotive #1461.

Old friends may contact Brother Massie by writing: 3022 County Rd. #1, S. Point, Ohio 45680.

In 1989, Brother Wallace helped defend the BLET’s right to hold the locomotive engineers’ contact on the Norfolk Southern property, successfully defeating an attempted raid by another rail labor union.

In 1992, he turned his efforts to the negotiating table and obtained the first Personal Leave Day agreement for engineers.

In 1996, he helped negotiate an on-property agreement with NS that provides a bonus plan to members. He helped negotiate similar on-property agreements in 2000, 2003 and 2008.

A lasting legacy of Brother Wallace is his important work as the 2008 agreement runs through 2014.

The 2008 agreement runs through 2014.

A lasting legacy of Brother Wallace is his important work in the face of new and changing technologies, but does not serve to eliminate any positions in any other craft.

Brother Wallace and his wife Janie have four children (Renee Brendle, Ray C. Wallace Jr., Mark Wallace and Brandon Wallace) and 10 grandchildren.

Daughter Renee resides in Charlotte, N.C. Her son, Alex Brendle, currently works for NS as a conductor and locomotive engineer where he was a member of BLET Division 696. He is currently the Superintendent of Terminals in Macon, Ga.

Son Mark Wallace is a 16-year employee of NS. He has worked in the craft of brakeman, conductor and locomotive engineer. He has been vice local chairman and local chairman of BLET Division 267 since 1996. He currently holds the position of vice general chairman on the NS-Southern Lines GoCoA.

Son Brandon Wallace resides in Fletcher, N.C., where he is a vice president in the banking industry.

Brother Wallace has been succeeded as General Chairman by Bill Overton. Old friends may write to Brother Wallace at: 48 Sunset Dr., Asheville, N.C., 28806.
THE BLET AUXILIARY offers $1,000 scholarships annually to help the children of BLET and Auxiliary members realize their goals in life.

There are two very strict guidelines that must be met in order to be eligible. First, the applicant must be a son or daughter of both an Auxiliary and BLET member (living or deceased), with each being a member for two years. Second, the applicant must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an accredited university, college or school of higher learning.

The Auxiliary also administers a joint scholarship, The John Thomas Collins Scholarship, for children of members participating in the Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA). This covers Divisions, Auxiliaries and Members at-Large in the following states: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Indians, and children, and stepchildren, of BR&CF members who are in aid of post-secondary schools or may be attending or enrolled as full-time students in accredited post-secondary schools.

International President J.M. Robb advises that 20 scholarships of $1,000 each are awarded every year.

BLET Division 57

TWO $250 SCHOLARSHIPS are available to children of BLET Division 57 members (Boston, Mass.). The scholarships are awarded to college-bound high school seniors, and will be given on the basis of their score on a labor history exam, administered by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. While the Division 57 scholarship is limited to children of that division’s members, the general AFL-CIO scholarship competition is open to all BLET members living in Massachusetts. This year’s test will be given on February 4. Members are advised to make preparations in fall 2009 if they wish to apply for the 2010 scholarship.

Employees of BNSF Railway

THE BURLINGTON NORTHERN Santa Fe Foundation Scholarship Program began accepting requests for applications on Jan. 1, 2009, and applications must be post marked by April 1, 2009. The program will award 35 scholarships, $2,500 each, for the 2009-2010 academic school year. The program is available to current high school seniors who are the dependent sons, daughters or stepchildren of full-time BNSF employees or retired, disabled or deceased employees of BNSF or its predecessor companies. Full-time employees must have at least two years of service as of Jan. 1, 2008, and must still be employed by BNSF when winners are selected in April. For details, visit www.bnsf.com or call BNSF at: (817) 352-1000.

BLET Auxiliary and Eastern Union Meeting Association

THE BLET AUXILIARY offers the children of BLET members, who are already enrolled in college, $1,000 scholarships. The scholarships are administered by the Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA), said Walter H. Nutter of Division 57.

Eligibility questions should be directed to Jim Lance, IWC Secretary-Treasurer at kidem@jets. net.

All applications should be mailed to: Anita J. Caruso, National Secretary, 3341 S. 112th Street, Omaha, NE 68144-4709. For details, email Sister Caruso at: bunne@jets.net.

The BLET’s CALIFORNIA legislative board offers a scholarship each year to a graduating senior who will attend college, trade or vocational school in the coming year. The applicant’s parent or guardian must be a BLET member in good standing, and in a Division represented by the California State Legislative Board.

Last year, the Board offered two $1,000 scholarships. Applications and deadline information are available on the Board’s website. All applications must be mailed to: CLET’s home office address: California State Legislative Board, BLET/BET, 610 Auburn Ravine Rd., Suite C Auburn, CA 95603.

The applicant’s score on a labor history exam, administered by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, is the determining factor in selecting winners.

The Auxiliary forms and the labor history exam study guide are available on the Division 57 website. For details, email Brother Nutter, or visit the Massachusetts AFL-CIO website.

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California State Legislative Board

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BLET Division 11

BLET DIVISION 11 (New York, N.Y.) awards one-time $500 scholarship annually to a child of any active member of Division 11 who pays local dues each month. Children who win are not eligible again. Deadline is June 1 and the winner will be announced at the June Division meeting. For details, contact Division 11 Sec.-Treas. Lorna K. Stevens at 1970 Veterans Hwy., Apt. C18, Levittown, PA 19056-2323, or email her at: STble11@comcast.net.

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Brotherhood’s Relief and Compensation Fund

THE BROTHE RHOOD’S RELIEF and Compensation Fund is pleased to provide opportunities for the sons and daughters of BLET and Auxiliary members to participate in the Lather G. Smith Scholarship Program.

Children, including adopted and step-children, of BLET members who are in “Good and Regular Standing” are eligible. Applicants must be 27 years of age or younger. Applicants may be current high school students who have applied for admission as full-time students in accredited post-secondary schools or may be attending or enrolled as full-time students in accredited post-secondary schools.

International President J.M. Robb advises that 20 scholarships of $1,000 each are awarded every year.

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The Auxiliary forms and the labor history exam study guide are available on the Division 57 website. For details, email Brother Nutter, or visit the Massachusetts AFL-CIO website.
The Craft Scholarship Fund (MWRCSF) is available to children of railroad workers each year. The deadline for applications is June 15, 2009. Furthermore, the Teamster membership is required by the application form, including proof of enrollment in an accredited college, university or institution of higher learning. Only divisions belonging to the SWCM are eligible. Additional information is provided on the application form, which is available on the BLET website at: http://www.blet.org/pdf/swcmapp.pdf.

Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM)

The Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM) awards approximately two dozen scholarships annually in academic achievement and financial need. The applicant must be a son, daughter or grandchild of a Teamster member or retired BLET member whose division participates in the SWCM. Divisions must be current with their annual Convention Meeting. Applicants must be in high school, or expect to enter college in the fall, or to starting date for the BLET Regional Meetings.

O B I T U A R I E S

Former La. SLBC Cooksey Humphrey, 1923-2008

Cooksey Humphrey, 85, was member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen for the last 60 consecutive years, having joined the Brotherhood in 1948. He was a fixture at BLET regional meetings over the years, particularly the Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM). In the late 1990s, he was presented with a 50-year membership badge, and at the SWCM in Shreveport, La., in 2007.

“Cooksey’s friendly demeanor and trademark cigar will be fondly remembered by all,” BLET National President Ed Rodzwicz said. “He was a true Brother and friend who will be sadly missed. I extend my deepest condolences to everyone in Cooksey’s family.”

He was born June 21, 1923. He started his railroad career in 1941 as a fireman for the Illinois Central Railroad in Bossier City. He was fired on July 9, 1943, and earned promotion to engineer on Dec. 22, 1943. He served in the army during World War II as a member of the Railroad Operating Battalion from 1943-1946, and received a Good Conduct Medal and a European Ribbon with two stars.

Brother Humphrey became a member of BLE Division 326 on April 3, 1950, and served as its secretary-treasurer and local chairman prior to his election as Chairman of the Louisiana State Legislative Board. He held that position for 21 years, from 1964-1985.

Brother Humphrey made his last run on March 1, 1985 from Bossier City, La. to Vicksburg, Miss. In addition to his railroad work, Cooksey also played professional baseball in the Boston Braves system from 1946-1950.

Cooksey married his wife, Martha, on Jan. 30, 1947. He is survived by: his wife; four children; and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Brother Humphrey passed his love of railroading on to two of his sons. One son, Buster, was a locomotive engineer for the Kansas City Southern and member of BLET Division 599 (Shreveport, La.). His other son, Bruce, was a fireman for the Illinois Central from 1962-1978.

Following retirement, Cooksey enjoyed passing the time by playing golf, attending several BLET conventions a year, and attending baseball games and LSU Tigers college football games.

Josh Mills, 14-YEAR-OLD HONORARY ENGINEER LOSES BATTLE WITH CANCER

Josh Mills and his father, Tony, at the CSX yard in Flint, Mich., on February 23, 2008.

Josh Mills, the young man granted a special wish by the BLET and CSX last year, succumbed to his battle with cancer on November 21. He passed away on his 14th birthday.

In November 2007, Josh’s family discovered that he had terminal brain cancer. His uncle reached out to BLET because Josh was such a lover of trains, CSX and BLET, as well as UTU members, worked to give Josh and his family some special memories that would last a lifetime.

On February 23, 2008, Josh was made an “Honorary Locomotive Engineer” by the BLET and was given a behind the scenes tour of the CSX rail yard in Flint, Mich. He also enjoyed an authentic railroad lunch served in a vintage cook car, toured the inside of an actual locomotive, and even got to meet an official CSX railroad police dog. Max.

The tumor, called glioblastoma multiforme, was not a solid mass that could easily be removed. Josh’s father Tony said it was the most aggressive type of brain tumor and compared it to painting the inside of a brain — spreading mass that was difficult, if not impossible, to remove.

Large portions of the tumor were removed at least twice, but the cancer came back more aggressively each time.

Josh was doing well in early summer and attended a “Make A Wish” trip to Sacramento, Calif., in June. However, he began having complications in late summer and early fall, then his health declined rapidly in October and November.

Following the February visit to the CSX yard in Flint, Mich., Josh’s dad Tony sent profuse thanks to both BLET and CSX.

“Josh had a day he will never forget,” Tony said. “You guys are first class. Things like this go a long way toward keeping faith in human kindness. Thank you for giving Josh one of the best days of his life.”

After reading about Josh in the Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen News, several BLET members from across the nation sent Josh care packages, cards and gifts.

Josh requested that he be cremated and his ashes placed in the firebox of a steam locomotive that runs on a tourist line in Standish, Mich., where his grandparents live. The owners of the rail line accommodated Josh’s request, and his ashes were placed in a pine box made by his grandfather. It was placed in the firebox of the locomotive for a “Santa Train” excursion on December 21.
BLET looking for Human Rights Commission volunteers

In today’s world everyone is extremely busy, but it’s important for all of us to remember, “Teamsters are people helping people.” The International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) has valuable resources to assist the membership, but many times the needs are not met because there has not been a system in place to field membership questions or concerns.

The Teamsters Human Rights Commission can do that for you, and the BLET is asking each BLET Division to appoint a local representative (or representatives) to the Teamsters Human Rights Commission.

The Human Rights Commission Representative will network with the leaders and members in your area on Human Rights issues, making sure they know about Teamster programs that provide assistance to the membership.

For example, the Teamsters Disaster Relief Fund, the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund, IBT Community Service, and the Helmets to Hardhats programs all fall under the umbrella of the Human Rights Commission.

Margo Storsteen, a Locomotive Engineer and member of BLET Division 57 in Boston, serves as the BLET’s National Representative on the Human Rights Commission, while Bill Walpert, BLET National Secretary-Treasurer, is Human Rights Director for the BLET.

In early December, Sister Storsteen and BLET National President Ed Rodziewicz went to a Human Rights Commission packet to each BLET Division, which explains the program in much more details. Also included in the packet is a letter requesting that each Division appoint a representative to the Human Rights Commission.

“The Commission was established to be an educational arm for the IBT to ensure that affiliated Teamster leaders have programs available to assist them with human rights issues,” Walpert said. “The Representative from each Division will be the backbone for several initiatives we have planned.”

Sister Storsteen will network with each local representative appointed by BLET Divisions and will coordinate all BLET programs with those individuals.

“We are at the beginning of this process and in much need of volunteers,” Sister Storsteen said.

Anyone with questions should contact Sister Storsteen at (781) 883-3443, or email Margoblet57@comcast.net.

Service, and the Helmets to Hardhats programs all fall under the umbrella of the Human Rights Commission.

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**Letters to the Editor**

**Editor’s note:** Occasionally, a member will take the time to sit down and write a letter to the Local Chairman thanking him for his help and dedication. This member did exactly that and is something that deserves being shared with the entire BLET.

Mr. Pat Williams, General Chairman

Dear Sir:

The purpose of this letter is to convey our deepest appreciation and gratitude from myself and my family. Mr. Todd Byrd, my Local Chairman (Division 398, San Bernardino, Calif.), and Mr. Rudy Borrego, Local Chairman of Division 662 (Los Angeles, Calif.), intervened and represented me concerning my decertification on December 3, 2008.

Mr. Byrd handled my withheld from service status and arranged meetings with carrier supervisors along with Mr. Borrego. They helped to resolve the alleged rule violation and the decertification.

The professionalism and pursuit of justice displayed by Mr. Byrd and Mr. Borrego resulted in my reinstatement.

Many times our membership questions the validity of having a Union and what the Division has accomplished. The tireless efforts and dedication by Brother Byrd and Brother Borrego obtaining my reinstatement is a sterling example of superior representation. Brother Byrd’s deportment in handling my case was exceedingly timely and beyond my expectations.

With two Local Chairmen of this caliber and the above stated professional performance, my 35 years as a member of the BLET has not been a waste. My tenure as an Engineer is drawing to a close. I’m truly proud to know that such able professionals as Mr. Byrd and Mr. Borrego will be available to our membership.

Extending a Happy Holiday season to you and your family.

Fraternally,

Richard E. Poore

Locomotive Engineer

Division 398, San Bernardino, Calif.

Dear Editor:

I just finished reading an article on your website titled “Drones annually commit suicide by train.”

My heart hurt reading it. I am the widow of a man who committed suicide by train in 2005.

One of the things I did was contact the train company. I asked them to please forward a note to the engineers and train crew telling them I didn’t blame them. I wanted them to know that I actually felt so awful for them to have seen all and how horrific it must have been for them.

I still suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder resulting from it.

I was — and still am — haunted by train whistles blowing. I can’t even look at pictures of trains without “going there.” But a friend had me do an exercise. If I could talk to the whistle, then I would say, “Thank you for doing everything you could to save Brian’s life. I know it’s not your fault.”

I’ve always included the engineers in my prayers for finding peace of mind.

We all have to work through this horror and trauma some how. If my words can help ease a bit of that for even one engineer, then it is a good thing.

Thank you for reading. This is just something I felt I needed to share.

— Vicki Alden
A gift that comes straight from the heart

H e's not Santa Claus, but Brother K.C. Kyer, a BNSF locomotive engineer and Local Chairman of BLET Division 647 (Phoenix, Ariz.), has spent the last nine years helping to make wishes come true for hundreds of children.

Brother Kyer volunteers, organizes and operates a unique passenger train ride each year for seriously ill and/or needy children in the Phoenix area. The special train ride is a cooperative effort with the BNSF Railway and the Make A Wish Foundation.

But it was Brother Kyer who got the wheels rolling.

He organized the first train ride in 2000 when his five-year-old son, Scott, was diagnosed with his first of two brain tumors. He endured a second in 2005.

“We were taking him to see a doctor about a brain tumor, and the doc-tor’s office was next to Make A Wish of- fices,” said Brother Kyer, who joined the Brotherhood on February 1, 1994. “One thing led to another and I approached BNSF management about the idea and they basically said I could run the train. I never imagined that going on 10 years later we would still be doing it.”

Since that first year, more than 1,000 children who were sick or less fortunate were able to enjoy the train ride and see their special wish come true. In 2007, 347 children and their parents rode the train, and as many as 425 enjoyed the ride a few years ago.

The 2007 run was especially important to Brother Kyer and all the volunteers.

With a little help from the Brother- hood of Locomotive Engineers and Train men and hundreds of volunteers, Santa delivered 18 tons of gifts, candy and food to those in need as part of the 66th an-nual CSX Santa Claus Special.

BLET Locomotive Engineer Allen Hughes, a member of Division 781 in Erwin, Tenn., was behind the throttle of the Santa Train as it wound its way along the 110-mile route through the rural mountain communities of eastern Ken-tucky, western Virginia and northeast Tennessee.

Brother Hughes piloted the Santa Train without a hitch and kept everyone safe and on schedule. It was his first time oper-ating the Santa Train.

Hughes began railroading in 1986 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1998. He holds a regular yard assign-ment in Kingsport, Tenn., but is intri-cately familiar with the Santa Train route from Pikeville, Ky., to Kingsport, Tenn. He held down a regular run on that ter-ritory for eight years prior to taking his current yard assignment.

The Santa Train is one of Appalachia’s most anticipated holiday traditions, es-pecially this year since the economy has Wickenburg. The train then turns around and runs back to Glendale. To-tal mileage is approximately 100 miles, and running time is about 3 hours and 15 minutes.

“The first year I used equipment from the Arizona Railway Museum in Chandler, Ariz.,” Kyer said. “The second year BNSF asked if I would like some of the BNSF business cars, and the rest is history.”

Those business cars make the train ride an even more personal journey for Brother Kyer.

“My dad was a Santa Fe locomotive engineer in Los Angeles and I vividly remember him running the Super Chief and San Diego when I was growing up,” Kyer said. “Some of the equipment BNSF lets me use was pulled on the Super Chief by my father, so it gives me a connection to him as well.”

Brother Kyer credits BLET members in Los Angeles for providing him with the inspiration for organizing the ride. He said they’ve been operating a similar ride for needy children for almost 20 years.

“BLET National President Ed Rodzwick commended Brother Kyer for his efforts, and thanked him and all other BLET members who volunteer their time to such worthwhile causes. “Over the years, Brother Kyer and his volunteers have given hundreds of fam-ilies in need a gift — treasured memories to last a lifetime,” President Rodzwick said. “That is truly special gift, and one that comes straight from the heart.”

BLET helps Santa spread good cheer

S preading good will and holiday cheer, Santa Claus made his an-nual visit to Appalachia the week-end of November 22. But he swapped his sleigh and reindeer for a ride on a CSX train.

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The CSX Santa Claus Special makes its 66th annual run in 2008. The mountains. It was inspired by the 2006 mining disaster in Sago, W.Va., that killed 12 miners.

Many of the songs on the album re-reflect the experiences of Mattea’s own family. Both of her grandfathers were coal miners and her parents grew up in coal camps.

“Mattea, 49, is a two-time Grammy winner who has four No. 1 country hits to her credit, including “Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses.” For Brother Hughes, the Santa Train experience was about giving back and helping those in need. But his most re-warding memory came at the end of the run. Brother Hughes’s wife, Lee, brought their seven-year-old son, Allen Jr., to Kingsport to see his dad pull the Santa Train into town.

“He was so excited,” Hughes said. “He liked it a lot.”

Allen Hughes, a member of BLET Division 781 [Erwin, Tenn.], said the highlight of operating the CSX Santa Claus Special this year was seeing his 7-year-old son, Allen Jr., as the train arrived in Kingsport, Tenn. "It hit that portion of Appalachia so hard. “The coal mines closed down and there’s not much work there,” Hughes said. “But it was rewarding to get to do something nice for the kids. There were great crowds this year and lots of kids. There were record turn outs at some of the stops.”

Goods, gifts and merchandise came in from 39 states for the Santa Train ef-fort. There were 18 tons of gifts, candy and food provided, and more than 5,000 gift bags were distributed at 14 stops along the route.

The Santa Train is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce in Kingsport, Tenn., CSX Transportation Inc., and Food City Grocers of Abingdon, Va. Next to Santa, the biggest celebrity on the train was country singer Kathy Mat-tea. She said her new CD “Coat” describes the hardships that many miners face in

At Mobest Yard in Phoenix (from left) on November 2, 2007. Trainmaster Brian Hurt, Engineer Steve Coffey, BLET Local Chairman K.C. Kyer (wearing hat), Joseph Thurman (in wheelchair) and Engineer Wendy Candler. Joeop, 10, was taken on board a locomotive that day, and then rode on the special passenger train on November 3, 2007. He passed away on November 12, 2007.

“We had a 10 year old boy from Phoe-nix Children’s Hospital who wanted to see the inside of a locomotive,” Kyer said. “We had him down at Mobest Yard the day before the passenger train ran and we took him up on an engine. He was given gifts from the BLET, United Trans-portation Union, and BNSF.”

“He rode the passenger train the next day (November 3, 2007), and he passed away on November 12. It was a sobering experience and a very real reminder of the reason we run this train each year.”

Children who participate in the ride are typically nominated by: Make A Wish Foundation; Phoenix Children’s Hospital; Camp Rainbow, Center for Burns and Trauma, Arise Children’s Foster Care, and Arizonans for Children.

“Arizonaans for Children provides a magician and clown as well as face paint-ers,” Kyer said. “Arizona Operation Life-saver provides materials for the kids and talks to them about safety.”

The train runs with a four-man vol-unteer crew each year.

“I use the same crew, changing out the brakeman each year to give other people a chance to work on it,” Kyer said. “Other volunteers, including those from the Young Women’s program at the LDS Church Rose Garden Ward, work as car attendants and serve drinks and snacks. Paramedics and a doctor are also on board.”

The run is from Glendale, Ariz., to Matthie, which is five miles east of

Inside a BNSF locomotive on November 2, 2007. BLET Local Chairman K.C. Kyer and 10-year-old Joseph Thurman.

Brother Kyer piloted the first train, and running time is about 3 hours and 15 minutes.

“Over the years, Brother Kyer and his volunteers have given hundreds of fam-ilies in need a gift — treasured memories to last a lifetime,” President Rodzwick said. “That is truly special gift, and one that comes straight from the heart.”

www.blet.org
Whether you are married to an “old hired railroader,” an injured employee, or you have probably been told little or nothing about what happens after a railroad employee sustains an injury at work. This article will give you a basic overview of how railroads deal with injured employees, what law governs the injury compensation process, and what to expect and be prepared to do if your spouse is injured in the course and scope of his or her employment with the railroad.

None of this information is specific to any given railroad because the same laws apply to any “common carrier by rail engaged in interstate commerce,” and Class I railroads all the way down to the smallest short-line railroads typically treat injured employees the same way. The common theme is that when an employee is injured he or she becomes a liability claimant and represents a potentially large payout to the railroad. Because of this, all railroads have highly trained “claims agents” whose job it is to keep the employee’s (and the railroad’s) lawyers from getting the upper hand. Despite the claims agent’s assertions that “they are there to help you,” the claims agent’s sole function is to minimize the amount of money the carrier (railroad) may have to pay an injured employee.

Unfortunately, the first inkling a spouse may have that an injury has occurred may be a mischievous call from the emergency room of a hospital, often located many miles from home. If there has been a death, a claims agent or a company official will knock on the door to personally notify the family. When an employee is hurt on the job, the railroad will see that injured employee gets to a hospital, often accompanied by a company official. The company official will attempt to steer the injured person to a “company doctor.” You should be aware that you have the absolute right to choose your own doctors, providers and treatment facilities. The railroad has no right to:

- have a representative present when treatment is given;
- speak to doctors or medical personnel providing treatment;
- suggest what medications are prescribed or not to be prescribed (i.e., a narcotic that would preclude the employee from returning to work);
- certain no right to obtain medical records without the express consent of the employee. If your spouse is in a hospital, you need to get there as quickly as possible and demand that company officials leave the care decisions to you, your spouse, and your spouse’s physicians. Do not let anyone get statements or accident reports from your spouse at the hospital. Accident reports cannot wait, and should never be ever completed and signed by your spouse while under pain and discomfort or while on medication. Call your spouse’s local chairman and take a union representative with you if possible. Call an attorney who specializes in FELA (Federal Employer’s Liability Act) claims, whose job it will be to help you and your spouse and to prevent the railroad from taking unfair advantage of their injured employee. In the event a catastrophic accident has occurred, you and your spouse will be left to starve to death. You and your spouse will be left to starve to death.

If the injury is serious, you will be well advised to hire a FELA attorney, not some divorce or car-wreck lawyer. Because FELA practice is very specialized it is essential that, if your spouse has been injured, you hire a bona fide Federal Employer’s Liability Act (FELA) attorney to represent your interests.

To help you choose an attorney, the BLE has what are called “Designated Legal Counsel” or D.L.C. In order an attorney to be appointed D.L.C. — of which there are few in the country — the attorney must have a proven track record in FELA cases, he or she must be recognized as authoritative in railroad law, and he or she must be chosen by the unions as an excellent lawyer in representing union members in legal matters. If there is an on-the-job injury, don’t wait to hire your attorney. If an attorney is hired early on, they can prevent you or your spouse from inadvertently damaging the case and the case’s possible outcome.

To help you in the event of an injury I am providing the following “checklist” of essential data that you should keep easily accessible in the event of an accident, as well as some generally useful legal suggestions for any household.

**Checklist:**

- Do you both have at least a simple will?**
- Do you have a durable power of attorney?**
- Do you have a healthcare power of attorney?**
- Do you have a disability insurance policy?**
- Do you carry UM/UIM and PIP uninsured/underinsured motorist and personal injury protection on your auto policy? If not, get it. You will be hiding in compa ny’s “limousines,” and if there’s a wreck you might well need the additional coverage.

The name and phone number of my local chairman:

President:

Vice local chairman:

General chairman:

Submitted by:

Bryan R. Cartell
The Cartell Law Firm
800-880-7245

**The Education & Training Department**

concluded its 2008 series of workshops with a class for Secretary-Treasurers in Cleveland, Ohio, from December 14-17. National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert heads the Education & Training Department. Course attendees and instructors are as follows:

**Front row (L-R):** Tom Woodf, ST Div. 333; Tracy Jensen, ST Div. 200; Ken KoegeCoordinator of Education & Training & Special Representative; William Walpert NST & Director of Education & Training; Jeffrey Grayson, ST Div. 555; Bob Brown Records Department Direc tor; and Vol Schmidt, Webmaster. Second row (L-R): Mark Manthey, ST Div. 369; Brent Lee, ST Div. 163; Gary Myers, ST Div. 301; William Brooks, ST Div. 454; Rusty Grose, ST Div. 537; Third row (L-R): Stephen Whitman, ST Arizona SIB; Chet Dworakowski, ST Div. 234; James Cleary, Alternate ST Denver; David Satterfield, ST Div. 284; Jesse Ingram, ST Div. 508; Fourth row (L-R): Jake Teckler, Alternate ST Denver; 416; Joe Prazio, ST Div. 306; Steven Oslander, ST Div. 178; Randall Jordan, ST Div. 327; Ron Oram, ST Div. 273; Paul Pearson, ST Colorado SIB; Richard Green, ST Div. 214; James Daddio, ST New York SIB; and Daniel Kaner, Alternate ST Montana SIB. Fifth row (L-R): Samuel De Courcey, ST Div. 274; Paul Rodenbucker, ST Div. 273; James Bryant, ST Div. 846; Charles Weck, ST North Dakota SIB; and Dr. Elaine Reese, Office of Tax Compliance Director.

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Rail Conference fights for safe workplace rules

Recently the Teamsters Rail Conference went on record pledging to fight a new Labor Department rule proposed by the Bush administration that would make it much harder for the government to regulate toxic substances and hazardous chemicals that railroad workers are exposed to. They believe that all workers deserve a safe workplace. And, it’s not surprising that the Bush administration would try to push through this new rule as a gift to big business before leaving office. We will work with the new Congress and the Obama administration to overturn this rule, should it be issued.

It is well known that the rapid increase in freight rail traffic has also meant that more and more railroad workers are exposed to toxic materials. Shipments of toxic ammonia and other chemicals used for cleaning tap water are one example. Shipments of toxic ammonia and other hazardous materials used for cleaning the nation’s rail lines.

There is also the risk of moving toxic materials that are exposed to toxic materials. Shipments of toxic ammonia and other hazardous materials used for cleaning the nation’s rail lines.

The 2008 Canadian National-Illinois Central Santa Claus Train heads north bound on the Holly subdivision going around the wye at Durand, Mich., headed toward Battle Creek on December. 21. Photo taken by Fred Alnor, a member of BLET Division 850 in Flat Rock, Mich.