



The Workers' Edge

Voice of the Tompkins County Workers' Center

Caregivers Deserve Better!

Support for Lakeside Workers

Jeci Brown

The Workers' Center has been standing up with Families

and Friends of Lakeside and workers from Lakeside nursing home (run by Peregrine Health Management Company). Their working conditions are dire. With no raise in over three years, close to half the workforce (over 140 people work there, including CNA's, food service workers, RN's and others) are not being paid a Living Wage as defined by Alternatives Federal Credit Union (due to be updated in spring '09),

and are the lowest-paid nursing home employees in Tompkins County.

These workers have to pay excessive amounts of money for an inferior insurance plan, have forced overtime imposed, work a very difficult job in unsafe conditions, frequently work without adequate staffing and have to deal with huge turnover. Lakeside workers need a fair contract.

Work at Lakeside is very challenging. The workers care a lot about the people they work with, and they want to make sure there is enough staff there to get them

good quality care all of the time. (Cont'd on pg.6)

Late Breaking News! The contract at Lakeside has been settled on terms that workers sought. More details to come in next issue of the TCWC newsletter!



Check out the Workers' Center
www.TCWorkersCenter.com

Call the Workers' Center at (607) 269-0409!



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I am a husband and a father of two daughters who we raise in Ithaca NY. Our nuclear family has been living in poverty since its conception. We believe that the use of working peoples' tax money to support a bailout is illogical, elitist and dangerous.

Many people know that they are not being represented or served by our government. All working class and middle-class people are most impacted by the current crisis and government responses. We are also a large number of people who reside in Tompkins County. According to our Chamber of

Commerce, people whose annual family income is \$34,000 or less make up 41% of the people in Tompkins County.

With these numbers, and some organization, we can combat what has been proven to us time and again - through outsourcing, disregard for ecosystems and inhumane working conditions and compensation - that the corporations that lobby our government lack the human condition's to care about or to

recognize inhumane consequences!

We are the loyal consumers that fuel these corporations...and WE deserve a bailout. Not just a cash bail out - we want, need and deserve our nation to use that money to destroy the exploitative labor structure and empower our people to participate in owning our lives in equity. A start is the imposition of financial accountability of corporations and their impact on government policy.

We must also continue to use our voice as people, together in the streets, and in our everyday living. When I say voice I am referring to our ability to overcome the temptations of ignorance and to fight for what we collectively KNOW to be our human rights. We must spread knowledge, organizing together and having our voice heard and acknowledged through change.

To begin we should work towards being able to sustain our local population with local materials and supplies. This must happen across all class lines (working class, upper class, farmers and financiers).



THE OBAMA VICTORY AND MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Gerald Coles

The large crowd at the Workers Center Election Night party exploded in cheers and tears when the tv network announced that Barack Obama had been elected the nation's next president. The unthinkable - a McCain/Palin victory - hadn't happened. We could look forward to a president who would begin to reverse the damage of the Bush years. And Obama not only won, but he won big, getting 365 electoral votes, compared to McCain's 173. It was a night no one wanted to end.

But it did end and the following morning we awoke again to the huge and growing problems facing working Americans and the Obama administration: millions of Americans losing jobs, health insurance, homes and pensions. Millions of families are without enough to eat while food banks across the country run out of food. Billions of dollars are going to Wall Street while "Main Street" is ignored. Billions of dollars more continue to feed Bush's Iraq war while Americans face a recession and even a depression (the cost of the war to Tompkins County residents so far is \$257 million).

These problems mean that now is the time to take the next step. Big Business and Wall Street have contributed millions to Obama's campaign and will expect a payoff. Therefore, it's up to us, through

organizations like the Workers Center, Jobs With Justice, and the Poverty Initiative to organize and make sure that "change we can believe in" means real change for working America.

We need to work to be sure Obama fulfills his campaign promises, such as:

- *the Employee Free Choice Act, a "card check" method that will make it easier for workers to form unions

- *repealing the Bush tax cuts for the rich

- *tax oil companies' windfall profits

The Workers Center's newly formed "Jobs With Justice" committee will be working to ensure the achievement of these and similar campaign promises. If you want to be part of the local effort to push for that change, contact Gerry Coles: gslcoles1@yahoo.com or 272 -0106)



(The community waiting eagerly to hear election results.)

Spotlight on a Member: Daniel Carrión

Rachel Vanderpool Rosario

It's not easy to write about someone you love and admire without sounding cheesy. That was my biggest worry when I interviewed this month's Member Spotlight, Daniel Carrión. In the two years I've known him, he's become the little brother I never had. He's one of the most insightful and caring people I know, and I am honored to share his story with you.

Dan first heard about the Workers Center two years ago through Steering Committee member Alicia Swords, a professor in the Department of Sociology at Ithaca College. In one of Alicia's classes, she invited students to participate in the first Workers Center's Organizing School in 2007. There, he realized that he shared similar stories of economic hardships with many people.

"When I was young, I had a series of surgeries. My parents couldn't keep up with all the different medical bills that were coming up. They had to declare bankruptcy."

This was hidden from Dan until the truth unraveled during his sophomore year of high school. His parents did not want him and his older brother, Ricardo, to worry. But it was difficult to get back on their feet and continue hiding the reality from

their sons.

"It wasn't their intention, but my immediate reaction was 'I made my parents go bankrupt'. It's a sad feeling to think about, but it could have happened to anyone."

Sharing stories at the Workers Center is not only a great way to get to know people, but it also helps folks explore how deeply connected all of our experiences are. This is what attracted Dan to want to work with people and commit to social justice.

Dan's favorite part about being a member of the Workers Center is the membership potlucks. He enjoys meeting new members and seeing friends, and hearing stories about how other people got involved with the Workers Center. "I like the people I've gotten connected to."

Dan graduated from Ithaca College in 2008 and decided to stay in Ithaca works for the Committee on US and Latin American Relations (CUSLAR) and the Cayuga Watershed Network. When I jokingly asked why he didn't take advantage of his college minor in Economics and find a plush job with a major company, I found Dan's response simple and profound: "I wouldn't have been ful-



filled knowing behind whose backs I was trading money and who I was trading money against."

His most memorable experience through the Workers Center happened in January 2008. Dan and fellow WC members Steph Edley and Alicia Swords participated in an immersion program in West Virginia organized by the Poverty Initiative of Union Theological Seminary in New York City. It was a formative experience for him to connect with poor and working class folks around the country, the struggles they've gone through, and sharing his trip experience with the Workers Center.

"The most important lesson I've learned is that everyone has a story and we all have to listen to each others stories to build the world we want to live in."

Confronting Poverty in New York State

Stephanie Edley

This past October the Worker's Center held a Member Potluck Dinner with guests from an organization called the Poverty Initiative based out of the Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Willie Baptist, a poverty scholar, led a discussion focusing on the upcoming presidential elections and the economy, expressing the pressing need for a movement to end poverty across racial lines. Afterwards we had a question and answer session where many people expressed their concerns about the current condition of our country.

The workers center became a member of this organization to connect with a national movement that is committed to ending poverty in this country, which is part of our

mission to stand up with workers faced with critical poverty. The mission of the Poverty Initiative is to "raise up generations of religious and community leaders dedicated to building a move-

The Workers Center is working closely with the Poverty Initiative to plan the Ithaca portion of the immersion course. We hope to build our relationship with local organizations across New



ment to end poverty, led by the poor." Their goal is to re-ignite Dr. King's poor people's campaign that he had started right before his assassination.

This January, the Poverty Initiative will be returning to Ithaca with 30 people from NYC as part of their annual Poverty Immersion course. The immersion course is a ten day experience that engages people with the reality of poverty in NYC and New York State. Part of the course will take place in Ithaca, NY, from January 8th to the 12th.

York State. To foster new relationships we are hosting a community dinner on Friday, January 9th, at 6:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend, including all workers center members! Feel free to bring a dish to pass. The place will be announced soon but mark your calendars. Don't miss out on some excellent food and meeting great people!

**Save the
Date!**

**Community
Dinner,
January
9th 2009
at 6:30p.m.
TBA**

What is the Tompkins County Workers' Center?



What does being a member of the Workers' Center mean?

The Tompkins County Workers' Center is composed of a group of low and middle income residents of Tompkins County.

Our Mission is to stand up with all workers treated unfairly at work or faced with critical poverty, racial, housing, health care or other social and economic issues.

We will support, advocate for, and seek to empower each other to create a more just community and world.

A member is someone who believes:

1. In helping each other to make our community a better place to live.
2. We all deserve to have good jobs with good wages so we can live decently.
3. We all deserve rights and fair treatment as workers.
4. Healthcare is a right—everybody should have affordable access to it.
5. We all deserve a livable neighborhood and affordable housing.

What Do You Think It Means? What Moves You?

I Want to Get Involved in the Fight for Workers' Rights!

\$_____ Individual Annual Membership
Due = One Hour's Wage or \$7.15/hour if not working

During the next year, I'LL BE THERE at least five times for someone else's fight, as well as my own. Please contact me with Rapid Response Alerts.

Signature

Your Name (please print)
Home Street Address
City
State Zip
Phone (s)
Email

Send to: TC Workers' Center, 115 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850

You'll receive a laminated card I the mail or at a meeting.
Great to have you with us!

is a member of the
Tompkins County Workers' Center (TCWC)

During the next year, I'LL BE THERE at least five times for someone else's fight, as well as my own. If enough of us are there, we'll all start winning.

TC Workers' Center, 115 The Commons,
Ithaca 607-269-0409 www.TCWorkersCenter.org

I'll Be There.....
...standing up for our rights as working people to
a decent standard of living.

...organizing working families to take strong ac-
tion to secure a better economic future for all of us.

...fighting for secure family-wage jobs in the face
of corporate attacks on working people and our commu-
nities.



Support These Living Wage Certified Businesses in 2008!

Advocacy Center
Alternatives Federal Credit Union
Ancient Wisdom Productions
Autumn Leaves Used Books
Black Box Computer Consulting
Blue Spruce Painting and Decorating
Boyce Thompson Institute
Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga
CFCU Community Credit Union
Colonial Veterinary Hospital
Community Foundation of Tompkins County
Contemporary Trends, Inc.
Custum Construction
Day Care & Child Development Council
First Baptist Church of Ithaca
First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca
Green Clean
GreenStar Cooperative Market

Home Green Home
Hospicare and Palliative Care
Ithaca Carshare
Ithaca Downtown Partnership
Ithaca Health Alliance
Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency
IthacaMed
Jewel Box
Jillian's Drawers
Loaves and Fishes
Money with a Mission
Morris' Men's Wear and Morris Too
Multicultural Resource Center
Northeast Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine
Offender Aid and Restoration
Ongweoweh Corporation (Pallet Mgmt.)
Renovus Energy
Shade Tree Auto
Significant Elements, A Program of Historic Ithaca

Singlebrook Technology
Snug Planet LLC (Home Performance Contractor)
Sparks Electric
Sprague and Janowsky (Accountants)
St. John's Church
St. Luke Lutheran Church
Stone Quarry House (B and B)
Sunny Brook Builders
Taitem Engineering
Taughannock Aviation Corporation
Temple Beth El
The Frame Shop
The Strebel Planning Group
Tompkins Community Action
Tompkins County
Tompkins County Public Library
Town of Ithaca
United Auto Workers Local 2300
Upscale Remodeling Corporation
Ward and Murphy (Law Firm)



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