



WOMEN OF STEEL NEWS

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FROM THE UNION

USW to host virtual International Women's Conference wrap-up

As the USW was unable to hold the final day of the International Women's Conference in person, the union will be hosting a virtual wrap-up before the holiday season.

Please click and fill out the form below to be kept in touch as details, including a date, are planned.

Access the form here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScvD_BRXTHyzrIGZMSmAOjSDwx4hlx-rxr6U0c4o92o0OJyGA/viewform

Cathy Drummond makes history as USW's first woman District Director

Cathy Drummond became the first woman to serve as a USW district director on Oct. 13 when she was named to replace Emil Ramirez, who became the union's International Vice President of Administration.

Drummond, who served as assistant to the director since 2019, began her work in the labor movement as a coder at the Adams Clinic in Hibbing, Minn., now owned by Essentia Health. In 1998, she helped organize her workplace and later served as Local 9460 president, representing about 2,400 health care workers.

The new director said she hoped to increase educational opportunities for members in her district, to prioritize organizing, and to amplify the voice of the union's 50,000 health care workers.



"I hope that I can bring a new voice, one that hasn't been brought to the board before," Drummond said. "It's so important that we train the activists of the future."

District 11 includes more than 34,000 members in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming.

SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

Women of Steel know their power at International Women’s Conference

More than 1,000 union activists from the U.S. and Canada took over downtown Pittsburgh for the 2023 USW International Women’s Conference, where they took part in several days of educational workshops and celebrated the Women of Steel who give the union its strength.

International Women of Steel Director Randie Pearson took the stage to welcome delegates and speak about the challenges she faced while working at the male-dominated oil refinery in Toledo, Ohio, for 11 years.

“My union sisters and I knew that our voices were important on the job,” she said. “Not just for us, but for the sisters that came before us, and the sisters who are going to come after us.”



International Vice President Roxanne Brown also spoke to the crowd on the first day, emphasizing the power women have to make a difference in their unions and in their communities.

“In every room, show up as yourself,” Brown said. “Be authentically you, and all that comes with you, particularly as it relates to the fights we fight collectively every day as a union: things like a good job that allows you to put food on your family’s table, send your kids to school and retire one day and leave a legacy for future generations.”

The week consisted of dozens of workshops covering all aspects of building union power, from civil and human rights sessions on supporting trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming members, to health and safety courses on hazard mapping, aging in the workplace and improving women’s personal protective equipment.



Luevon Boddie-Lewis of Local 9-00719 has worked at the WestRock Co. paper mill in Demopolis, Ala., for 18 years, but this was her first time attending the women’s conference.

She said the Women of Steel program is crucial for creating unity with union women in diverse sectors, and emphasized the opportunities the conference offers for networking.

“There’s nothing women can’t do,” said Boddie-Lewis. “Women make the world go around, and we are here to help bring them together.”

Delegates took their solidarity outside the conference hall when they converged on the University of Pittsburgh campus to rally in support of the staff and graduate workers who are at various stages of union organizing.

Amanda Buda, who works at the University of Guelph in Ontario, serves as the Women of Steel coordinator for Local 412. She said she was proud to rally alongside other higher education workers for fair treatment.

“There are a lot of people here that are in the same boat and in very similar situations,” Buda said. “If I have any advice, it's that you don't know what you don't know. It's always best if you have any type of question to reach out and ask a current union member how they did it, because there's always an answer and information that will benefit you in the long run.”



[Click here to view all photos from the conference.](#)

Women of Steel make winters bright in their communities

The USW District 4 Women of Steel Western New York Regional Council held their quarterly meeting on Sept. 29 in Olean, N.Y., at Local 5429's union hall. Along with their regular agenda, the sisters took time to make scarves for the homeless and for those in need in their community.

Women of Steel at Local 1915 also recently stepped up for their local community. They have finished building and supplying their “blessing box” which includes food that anyone in need can take. It is now open to the public and can be found outside of the union hall in Findlay, Ohio.





Local 689 Women of Steel knew that traveling to the USW International Women’s Conference wasn’t just about education and socializing—it was also about service. The group decided to make tie blankets at their union hall before attending the conference and distributed them to people in need in Pittsburgh.

“This event opened multiple doors and recommendations on other opportunities our local could participate in to help our community,” said Paige Cisco of Local 689. “The trial and errors making the blankets, laughs, and good company were the cherry on top. I think this was a fun and creative way to bring everyone together for the sake of helping others.”

