

STEELDRUM

USW1998 NEWSMAGAZINE

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PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE

SIGNS OF HOPE & SOLIDARITY

We are now into our eight month of living with COVID-19 and many of us are feeling worn down. We are tired of the restrictions, we continue to be worried about our health and the health of our families, and some of us are dealing with the additional stress of job loss. As we head into a second wave and a long winter ahead, it's hard to see a light at the end of the tunnel.

As hard as it is, in these challenging times, we need to look for that light and see signs of hope and solidarity that can pull us through. There are so many heart-warming instances of people stepping up to help their neighbours and others who are struggling through this pandemic. Here are a few signs of hope and solidarity related to USW and its members that I find inspiring.

We have also seen an amazing initiative of solidarity between faculty and staff at U of T. In the spring when the impact of the pandemic on staff at U of T was becoming apparent, a group of progressive professors started a campaign to have faculty donate some of their annual salary increase to a fund to support laid off workers. They particularly wanted to help the most precarious - those without contracts, sick benefits or who would not qualify for the

Canada Emergency Response Benefit. Over 300 professors contributed almost \$100,000, and the money was divided between USW, CUPE and UNITE HERE. We will be getting information out to our casual members about how to apply for financial assistance to this fund shortly. We were so moved by their generosity, which they see as a step to building deeper relations of solidarity between different worker groups on campus.

In this issue of Steeldrum, we have an article on the racist attack on two of our members in Toronto's east end and the groundswell of support for them from all levels of USW and from allied groups in the community. That horrible event was the catalyst for a new coalition of individuals and groups who are continuing to work together to combat racism in the east end of Toronto.

One of the bright spots in the union local is our new bargaining unit – Residence

Dons. In this issue, you can meet the Don bargaining committee and stewards. They successfully organized last spring and we're in the process of bargaining their first contract. This is very motivated and energetic group and we look forward to continuing to integrate our Don members more fully into the union.

Although this is probably the toughest year many of us have lived through and there are several months of uncertainty ahead, we must look for some bright spots to inspire us and keep us going. New partnerships and relationships can emerge from negative situations and lead to lasting change. We must continue to support each other individually and collectively, whether it's through the union, your neighbourhood, your family or your friends. We will get through this.

– **Colleen Burke**

President, USW Local 1998

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– *Colleen Burke*

LABOUR COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION



Calls Out Police Inaction & Systemic Racism in Racist Assault on USW1998 Members

On June 25, 2020, USW Local 1998 Recording Secretary Mark Austin and his partner, USW 1998 Victoria University Unit member Candace Zinkweg, were walking their dog in Dentonia Park in Toronto's east end.

When their dog was bitten by an off-leash dog, they confronted the dog's owners, who quickly became very aggressive and threatening. Zinkweg was assaulted and suffered a concussion. The assailants hurled racist abuse at Austin, who is Black, and threatened him with gun violence, both during and after the incident.

The police response to this assault and death threat was a clear indication of systemic racism. Clearly, racial profiling was in play as the police immediately assumed Austin was

equally guilty and said the only way to proceed was to charge everyone because it was a "he said/she said" situation. They did not seek out any witnesses in the well-used park, nor did they interview Zinkweg for several days.

After working on his own to

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escalate things with the police to push for a full investigation, Austin reached out to his union, the United Steelworkers (USW). On July 6, the USW Toronto Area Council, supported by the Black Action Defence Committee, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) and Toronto East Anti-Hate Mobilization, quickly organized a demonstration outside of Toronto Police 55 Division. It was attended by about 200 people from the community and the labour movement.

Speakers from several organizations called out the racist response of police and the differential treatment of Black and racialized victims of crimes, linking it to other recent incidents in the Toronto area. In the past few months, Toronto has seen huge protests over the deaths of Regis Korchinski-Paquet and Ejaz Ahmed Choudry while in the presence of police. In both cases, police were called by families seeking a wellness check and assistance for a family member in distress. Korchinski-Paquet, a Black and Indigenous woman, fell 24 stories to her death after police entered her apartment

room and prevented other family members from entering. Lawyers for her family have said their investigation suggests there are grounds for criminal charges against the police. Choudry, who moved to Brampton from Pakistan, was shot dead by police while experiencing mental health distress. Video footage shows police opening fire on Choudry immediately upon kicking in his door. His family had called for assistance from mental health professionals, rather than police.

The community is also outraged about the verdict in the case of Dafonte Miller, a young Black man who was beaten so badly by two white men – one an off-duty police officer – that he lost an eye. His attackers were found not guilty on all counts except one charge of assault. They were acquitted of aggravated assault and obstruction of justice.

Three weeks before the attack on Austin and Zinkweg, the then Toronto police chief, Mark Saunders (who recently and abruptly retired), took a knee at a Black Lives Matters demonstration in Toronto. Mark Brown, from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and CBTU, called out Saunders’ hypocrisy at the 55 Division demonstration. “If those same Black *Continued on page 7*

In Austin and Zinkweg’s case, the labour-community mobilization has led to the arrest of two of the three assailants. It also helped force police to escalate the investigation to the Toronto Hate Crimes unit.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS



RICHARD WATERS ACCLAIMED AS LOCAL 1998 TREASURER: FIRST OPENLY DISABLED MEMBER TO SERVE ON EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Richard Waters, Chief Steward at the University of Toronto at Mississauga (UTM), has been acclaimed as the new Treasurer for USW Local 1998. He replaces Tamara Vickery, who is currently on maternity leave.

Waters was the only candidate nominated for the position when nominations opened during the general membership meeting in August 2020. He was nominated by former UTM Chief Steward, Windsor Chan.

"I'm very happy to have Richard join us on the Executive," said USW Local 1998 President Colleen Burke. "We have not had a representative from UTM for a few years. Richard is a steward and strong union activist, and is really solid on equity issues, like accommodation in the workplace."

Waters is the first openly disabled member (he is hearing impaired) to serve on the Local's Executive Committee. "It is a privilege to serve our Union and its members. I am passionate about supporting our members and fighting against injustice, and I will continue to work with the Executive and officers of USW 1998 to build on our strength within the university," said Waters.

JUSTEN BENNETT IS NEW GRIEVANCE OFFICER

Justen Bennett (a steward at Rotman School of Management) is the newest USW 1998 Grievance Officer, replacing Tamara Vickery, who is on an 18-month maternity leave. Bennett began his term on September 1, 2020.

"I'm excited for this new role and the challenges it brings. Being able to support and advocate for fellow USW members is a great responsibility that's both humbling and inspiring," said Bennett. "We have an amazing team of people in the USW office who are welcoming and generous, and we have a powerful membership here at the University of Toronto. I can't wait to spend the next 18 months working with both."

Bennett will be handling grievances from members in University Operations, the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education and University of Toronto at Mississauga.



CORRINE BRANDON IS NEW HEALTH & SAFETY ASSISTANT

Corrine Brandon (from the Capital Projects dept.) is the new Health & Safety Assistant at USW Local 1998.

In her role, Brandon will be assisting Mark Austin, Health & Safety Officer at USW Local 1998, as the University of Toronto prepares for the gradual reopening of all its campuses this fall.

Brandon brings a wealth of experience to her new role.



LABOUR COMMUNITY **MOBILIZATION**

Continued from page 5

lives cannot get justice in their time of need, then the knee that the police chief placed on the ground remains on the necks of every one of those Black lives today.”

In Austin and Zinkweg’s case, the labour-community mobilization has led to the arrest of two of the three assailants. It also helped force police to escalate the investigation to the Toronto Hate Crimes unit.

Dentonia Park is in Crescent Town, a diverse and densely populated neighbourhood with large Bengali, Jamaican, Pakistani and Tamil communities. The neighbourhood is highly educated with a wealth of international experience, but many people are unemployed

or underemployed. Over a third of the population lives on low incomes and over 40% have trouble affording adequate housing. Racist incidents against Black and South Asian people are not unusual.

On August 29, the USW together with the Toronto East Anti-Hate Mobilization and a number of other community organizations organized the “United Against Hate” Rally in Dentonia Park. Hundreds participated in the rally to unite people and denounce racism in the community.

– **Colleen Burke**

President, USW Local 1998



RESIDENCE DONS

Join USW1998

After months of painstaking work to unionize residence dons at U of T's St. George campus, Khaleel Grant was rewarded with a vote in March 2020 in favour of joining USW Local 1998.

Grant, 23, a former residence don at University College (UC) residences and now a PhD candidate in history and women and gender studies, says the successful organizing drive was "the product of a lot of conversations" between residence dons at UC, Innis, New and Woodsworth who wanted to be treated fairly and with consistency by their employer.

"In those conversations, we found there were a lot of inconsistencies as to how dons were treated, the supports they were given and their compensation," explains Grant. Residence dons at U of T typically are upper-year students paid a stipend, and given free room and board,

to act as advisors and supervisors of students in residence. What Grant and his colleagues found was that University administrators were hiring some on an hourly wage, there were widely different conditions for room and board, and job duties varied.

Grant, who along with three other members of the new Local 1998 unit was elected recently by the more than 60-member unit

to bargain a first contract, expects bargaining to begin in the new year. His hope is a collective agreement will include uniform rules around compensation and working conditions and require University managers to treat residence dons with more respect.

Other activists in the Dons Unit include Rafique Van Uum, Steward, Sterlin Vaillancourt, Alternate, Negotiating Committee, Stephanie Kroone, Steward & Alternate, Negotiating Committee, and Ben Swadron, Negotiating Committee.

– **Nick Marchese**, President Casual Unit



PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE & CENTRE: *Khaleel Grant , Rafique Van Uum, Sterlin Vaillancourt, Stephanie Kroone, Ben Swadron (centre).*



Victoria University Unit Report: FALL 2020

COVID-19 & the Reopening of the Victoria University Campus

The Union continues to address concerns about the University's campus reopening plans. We are assisting members who are currently working on campus and some who expect to be returning to campus in the coming months.

We have also been in discussions with Human Resources about the need for the University to provide clarity and transparency on their policy related to situations in which a student in residence has COVID-19-like symptoms or is known to have been in contact with someone who tested positive for the virus. The University has indicated that they are working on a document that addresses this issue.

During the week of August 24, all our members who were temporarily laid off or in the work-sharing

program during the summer due to the pandemic related downturn in business returned to their regular jobs and hours of work per week. The Union is planning to hold sessions in which members who did or could have participated in the work sharing program can share their thoughts about the program. At Local 1998's October general membership meeting, a motion was passed that provides for union release time for attendance at the sessions. The Union has notified Human Resources about our plan to hold the meetings and we requested their cooperation in scheduling the release time. We anticipate that the meetings will take place in November.

The Result of the Membership Negotiations Consultation Process & Next Steps

Numerous in person and virtual collective bargaining consultation meetings with members were held by the Vic negotiating team as part of its process for deciding whether to enter full collective bargaining with the University or formal talks for a one-year extension of the current collective agreement. The pros and cons of each option were discussed and those in attendance had the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the two options. Many members expressed an opinion on what direction the negotiating team should take and they were overwhelmingly in favour of an extension of the current collective agreement.

At the end of the consultation process, the negotiating team unanimously decided to ask the University to enter formal talks for a one-year extension contract. The University agreed to our request and we are scheduled to meet with them on Wednesday, October 28. If we reach an agreement with the University for an extension contract, the deal will be brought to the membership for a ratification vote.

The USW negotiating team is John Ankenman, Chris Greenwood, Alex Thomson and Mary Lou Scott.

Vic USW Elections for the Alternate Health & Safety Representative and for the Steward for Full-time Hourly-

paid Employees

The Vic USW elections for the Alternate Health & Safety Representative and the Steward for Full-time Hourly-paid Employees were postponed due to the initial spread of the COVID-19 virus and then further delayed because of the layoffs of a significant number of hourly-paid employees in the summer.

Two members accepted their nomination for the position of Alternate USW Health & Safety Representative on the Victoria University Joint Health & Safety Committee. Stefan Panic decided to withdraw his candidacy, so Grace Santos was acclaimed as our new Alternate Health & Safety Representative.

Six members accepted their nomination for the position of Steward for full-time hourly-paid employee members. Candace Zinkweg has since decided to withdraw her



“The Union continues to address concerns about the University’s campus reopening plans.”

candidacy. The following names will be on the ballot: Ernesto Cruzada, Mike Lau, Evan May, Mike Miszuk and Brenda Uribe. The election will be held at the same time as the anticipated ratification vote for a new collective agreement.

– **John Ankenman**, President, Victoria University Unit



ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE UNIT REPORT: FALL 2020

The past nine months have been unlike no other on campus. Our classrooms were empty, buildings shut tight, and the grounds unoccupied by students. However, our members were still in contact with students, faculty, and each other.

These really are unprecedented times. Together, the St. Mike's Unit members got through the transition phase of working from home and/or coming onto campus during a global pandemic. Now with a population returning to campus and the second wave of COVID-19 upon us, we are again learning how to provide our services from safe distances, which allows students and faculty to understand we are available for them while at the same time ensuring everyone stays healthy.

As a unit, we had a total of five members volunteer for a summer furlough, and all were recalled back

this autumn. A majority of departments have some staff returning on rotational schedules, with the rest continuing to work from home. For areas that are open to students, a unit member from the Joint Health & Safety Committee has been critical in preparing spaces safe for students and staff. This is our new normal.

USW work continues as well, and this autumn we will be meeting with the college to discuss the expired contract. The Pay Equity/Job Evaluation project has finally reached the sore-thumbing stage, and we will begin to set regular meetings with the Joint Evaluation Committee to move this project along to its completion.

– **Manda Vrkljan**, President, University of St. Michael's College Unit

Women of Steel

Shined a Pro-Biden/Harris Sign on Trump Tower in Chicago



A group of four USW Women of Steel used a projector to shine a gigantic Biden-Harris sign across the Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago. Working between 4 and 7 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 17, the group also shined the Biden/Harris sign on the walls of some of the most famous landmarks in Chicago, including the Chicago Theatre, Wrigley Field, the Art Institute of Chicago and the famed Wiener's Circle hot dog stand. After shining the Biden/Harris logo, the group took photographs and moved on to another city to continue the project.

Tamara Lefcowitz, International Coordinator for the Steelworkers Health Care Workers Council, is one of the four Women of Steel participating in the project. She said the project is a fun way

to get the message out that voting in the November 3 U.S. election is important.

"We represent essential workers who have been out there risking their lives since the beginning of the pandemic," Lefcowitz said. "What we are doing is something fun, but the reason we are doing it is deadly serious - it's literally life or death for our members."

Lefcowitz said the Chicago tour drew overwhelming positive responses from local union leaders and on social media, especially given the significance of shining the light on the Trump tower. People called the women heroes and invited them to visit other cities.

The project began in September, and the group plans to visit between 25 and 30 cities before the election.

Steeldrum thanks the Block Club of Chicago, Ariel Parrella-Aureli and Amber Miller for this article.



MENTAL HEALTH & COVID-19

Initially, I saw the pandemic as an opportunity, a time when I could be my most productive with tons of time to start on all those little projects that I never had the time to begin.

After all, travel time was reduced and when I was done work, I was instantly home. However, it didn't quite work out that way. Instead of feeling I had a fortune of freedom, I was met with a sense of reluctance and an accumulation of stress. There was a fine line from when work started and when the workday ended. Days blended into one another, and this vast transformation on how we shopped, how we ate and who we saw had changed enormous-

ly. It was all a very lonely process. With all this newfound freedom, I thought I had, to my delusional thoughts of accomplishments, an opportunity to achieve everything on my to-do list. No surprise, but none of it got done. I lacked the energy, the drive and motivation

to begin and despite not tackling my to-do list, I was feeling overwhelmed.

So just what is mental health? The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) defines positive mental health as “the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity.” Not sure if my lack of motivation was my inability to cope with uncertainty or if it was generalized anxiety, but if I am totally honest, it was probably a bit of both. My sense of purpose is lost, although initially I didn’t recognize it as such. It is so strange how something like a global pandemic can affect one’s thought processes. The many years of yearning to work from home were finally here, and yet something was missing. The early days in April and May 2020 were the hardest. There was no unwinding. You rolled out of bed, started on the computer and finished at least eight hours later. The whole notion of boundaries went out the window. I found myself accepting meetings, working on projects at all hours of the day; something I could curtail much better pre-pandemic. This new flexible me made me start to learn new things about myself.

Sharon Clarke from USW’s Lifeline Foundation stresses, “You need to have a plan every day. You need to set boundaries. You need to learn to say ‘no!’” While in lockdown, there was this quiet expectation to be everywhere and anywhere. Someone is setting up the meeting; the expectation is that since you have nowhere to go, so you need to be at that meeting. Clarke remarks, “Instead we should be our own advocates and believe in work-life balance not just for others, but for ourselves.”

Being constantly on scenario really had me feeling like I was in a downward spiral, and it didn’t make me feel energized. Somehow Zoom just wasn’t doing it for me. I missed the social interactions. Clarke reminds us that it’s about the choices we make. With most people working from home, you need to respect those boundaries. Protocols need to be in place especially around timing. One needs to find the opportunity of having downtime or it can easily unravel, and people will find it hard to cope.

Issues of everyday life can be taxing and sometimes we just need someone to talk to. Not everyone will suffer from anxiety or depression or require a psychiatrist, but psychotherapy and supportive counselling could come in handy for some. Both are considered peer counselling and can help you work through what you are feeling.

There are a number of different resources available. The Bounce Back Ontario program is online (<https://bouncebackontario.ca/>) and it helps navigate people through the realities in the wake of COVID-19. It is a free, guided self-help program that’s effective in helping people experiencing mild-to-moderate anxiety or depression, or who may be feeling low, stressed, worried, irritable or angry. This is done through telephone coaching, skill-building workbooks and online videos to help them overcome these symptoms and gain new skills to regain positive mental health. Typically, participants take three to six months to complete the program. Two other useful tools from the Canadian Mental Health Association are What’s your stress index? (<https://cmha.ca/whats-your-stress-index>), an online resource for determining your stress



levels, and Mental Health Meter (<https://cmha.ca/mental-health-meterhelps>), which helps you understand how mentally fit you are by using self-actualization techniques.

Members can also reach out to Clarke at the Lifeline Foundation, a free confidential referral service for USW members and their families. Clarke can be reached at life_line@bellnet.ca. The university also provides counselling services through its Employee & Family Assistance Program (<https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/employees/efap/>).

There are also a number of apps that may also assist with mental wellness (see the next page).

One thing I did learn from all of this is you can experience feelings of being ill without ever physically catching the COVID-19 disease. Things are much better now that we are not all housebound and there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel. I am much better at establishing routines with built-in breaks during the day. Sitting for hours on end is not healthy. Not crazy about the whole exercise thing, but I am getting out and walking more

than I did before. I still enjoy the human side to life, so getting out and talking to people really helps. I now actually look forward to my weekly jaunts to the grocery store. I find connecting with people has a huge positive impact on my mental health and overall mood. Finally, the one thing I would do differently is I would stockpile toilet paper as though I were bracing for an apocalypse. I'm not getting caught off guard with empty shelves a second time.

– **Margaret Bucknam,**
Co-Chair, Communications Committee

Members can also reach out to the Lifeline Foundation, a free confidential referral service for USW members and their families, via life_line@bellnet.ca



Calm

A meditation app for beginners that also includes programs for intermediate and advanced meditators. Guided meditation sessions are available in lengths of 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, or 25 minutes so you can choose the length that best fits your schedule.

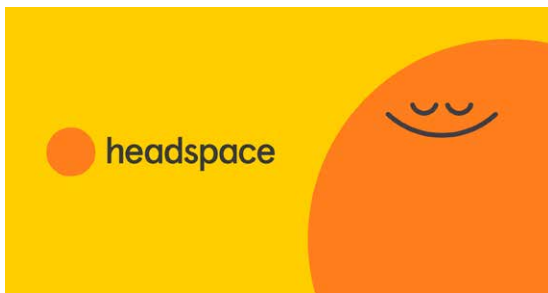


The Fabulous

This science-based app is intended to help you build healthy rituals into your life.

The Five Minute Journal

The Five Minute Journal is based on proven positive psychology research. It focuses your attention on the good in your life and helps you set action in just 5 minutes a day.



Headspace

Learn the essentials of meditation and mindfulness with their free Basics pack. If you enjoy it, you can subscribe.

Stop, Breathe, & Think

Emotional tracker lets you note moods before and after meditating and track your mental wellness over time.



STOP, BREATHE
& THINK



THINK'n

A web-based program divided into short modules intended to teach strategies that help decrease stress, increase resiliency and prevent mental illness.

USW MEMBERS UNSUNG HEROES

of June 2020 Convocation



For the first time in U of T's history, graduating students this spring were not allowed to receive their diplomas/degrees in person. The COVID-19 pandemic made such a gathering unwise, to say the least.

Instead, students joined a virtual convocation June 2 and were promised that that special parchment declaring their successful completion of studies would be in their hands in short order. It was the job of USW members to make sure that promise was kept.

I met Samantha Smith, the Office of Convocation's assistant director, in July. Simcoe Hall was eerily quiet. There was no indication of the daily mad rushes to package convocation kits for FedEx drivers waiting to courier them around the world.

"Yes, it's quiet now, but it wasn't so back in early June," says Smith. "We even had to put in some overtime in June to make sure students got their diplomas."

Smith and two other USW members, Randa Itani and Ida Colalillo, worked tirelessly from late March until virtual convocation in June, to print and have couriered diplomas and degrees to about 15,000 students. Hundreds of degrees and diplomas went out daily across Canada and to locations in 99 other countries for two and a half weeks. "Towards the end of the period, we were rolling out kits for five-six ceremonies in one day," said Smith. Even the FedEx drivers knew something special was going on. "They told us how really good it felt was to know they were delivering something so special to so many people," said Smith.

This small staff, responsible for the logistics of

ensuring a smooth convocation for students and guests, usually handles about 200 to 300 mailings for those who cannot attend convocation in person.

Why did they feel compelled to come into work each day, even when they knew there was added risk to work on site during a pandemic?

"This year has been so bizarre," said Smith. "Convocation is such a special time for students. It's such a celebratory time. When you are on campus in June, you can feel the excitement. It's a happy time. Despite the pandemic, we wanted to contribute to that feeling," explained Smith.

When students were told back in March that a live convocation was being cancelled, Smith said students were truly upset. "We understand them. The document is important. They've earned it. So, it was important for us to find a safe way to get these documents out as quickly as we could."

When asked to explain why in this case there was, as there sometimes is, no adversarial relationship between staff and students, Smith replied, "There was a real desire to ensure, even during this strange period, that special feeling of graduation was experienced by students, at least by receiving their diplomas in a timely manner." Usually, the June convocation season in-

cludes 32 separate ceremonies. But this year, they were condensed into one online event on June 2. The convocation office staff normally deals with, at most, 300 kits that have to be mailed out to graduating students who could not attend a ceremony in person. But with all graduates in forced absentia this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that number ballooned to about 15,000.

But this year, COVID-19 and the restriction on such large gatherings, meant convocation would be held virtually and the kits mailed out to students, with their diplomas promised to be sent to them shortly thereafter. This all happened from June 2 to 19. Smith, Itani and Colalillo were aided by secondments from other departments and a few volunteers, bringing the total complement to 12. Staff processing the documents wore masks and kept two metres apart as best they could.

Of the 12 that worked on the gargantuan task of mailing out the kits, Smith, Itani and Colalillo are the only ones that continue to work on site, responding to enquiries from some students who still haven't received their diplomas (usually an incorrect address) or handling return-to-sender packages.

– **Nick Marchese**, President, Casual Unit

PHOTO: *Randa Itani (left) and Samantha Smith (right), in front of the Simcoe Hall entrance.*

When asked to explain why in this case there was no adversarial relationship between staff and students, Smith replied, "There was a real desire to ensure, even during this strange period, that special feeling of graduation was experienced by students, at least by receiving their diplomas in a timely manner."



Former USW Local 1998 Executive Committee member, **Philip Murton**, passed away peacefully on December 4, 2020 from Progressive Supranuclear Palsy.

Christine Beckermann, a colleague who worked with Murton in IT at the University of Toronto and also served on the Executive of Local 1998, said that “Philip contributed so much to our Local and I’ll always be grateful for the role he played as a union activist in the IT area.”

Current Local 1998 Executive member, Alex Thomson from the University of Victoria College, described Murton as “one of the most principled people I have ever known. He was a stalwart in our local union from the very beginning, and we would not be where we are today without him.”

John Bell, a columnist with Canada’s

Socialist Worker newspaper, described Murton as “a quiet wisdom, a sly wit, a powerful memory, a devoted father and loving partner to Deanna. Phil’s revolutionary roots go back to the Waffle, and the Student Christian Movement in its heyday. He was the longest serving member of the International Socialists and was able to navigate the twists and turns thanks to an independent mind, a devilish bullshit detector, and a steadfast belief in a socialist future. And he was a strong, guiding presence in his United Steelworkers Local. It diminishes us all to lose such a comrade, such a wealth of experience and memory of struggle.”

Rest in peace, Philip.

– **P.C. Choo**



In Memoriam: Sophia Cottrell

Recently I heard the sad news that my former colleague in the Anthropology department had passed away. Her obituary notes she was diagnosed with cancer on September 10, 2020 and died just a few weeks later, surrounded by family in Calgary.

Sophia worked at the University of Toronto from 2004 until her retirement from the Anthropology dept. in 2017. She was laid off from her job at OISE Continuing and Professional Education in 2010. The same day she emptied her desk at OISE, I remember her arriving for an interview as a redeployment pool candidate for the receptionist position in Anthropology. She was hired and worked from an office next to mine for the next seven years.

Sophia was a wonderful colleague - a diligent worker always willing to help others, but she was no pushover. If she felt something wasn't right, she spoke out about it. She connected easily with staff, students and faculty, making quick friends and staying in touch with them on social media. She would often interrupt my work for

friendly chit chat, and I appreciated her forcing me to take a break. That's what colleagues are for. She signed as a witness on the paperwork when I bought vacant land to farm, one of the most important moments of my life. I cried and she hugged me, and it was the warmest hug I've ever received in the workplace. I was lucky to have worked with such a supportive and caring person.

Sophia loved animals and her cats especially, talking of them often. I remember when she had to put down her 19-year-old cat, she was distraught. She called to let me know she couldn't come to work that day and made me promise not to let anyone bring up her cat at work in the following days. She knew she wouldn't be able to keep herself together if asked about him. Ever since, and given my own super senior cat, I've strongly felt that members should *Continued on page 23*

Brad James

2020 Sefton Awards Winner

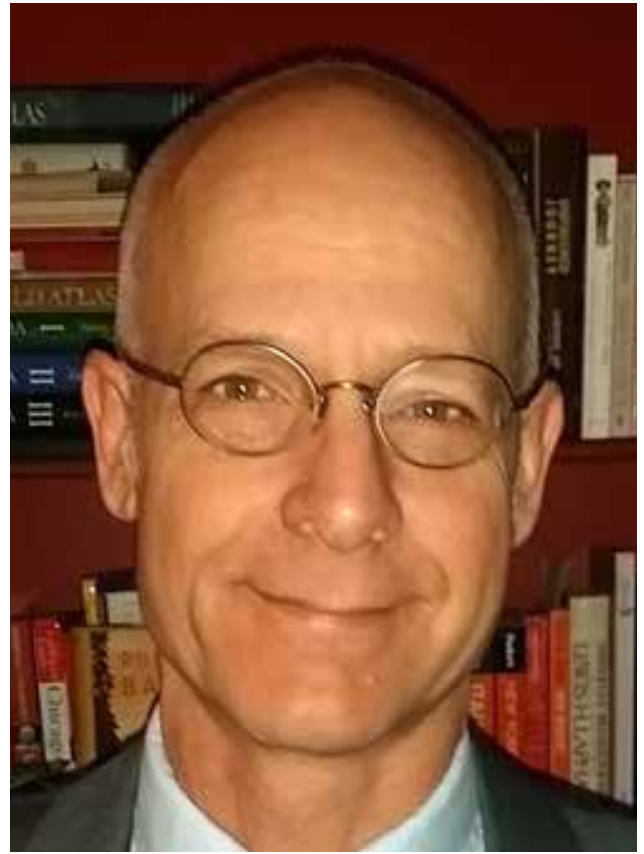
Former **Steelworker** Regional Organizing Coordinator Brad James has been named winner of the 2020 Sefton-Williams Award for his extensive and ongoing contributions to labour relations by the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources (CIRHR) and Woodsworth College at the University of Toronto.

The award honours those who have made a significant contribution to the field of labour relations and human rights.

James is fondly remembered as the 'mastermind' who led the successful USW organizing drive at U of T in 1998. He is one of those rare 'outsiders' in the Steelworker leadership hierarchy who did not rise through the rank and file. He graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce from Queen's University and joined the Steelworkers shortly thereafter.

James also graduated with a Master in Industrial Relations from the Centre for Industrial Relations at U of T in 1987. He credits the centre with giving him the skills to "put expertise to work to effectively represent workers' interests, connecting research and policy with on-the-ground work for the union."

For his tireless volunteer work, including the establishment of a new Chair in Collective Bargaining and Worker Representation at the centre, James was recognized with the Morley Gunderson Prize in 1999.



More recently, James served as a consultant for a coalition of unions and faculty associations when the University Pension Plan (UPP) was established. The UPP is a new jointly sponsored, multi-employer pension plan for employees at U of T, the University of Guelph and Queen's University. James calls successes like this one - sector-based and durable, built with both employer agreement and tough bargaining - a demonstration of how much can be accomplished with farsightedness on the part of both labour and management.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's Sefton-Williams Memorial Lecture was held online on September 30, 2020.

Previous distinguished winners of the Sefton-Williams Award include former USW International Director Lynn Williams (1998), former Canadian Labour Congress President Bob White (1999), former General Counsel of the Canadian Civil

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IN MEMORIAM

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get bereavement leave when our beloved pets die. For many of us, our pets are closer than family, and that was certainly the case with Sophia – though she would often speak proudly of her family too!

Although born in Toronto, most of Sophia's family lived in Calgary, where she also lived for part of her life working in the oil and gas industry. Upon her cancer diagnosis, her last wish was to return to Calgary to be with family.

Sophia had a lot of great stories from her time working in Calgary and living in the Middle East with her German Sheppard dog. She was always up to date on

Facebook posts, making Toronto news in May 2019 when she identified a stolen dog, returning Siberian husky Charlie to his owners.

Sophia was a warm and welcoming presence in the Anthropology dept., as many students would attest. As one graduate student posted on Facebook: "Every time I walked past her office, she always bestowed on me the warmest smiles and the most genuinely friendly small talks, which never failed to make me feel at home. The building will not be the same without her" (Fan Zhang).

Sophia's excitement around the pandas coming to the Toronto Zoo knew no bounds, nor did her enthusiasm for the Toronto Blue Jays and Calgary Flames.

If you wish to honour Sophia's memory, consider making a donation to a place very dear to her heart – the Beaches Animal Hospital (2304 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M4E 1G8).

– **Kristy Bard**, Grievance Officer, USW 1998, with special thanks to Kathy David for input.



PHOTO: Sophia Cottrell with the Blue Jays Mascot.

BRAD JAMES *Continued from page 22*

Liberties Association Alan Borovoy (2006), former OPSEU President Leah Casselman (2007), former USW International Director Leo Gerard (2009), former federal NDP

Leader Ed Broadbent (2015) and former NDP MP Olivia Chow (2016).

Congratulations, Brad!

– **P.C. Choo**, with notes from Cate Macleod, CIRHR

Maru-Elena Rodriguez (Transitional Year Program) and her husband Maurizio Digoia welcomed baby Valentina Alessandra into their family. Valentina is also the grand-daughter of Julia Rodriguez (University College).



CONGRATULATIONS



Irisz Paupera (Obstetrics and Gynaecology) and her husband, Michael, posing with baby Adaline.

Tamara Vickery

USW 1998 Treasurer, Tamara Vickery, and her husband Andrew Clunie, are blessed with a baby boy, Nathan Clunie, their second child. With them in the photo is their first child, Noah, who is excited about the arrival of his baby brother.



Sam Xu (University Advancement) and his wife Emily with their daughter Serena.

Glenda Gillis (formerly of Enrolment Services) welcomes her first grand child, Alasdair James Bryson Essam, into the family.



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