Hello brothers and sisters.
This is my first newsletter as your President, and I want to let you know that I am honored to be as much. I take great pride in being a member of such a dedicated, professional bunch of people, and will conduct myself accordingly as your president. Our local is comprised of some of the most dedicated, professional people I have ever been associated with, and you should all be proud. Our group is very unique within the WMU community in that there are members of our union that affect the students in nearly every aspect of their experience at WMU. We have a presence in the areas where they learn, live, play, eat, and just about anything else they may do while at WMU. All of these things are a vital part of their overall learning goals, and our folks are the ones that make these areas better, thereby making their educational experience better. Thank you all for all that you do. It is true that AFSCME Local 1668 “Makes WMU Happen”.

I want to thank everyone who stepped up and ran for a position in the recent elections. It is great to have so many members interested in our local and willing to do their part to make it better, and win or lose, you should be proud. Congratulations to those of you that were successful, and I look forward to working with you to accomplish the goals of our local.

Your bargaining committee has begun the journey of negotiating our next contract. Please help your representative in any way you can. Now is the time to communicate any issues or concerns you have to your rep so they have time to do any research or investigation prior to going to the table. Now is also the time to put our best foot forward and show the administration how professional and united we are. Wear your union apparel on Wednesdays! If you don’t have any, we still have a good selection at the office, give us a call for more info.

That’s about all I have for this month. Thanks again for all that you do to make WMU happen!!!

In solidarity, Dennis

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Vice President's Report

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
First I would like to thank you for Electing me, I really appreciate your support. I will work very hard to represent you as your Vice President. I will work harder to gain your respect. I look forward to working with the President and Chief Steward and the other Officers of this Local. I look forward to the challenges that are ahead. At the February Union meeting, there was a motion to send me to the Michigan Labor Press Spring Conference in April where I will learn more about putting together a Union Newsletter and other publications. I am excited to go and represent our local at this conference. It is a negotiations year. What does that mean? IT means that the problems we face, we face UNITED. Obstacles we face, we overcome UNITED. Why? Because as a Union, when we stand, we stand UNITED.

If you would like to submit any articles or letters for the Newsletter, Please send them to me or send them to my email address at valerie.armstrong@wmich.edu

In Solidarity,
Valerie Armstrong
Chief Steward’s Report

Congratulations to all our newly elected and re-elected Officers, Executive Board Members, Divisional Stewards. I personally want to thank all of you for your continued support throughout the last five years. I still feel a passion for this opportunity to serve you and making a difference for all of our members. I look forward to the next two years with all of the challenges that are ahead of us. We are going to be in negotiations this summer and we have a lot of new faces on our Bargaining team as well as the newly elected Officers and Executive Board Members. I look forward to working with each and every one of them. We also have some newly elected Divisional Stewards who I will be working very closely with. I appreciate every one of you for stepping up to represent our local.

Now that elections are over, we will begin holding District Steward Elections in all of our Divisions. Please remember that these are the people who will be representing you for the next two years. Especially since this is an negotiations year, please consider running for Steward in your District. If you have questions, you can ask me or your Divisional Steward. We really need to make sure that we have representatives from every District, shop, crew, region, or zone. These are the people we will make contact with first when we need to get the word out! Steward Elections will be held between Feb 17, and 27th, 2009. Your Divisional Stewards will be scheduling these and holding these elections on every crew.

I am working with Council Staff to set up Steward Training for some time in March. When I have more information, I will be passing it on.

I have set two dates for computer training. The first will be on Feb. 25, 2009 at 3:30pm to 7pm in Room 1107 in Sangren Hall. The Second will be on March 11, 2009 from 8am to 11am in Room 1206 in Sangren Hall. Please call to RSVP at 381-1668.

In solidarity,
Kathi

Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was born on February the twelfth 1809, and became the 16th President of the United States on March the 4th 1861 at the age of 52, he died four years later on April the 15th 1865 at the age of 56. He was born in Hardin County, Kentucky to Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks into a small log cabin with just one room. His parents were uneducated farmers working on the 348 acres site the log cabin was situated on.

In 1832 Lincoln began his political career creating a campaign for the Whig Party, which was improving navigation on the Sangamon River. Then on November 4th 1842 Lincoln married Mary Todd, and together they had four sons, of which only one survived into adulthood.

In 1846 Lincoln was elected into the US House of Representatives, where he accredited the Mexican-American War to President Polk's need for “military glory”. He then tarnished his status with a speech which angered the Democrats.

In 1860 Abraham Lincoln was chosen to become the Republican candidate for the elections because of his temperate views on slavery and his western origin. Throughout the election Lincoln gave no speeches as it was handled by the Republican organization. On November the 6th 1860 Lincoln was elected to become the 16th President of the U.S. beating the other contestants; Stephan A. Douglas, John C. Breckinridge and John Bell.

While Lincoln was president, the American Civil War started. The fighting began in 1861, and took up much of the presidents time, resulting in much frustration, until April 9th 1865 when Robert E. Lee, the United States Army Officer surrendered in Virginia, ending the war.

On April 14th 1865 Lincoln attended Our American Cousins, a play in Ford’s Theatre, without his body guard. John Wilkes Booth knew of this and formulated a plan to assassinate Lincoln. While Lincoln sat in the Balcony, Booth, at the point of the funniest line, fired a .44 caliber bullet into the back of Lincoln’s head at point blank range. Booth hoped the laughter would cover the gunshot noise; however Major Henry Rathbone grabbed him, before being cut by Booths knife. Booth then jumped from the balcony and escaped with a fractured leg. Lincoln was moved to Petersen House across the street, where he lay in a coma for nine hours before passing away. Booth however was hunted down for twelve days before being shot.
Attention All Members of Local 1668
Computer Training

I will be holding two (2) more Basic Computer/Internet Training Classes!
February 25 from 3:30 to 7pm in Sangren Hall room 1107. This one will be a refresher or “part two” class but I will accept first timers too.
March 11, in room 1206 at Sangren Hall from 8am to 11am.

If you are interested in learning about the internet and email system, please plan to attend. I think this will be a very useful class for many people. I am even willing to have a second class if people want to learn even more. I wanted to do this when they went to the online “Webcheck” system and then this new “Online Application System” which has been nothing short of difficult for many people. I believe this will be very beneficial and empowering to many people.
This will be a “no previous experience necessary” type of class so everyone will benefit! It is my intent to make sure that everyone who attends will be very comfortable with sending and receiving emails and will be able to search on the internet with these basic skills. All you need is two fingers and a desire to learn.
This class will be exclusive to our members only. There will be no management personnel or students. Just us! Fellow AFSCME Local 1668 members.

Please call me to sign up 269-381-1668 or 269-377-2148. Class size is limited! I am looking forward to this opportunity!

Kathleen Cantley
What is the Employee Free Choice Act?

The Employee Free Choice Act, supported in 2007 by a bipartisan coalition in Congress, would enable working people to bargain for better benefits, wages and working conditions by restoring workers’ freedom to choose for themselves whether to join a union. It would:

- Establish stronger penalties for violation of employee rights when workers seek to form a union and during first-contract negotiations.
- Provide mediation and arbitration for first-contract disputes (PDF).
- Allow employees to form unions by signing cards authorizing union representation.

The System for Forming Unions is Broken

Today, CEOs get contracts that protect their wages and benefits. But some deny their employees the same opportunity. Although U.S. and international laws are supposed to protect workers’ freedom to belong to unions, employers routinely harass, intimidate, coerce and even fire workers struggling to gain a union so they can bargain for better lives. And U.S. labor law is powerless to stop them. Employees are on an uneven playing field from the first moment they begin exploring whether they want to form a union, and the will of the majority often is crushed by brutal management tactics.

Cornell University scholar Kate Bronfenbrenner studied hundreds of organizing campaigns and found that:

- Ninety-two percent of private-sector employers, when faced with employees who want to join together in a union, force employees to attend closed-door meetings to hear anti-union propaganda; 80 percent require supervisors to attend training sessions on attacking unions; and 78 percent require that supervisors deliver anti-union messages to workers they oversee.
- Seventy-five percent hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns, often based on mass psychology and distorting the law.
- Half of employers threaten to shut down partially or totally if employees join together in a union.
- In 25 percent of organizing campaigns, private-sector employers illegally fire workers because they want to form a union.
- Even after workers successfully form a union, in one-third of the instances, employers do not negotiate a contract.

Why Workers Need the Freedom to Form Unions and Bargain

Joining together in a union to bargain for health care, pensions, fair wages and better working conditions is the best opportunity working people have to get ahead.

Today, good jobs are vanishing and health care coverage and retirement security are slipping out of reach. Only 38 percent of the public says their families are getting ahead financially and less than a quarter believes the next generation will be better off.

But workers who belong to unions earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers. They are 59 percent more likely to have employer-provided health coverage and 72 percent more likely to have pensions.

All workers should have the freedom to decide for themselves whether to form unions to bargain for a better life.

Holy Cow!
Your AFSCME Local 1668
Golf Outing is only 4 months away.
Make plans now to join us on June 20.
Keep posted for more info soon!!!