

THE WORKERS' EDGE

Voice of the Tompkins County Workers' Center



STANDING TOGETHER WITH CAYUGA RIDGE

Cayuga Ridge Nursing and Rehab Workers need our support! pg.2

MEET OUR STAFF!

The Workers' Center is thrilled to have expanded our staff since our last newsletter. Learn about the new faces making the work happen around here!

WHY A WORKERS' RIGHTS HOTLINE?

Learn this history and organizing value of the Workers' Rights Hotline

WORKERS' CENTER TAKES ON SUPPORTING EXCLUDED WORKERS

By Cecilia Faringer-Perez

In August, we kicked off outreach efforts for the Excluded Workers' Fund (EWF) under a New York State Department of Labor grant. The historic \$2.1 billion fund sought parity between documented and undocumented workers who lost income due to the pandemic. More than 99% of approved applicants received \$15,600, roughly equivalent to the total amount a person receiving \$300 in unemployment benefits per week over 52 weeks.





STAND FOR A FAIR CONTRACT FOR CAYUGA RIDGE HEROES

by *Maya Malcolm*

Over these past months, the Tompkins County Workers Center has been working closely with Cayuga Ridge Nursing and Rehabilitation Center staff. One of the most vulnerable workforces in America is care workers particularly those that care for the elderly and infirm. Unfortunately, Cayuga Ridge has made this job more difficult by not being willing to bargain for a fair contract for their workers.

Workers at Cayuga Ridge are fighting for a contract with good wages and benefits that will help retain staff who provide quality care that our local residents deserve. In these times especially, our essential care workers deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and given what they need to keep helping those in need to the best of their ability.

Thus far, management has continued to disappoint with contract proposals that include meager wage increases and concessions in important areas such as health insurance which would result in staff PAYING for their own increase. Many nursing home staff, including CNAs, dietary staff, and custodians are not making a Living Wage—this has resulted in employees leaving to work in nearby fast food restaurants; overworking themselves and taking time away from their families and personal lives.

The remaining coworkers are trying their hardest to provide good care to residents while working short-staffed and need Living Wages and benefits to ensure that quality care can be a reality for Ithaca residents for years to come.

We need your support to make it clear to the owners of Cayuga Ridge and similar establishments that Tompkins County has our members' backs as they fight for what's right.

MEET THE STAFF:

Maya Malcolm



Community Organizer

As an Ithaca native, Maya has deep ties to her community and a firsthand perspective on what it's like to grow up in Tompkins County. Before attending Ithaca College, Maya went to high school at LACS and was heavily involved in community organizing within her school, such as leading a schoolwide walkout and facilitating racial sensitivity training for the staff.

Her duties with TCWC include answering the Workers Rights Hotline, providing support and tools to workers, and ensuring that they know their rights.



MEET THE STAFF: Julia Machlin

Julia is currently a senior at IC, majoring in Literatures in English and Sociology. As an Ithaca native, she has been fortunate to grow up in an area that harbors a passion for community-based organizing and grassroots movements. She has participated in multiple movements, one of the most notable being the Poor People's Campaign. Julia primarily works with the Workers Rights Hotline, supporting workers locally.

Worker Advocate

MEET THE STAFF:

Gabriella came to Ithaca over a decade ago and received her BA in Theatre Studies from Ithaca College. Gabriella's experience in unfair and illegal workplace conditions as well as bearing witness to the discrimination and mistreatment her immigrant mother faced in the workplace throughout her life has made her passionate about workers rights. Gabriella is a proud queer, Latinx, mixed-race woman. Gabriella is committed to the dream of the Beloved Community, working towards dismantling systems of oppression to create a society free of poverty, hunger, and hatred.

Gabriella Carr



Operations Manager

EXCLUDED WORKERS FUND, CONT.

The unprecedented turnout that we saw demonstrated the dire need for the EWF. After only five weeks of outreach, we learned that applicants who applied on September 24 or later were not guaranteed funds, regardless of eligibility. Much like the workers within our target population, we contended with geographic isolation unlike organizers in more populous areas downstate. Still, TCWC assisted 32 first-time applicants before the fund officially closed on October 6. We helped several dozen more applicants navigate the appeal process and reply to additional requests for information after they applied on their own.

Although most undocumented New Yorkers currently live in or around the city, undocumented workers in our region and other more rural parts of the state are more likely to be disconnected from fellow immigrants and isolated from resources while grappling with many of the same obstacles as their urban counterparts. Most notably, an increasing number of our local undocumented workers are stalled by the limiting effects of legal status on their occupational opportunity and income growth.

In August, I was hired to lead TCWC's EWF outreach and application assistance efforts. Over the past few months, I have served excluded workers in Tompkins and surrounding counties through EWF application assistance and workplace advocacy. I saw first-hand the revitalizing effect this assistance has had for recipients. For example, one worker I helped apply was in the process of taping a makeshift barrier over her rotting mattress when I called to let her know she was approved for the \$15,600 Tier 1 amount. Upon hearing the news, she threw down the tape, rejoiced in thanks, and exclaimed that she would buy a new mattress.

As the number of active applications gradually comes to a close, I continue to serve the same excluded worker population through worker advocacy. So far, I have worked on cases dealing with issues of national origin discrimination and wage theft. I look forward to expanding my scope to include immigration retaliation and other pertinent labor issues plaguing excluded workers in our region.

MEET THE STAFF: Tammy Munoz

Tammy is a Hispanic American from Miami with a strong commitment to supporting immigrant and undocumented workers. A senior at Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Tammy is also passionate about education and childhood development. She is looking forward to serving the Ithaca community and shadowing Cecilia Faringer-Perez amidst the Excluded Workers Fund effort.

Excluded Workers Fund Assistant



WHY A WORKERS' RIGHTS HOTLINE?

by Maya Malcolm and Pete Meyers

The Tompkins County Workers' Center has operated the Worker's Rights Hotline for over 18 years, beginning in 2003. We started the Hotline in order to create a confidential, informative, and emotionally supportive way for workers to learn their rights and have a voice in their workplace. Many people get lost in labor rights issues and have no one there to aid them or remind them of their rights to be heard and to take action against unlawful or unjust behavior.

One of our ultimate goals with the Hotline is to encourage workers to ORGANIZE in their workplaces. Whether it's organizing a union or otherwise taking 'concerted action' in the workplace, which is protected under the National Labor Relations Board, unfortunately, workers have less power when operating solely as individuals.

In the past month alone, we have been working closely with six workers of an exceedingly important nonprofit in the community who have felt especially abused by their employers. Between taking action in concert with each other, these workers are also in the process of organizing a union. In another situation, a group of 10 workers at a well-known seasonal local restaurant are acting together after having not been offered their jobs back for stating objections to how the restaurant has been operating during the past two pandemic years.

If you or someone you know needs the support, please call the Tompkins County Workers' Center Hotline at 607-269-0409 or email us at TCWRH@tcworkerscenter.org!

MEET THE STAFF:

Cecilia Faringer- Perez



Excluded Workers' Fund Specialist

Cecilia got involved with the TCWC as a Worker Advocate in January 2021. Now she leads TCWC's Excluded Workers' Fund (EWF) outreach and assistance efforts. In August 2021, she switched focus to help workers apply for New York State's Excluded Workers' Fund. She is currently serving the same population in her casework through the Workers' Rights Hotline, in addition to continuing advocacy through the Fund Excluded Workers Coalition.



MEET THE STAFF: Deb Clover

Deborah came to Ithaca in 1981 when she was hired by Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, where she helped start their Rental Rehabilitation Program. A common theme throughout her varied work has been a commitment to diversity, empowerment, collaboration, and inclusion. She is passionate about issues of social justice and cultural equity and has a deep commitment to living life in a way which fosters equality, diversity, and respect for all people.

Bookkeeper

TOMPKINS COUNTY LIVING WAGE UPDATED

Tompkins County has a new Living Wage. It is now \$15.32/hour.

The Living Wage is calculated every two years by Alternatives Federal Credit Union and represents a minimum standard of living for a single person, including the cost of a 1-BR apartment, health insurance through the NYS Health Marketplace (Silver Plan), and taxes. If your health insurance is provided and 100% paid by your employer, the Living Wage is \$14.32/hour. In some cases, where your employer provides health insurance but requires workers to pay a portion of the premium that cost may be more than the cost of the silver plan on the Marketplace. In such a case the Living Wage would be higher than \$15.32.

The new Living Wage – \$15.32/hour – is less than calculated two years ago mainly due to the increased federal subsidies going toward health insurance on the Marketplace, resulting in a 39.7% decline in the cost of a Silver Plan.

While some employers have committed to paying a Living Wage, most local workers have to depend only on the NYS minimum wage, which is \$12.50/hour in upstate New York, going up to \$13.20 in January 2021, almost \$2/hour LESS than a Living Wage. This is why our County Legislature needs to establish the Living Wage as a County Minimum Wage.

TOMPKINS COUNTY LIVING WAGE BUDGET



HOUSING

Based on HUD fair market rent for a one-bedroom in Tompkins County

\$1048



TAXES

Based on single adult filing including Fed/State/Payroll

\$480.92



HEALTH CARE

Includes NY Health Exchange subsidy (Obamacare)

\$225.87



GROCERIES

Average "low cost" plan for adults according to the USDA.

\$237.25



TRANSPORTATION

Average cost of the available options in Tompkins County

\$222.58



MISCELLANEOUS

Personal care, clothes, household items, odds and ends.

\$159.00



RECREATION

To support a work-life balance

\$120.32



COMMUNICATION

Cost of basic cell phone and internet service.

\$91.00



SAVINGS

To prepare for emergencies or build for the future.

\$71.29

\$15.32/HR

\$2656.23

X 40HRS/WK = \$2,656.23/MONTH

X 52 WK/YR = \$31,874/YEAR



MEET THE STAFF: Pete Meyers

Pete was a founder of the TCWC in 2003. In 2000, Meyers moved to Ithaca and got a job at Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga Counties as a Mentor in a Welfare-to-Work program. It was this experience of people being kicked off of welfare into minimum wage jobs that led Meyers to take a lead role in creating the Living Wage Coalition. Meyers' commitment is to be part of organizing a movement that will usher in the Beloved Community in real and tangible ways for the world's population, starting first and foremost those in our immediate midst.

Coordinator

SUPPORT THESE 103 CERTIFIED LIVING WAGE BUSINESSES

Our newest living wage certified businesses (since our last newsletter) are in bold

- Alcohol & Drug Council of Tompkins County, Inc.
- Alternatives Federal Credit Union
- Ancient Wisdom Productions
- Areti Construction
- **Argos Inn**
- Autumn Leaves Used Books
- Avital's Apiaries
- Bridges Cornell Heights
- Brotherton Construction
- Buffalo Street Books
- Cancer Resource Center of the Finger Lakes
- Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga
- **Cayuga Pet Hospital**
- Child Development Council
- Cinemapolis
- City of Ithaca
- **Civic Ensemble**
- The Clay School/Julia e Dean, Inc
- **CoLab Cooperative**
- Colonial Veterinary Hospital
- Community Dispute Resolution Center
- Community Foundation of Tompkins County
- Community Science Institute
- Cornell Child Care Center
- **Downtown Ithaca Children's Center (DICC)**
- Downtown Ithaca Alliance
- Emmy's Organics, LLC
- Family and Children's Service of Ithaca
- Feirman Builders, Inc.
- Finger Lakes ReUse
- Finger Lakes Running Company
- First Baptist Church of Ithaca
- First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
- **Flair Strategic Communications, LLC**
- Foodnet Meals on Wheels
- The Frame Shop
- Friendship Donations Network, Inc.
- Grayhaven Motel
- Greensprings Natural Cemetery
- **GreenStar Cooperative Market**
- The History Center in Tompkins County
- Home Green Home
- Hospicare & Palliative Care Services of Tompkins County
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local #241
- Ithaca Carshare
- Ithaca Cayuga Optical Service
- Ithaca Health Alliance
- **Ithaca Marriott Downtown**
- Ithaca Montessori School
- Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services
- Ithaca Oral Surgery and Implants
- Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency
- IthacaMed
- Ithaca Teachers Association
- Jewel Box
- Jillian's Drawers
- **Joel Frank Builders**
- **Lakeview Health Services, Inc.**
- **Lansing Library**
- LaMorte Electric
- Loaves & Fishes of Tompkins County
- **The Mental Health Association in Tompkins County**
- **Midstate Education and Service Foundation**
- Miller Mayer Law Firm
- **MiTiGen, LLC**
- **Odyssey Bookstore**
- OAR – Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources
- One World Market
- Ongweoweh Corporation (Pallet Mgmt)
- Park Foundation
- **The Pilates Room & Antigravity Studio**
- Q2 Solutions
- Reach Medical
- Red Feet Wine Market & Spirit Provisions
- Renovus Energy, Inc.
- Sciencecenter Discovery Museum
- Segal and Sorensen
- Shaw & Murphy, PLLC
- **Silo Food Truck**
- Singlebrook Technology, Inc.
- Snug Planet LLC
- St. Luke Lutheran Church
- Strawbridge and Jahn Builders
- The Strebel Planning Group
- Sunbeam Candles
- Sunny Brook Builders
- Sunny Days of Ithaca
- Sustainable Tompkins
- Taitem Engineering
- Temple Beth El
- Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT)
- Tompkins County
- Tompkins County Public Library
- Tompkins County Recycling, LLC
- Town of Caroline
- Town of Danby
- Town of Ithaca
- Trumansburg Community Nursery School
- United Auto Workers Local 2300
- Village of Cayuga Heights
- The Watershed
- Women's Opportunity Center
- Youth Farm Project

TELL THEM SOLIDARITY SENT YOU!

BECOME A MEMBER

As a member of the Workers' Center:



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



I'll be there organizing working families to take strong action to secure a better economic future for all of us.



I'll be there supporting the right of all workers to organize and bargain collectively in the workplace.



I'll be there fighting for secure Living Wage jobs in the face of corporate attacks on working people and our communities.

Send this back to the Workers' Center or sign up online at <http://www.tcworkerscenter.org/>

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Address:

Membership Commitments:

- I will take at least two actions with TCWC: attend a meeting or event, respond to an action alert, volunteer, sign a petition, offer a skill, take part in an activity, etc.
- I will participate in TCWC events throughout the year as my schedule permits.
- I will oppose oppression and discrimination by class, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and other forms.

Dues are not required for membership. If possible, however, a suggested donation based on one hour of what you are paid for your work would be greatly appreciated.





Living Wage Week

2021



Launching!

The Living Wage Places Campaign & Living Wage For US!

Asheville NC



Durham NC



Orange County NC



Georgetown TX



Nashville TN



Ithaca NY



Virginia



If you weren't able to watch the NATIONAL launch of Living Wage for US's Living Wage Employer Certification program with Living Wage for US, please do check this out by going [HERE: bit.ly/nationallivingwage!](https://bit.ly/nationallivingwage) We were the the VERY FIRST organization to certify employers as Living Wage, we are very excited to see this LW Certification go BIG TIME.

Tompkins County Workers' Center
115 E. Martin Luther King, Jr. St
Ithaca, NY 14850

