

LOCAL EXTENDS ITS HANDS INTO COMMUNITY, TOO

For 125 years, the numerous charitable efforts of Local 33 have continuously touched countless lives in Des Moines and throughout the State of Iowa. The long list of member activities also includes marching together in annual parades, annual parties, picnics and dinner-dances to honor apprentices and retirees.

Out in the community, Local 33 members have helped a wide range of beneficiaries. More recently, the local joined a significant community-wide crusade in 2006 that helped win a nationwide competition for a **Job Corps Center in Ottumwa** after several years of lobbying and letter-writing campaigns. The mechanical work on the Job Corps Center in Ottumwa, one of only two granted in the entire United States, was awarded to Winger Mechanical, a union contractor from the area.

Among other helpful projects in which the local has participated, back in 1959, Local 33 members contributed labor to help build three new buildings at the Y.M.C.A. boys camp near Boone, Iowa. The next year, the local and 11 other Iowa United Association locals helped build "**Camp Sunnyside**" for the Iowa Society of Crippled Children and Adults in Des Moines.

Even during the challenging 1980s, Local 33 pitched in. For example, the local was one of the first distribution sites in the city in 1983 to run out of free government surplus cheese that was being given away to Polk County residents.

Later in the 1980s and well into the 1990s, Local 33 participated in the United Association's nationwide "**Project HEAT'S ON,**" during which members volunteered to inspect, service and repair heating equipment of needy families in the Des Moines area. In October 1991, 90 servicemen volunteered for the project and serviced 207 homes.

At its 125th Anniversary in 2016, Local 33 has compiled a long, proud list of community giving – and continues to help whenever there is a need. Most recently, the local has participated in and continues to assist with multiple community-support ventures, organizations and institutions, including **Make-A-Wish Jolly Holiday Lights, John Stoddard Cancer Center, Mercy Cancer Center, Blank Children's Hospital, Dorothy's House, Habitat for Humanity, Iowa Food Bank, Siouxland Food Bank, Young Women's Resource Center, Animal Rescue League, Des Moines Police Burial Association, Bethel Mission and Hope Ministries.**



Local 33 members volunteered their piping skills to the Iowa Mission of Mercy in October 2013 to help the program provide free dental services for those in need.



FACING NEW CHALLENGES, HARD TIMES

The downtown revitalization and abundant apartment construction work of the late 1960s eventually tailed off in Des Moines, and the bulk of the 1970s, for the most part, were relatively slack times for Local 33. Regardless, the local continued to grow and by the end of the decade had nearly 700 members.

What's more, as the decade proceeded, Local 33 and the **Iowa State Building Trades Council** became more preoccupied with the advancing non-union movement, led in particular by the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) anti-union group.

In the mid-1970s, the local did enjoy a reprieve from the tougher times beginning with construction of the **Ruan Center** high rise on Grand Avenue in downtown Des Moines. Started in 1973 and completed in 1975, it was the tallest building in Iowa until the completion of the 801 Grand building in 1991.

Members were also employed during that time on a project at the **3-M** plant in Knoxville and at the **Maytag** plant in town, and **Business Manager Ray Sullivan** reported to the November 20, 1974, general membership meeting that a new power house would be built in Chillicothe, Iowa, in 1976.

The bulk of Brother Sullivan's reports during the following few years were far less encouraging. On February 5, 1975, he told the membership that 11 men were on the out-of-work bench; then on March 5 that year it was 25 men; and on February 2, 1977, he reported that 82 men were either unemployed or working out of town.

The news was not all foreboding during that time, as the local did receive a 65-cent pay bump with a new contract in June 1976, increasing the rate for plumbers from \$9.90 an



Local 33 joined the more than 200 union members who assisted with cleanup operations after a tornado hit Charles City, Iowa, on May 20, 1968.

hour to \$10.55 an hour. For the second year of the agreement, the wage increase was based on a fixed amount or the increase in the cost of living, whichever was higher.

At the conclusion of that contract, Local 33 received a three-year pact on June 1, 1978. For the first year, journeymen wages were increased to \$12.15 per hour, which included a 50-cent vacation allowance, then to \$13.20 the second year and then \$14.30 until May 31, 1981, while foreman were given an additional \$1 per hour.

Despite the local's many gains for its membership in the more recent years and throughout its history, Des Moines Water Works employees voted, 82 to 74, on June 27, 1980, to reject a proposal to join the local.

It then took a 10-day strike beginning June 7, 1981, with Local 33 members walking off jobs on several downtown building projects, including **Locust Mall, Carriers**



Ruan Building

Insurance and Elsie Mason Manor apartments, just to gain a new one-year deal with contractors.

The slump not only continued but worsened into the early 1980s for Local 33. In a true sign of the times, **Business Manager Robert Cobley** reported to the local's September 2, 1981, general membership meeting that 66 members were on the bench and "work in town looks bad," while one particular non-union firm, Fulton Company, won three jobs in the city over the previous month.

A few months later on March 17, 1982, Brother Cobley told the members that 160 men were on the bench, 87 of which were on travel cards, and "things don't look good in our area." Conditions remained the same for the ensuing year, placing 184 men out of work in the area on August 4, 1982, 141 still on the bench on May 5, 1983, and over 160 out in November of that year.

Elsewhere, United Association Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 125 in Cedar Rapids ratified a new contract in May 1983 – for a \$2.60-per-hour pay cut.

LOCAL 33 BUSINESS AGENTS/MANAGERS THROUGH THE YEARS

The position of "Business Manager" was not officially designated until 1964; previously, the local employed a "Business Agent" for related duties.

Local 33 Business Agents prior to 1912 were not recorded in United Association records. (The earliest documented officers of Local 33 were **Secretary C. W. Rosene**, who served from October 1892 through December 1893, and **Secretary C. G. Shaw**, who served from March through April 1894.)

M. J. Miller (Business Agent)
March 1912 through July 1912

J. A. McChesney (Business Agent)
August 1912 through September 1912

Eugene J. Heger (Business Agent)
October 1912 through May 1914

H. P. Willey (Business Agent)
June 1914 through July 1915

John W. Conklin (Business Agent)
August 1915 to November 1919

Jason A. Sneddon (Business Agent)
December 1919 through October 1922

W. F. Freezor (Business Agent)
November 1922 through January 1925

J. A. Sneddon (Business Agent)
February 1925 through August 1927

(None, September 1927 through December 1930)

W. R. Elder (Business Agent)
January 1931 through August 1932

Frank A. Lynch (Business Agent)
September 1932 through February 1934

Willard Morrow (Business Agent)
March 1934 through July 1940

Court Boller (Business Agent)
August 1940 to September 1951

Wilton M. Seymour (Business Agent)
September 1951 to September 1964

Wilton M. Seymour
September 1964 to July 1970

Raymond L. "Ray" Sullivan
July 1970 through June 1980

Robert Cobley
July 1980 through June 1983

Raymond L. "Ray" Sullivan
July 1983 through June 1992

John "Pat" Dorrian
July 1992 to October 1999

Thomas F. Gillespie
October 1999 to July 2007

Gregory B. Foshe
July 2007 to July 2010

Andrew "Andy" Roberts
July 2010 to current



Local 33 Brother **Wilton M. Seymour** was elected business manager of the local in 1951 and held the position for 19 years before he was named a United Association International Training Fund Coordinator. He served in that post until his untimely death on July 3, 1971, in Denver, where he was attending a business session of the Industrial Relations Council.