



The Workers' Edge

Voice of the Tompkins County Workers' Center

The Three Pillars of Sustainability: Economic, Social, and Environmental

The Tompkins County Workers' Center (TCWC) has been asked by some of our local supporters how it fosters sustainability and how it can play a larger role. Too often sustainability is limited to the natural environment. But sustainability involves more than that. The concept of the Three Pillars of Sustainability defines sustainability as taking into account three broad areas: 1) the economic; 2) the social; and 3) the environmental.

The TCWC mission seeks to enable economic and social sustainability. Workplaces where the employees are unfairly compensated or mistreated undermines both economic and social sustainability. Workers' Center staff and volunteers experience this daily in the calls that come in to the Worker's Rights Hotline. Callers describe work situations that tear at the fabric of their individual lives and the collective life in our community.

By championing a living wage and certifying employers who pay a living wage, the TCWC has contributed to economic and social sustainability locally. Low-wage workers, contingent workers, more-than-one job workers often live day-to-day. Because they do not have the security a living wage job provides, they are likely to pay little attention to "environmentalism" or develop concern about the environment as a long-term issue. Henry Ford's decision to pay his workers enough to buy the car they made enabled decades of economic and social sustainability, though the product being manu-

"A truly sustainable economy would foster the health of workers and their communities though fair wages and safe working conditions"

factured violated the standard of environmental sustainability. A truly sustainable economy would foster the health of workers and their communities though fair wages and safe working conditions, and it would foster the health of the natural environment through the resources it used and how it used them.

The false choice of "saving the environment" at the expense of people's livelihoods often put workers and communities at odds with the environmental movement. However, sustainability, when rightly understood, can decouple the needs of the environment from the fear of job loss, even among vulnerable workers. The issue is no longer jobs or the environment. Rather, it is imagining and creating new ways for people to live and to work that are built on the Three Pillars of Sustainability: the economic, the social, and the environmental.

Some questions the TCWC is engaged in can help advance the conversation on sustainability and broaden it to include low-wage and other vulnerable workers in making it a reality.

- How can we work with labor unions to create green jobs that work towards greater sustainability: environmental, social, and economic?
- How can we involve those who have historically been at odds with, or alienated from, the environmental movement to look anew

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Sub-Minimum Wages for 'Tipped Workers' Needs to End!

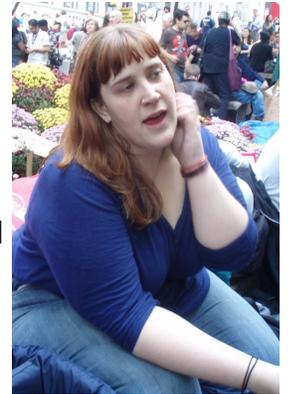
By Erin Leidy

At the beginning of 2014 there was an increase in the minimum wage in New York State. It rose from \$7.25 to \$8.00 an hour. [The NYS Minimum Wage will be going up to \$8.75/hour on 12/31/14.] Although the gains were small obviously this is something all workers can cheer. While those who work in retail and other low wage jobs saw their pay increase, tipped workers did not. In a town like Ithaca where so many are employed in the service industry the low minimum wage for tipped workers has a broad impact. For food service workers it is \$5.00, for service employees, such as delivery drivers, it is \$5.65 and for employees of resort hotels it is \$4.90 if they also average at least \$4.50 in tips.

They visited several cities and on October 3rd they came to Syracuse. Workers from Tompkins County and representatives from the Worker's Center participated in the event, including myself as a delivery driver for a local pizzeria.

This issue is close to my heart because I am a tipped worker and I make less than \$8.00 an hour. One of the biggest problems with relying on tips is that the figure varies greatly from shift to shift. The amount I make in tips can be anywhere from a few dollars (literally) to more like \$50-75. Clearly the most lucrative shifts are sought after so most of the time what I make is at the lower end.

In order to change the outlook for me and for all the people who will be doing these jobs well in to the future it



is vital that New York State make moves to support tipped workers and truly create wealth that will ripple out through the local communities in to every corner of the state. Other states and cities that have raised the minimum wage have seen this far reaching effect and contrary to what opponents of raising the minimum wage to a living wage claim, the benefits have been clear. This isn't even experimental at this stage. It's just plainly good economic sense to put money in to the hands of the people who are working hard and will be spending it all over their communities to get the goods and services they need. There are few other single legislative acts that would positively affect so many citizens and by extension the economy of the entire state.



Louise Brown of Citizens Action in Syracuse; flanked by Tim Hembrooke, Ithaca bartender, on the left; Eric Byrd, Ithaca pizza delivery driver; and Howie Hawkins, at Wage Board Hearing on October 3rd which is studying

The jobs effected by this are often thought of as temporary but that is not the case for everyone and even if it were everybody who works one of these jobs does it because they need the money. Nobody would put up with the many

unpleasant aspects of a job like this that sends them home tired and underpaid unless they are trying to make ends meet.

After failing to implement the 2013 recommendation of the State Legislature, Gov. Cuomo finally convened a Wage Board this year to look at the problem.

A Plea from Adjunct Professors at TC3 for Their Union to Be 'Voluntrily Recognized'

by Sherry Tacktil

Editor's Note: Although adjuncts teach the majority of the courses at Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3), for years they have been the only group of college employees without a union and therefore the only employees without any voice over their wages, benefits, or working conditions. That's changing. Since September, TC3 adjuncts have been organizing a union -- the TC3 Adjunct Association (TC3AA), an affiliate of NY State United Teachers. Last month, TC3 Administration was informed that a majority of adjuncts had signed "authorization forms" expressing their desire for union representation. According to state labor laws, the College has until November 21st to "voluntarily recognize" the union, however there is strong concern among union activists that the College plans to try and derail the adjunct union by engaging in a protracted legal battle at the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB).

They have good reason for concern. Last spring, Cayuga Community College (near Syracuse) refused to voluntarily recognize their adjuncts' union, instead insisting that adjuncts needed to be absorbed by the existing union for fulltime faculty, a scenario which neither fulltime nor adjunct faculty want. The PERB hearing on that matter is set to finish in mid December and the judge's ruling isn't expected until late spring -- more than a year after Cayuga adjuncts first formed their union. Worse, regardless of how the judge rules, appeals and more delays are expected and it could be years until contract negotiations begin. In an effort to avoid a similar legal morass, adjuncts at TC3 are pressuring the College to take the high moral ground and not waste taxpayer monies on legal delays. What follows is one TC3AA Organizing Committee member's appeal to the Board of Trustees.

What follows (opposite) is an open letter to the board of trustees asking for that recognition.

The Three Pillars of Sustainability, cont.

at sustainability?

- How do we reach working class communities in order to change widespread perceptions about the affordability and accessibility of green choices and lifestyles?
- How can we more deeply collaborate with and support those who are already doing this important work?

We invite our readers to consider one or more of these questions and share their thoughts on concrete ways to effect change that encompasses the three pillars of sustainability. We are taking the challenge seriously.

Put your thoughts into words and send them to us either via email at TCWRH@tcworkerscenter.org or postal mail at: 115 E. MLK Street, 14850. We will reprint some of the responses we receive in a future issue of *The Worker's Edge*.

Members of the Board of Trustees,

My name is Sherry Tacktill and I have been your employee for 8 years. During these eight years I have taught 47 classes over 22 semesters. I am here this evening to request that you respect the wishes of the majority of your part-time teaching staff for voluntary recognition of our union.

You may be wondering why your part-time staff feels the need to seek union representation. I will be happy to shed some light on this for you.

Your part-time faculty, much like your full-time faculty is comprised of competent teachers, dedicated mentors and sometimes surrogate parents to our TC3 students. We instruct classes, counsel students on a number of academic and personal issues, tutor students outside of class when they are in need of extra help, write letters of recommendation for college admission and employment applications, make referrals to mental health professionals when they are struggling and even drive them to and sit in hospitals when they are sick.

We are seen by our students as their teachers... not their part-time, contingent, or adjunct teachers, but their teachers. They trust that we are committed to their education and their futures. They trust that we know our subjects and are capable of providing meaningful and rigorous courses that will serve as keys to careers or the foundation for future study.



Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) Adjuncts Association Organizing Committee Members (L-R), Sherry Tacktill, Gregg Weatherby, Nancy Crane, and Cynthia Coleman plus Theresa Alt from the Tompkins County Workers' Center, gather outside the Old Courthouse after they addressed Tompkins County Legislators on October 22nd about the plight of adjunct professors at TC3.

And yet, despite the fact that your part-time teachers make up 70% of your faculty and teach 56% of your college's classes... when we are on campus.

*There may not be a place for us to sit and work

*There may not be a computer for us to use.

"We are your backbone; we deserve to be recognized and respected."
- Sherry Tacktill

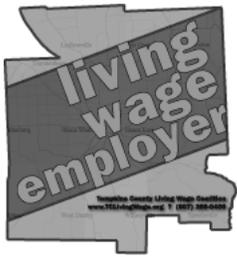
*There may not be a private place for us to have a confidential conversation with a student.

We are hired as contingent teachers, but contingent on what? On need? Ob-

viously there is a need for more than 10 full-time English instructors. We know this because since I have been here, the college has consistently employed between 30 and 50 part-time English instructors each semester. We all know that it takes years to have good teaching skills that result in a more stable educational environment, and yet due to the limit on the number of credits we are allowed to teach, the inconsistency in the number of classes we can depend on each semester, the salaries that we receive, and the fact that we no longer receive health benefits, we have seen instructors come and go when jobs with better futures present themselves. This is not good for TC3 students and not good for TC3's reputation.

We are your backbone; we deserve to be recognized and respected. We ask for voluntary recognition of our union so that we may bargain, in good faith, for what will only improve TC3.

Thank you.



Support our 88 Certified Living Wage Businesses

and their over 2900 workers!

Since our last newsletter in August of 2014, we are pleased to welcome the following three newly-Certified Living Wage Employers: **Court St. Chiropractic of Ithaca**; **St. Paul's United Methodist Church and Nursery School**; and **Sunny Days of Ithaca**!

Advocacy Center	First Congregational Church of Ithaca, United Church of Christ	PPM Homes, LLC
Alcohol & Drug Council of Tompkins County, Inc.	First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca	Quintiles Biosciences Inc. LLC
Alternatives Federal Credit Union	First Unitarian Society of Ithaca	Red Feet Wine Market
Ancient Wisdom Productions (Web Designer)	Foodnet Meals on Wheels	and Spirit Provisions
ASI Renovations	Friendship Donations Network, Inc.	Renovus Energy, Inc.
Autumn Leaves Used Books	Home Green Home	Segal and Sorensen
Avalon Homes	Hospicare and Palliative Care	Shade Tree Auto, Inc.
Black Box Computer Consulting	Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County	Shaw & Murphy Law Firm
Blue Spruce Painting and Decorating	International Food Network, Inc. Ithaca Carshare	Silk Oak/Ithacamade
Boyce Thompson Institute	Ithaca Cayuga Optical Service	Singlebrook Technology, Inc.
Brightworks Computer Consulting	Ithaca Health Alliance	Snug Planet LLC (Home Performance Contractor)
Buffalo Street Books	Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services	Sparks Electric
Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga	Ithaca Oral Surgery and Implants	Sprague & Janowsky (Accountancy)
CFCU Community Credit Union	Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency	St. Catherine of Siena Church
Child Development Council	IthacaMed	St. Luke Lutheran Church
City of Ithaca	Ithaca Teachers Association	St. Paul's United Methodist Church and Nursery School
Colonial Veterinary Hospital	Jewel Box	Stone Quarry House (Bed and Breakfast)
Community Dispute Resolution Center	Jillian's Drawers	Sunbeam Candles
Community Foundation of Tompkins County	Julia E. Dean Pottery	Sunny Brook Builders
Community Nursery School	Loaves and Fishes	Sunny Days of Ithaca
Community Science Institute	Mama Goose/Mimi's Attic	Sustainable Tompkins
Contemporary Trends, Inc.	Miller Mayer Law Firm	Taitem Engineering
Cornell Child Care Center	New Roots Charter School	Temple Beth El
Court St. Chiropractic of Ithaca	Northeast Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine	The Frame Shop
Crown Construction, Inc.	Nutritional Wellness Center	The Strebels Planning Group
Downtown Ithaca Alliance	OAR – Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources	Tompkins County
Family and Children's Service of Ithaca	One World Market	Town of Danby
Finger Lakes Naturals	Ongweoweh Corporation (Pallet Mgmt)	Town of Ithaca
Finger Lakes ReUse		TRC Energy Services (Ithaca)
First Baptist Church of Ithaca		United Auto Workers Local 2300
		Upscale Remodeling Corporation

Get Certified!

What is a living wage in Tompkins County?

Currently, as of May 3, 2013, in Tompkins County the living wage is \$12.62/hr (with health insurance. Without is \$13.94). This number will be updated in May of 2015 by Alternatives Federal Credit Union (to see details, go to <http://alternatives.org/livable.html>)

Are you a Certified Living Wage Employer?

By providing every employee a living wage, you show your integrity and leadership in the community. You create a positive image in the minds of current and potential customers. You strengthen relationships between staff members and management, and you raise employee morale and productivity and encourage employee loyalty.

Check out the opposite page for a current list of Living Wage Employers.



Has your job made you sick? Occupational Health Clinical Center Can Help!

- Are your symptoms work-related?
- Have you been exposed to substances on the job that might make a person sick?
- Have you recently left a job (through retirement, lay-off, termination, etc.) that caused your symptoms?

Call to find out how we can help you....
Occupational Clinical Health Centers are staffed by a team of health professionals actively working to support worker health and safety in 26 counties in New York. Occupational Illnesses and diseases are highly preventable, and we can help.

As a medical practice, we focus on Medical Services including medical and occupational history; physical exam and diagnostic testing, referral and social work services.

Prevention of Occupational Illness and Disease, including screening and monitoring; education and workplace safety assessment; data collection; public policy advocacy; worker/patient empowerment, including risk mapping, workers' rights to health and safety at the workplace; navigating the Workers' Compensation system, support groups and popular education related to the impact of worker health on public health.

Convenient locations in Binghamton, Syracuse and Canton
Call OHCC at 315-432-8899 or toll-free at 1-800-432-9590

Be our star this year...

Our New Year's Resolution:

- ★ Stand up for our rights as working people to a decent standard of living
- ★ Organize working families to take strong action to secure better economic future for all of us
- ★ Fight for secure family-wage jobs in the face of corporate attacks on working people and communities
- ★ Support the right of all workers to organize and bargain collectively in the workplace

We need your support.

 **Tompkins County
WORKERS'
CENTER**

TC Workers' Center
115 The Commons
Ithaca, NY 14850
TCWorkersCenter.org



Return Service Requested

