



WOMEN OF STEEL NEWS

FEBRUARY 2024

FROM THE UNION

2024 Harvard Trade Union Program USW graduates know their power



The Harvard Trade Union Program's 111th Session Commencement took place on Feb. 9 in Cambridge, Mass. Five USW staff members graduated with this class, four of them being Women of Steel: District 5 Health, Safety and Environment Coordinator Julie Hébert; Laura Donovan from the Collective Bargaining, Research and Benefits Department; District 1 Assistant to the Director Teresa Cassidy; Trish Creech from the Health, Safety and Environment

Department, and John Lepley, who serves as Assistant Director of the Education and Membership Development Department.

These members left their homes and their families to take part in an intensive five-week educational program that explores key issues of today's labor movement. Hébert was one of two women chosen by their peers as class speakers. In her speech, she touched on the power of inclusivity and the knowledge we can gain by listening to one another and exploring our similarities.

The Harvard Trade Union Program is provided by the Center for Labor and a Just Economy (CLJE) at Harvard Law School, a hub of collaborative research, policy, and strategies to empower working people to build an equitable economy and democracy.

Congratulations to these siblings and Women of Steel for their accomplishment and knowing their power!

Register now for International Women's Conference virtual wrap-up

On Feb. 29, 2024, at 8:00 PM EST, just in time to welcome in International Women's Month, we are getting back together to finish what we started in October!

Register NOW to be a part of the virtual conclusion to the USW International Women's Conference where we will hear from our union's leaders and learn about topics affecting women workers in the United States, Canada, and around the globe.

Can't make it on the 29th? We know life is busy and we've got you covered! We'll be sending out information on how to access the content online after the event. You'll be able to watch whenever, wherever makes sense for you.

[Click here to register!](#)



SISTER STORIES

Breahn Quigley Knackert's local union experience prepares her to lead USW paper bargaining

Breahn Quigley Knackert is a shining example of what it means to be a woman stepping up in the labor movement. Now serving as the USW National Paper Bargaining Chair, she began her leadership journey at Local 2-209. Here she served in many roles, including full-time bargaining representative, and she firmly believes this experience paved the way for everything that would come.

“This is 100 percent what prepared me and pushed me,” Breahn said. “I have so much love for my home local.”



Her work ethic eventually caught the attention of then District 2 and was invited to join the USW as a staff representative in 2010. Ten years later, she accepted the position of National Paper Bargaining Chair for the union, ensuring that workers in the paper sector have the resources they need to bargain strong, consistent contracts.

“It’s about making sure the sector is moving forward, not backwards,” Breahn said.

One challenge that women in particular face in the sector is the lack of representation. She said numbers vary by location, but there are some shops and mills where there are no women at all.

“It’s getting better at some of the larger companies, but it’s by chance,” she said. “It’s also not happening fast enough. What we need to do, across all sectors, is introduce women to what is considered nontraditional work.”

Breahn also believes women have more than enough to offer to the labor movement, even as many hold back from leadership positions out of fear or lack of confidence.

“I would tell any woman not to overthink it and not to focus on what she thinks she can’t do or what she doesn’t know yet,” Breahn said. “If you can be a good friend, if you can run a household, if you can be a good mother or partner, then you’re already doing what it takes to be a good leader.”

When she isn’t working, Breahn loves reading, taking care of her many pets, and spending time with her family.

IN THE NEWS

News 5 highlights Cleveland women succeeding in the trades

As government money pours into infrastructure projects in recent months across the United States, women are finding opportunity in the trades like never before.

News 5 in Cleveland spoke with several of these women who are earning \$23 an hour as apprentices and are on track to earn \$45 when they graduate.

[Click here to watch the piece](#) and hear from women who are breaking barriers in male-dominated fields and bringing home the money.