



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ June 1, 2015 – June 5, 2015

WIA Celebrates 500th Edition!

Today's edition of VSEA *Week In Action* is the 500th published since the weekly's inception in 2005 under then-President Ed Stanak, who spearheaded its creation.

“More than a dozen years ago, VSEA leadership made a commitment to begin the transformation of our union from a "service model" to an ‘organizing model’ labor organization,” explains Stanak, who served as President from 2000 to 2006. “Traveling the state and visiting the work sites as VSEA President to promote the change, I realized that our members had shallow faith in their union because they had little information about what the union was capable of doing through collective action. Taking advantage of what was then the relatively new ‘information highway,’ I thought we should get timely news out to VSEA activists about action that the union taking for the common good so that the activists could then share that news with the rank and file. At first we circulated *WIA* only to activists such as Chapter leaders and Council members. Thanks to VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson and other staff, *WIA* now reaches most of the VSEA membership, including retirees. It is all about building capacity to mobilize the work force in a concerted effort for just compensation, job security and dignity in retirement. Faith in a union without taking action is a sign of a shallow understanding of unionism. I'm really pleased *WIA* has become an effective tool to ensuring a solid foundation for VSEA as we fight back against efforts to diminish and privatize quality public service jobs.”

Gibson has been writing and editing copy and providing art to *WIA* since joining VSEA staff in 2005. He was joined in November 2013 by Communications Specialist Kris Lizzari, who redesigned the publication and made it much easier to read and more appealing to the reader's eye.

“It's been my pleasure to provide a weekly update to VSEA members for more than nine years now—in good times and what seems like way too many bad times anymore,” says Gibson. “I want to thank every member who has ever appeared in *WIA*, been quoted in *WIA*, been photographed for *WIA* or taken some time to distribute the weekly to co-workers or post on a work site bulletin board. I also want to really thank my colleague Kris Lizzari for bringing *WIA* into the 21st century with his amazing graphics and layout expertise.” He adds, “Please keep the stories coming, especially if you work with someone who is doing something extraordinary or above and beyond for the Vermonters they serve.”

WIA Is Celebrating Its 500th Edition With A Contest To Win Great Escape Tickets!

To celebrate *WIA*'s 500th edition, VSEA's Communications Department is sponsoring a contest from now until June 11. To date, there have been some really thoughtful entries, and we encourage members to keep them coming.

Tell us in 75 words or less why you are VSEA proud. That's it. Pretty simple. A short essay about what your union means to you and your family or how your union helps you in your day-to-day work life. Whatever words convey best how you feel about your union.

We'll choose three winners and publish the winning short essays in a future edition of *WIA*.

First place = 4 day tickets to the Great Escape + VSEA t-shirt

Second Place = 2 day tickets to the Great Escape + VSEA baseball hat

Third Place = 2 day tickets to the Great Escape + VSEA window sticker

Deadline: You must submit your essay to the VSEA Communications Department by 4:30 p.m., Thursday, June 11. Email your essay to Doug Gibson at dgibson@vsea.org and put “WIA 500” in the subject line.

VSEA President Shelley Martin Not Running For Re-Election

VSEA President Shelley Martin asked WIA to share the following open letter to VSEA members and retirees:

To My Union Family Of Workers Within VSEA:

Sixteen years ago I made a conscious decision to become actively involved in VSEA, our union. It is a choice I have never regretted. I have enjoyed my time serving as a Council member, Chapter President, NMU Bargaining Clerk, Chairman and member of many committees, First Vice President, and now President. This activism has afforded me the opportunity to meet and talk with a great many VSEA members across Vermont. Through this interaction, I have witnessed the many challenges state employees confront daily and learned new perspectives from worksite locations. I have worked hard during my tenure to make sure your concerns are being strongly conveyed to the powers that be—and heard. It has been a tough job, but I have enjoyed the fight and the responsibility and challenges.

With a new VSEA officer election cycle drawing close, I have looked at my own personal goals and dreams to consider whether or not to seek a new term as your President. For me, my Presidential term has been devoted entirely to my position, to you as a member, and VSEA in general. Living alone has afforded me the opportunity to be able to say “yes” at a moment’s notice to go anywhere in the state and put VSEA members’ needs first. But it has been tough, so I have decided that I will not be seeking a new term as your President. To step aside was a difficult decision, but I believe the best one for me at this time in my life.

However, just because I have decided not to run again this year definitely does not mean I am hanging up my hat right now...far from it. In the coming weeks and months, I want to engage with as many members as possible to try to recruit more frontline workers to run for a VSEA elected office or to get involved in some other way. It is not too late to join a committee, a Bargaining Team, or the Council. VSEA is a member-driven, democratic organization, and I am committed to sharing this message far and wide before stepping down as your President October 1 (and even afterwards). VSEA’s future success is largely contingent on our union’s ability to identify and cultivate new leaders who strive to understand those many constant changing challenges confronting state employees and who want to help their colleagues across Vermont by effectively addressing them.

Throughout my career, working as a proud Vermont State Employee, I have always appreciated having my union family there to back me up in tough fights with the State. I am thankful every day for the security that comes with our good, strong union contract. VSEA is the best union in the New England States and it is up to each and every one of us to keep it strong and prepared for the battles that most certainly lie ahead.

Again, I encourage you to consider running for office and becoming a member of the Board of Trustees for VSEA. The Board gives you the opportunity to become a part of the body that manages our union and is open to every member regardless of your job title. It is my understanding that some officer positions only have one person interested – so please, rise to the challenge. Experience as an activist is always a great foundation, but not needed. We currently have officers who were elected with very little experience as an active member in VSEA.

I will forever be thankful to you for electing me to be your President – being your voice and facing those many challenges that came with this position with only your best interest in mind for success. I have thoroughly enjoyed and have learned so much through this experience. I look forward to continuing to serve as your President through the Annual Meeting at Jay Peak this year and hope to see you there before leaving office. I pledge to work closely with whoever is elected to ensure the transition is smooth.

It has truly been an honor to serve.

In Solidarity!

VSEA President Shelley Martin

Candidate(s) Determined In 2015 VSEA Board Of Trustees' Races

After reviewing the petitions received by the June 1 deadline, VSEA's Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee has approved the following candidates for these seats:

Non-Management Unit Trustee

William Wells – Benefits Program Specialist – DCF – Burlington
Write-In

Judicial Unit Trustee

William Capasso – Family Case Manager – Middlebury
David Wortheim – Court Officer B – Burlington
Write-In

District #3 (Newport/Island Pond, Lamoille County, Northeast Kingdom and St. Johnsbury)

Robert Arkley – Shift Supervisor – DOC – Newport
Dawn Carrillo – Help Desk Specialist II – DII – Lowell
Alan Rancourt – Master Maintenance – AOT – Island Pond
Write-In

District #6 (White River Junction/Springfield/Brattleboro)

Jeff Trowt – Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Inspector – DMV -- Wilmington
Write-In

Note: VSEA members eligible to vote in any of the above races will be mailed a ballot in the next few weeks with voting instructions and a deadline to return your marked ballot.

NMU Bargaining Team Wants Your Leave Request Stories

The Non-Management Unit's Bargaining Team was at headquarters on June 3 to continue preparing for upcoming negotiations with the State this fall. One of the topics they discussed is the need to learn more from NMU workers about how long it takes different managers to process employee leave requests. Are workers' requests being approved or denied in a timely manner?

If you belong to the NMU and want to share your story about how long it took for managements to process your leave requests, please send your NMU Team a summary of how long it took and what the ramifications were. Did you miss a booking date due to a delay? Were you denied at the last minute, after waiting for days or weeks? Did you have to cancel a trip or event due to slow processing of your request? Was your family made to suffer because management was stringing you along on your leave request? Your NMU Team wants to know.

To share your story (confidentially, unless otherwise agreed to) with the Team, please send an email to nmumail@vsea.org and write "My Leave Story" in the subject line. The Team thanks you in advance for responding to this request.

VSEA Saying Goodbye To Union Representative Josh Massey

After two stints admirably serving the VSEA membership as both an Organizer and a Union Representative, Josh Massey has decided to leave the union—and Vermont—to go way northwest to British Columbia, where he and his family will be putting down new roots.

“Very tough decision, but my wife is Canadian, and this is a move we have always thought about making,” explains Massey. “I’ll miss representing and advocating for VSEA members, and I want to thank them for letting me try to make their working lives and conditions a little better and fairer. I also want to thank the VSEA staff at headquarters for always being there for me and providing advice when I needed it. VSEA members are in good hands. I’ll miss everyone, and I’ll miss Vermont...especially the skiing. Keep fighting VSEA!”

VSEA President Shelley Martin praised Massey’s commitment to helping members and his friendly, down-to-earth approach, telling *WIA*, “It’s really been a pleasure to work with Josh, and VSEA wishes him and his family all the best as they head west—far west, I might add—to start this new chapter of their life.”

VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard joined Martin, saying, "VSEA is grateful for the hard work Josh Massey has performed on behalf of our members both as union representative and an organizer. We wish him and his family well in their new home."

VSEA Seeks New Union Representative!

Josh Massey’s departure has created a need for VSEA to fill a now empty Union Representative position at headquarters in Montpelier. Here is a description for any member interested in applying:

Join Vermont’s most dynamic statewide union as its new Union Representative.

Job Duties will include:

- Membership advocacy;
- Complaint and grievance handling;
- Contract administration, enforcement, and representation in investigations;
- Organizing and other related duties associated with the strategic plan of VSEA;
- Handling all aspects of work related to membership services in an assigned field area; and
- Administration of the collective bargaining agreement through membership education and communication.

VSEA seeks to interview dynamic candidates with a track record of commitment to the labor movement and preferably two (2) years of experience as a union representative both administering and enforcing collective bargaining agreements. Interested and qualified candidates are encouraged to submit their resume and a cover letter detailing their professional involvement with and commitment to the labor movement to Rstout@VSEA.org. Exceptional candidates will be scheduled for an interview.

VSEA Legislative/Policy Team Pens Legislative Session Synopsis

VSEA’s Legislative team and Policy Analyst worked together to produce a synopsis of the 2015 legislative session and interested VSEA members can find a copy of the document by [clicking here](#).

Here’s an excerpt:

“VSEA members were fed up, and they were fired up. Already burdened this year with an 18% health care premium increase due to the State’s previous raids on the State Employee Health Care Fund and

still juggling burgeoning caseloads caused by a loss of workers during Vermont's last recession, VSEA members were adamant this time around that things were going to be different, voicing strong opposition to any talk of reopeners."

Parking Garage Issues At 108 Cherry St. Building

[VTDigger reports on June 2](#) that BGS is beginning a review of the structural integrity of the State Office Building located at 108 Cherry Street in Burlington. The building, which primarily houses Department of Health offices, was constructed in the 1980s on top of a parking garage built a few years earlier. According to BGS official Dave Burley, the parking structure is not growing old gracefully, and it has sustained extensive damage from road salt. It's slow deterioration is now causing some to question the structural safety of the building that sits above it.

Burley tells *Digger* the State will be bringing in a structural engineer soon to evaluate the situation, but he assures that "It's not going to collapse...it's not that bad." He also reports that the building has been on BGS' "radar screen" for six years, and steps have been taken in those years to minimize further damage, like installing protective membranes. Still, BGS says 25 spaces are out of commission today due to deteriorating conditions. Burley says there are no plans to relocate employees.

VSEA Union Representative Kelly Burns tells *WIA* she has received reports from members working at 108 Cherry Street about damage to their vehicles while parked in the garage, and she will be reviewing the claims with VSEA leaders and BGS officials. Burns will also be monitoring the structural engineer's investigation and sharing any pertinent findings with employees.

House Speaker Tours Vets' Home

Just a few weeks after celebrating being officially deficiency free, the *Bennington Banner* reported on June 1 that House Speaker Shap Smith was at the Vermont Veterans' Home (VVH) recently to meet with facility administrators and VVH Board Chair Joe Krawczyk to discuss the legislature's \$5.4 budget allocation to keep the Home operating in FY2016. Smith also toured the facility, where he was able to meet some of the frontline VVH employees who helped get the Home back on track and see them at work. Smith also received an update on the \$1.2 million lawmakers allocated to the VVH to renovate its expansive kitchen, and he called the expenditure sensible for the long term.

Smith offered some encouraging words to the workers and residents, saying that Vermont "is not in a place where we want to close the Veterans' Home," and adding, "We need to make sure the money is being spent efficiently, but we also have to make sure that we're supporting the provision of services to the veterans."

VSEA Schedules Legislative Wrap-Up Meetings

VSEA's Organizing and Legislative Departments are scheduling a series of meetings in the next few weeks to provide members with a summary of the 2015 legislative session, including wins and losses, what worked and what didn't and who stood with VSEA in members' fight against more cuts.

"I encourage VSEA members interested in learning more about what happened this session, or who have questions about the session, a candidate's record or the legislative process in general, to attend," VSEA President Shelley Martin tells *WIA*.

Here is the schedule to date:

Wednesday, June 10

1:30 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.

Green Mountain Psychiatric Care Center

Berlin

Wednesday, June 10

11:45 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.

DMV Office
4 Market Street
Berlin

Thursday, June 11

½ Noon to 1:00 p.m.

MacFarland House
ESD Conference Room
Barre

Thursday, June 11

½ Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Family Services Division
Industrial Avenue
Williston

Thursday, June 11

4:30 p.m.

HAEU
Essex

Friday, June 12

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

State Office Building
First Floor Conference Room
100 Mineral St.
Springfield

Friday, June 12

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

State Office Building
Morrisville

Friday, June 12

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Department of Health
108 Cherry St.
Burlington

Tuesday, June 16

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

ESD
Burlington

Thursday, June 18

11:00 a.m. & Noon

DMV Office

120 State Street
Montpelier

Thursday, June 18

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

State Office Building

Newport

Thursday, June 18

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

National Life Building

Winooski Conference Room

Montpelier

TOMORROW! VSEA Members Invited To “Stroll With The Heifers”

The Vermont Workers’ Center is inviting any and all interested VSEA members to join their “Strolling With The Heifer’s” parade contingent on Saturday, June 6, in Brattleboro. The popular event draws Vermonters from across the state, and if you would be interested in marching in the parade with other workers, please email Ellen Schwartz at eschwal@myfairpoint.net, or call her at 802-257-4436.

Workers are gathering at 9:30 a.m. at the Church Street Plaza on Flat Street, and the Workers’ Center group is in Division 4 and will be carrying a large “Put People First” banner.

VSEA members are encouraged to wear a union t-shirt and carry a banner if you have one. Brattleboro Chapter President Robin Rieske is offering to let VSEA members carry the Chapter’s banner if you would like. If interested, please give Robin a call at 802-275-7232.

There is also an opportunity for Chapters to drop literature on an informational table being set up on Friday, June 5, beginning at 5:00 p.m. and continuing through the event.

For more information, please visit [this event Facebook page](#), set up by the Workers’ Center.

VSEA Member Hosting “Labor Reading Group”

VSEA activist John Howe is inviting members to join him at a “Labor Reading Group” he is starting in Burlington. The group is holding its first meeting on Sunday, June 21 at 5:00 p.m. at the offices of the Vermont Workers’ Center, located at 294 N Winooski Avenue. The group will be reading passages from “How To Jumpstart Your Union,” which is a book about a recent strike by Chicago teachers and how they used their fight to build community and union power.

If you would like more information or have a question, please contact John at johnh@gmavt.net.

Discounted 2015 Great Escape/Splashwater Kingdom Day Tickets Now Available Online! Hard Tickets For Pickup Coming Soon.

“Two parks of fun for the price of one!”

Lake George, New York

Park Opens May 16, 2015, & Splashwater Opens May 23, 2015

Discount tickets are now available to purchase online by [clicking here](#), but in order to access this page, which also includes the required VSEA username and password, **you must be a registered “member-only” VSEA website user** ([you can sign up here!](#)). Please note that there is a service charge for purchasing online.

VSEA will also soon be receiving a batch of hard tickets that members can pick up at headquarters, and there is no service charge attached.

2015 Regular Day Tickets = \$33 each (\$25 savings over price at gate)

Quote Of The Week!

“It looks like they’ve made a choice...the administration’s made a choice just to close down Rutland and Derby, and we were convinced that was going to happen as the (legislative) session wore on. Now that we have some hard numbers, we can decide what we’re going to do.”

Rep. Butch Shaw (R-Florence) in a [June 4 VTDigger story](#) about DPS Commissioner Keith Flynn’s announcement this week that PSAP (911 Emergency) Call Centers in Derby and Rutland will close in September 2015. VSEA members at both Centers had lobbied hard against this action throughout the session, and first responder and public sentiment seemed to be heavily on their side, but alas.

File Your Petition Today To Run To Be A VSEA Officer!

Petitions to run for one of VSEA’s five top elected official seats are due 60 calendar days prior to the union’s Annual Meeting on September 12. This makes the deadline Tuesday, July 14, 2015.

- VSEA President
- VSEA First Vice President
- VSEA Second Vice President
- VSEA Clerk
- VSEA Treasurer

VSEA members interested in running for one of the "Elected Officer"positions above can find a filing petition [here](#).

Note: If running to be an elected officer, please make sure you clearly indicate the office you seek in the space provided. Primarily, this means distinguishing between First and Second VP.

June 30 Deadline To Self-Nominate For VSEA Departmental Council Seat

VSEA Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee Chair Mary Poulos is reminding VSEA members that now is the time to self-nominate for a VSEA departmental Council seat.

All departmental Council seats are open, and current terms will expire on September 30, 2015. The deadline to submit a self-nomination form is Tuesday, June 30, 2015.

You can find a self-nominating form by [clicking here](#).
(Opens/ downloads as a PDF)

With more than 120 VSEA members, the VSEA Council is one of your union's primary governing bodies and its largest and most diverse, with departmental representatives from across state government. The Council meets quarterly and retains a right to override decisions made by the VSEA Board of Trustees.

Questions? Please contact VSEA Administrative Assistant Ayla Hudson at 802-223-5247, or by email at ahudson@vsea.org.

To determine the best fit for you, here is a complete list of the number of Council seats available, by departmental heading:

Aging and Independent Living = 4 Seats
Agriculture = 1 Seat
Attorney General = 1 Seat
Auditor of Accounts = 1 Seat
Buildings and General Services = 5 Seats

Children and Families = 10 Seats
ACCD/Housing = 1 Seat
ACCD/Economic Development = 1 Seat
ACCD/Marketing and Tourism = 1 Seat
Commission on Women = 1 Seat
Corrections = 10 Seats
Criminal Justice Training Council = 1 Seat
Defender General = 1 Seat
DVHA = 2 Seat
Education = 2 Seats
Environmental Conservation = 3 Seats
Finance and Management = 1 Seat
Financial Regulation = 1 Seat
Fish and Wildlife = 1 Seat
Forests and Parks = 1 Seat
Health = 6 Seats
AHS/Rate Setting and Auditing = 1 Seat
AHS/IT Unit = 1 Seat
Information and Innovation = 1 Seat
Judiciary = 3 Seats
Labor = 3 Seat
Library = 1 Seat
Liquor Control = 1 Seat
Lottery = 1 Seat
Mental Health = 4 Seats
Military = 2 Seats
ANR = 1 Seat
Natural Resources Board = 1 Seat
Public Safety - Civilian = 4 Seats
Public Service Board = 1 Seat
Public Service Department = 1 Seat
Secretary of State = 1 Seat
Tax Department = 1 Seat
Transportation Agency = 10 Seats
Transportation Agency/DMV = 2 Seats
Treasurer's Office = 1 Seat
Vermont Veterans' Home = 3 Seats
Vermont State Colleges = 4 Seats
Vermont Housing Authority = 1 Seat

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

June 9

VSEA Council Meeting
Vermont Technical College
Randolph
9:30 a.m.

June 10

NMU Bargaining Team Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

June 10

Retirees' Chapter Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:30 a.m.

June 10

VSEA Legislative Update Meeting
Green Mountain Psychiatric Care Center
Berlin
1:30 p.m.

June 10

VSEA Legislative Update Meeting
Green Mountain Psychiatric Care Center
Berlin
3:30 p.m.

June 11

Training: Steward 2: Protecting The Contract
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin
9:00 a.m.

June 11

Fight Back Campaign Debrief
Agency of Agriculture
Room 210
Montpelier
Noon

June 11

VSEA Legislative Update Meeting
McFarland House
ESD Conference Room
Barre
Noon

June 11

VSEA Legislative Update Meeting
DCF Family Services Division
Industrial Avenue
Williston
Noon

June 12

VSEA Legislative Update Meeting
State Office Building
First Floor Conference Room
100 Mineral St.
Springfield
Noon

June 12

VSEA Legislative Update Meeting
State Office Building
Morrisville
Noon