BLET distributes checks from Perrien Fund in Hurricane Harvey relief effort

OVER $91,000 DISTRIBUTED TO IMPACTED MEMBERS IN LATE DECEMBER 2017

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the BLET’s National Division Advisory Board approved an expansion of its Gary Perrien Fund to provide financial assistance to members living in Texas and Louisiana who had suffered losses from the storm. Thanks to the generosity of BLET members and officers, the Perrien Fund raised more than $91,000, which was distributed to impacted members in the days before Christmas.

On December 20, 2017, the BLET’s Executive Committee—consisting of National President Dennis R. Pierce, First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt, and National Secretary-Treasurer Stephen J. Bruno—mailed the checks to 17 members. “While no one can ever be made completely whole having endured such an event, it is our hope that this small token of generosity from the membership of our Brotherhood will help in your recovery from this Disaster,” they wrote. The Gary Perrien Fund was originally established by action of the delegates at BLET’s Second National Convention in 2010. Brother Gary Perrien, then an active member serving on the Convention’s Arrangements Committee, fell ill and the delegates passed the hat to assist in his recovery. In a televised report back to the convention from his hospital bed, Brother Perrien asked that the funds be used to help those more needy than him, leading the delegates and the Advisory Board to later create the Gary Perrien Fund. Brother Perrien recovered and retired in the years following the 2010 Convention. As part of the expansion of the Fund in August, the BLET Advisory Board also authorized President Pierce’s request that $20,000 be transferred from the Union’s General Fund to the Perrien Fund as part of the associated fund raising effort on behalf of the Union’s members harmed by the storm. In the days and weeks that followed more than 70 BLET General Committees of Adjustment, State Legislative Boards, Local Divisions, and individual members made donations to more than quadruple the National Division’s initial $20,000 gift.

“I am proud of the overwhelming level of generosity shown by our members, officers, Divisions, State Legislative Boards, and General Committees of Adjustment,” President Pierce said. “For nearly 155 years now, our Brotherhood has thrived on the principle of members helping members and this is a shining example of what it means to be a Brotherhood.”

DASHING THROUGH THE SNOW

Operating with BNSF power, Norfolk Southern train 380 slithers south through the rolling hills of the NS West Virginia Secondary near Arbuckle, W.Va., on February 4, 2014, following a wet snowfall the day before.

Photo: Chase Gunnoe
ELECTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES – FELA UNDER ATTACK IN INDIANA

This year marks the 110th anniversary of the Federal Employers’ Liability Act (FELA). Congress passed FELA in 1908 for the purpose of providing compensation to railroad employees who are injured on the job. It was created at a time when working conditions were so perilous that 12,000 railroad workers were killed on the job in 1908 alone—that’s over 32 fatalities per day.

Unlike state worker compensation systems, damages paid to an injured railroad worker under FELA are not capped by some one-size-fits-all chart. FELA damages are based upon the severity and permanency of an injury, and include all economic damages, plus pain and suffering.

It should come as no surprise, then, the railroads have made numerous attempts over the years to weaken or repeal FELA. If the industry was to succeed in this effort, literally millions of dollars would be transferred from the pockets of injured and deceased railroad workers and their families to the carriers’ already swollen bottom lines.

In one of my messages to you two years ago, I discussed the subject of FELA and explained in detail about its history, its importance to railroaders, and how the carriers have repeatedly tried to repeal it over the years. In that piece, I warned BLET members to consider carefully how their votes would be cast and urged you to all to strongly support labor-friendly candidates. It should come as no surprise, then, the railroads have made numerous attempts over the years to weaken or repeal FELA. If the industry was to succeed in this effort, literally millions of dollars would be transferred from the pockets of injured and deceased railroad workers and their families to the carriers’ already swollen bottom lines.

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In late December, BLET National Division Chairman Brian J. Farkas alerted the National Division that an anti-worker, anti-FELA bill would be considered by the Indiana General Assembly in early 2018. As introduced, Indiana Senate Bill No. 436 (S.B. 436) would allow railroads to seek damages from third parties to offset their financial obligations in the event they are found negligent and lose a FELA case in court. The original bill would have allowed railroads to sue the injured employee’s co-workers as third parties if their negligence contributed to the injury. Adding insult to injury, the law was crafted in such a way that corporations whose negligence causes or contributes to occupational diseases were exempt from such potential claims. In other words, workers were targeted for lawsuits while corporations were exempted. This is what happens when pro-corporation politicians act on behalf of their benefactors. Section 5 of S.B. 436 stated that a railroad “does not have a right of action of contributory negligence against a third party under this chapter if liable in whole or in part to an occupational disease.” In other words, Big Business—corporate manufacturers of locomotives that are excessively noisy or spew dangerous diesel fumes, and the manufacturers of tools that contribute to carpal tunnel syndrome, and the corporate manufacturers of the various toxins to which railroad workers are exposed in the workplace—all get a free pass. However, if the court determines that a railroad worker’s negligence contributed to the injury, it may be held to answer! The severity and permanency of an injury, and include all economic damages, plus pain and suffering.

It should come as no surprise, then, the railroads have made numerous attempts over the years to weaken or repeal FELA. If the industry was to succeed in this effort, literally millions of dollars would be transferred from the pockets of injured and deceased railroad workers and their families to the carriers’ already swollen bottom lines.
Democracy is supposed to function based on majority rule. But increasingly, elected officials are using their powers to draw legislative districts that don't accurately measure the will of the people.

There is nothing new about the process known as gerrymandering, where districts are sometimes drawn with little thought to reason. Instead, it is all about manipulating the electoral process to give an advantage to one side over the other.

The U.S. Supreme Court is currently considering a Wisconsin case that could make some headway in the discussion. In that case, state legislative districts are being contested. At the center of the argument is the "efficiency gap," a relatively new measure of partisan gerrymandering.

As The New York Times described it recently: "The efficiency gap measurement aims to summarize the effect of gerrymandering by identifying all of the wasted votes in victory and defeat for both parties. It then adds them up, finds the difference between the two sides, and divides that by the total number of votes in a state. This yields a single percentage figure: the efficiency gap. The creators of the measurement, Eric McGhee, research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, and Nicholas Stephanopoulos, professor at the University of Chicago Law School, propose that a gap of 7 percent or higher should be enough to find that a state may have committed an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander."

As it stands, there are currently 13 states with at least five congressional districts that violate this standard — 12 of which give an advantage to Republicans. They make a backwards "C" shape, running from the upper Midwest through much of the East Coast and into the deep South.

Gerrymandering is jeopardizing democracy, and the public is catching on. How else, for example, does one explain a North Carolina brewery whipping up a new beer called "Purple State" to raise money to fight the problem there?

In California, an independent panel made up of citizens redrew the district lines in the Golden State for the first time in the lead up to the 2012 vote, and the result was the election of congressional members who more accurately reflect the views of the electorate there.

Now that's democracy in action.

Fraternally,

James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President

The BLET Statement on Not-Guilty Verdict in Lac-Megantic Trial

Although it remains a travesty that criminal charges were ever filed, justice was served in the unanimous not guilty verdict issued by jurors in the Lac-Megantic trial in Sherbrooke, Quebec, on January 19, 2018.

The trial against three former employees of the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway (MMA) began in September of 2017, and the jury deliberated for nine days prior to reaching their verdict. The trial laid bare the dangerous tendency of certain rail carriers to cut corners on safety. Leading up to the tragedy of July 5, 2013, the MMA Railway had begun the dangerous practice of one-person train operations, and the trial exposed how employees were forced to work with equipment that contributed to the accident.

As the jurors rightly determined, blaming the workers for the Lac-Megantic catastrophe was the wrong thing to do. Railroading is a complex system of operations, and many factors go into a safe operation. Determining the root cause of this tragedy is more complex than simply blaming the workers, but that all too often is what many rail carriers and government agencies do.

Our hearts and prayers continue to be with the victims and their families who were touched by the tragedy of July 5, 2013. It is our hope they — and the three workers who were wrongly accused — can find some closure from this verdict.

Train engineer Thomas Harding leaves the courtroom after hearing the verdict on Friday, January 19, 2018 in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Photo: THE CANADIAN PRESS/Ryan Remiorz
Each year, the BLET National Division compiles a list of scholarship opportunities available to the children of BLET members. Numerous financial aid opportunities are published here in the 2018 BLET Scholarship Directory. The scholarship opportunities vary widely. The following comprehensive list provides members and their families with a starting point from which scholarship programs are pursued. The BLET National Division does not maintain its own scholarship program, so interested parties are advised to contact the individual scholarship providers listed below for additional information.

Those aware of additional scholarship opportunities not included in this Directory are urged to contact the BLET Public Relations Department at: Bentley@ble-t.org.

The 2018 BLET Scholarship Directory is as follows:

James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund is now accepting applications for 2018. The deadline to apply is March 31, 2018.

For the first time, the application process is completely online this year. All applications must be completed through the on-line portal found on the Fund’s website: https://www.jrhmsf.org. Applicants must complete a brief registration process in order to access the registration area, and should use the “Key” JRHMSF to begin the process.

There are two types of scholarship applications available: Academic Scholarships, which range up to $10,000, and Training/Vocational Scholarships, which range up to $2,000. The details and eligibility requirements for each type of scholarship are available on the Fund’s website at the link above.

In 2017, the Fund awarded $1.4 million in scholarship awards to students in the U.S. and Canada, including 43 winners from BLET families. The BLET boasts nine winners in the $10,000 scholarship category.

James R. Hoffa became a Teamster member in 1914 and served as General President for 14 years, and, in recognition of his tireless service to the union and its members, was honored as General President Emeritus for life. At the November 1999 General Executive Board meeting, then-General Secretary-Treasurer C. Thomas Keegel presented a resolution to establish the new scholarship fund. The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund (JRHMSF) website outlines eligibility requirements and application procedures.

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund is an independent organization established and registered as a tax-exempt entity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Fund is established solely to provide scholarships to the child or dependent of a member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and contributions to the Fund are deductible as charitable contributions to the extent permitted by law.

Assisting the sons, daughters and financial dependents of Teamster members with their educational goals is a tradition with which we are proud to continue.

For general questions about the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund, please call (855) 670-ISTS (4787) or Email: contactus@applyISTS.com.

BLET Auxiliary and LECMPA Scholarship Programs

The BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Program provides $1,000 scholarships to qualifying students who wish to pursue higher education. The Auxiliary also offers two $2,500 scholarships annually in collaboration with Locomotive Engineers and Conductors Mutual Protective Association (LECMPA). The two $2,500 scholarships are fully funded by LECMPA.

To apply for an Auxiliary Scholarship award, the applicant must be a son, daughter, stepson, or stepdaughter of a BLET Auxiliary member and a Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineer and Trainmen member (living or deceased), with each being a member at least one year. To qualify for the LECMPA-funded scholarships, the BLET member in the family must also be a member of LECMPA for no less than one year. Children of an unmarried BLET member who has been an Associate Member of the BLET Auxiliary for at least one year are also eligible.

In addition, applicants must be accepted for admission by an accredited university, college, trade school, or institute of higher learning. Recipients are chosen on the basis of academic record, leadership, character, and personal achievement.

Important: For high school seniors entering an institute of higher learning for the first time, a copy of ACT or SAT scores and a current copy of cumulative grade point average (GPA) must accompany the application. For graduate students or students returning to an institute of higher learning, a copy of last term’s (or most current) GPA must accompany the application. Applications submitted without these documents will not be considered.

The LECMPA-funded scholarships will be awarded to the two applicants who score the highest amongst those who qualify (by having one parent who is an Auxiliary member for at least one year, and one parent who is a BLET member and LECMPA member for at least one year). If an applicant meets the eligibility requirements for the LECMPA-funded scholarships but is not selected for one of the two $2,500 scholarships, he/she will still be eligible for a $1,000 scholarship.

Completed applications must be received by BLET Auxiliary Secretary Helen Brand (hbrand51@gmail.com) no later than April 1, 2018. Applications received after that date will not be considered.

Applications, instructions for scholarships, and mailing address for submission may be found on the Auxiliary website at http://www.bletauxiliary.net.

BLET UP-Southern Region GCA

The BLET’s Union Pacific-Southern Region General Committee of Adjustment (UP-SR GCA) offers annual scholarships ranging from $750 to $2,000. Applicants must be the son, daughter, financial dependent or ward of a UP-SR GCA member in good standing per the BLET Bylaws starting with the 2018-2019 school year.

The deadline for applications is March 1, 2018. The rules and application can be found at http://www.blet.org or by contacting UP-SR GCA Secretary-Treasurer Scott Pierikoski at upsgca@att.net.

California State Legislative Board

The BLET’s CSLB will award a $1,000 scholarship to a graduating high school senior attending a college/trade/vocational school in 2018. The applicant’s parent or guardian must be a member in good standing in a BLET division represented by the CSLB.

Rules, applications and deadline information are available on the Board’s website, www.cslb.ca.gov. The deadline is May 1, 2018.

All applications must be mailed to the CSLB Home Office address: California State Legislative Board, BLET/IBT, 610 Auburn Ravine Rd., Suite C, Auburn, CA 95603.
Illinois State Legislative Board
The BLET’s Illinois State Legislative Board is currently accepting applications for its Don Little Memorial Scholarship Fund, which was established in 2013. One $1,000 and two $500 scholarships will be awarded to applicants whose parent or guardian is a BLET member in good standing with a BLET Local Division represented by the Illinois State Legislative Board. Applicants must be 26 years of age or younger.

Brother Don Little was a locomotive engineer with Metra commuter rail in Chicago and a proud member of BLET Division 314 (Bensenville, Ill.) for 35 years. Brother Little served for more than 10 years on the Executive Committee of the Illinois State Legislative Board and always had a dream of establishing a scholarship program for the family members of fellow Brothers and Sisters who belonged to divisions chartered in Illinois. Unfortunately, brother Little passed away before his dream was realized.

In 2013, Paul Piekarski (Chairman of the Illinois State Legislative Board), Timothy Dunn (former Secretary-Treasurer of the Board), and several others helped to make Brother Little’s dream a reality.

Scholarship applications and all accompanying documents must be received by May 1, 2018. Specific eligibility requirements, detailed instructions and application forms are available for download from the BLET National Division website, http://wwwchile-torpr/pdf/Illinois_SLB_Scholarship_2018.pdf.

For questions or assistance in completing the application, contact Joyce A. Piekarski, Administrative Secretary, at (630) 969-0699 or Joyce.piekarski@gmail.com.

Wyoming State Legislative Board
The BLET’s Wyoming State Legislative Board (WYSLB) is again offering a scholarship program for the upcoming school year. First offered for the 2014 academic year, the scholarship deadline for 2018 is June 1, 2018.

Wyoming State Legislative Board Chairman Cory Runion said the Board will award either two $1,000 scholarships, or, in the event of a single applicant, one $1,000 scholarship each year to an immediate family member of a BLET member in good standing and holding membership in a Division chartered within the state of Wyoming. The scholarships will be awarded based on the application, along with any requested documentation, by the WYSLB scholarship committee.

Scholarship applications and all accompanying documents must be received by June 1 of each year. Specific eligibility requirements, detailed instructions and application forms (PDF) are available for download from the BLET National Division website, or can be requested from your Division Legislative Representative. Currently, the BLET has nine Divisions chartered in Wyoming — Division 31 (Bill); Division 294 (Bensonville, Ill.) for 35 years; Brother Don Little was a locomotive engineer with Metra commuter rail in Chicago and a proud member of BLET Division 314 (Bensenville, Ill.) for 35 years. Brother Little served for more than 10 years on the Executive Committee of the Illinois State Legislative Board and always had a dream of establishing a scholarship program for the family members of fellow Brothers and Sisters who belonged to divisions chartered in Illinois. Unfortunately, brother Little passed away before his dream was realized.

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For questions or assistance in completing the application, contact Joyce A. Piekarski, Administrative Secretary, at (630) 969-0699 or Joyce.piekarski@gmail.com.

BR&CF Scholarship Program
The Brotherhood’s Relief and Compensation Fund (BR&CF) is pleased to provide scholarship opportunities for the sons and daughters of BR&CF members to participate in the Luther G. Smith Scholarship Program. Children, including adopted and step-children, of BR&CF members who are “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 Jesse Taylor advises that 20 scholarships of $1,000 each are awarded every year. The BR&CF’s 2018 scholarship program commenced on October 1, 2017, with applications due on March 1, 2018. BR&CF Members with Questions may contact Linda Garber at (860) 253-7080. Members may obtain an application form by calling our toll-free number noted above, or writing to 2150 Linglestown Road, Harrisburg, PA 17110.

Union Plus Scholarships
Union Plus awarded approximately $150,000 in scholarships to 106 students in the 2017 Union Plus Scholarship Program. Individual awards ranged from $500 to $4,000. The deadline is January 31 each year. Rising education costs are making it difficult for many union families to afford the cost of tuition. That’s one reason Union Plus, which provides important consumer benefits to union members and retirees, offers a unique scholarship program. It has distributed more than $4.2 million in scholarships to 2,800 union members and their children since 1991. Recipients are selected based on academic ability, social awareness, financial need and appreciation of labor.

The students selected for university, college, trade or technical school scholarships represent a wide sampling of backgrounds, union affiliations, goals and accomplishments. The selection process is very competitive since Union Plus receives over 5,000 applications each year. The Union Plus Scholarship Program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation, supported in part by contributions from the provider of the Union Plus Credit Card. You do not need to be a Union Plus Credit Card holder to apply for this scholarship.

Visit the Union Plus website to learn more: www.unionplus.org/scholarships.

For more specifics, please visit the Division 622 website (www.blet622.com) and click on “Scholarship” or email lthomas@blet622.com. LECMPA
Job insurance is your ticket to value.

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• Claim payments are deposited to your account every week
• You are paid up to your policy limit even if you sign a waiver
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Transportation workers protecting each other since 1910

BLET Division 622
BLET Division 622 (Alliance, Neb.) will award two $500 scholarships in 2018. Only the children or dependents of Division 622 members are eligible to apply. Scholarship winners will be chosen at random during a Division meeting in August. Applications must be received by July 31, 2018.

For details, watch your Division 622 website (www.blet622.com) and click on “Scholarship” or email lthomas@blet622.com.

BR&CF Officers and Directors are Railroaders
160 years of railroad experience
New Members Start with 150 Days of Benefit Eligibility
Maximizes 365 days after 3 years of beneficial membership
Lowest Membership Dues in the Industry
$50,000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment Benefit
Applicable while on duty only

Lump Sum “Retirement” Benefit
$500 for the first 10 years of membership and $50 for each year thereafter

Education Scholarships
20 scholarships of $1,000 awarded each year

DAILY BENEFIT

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Call the BR&CF at (800) 233-7080 if you have any questions!
43 BLET families win Hoffa scholarships in 2017, including nine $10,000 winners

Forty-three BLET families were winners of scholarships from the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund in 2017, including nine $10,000 scholarship winners. The $10,000 awards are the highest honor bestowed by the Hoffa scholarship fund.

The bereaved family of Edwin R. Bird of BLET Division 692 (Tracy, Calif.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer; • Alexandra Cooper, daughter of Anthony D. Cooper of BLET Division 37 (Norton, Va.), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer; • Noah Damron, son of William B. Damron of BLET Division 698 (Ashland, Ky.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Parker DiPaolo, son of D. DiPaolo of BLET Division 26 (Richmond, Va.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Katherine and Maria Frascella, daughters of Joseph A. Frascella of BLET Division 373 (Trenton, N.J.), a union Pacific locomotive engineer; • Clarise Hawkins, daughter of Stanton Capers of BLET Division 140 (Mobile, Ala.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; and • Samuel Stewart, son of John H. Stewart of BLET Division 373 (Trenton, N.J.), a NJ Transit locomotive engineer.

There were 30 BLET winners in the $1,000 scholarship category. They are:

• Naomi Boyd, daughter of Michael A. Boyd Sr. of BLET Division 140 (Mobile, Ala.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Emily Cassidy, daughter of Gray Cassidy of BLET Division 155 (Decatur, Ill.), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer; • Maria Cimolin, daughter of Christopher A. Kopf of BLET Division 4 (Toledo, Ohio), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer; • Claire Cohlhofer, daughter of Steve R. Cohlhofer of BLET Division 158 (Sparks, Nev.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer; • Ryée Crockett, daughter of Alan D. Crockett of BLET Division 777 (Argentine, Kan.), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer; • Madeline Cushman, daughter of Gregory J. Cushman of BLET Division 871 (Santon, Texas), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer; • Michael Davis, son of Michael H. Davis of BLET Division 332 (Montgomery, Ala.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Olivia Elkins, daughter of Mark A. Elkins of BLET Division 270 (Russell, Ky.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Dylan Ernsedt, son of Paul Yale of BLET Division 362 (Allentown, N.J.), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer; • Madison Faller, daughter of Charles C. Faller of BLET Division 275 (Pensacola, Fla.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Mason Flower, son of Keith A. Flower of BLET Division 462 (Arkansas City, Kan.), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer; • Tristan Hill, son of T.L. Hill of BLET Division 811 (Clovis, N.M.), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer; • Jessica Kaden, daughter of C.J. Kaden of BLET Division 542 (Detroit, Mich.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Ethan Leonard, son of Michael B. Leonard of BLET Division 2 (Toledo, Ohio), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer; and • Reilly McGovern, daughter of J.J. McGovern IV of BLET Division 644 (Galax, Va.), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer; • Melissa Meyer, daughter of D.R. Meyer of BLET Division 487 (Topeka, Kan.), a PATH locomotive engineer; • Reanna Moll, daughter of Christopher A. Moll of BLET Division 398 (San Bernardino, Calif.), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer; • Claire Nickels, daughter of Michael W. Coleman of BLET Division 561 (Richmond, Va.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Jacob Norman, son of Jesse W. Norman of BLET Division 578 (Tulsa, Okla.), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer; • Blake Pearson, son of Bobby E. Pearson of BLET Division 779 (Manchester, Ga.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Breanna Pye, daughter of Michael B. Pye Jr. of BLET Division 796 (Pittsburgh, Pa.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Abigail Reese, daughter of Perry E. Reese of BLET Division 508 (Puyallup, Wash.), a CNOIC locomotive engineer; • Hadyn Rosenkranz, son of Gary H. Rosenkranz of BLET Division 846 (Salt Lake City, Utah), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer; • Coleman Schuster, son of C.A. Schuster of BLET Division 444 (East St. Louis, Ill.), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer; • William Stone, son of Ted R. Stone of BLET Division 88 (North Platte, Neb.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer; • Aftsa Thomas, daughter of Eric D. Thomas of BLET Division 681 (Milledgeville, Utah), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer; and • Madison Vangerven, daughter of Richard C. VanGerven of BLET Division 285 (Thayer, Mo.), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer.

There were four BLET winners in the Vocational Scholarship category, ranging up to $2,000:

• Spencer Cogdill, son of Michael L. Cogdill of BLET Division 78 (Louisville, Ky.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; • Isabella Jaramillo, daughter of Don L. Jaramillo of BLET Division 622 (Alliance, Neb.), a BNSF Railway locomotive engineer; • John Ethan Jenkins, son of John E. Jenkins of BLET Division 265 (Florence, S.C.), a CSSX locomotive engineer; and • Kaier Meyer, son of Kevin S. Meyer of BLET Division 724 (Salina, Kan.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer.

About the Scholarships: The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund awards scholarships annually to outstanding high school seniors. The next application deadline is March 31, 2018. Recipients are selected by an impartial committee of university admissions and financial aid directors based on academic achievement, SAT/ACT scores, character, potential and financial need. The Teamsters consider all applicants without regard to race, religion, gender, disability, or any other legally protected status. In 2017 the Fund awarded $1.4 million in scholarships. For more information, please visit the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund website (http://www.jrhmsf.org).
**SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDS 15**

In 2016, delegates attending the BLET Union Convention recognized General Council and Committee of Adjustment’s quadrennial meeting voted unanimously to establish the UPSR Scholarship Program. The program was created to help students secure much needed financial assistance to help offset the ever-rising costs of higher education.

The inaugural UPSR Scholarship Program awarded 15 students — children of members of the UPSR GCA — with financial scholarships for the 2017-2018 academic school year. The UPSR Scholarship Program is open to all children of financial dependents of members of the UPSR GCA in good standing, and are recent high school graduates or current college students. Applicants were evaluated on financial need, scholastic achievements, and were required to submit a written essay titled, “Why Labor Unions are still important in today’s world.” We are proud to have been able to provide some financial assistance to these students to help them reach their educational goals. We wish them the best of luck in their studies.

Chairman Dana Marlow said, “We are proud to announce the scholarship award amounts ranged from $750 to $2,000. There is a need to help college students. The scholarship program is still important in today’s world.” The scholarship award amounts were selected to help students secure much needed financial assistance to help offset the ever-rising costs of higher education.

The THE 2017-2018 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS ARE:

- **Jackson Airhart**, son of Jack Airhart, Division 944 (Dallas, Texas)
- **Rhianzanna Asey**, daughter of David Asey, Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas)
- **Alyssa Cain**, daughter of Neal Cain, Division 837 (Tyler, Texas)
- **Kace Hall**, daughter of Neude Hall, Division 837 (Tyler, Texas)
- **Mackenzie Coates**, daughter of John Coates, Division 366 (Del Rio, Texas)
- **Joshua Coursey**, son of SS Coursey, Jr., Division 944 (Dallas, Texas)
- **Emily Leigh Bird**, daughter of Joel Bird, Division 524 (Van Buren, Ark.)
- **Sean Perez**, son of Fernando Perez, Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas)
- **Daniel Perez**, son of Rick Perez, Division 904 (Austin, Texas)
- **Kaleigh Phillips**, daughter of Leonard Phillips, Jr., Division 531 (New Orleans, La.)
- **Courtnie Pickens**, daughter of Scott Pickens, Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas)
- **Kaelyn Pickens**, daughter of Scott Pickens, Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas)
- **LaChantel Phillips**, daughter of Lenard Phillips, Jr., Division 531 (New Orleans, La.)
- **Jordan Salyer**, son of Joy Salyer, Division 197 (San Antonio, Texas)
- **Noah Smith**, son of Charles Smith, Division 366 (Del Rio, Texas)
- **Madison Threadgill**, daughter of Samuel Threadgill, Division 834 (Mineola, Texas)
- **Tiffany Threadgill**, daughter of Samuel Threadgill, Division 834 (Mineola, Texas)

See page 4 of this issue for information about applying for a 2018-2019 scholarship.

**BLET STF helps NTSB investigate Amtrak fatality in DuPont, Wash.**

Three people were killed and 70 injured when Amtrak Cascades train 501 derailed on December 18, 2017, in DuPont, Washington. The BLET’s Safety Task Force is assisting the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) with its official investigation.

According to the NTSB’s preliminary report: “When the train derailed, it was on its first regular passenger service trip on a single track mainline (Lakewood sub-division) at a speed (MP) 19.6. The lead locomotive, the power car, and two passenger cars derailed derailed onto Interstate 5. Fourteen highway vehicles came into contact with the derailed equipment. At the time of the accident, 77 passengers, 5 Amtrak employees, and a Talgo Incorporated technician were on the train. Of these individuals, 3 passengers were killed, and 62 passengers and crewmembers were injured. Eight individuals in highway vehicles died in the accident. The accident was estimated to be more than $40.4 million.

The day after the accident, the BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce issued the following statement: “Members of the BLET’s Safety Task Force are on the scene assisting the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) with the investigation into the tragic December 18th derailment of an Amtrak train in Washington State. As part of our Party Status agreement with the NTSB, the BLET does not make official comments about the details of any ongoing accident investigation, nor does the BLET speculate on the events that may have contributed to such an accident during the investigation. Any current or former BLET members who choose to comment on this event do not speak for, or represent our Brotherhood or its members. All media inquiries should be directed to the NTSB, and the NTSB will handle any inquiries about details regarding this accident as the on-site investigation unfolds.

“Those who were hurt in the accident and the loved ones of those who lost their lives deserve to know what happened based upon the facts that are uncovered; sharing speculation based upon personal opinions about the events under investigation does them all a disservice. The BLET Safety Task Force (STF) assists federal agencies in the investigation of rail accidents, helping to determine probable causes and making safety recommendations. The STF will study this accident from the viewpoint of locomotive engineers and trainmen to help determine how the accident occurred and how to prevent similar accidents from happening in the future. On behalf of all men and women of the BLET, I extend our most heartfelt condolences to the victims and families of this tragedy.”

On December 22, 2017, the NTSB publicly released initial details gathered from the locomotive’s event data recorder and inward- and outward-facing cameras. The crew was not observed to use any personal electronic devices. According to the NTSB, “The authorized track speed technology and when railroads will meet the PTC implementation deadlines. According to the NTSB, “The authorized track speed...”

**Lawmakers demand action on PTC**

In response to Amtrak train 201’s derailment in DuPont, Washington, lawmakers in Washington demanded action to ensure the timely implementation of Positive Train Control. In late December 2017, Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and Michael Capuano (D-MA), Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials, sent a letter to Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao requesting a detailed status update on where the railroads are in fully implementing PTC technology and when railroads will meet the PTC implementation deadlines. On January 11, 2018, Reps. DeFazio and Capuano introduced the Positive Train Control Implementation and Financing Act, which seeks to speed up the implementation of PTC. The proposed legislation would mandate full implementation of PTC by the deadline of December 21, 2018, and would prohibit the Department of Transportation from further extending the implementation deadlines. The proposed bill would also provide more than $2.5 billion in grants to help passenger and commuter railroads meet the deadlines.

**“BE STRONG!” INTERNATIONAL RAIL ORGANIZATIONS EXTEND SOLIDARITY, CONDOLENCES FOLLOWING AMTRAK CRASH IN WASHINGTON STATE**

Three international rail worker Organizations have extended their feelings of sympathy, support and camaraderie to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLEF National Division, its members and the victims of the fatal Amtrak derailment near Tacoma, Wash., on December 18, 2017. The 4,600 members of New Zealand’s Rail & Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) sent their “sincere and heartfelt feelings of sympathy and camaraderie” in a letter to BLET National President Dennis Pierce dated December 23, 2017.

Wayne Burton, General Secretary of the 4,600-member RMTU, wrote: “Our thoughts and best wishes go out to the locomotive engineer and other members of the crew who were involved both during and following the accident and who may have been traumatised as a result. We also extend our sincere sympathy and condolences to the families of those who have been killed or injured in the train derailment. In NZ there is a saying, ‘Kia Kaha’, which is Maori and when translated (to the best of my knowledge) it’s close in meaning to the majority of victims of this incident a stringent Kia Kaha.”

Also on December 23, the BLEF received a similar letter from Stephen Cotton, General Secretary of the London-based International Transport Workers’ Federation (IFT). “This shocking human tragedy reiterates that we can never relax on accident prevention,” Brother Cotton wrote. “We stand with you in your efforts to study this accident from the viewpoint of locomotive engineers and trainmen, to determine how the accident occurred, and to prevent similar accidents from happening in the future by calling for preventative measures to be implemented. Please offer our sincere sympathy and condolences to the victims and families affected by this tragedy of this most difficult time.”

The third letter comes from the Paris-based Federation GGT Des Chemins (GGT Federation of Railway employees), Laurent Brun, General Secretary, and David Gabe, ETP Railway Section, extended their “sincere and heartfelt feelings of sympathy, support and camaraderie” in a letter to BLET National President Dennis Pierce dated December 23, 2017.

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Railroad Retirement and Unemployment Insurance Taxes in 2018

The amounts of compensation to be subject to railroad retirement tier I and tier II payroll taxes will increase in 2018, while the tax rates on employers and employees will stay the same. In addition, unemployment insurance contribution rates paid by railroad employers will continue to include a 1.5 percent surcharge in 2018, in addition to the Medicare surtax.

In 2018, the minimum rate of 2.15 percent will apply to 78 percent of covered railroad employees, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. 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New railroad employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 100 percent in these types of railroad retirement and unemployment insurance taxes in 2018 to 2075, assuming no change in the maximum rate.