

## LOCAL 118 NEWS



## Hello Brothers and Sisters

2025 was a great year for Local 118. Almost 3 million hours were logged, work began on Phase 1 of our new building, and the outlook remains strong. In the first quarter of 2026, Brent Mueller joined as Welding Coordinator, welding classes began in the new Training Center, and Lisa Popodi was hired as our new Office Professional. The Local continues to grow in both capacity and opportunity.

## Work Outlook

The work outlook for 2026 is strong, featuring significant projects such as Microsoft, Lilly, the Paris and Darien power plants, and continued work at Racine schools. This positive momentum is expected to carry into 2027 with major projects on the horizon, including the Kenosha Menominee Hard Rock Casino, the Haribo expansion, and two new natural gas power plants planned for Kenosha and Racine Counties.

While Microsoft's Phase 2 started slower than anticipated, the project's end date remains unchanged. This will likely concentrate the manpower demand, with a significant ramp-up expected in May. Lilly and the Paris RICE (Reciprocal Internal Combustion Engine) plant are both slated to ramp up in the fall. Hopefully, these projects will keep our members busy through our typically slow winter season.

~ Josh Birong

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The demand for licensed plumbers in Wisconsin continues to grow across residential, commercial, and service work. From new home construction to large commercial projects and everyday service calls, skilled, licensed plumbers are essential to ensure safe, high-quality work.

Local 118 is focused on meeting this need by growing our membership, investing in training, and maintaining a highly skilled workforce. We are also committed to organizing non-union plumbers who want better training, benefits, and working conditions. By doing so, we will continue to protect our market share and deliver the quality work our industry depends on.

~ Josh Lewandowski



There's a lot of work coming across the jurisdiction, and it's not slowing down anytime soon. With that, we're going to see more travelers coming back into the area to help man these jobs.

The big projects this year are the **Paris Power Plant, Microsoft Phase 2, and Eli Lilly and Company**. These jobs are going to need skilled hands, and there will be plenty of opportunities for those who are ready.

If you've got the time, contact the training center and get your certs lined up. The more certifications you have, the more valuable you are on these jobs—and the steadier you'll stay working.

### In Demand Certifications:

#### Welding:

Structural Steel, UA 18A Orbital, UA 21, 22, or 63,  
UA 41, UA 38, UA 93

#### Copper:

SS-1 Soldering, UA 51 Brazing

### Critical Reminder for Continuity Certifications:

Do not allow certifications that require continuity to lapse. Use reminders, mark your calendar, or take whatever steps necessary to stay current. A lapsed cert can cost you work.

### Bottom Line: Be Proactive

Do not wait for a job call to be issued before scrambling to get certified. Some certifications require time for practice or class availability. Getting ahead of this now ensures you are ready when the work starts.

### Support Your Fellow Members

Look out for your brothers and sisters—both apprentices and journeyworkers. If you see someone struggling with mental health, keeping up with work, or managing school, check in with them. Lend a hand and help one another through challenges. We are a unified team.

If you are interested in working on any of the projects listed, please reach out.

~ Eric Steimle

## Allocations



This is the final year of our current three-year contract. On **June 1**, a **\$4 increase** will be added to the total package. At the **May 18 union meeting**, members will vote on how to allocate this increase.

### Recommendation:

- **Required: 10¢ to health fund**
- \$1 to the Pension
- \$1 to the Supplemental DC (401k)
- \$1.90 to the check

Member participation in this vote is encouraged to ensure the allocation reflects the priorities of the Local.

## Pension



2025 was also an excellent year for the Pension Fund. Increased hours worked, a lower average membership age, and strong investment returns have improved our funding percentage. Because of this progress, the Trustees approved two important changes at the March Pension Fund meeting:

- The **unpenalized early retirement age** could be reduced from 62 to 60.
- The **accrual rate** could be increased by **\$12 for a \$1 Buy-in**.

These benefits have been approved by the trustees, but the **members have to ratify them at the May meeting** before they can take effect.

While the Health Fund is currently stable financially, the trustees are concerned about the long-term impact of members' Dollar Banks. Because the fund's structure classifies these banks as liabilities, they contribute to projected long-term funding shortfalls. This challenge is heightened by the fact that contributions have not increased in the last four years.

To proactively address this financial structure, the trustees approved two changes at the Health Fund meeting on Tuesday, April 13, 2026:

1. A **10-cent increase** to the health fund, effective **June 1, 2026**.
2. A reduction in the monthly Dollar Bank accruals to **\$8.59 per hour** worked in excess of eligibility.

## Health Fund



### Exploring a Local Health Fund for Local 118

The process of formally separating Madison area members (who merged into Locals 601 and 75 twenty-six years ago) into their respective health funds is nearing finalization this year. As details are concluded, it is evident that Local 118 will have reduced influence over the current WPT Health Fund. This, along with several ideological disagreements that have occurred over the last couple of years, has led us to begin exploring the possibility of establishing our own local health fund.

This initiative is in the very preliminary stages. We are committed to keeping all members completely informed as this process moves forward. We want to assure you that both Union and management trustees are in full agreement: our primary goal is to maintain the current benefits and structure for our members.

For ongoing updates and detailed information, please continue to attend the monthly union meetings.



## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

May is Mental Health Awareness Month—a time to recognize something that affects every one of us, whether we talk about it or not. In the trades, especially in a hardworking union like Local 118, we pride ourselves on toughness, reliability, and getting the job done. But behind that strength, there's a reality we can't ignore: mental health matters just as much as physical health.

Long hours, demanding job sites, time away from family, financial pressures, and the wear and tear on the body can all take a toll. It's easy to push through stress, bottle things up, or tell ourselves to deal with it later. But just like ignoring a small mechanical issue can lead to a major breakdown, ignoring mental health can lead to serious consequences.

The good news is that things are changing. Conversations around mental health are becoming more open, and the stigma is slowly being broken down. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness—it's a sign of strength and awareness. Looking out for your mental well-being, and checking in on your brothers and sisters, is just another way we take care of each other as union members.

There are a few simple things we can all do:

- **Check in with yourself.** If you're feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or off, don't ignore it.
- **Talk to someone.** Whether it's a coworker, friend, family member, or professional, having a conversation can make a big difference.
- **Watch out for each other.** If someone seems different—quieter, angrier, or withdrawn—reach out. A simple “you good?” can go a long way.
- **Use available resources.** Many unions and benefit funds offer confidential counseling or support services. These are there for a reason—use them.

Mental health challenges don't discriminate. They can affect apprentices, journeymen, foremen, and leadership alike. By creating a culture where it's okay to speak up, we make our union stronger, safer, and more united.

This May, let's commit to being more aware, more supportive, and more willing to have real conversations. Taking care of your mind is just as important as taking care of your tools—and both are essential to doing the job right.

Stay safe, stay strong, and take care of yourselves and each other.



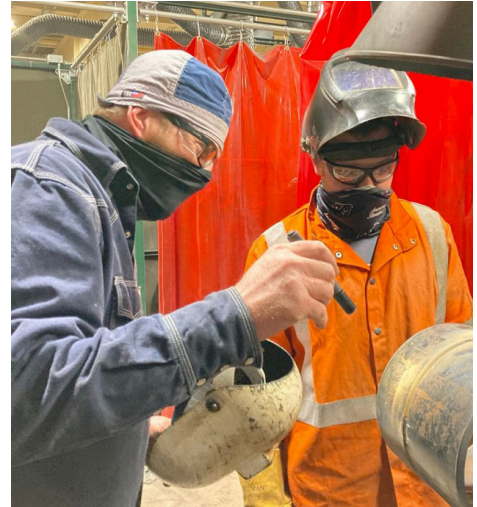
## Training

The Fall 2026 Night School schedule is being finalized and will be posted on the bulletin board at Union Meetings by early June.

This year's Apprenticeship Contest was highly competitive. Congratulations to Joe Wrixton, James Lepow, Tyler Kowalczyk, and Seth Weippert for representing Local 118 with skill and professionalism at the Wisconsin Pipe Trades Contest.

The Veterans in Piping (VIP) program was hosted at the Training Center April 13-16, with Mike Lea instructing and Mason Langenfeld teaching First Aid and CPR.

The Training Center is also seeking Service Fitters interested in teaching night school. Members interested should contact Brandon Lawton at 262-933-3687 for details.



## Apprenticeship Updates:

If night school hours appear incorrect on Work Reports, please note that the issue is being resolved and should be corrected by the **end of May**.

Beginning **January 2027**, **Fitting PRI tuition** will be collected **before each semester**. Tuition will be due in **late December** and **late May**.

- Tuition must be paid in full before classes begin.
- Apprentices with unpaid tuition will not be allowed to continue the semester.
- All tuition and book fees must be paid in full before turning out.

This change ensures fairness and accountability across the program.



### Trent McReynolds Scholarship Grant

A grant of up to \$2,000 is available to all apprentices who live in Racine County or work for a Racine County-based contractor. You can apply online at <https://www.racinecounty.com/our-county/residents/trent-mcreynolds-scholarship-fund/apply>.

## Support Needed for Kenosha Hard Rock Casino



Progress on the proposed Kenosha Menominee Hard Rock Casino is slow, but it is moving through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The Menominee Nation anticipates the proposal will reach Governor Evers' desk before his term ends in January 2027.

The Nation is hopeful, but they have requested our assistance to ensure strong public support during the recently opened public comment period. It is crucial to participate, as strong opposition often overpowers the voices of the "quiet majority."

To make your voice heard and participate in the public comment, please visit the Better Kenosha Coalition website at [betterkenoshacoalition.com](https://betterkenoshacoalition.com).

## Get Involved

There are numerous opportunities for members to become more involved in Local 118. You can run for office (every three years), be a member of the finance committee, the Examining Board, or the election committee, become a trustee on one of the benefit funds or the JATC, become an instructor, or, most importantly, volunteer to get more involved with the community service and political action. If you want to get more involved, please contact Business Manager Josh Birong at [joshb@ualocal118.com](mailto:joshb@ualocal118.com).

## Organizing Blitz

Every summer, the UA conducts regional organizing blitzes around the country. Our regional blitz will be held from October 4th - 9th in Des Moines, IA. Journey persons interested in participating should contact Business Manager Josh Birong at [joshb@ualocal118.com](mailto:joshb@ualocal118.com).

## Pipe Up!

UA General President Mark McManus has started a podcast to inform members and give them a better idea of what's happening in our industry. New episodes are available monthly on most platforms, including Apple Music and Spotify. Click on the link or scan the QR code to download, subscribe, or submit ideas for future episodes. <https://ua.org/pipeup/>



## UNION MEETINGS:

Our Union meetings are always held on the third Monday of every month at the Kenosha Union Club, 3030 39th Ave. Kenosha, WI 53144, at 5:00 PM.

**There are no union meetings in July or August**

## Upcoming Events

### Retiree Luncheon



#### Retiree Luncheon

Join us on **Thursday, April 23rd**, from **noon - 2:00 pm**.

To RSVP or for more details, please call the office at **262-654-3815**.

### Wisconsin Construction Hike for Hope

UA Local 118 is proud to be a sponsor for this year's Wisconsin Construction Hike for Hope, taking place on **Saturday, June 13th**.

We're walking as a union family to show up for our members, our industry, and our community. Every step and every dollar raised helps bring hope and support to people right here in Wisconsin. Sign up to hike with us, invite a friend, or make a gift—let's prove what solidarity can do.

Join the team or show support at <https://supporting.afsp.org/teams/388365>

The event will be held at two locations:

- **Devil's Lake State Park** - Baraboo, WI
- **Marsh Haven Nature Reserve** - Waupun, WI

Event Timeline:

- On-Site Registration Starts: 10:00 am
- Program Starts: 11:30 am

For more details, visit: [afsp.org/wiconstruction](https://afsp.org/wiconstruction)

### Kenosha On-Site PHA Event

Location: **Kenosha Union Hall**

Address:

**3030 39th Ave, Room 112, Kenosha, WI**

Date: **Tuesday, May 19**

Time: **1:30 PM – 5:30 PM**



3 Easy Ways to Schedule Your PHA

1. Call Direct
2. Online: Visit CareATC at [www.careatc.com/patients](http://www.careatc.com/patients)
3. Mobile App: Use the CareATC app

### Annual Kingfish Game

The Southeast Wisconsin Building and Construction Trades Council will host its annual Kingfish Game on **Friday, July 9th**.



- Free to all Union Building Trades members in good standing.
- Each member may receive up to **four tickets** with the donation of a **non-perishable, non-expired food item**.
- Additional donations are appreciated and will benefit a local food bank or organization selected by the Building Trades.