

# The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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## The Power of Working Together

As union members, we believe there is nothing more powerful than people standing arm-in-arm behind a collective cause. It's what won working people basic things like a 40-hour work week, weekends, paid holidays and sick time and an expectation of safe working conditions. It's why we are able to negotiate contracts that ensure quality health care and higher wages than nonunion counterparts.

But the idea doesn't only apply to working people standing with one another. We understand that our success is dependent on the success of our employers and that cooperative relationships built on dignity and respect aren't just a good idea—they work. Companies that respect their workers and workers that respect their companies make better choices—and both sides do better in the long run.

That's why relationships are at the heart of the Code of Excellence. But what about when the relationship between the company and its workforce isn't going well? Not every company, or worker for that matter, believes that collaboration and success go together. What then?

There might be a misunderstanding that the Code of Excellence only works where relations are already good.

For those willing to embrace it, the Code of Excellence is much more than just a list of best practices for the best workplaces. People like incoming St.

Louis Local 1439 Business Manager Jeremy Pour understand that.

Local 1439 represents nearly 700 workers at the utility company Ameren, and, in recent years, the partnership with the company was, in Pour's words, "Contentious. Litigious.

1439 to ask if their directors, the direct supervisors of our members, could attend the Code of Excellence trainings as well. A month later, 50 directors joined 50 stewards to look at how a joint commitment to excellence could transform the company.



Every dispute became a grievance. Every grievance became a fight. So, we proposed to do something different."

Local 1439 introduced the Code of Excellence and received permission from the company to begin training stewards while on the clock. The stewards then fanned out across the utility, spreading the word about what our commitment was—to ourselves, to the company and to one another. And it got the company's attention.

Soon after, Ameren came to Local

"We are seeing a difference already," Pour said. "This wasn't built on a foundation of trust. The Code is the foundation."

**Read on and then send us your stories about how the Code of Excellence is building and transforming relationships between sisters and brothers, fellow unions and our partners and employers.**



What does SPARQ mean to you? Have an idea for the newsletter? Email [theSPARQ@ibew.org](mailto:theSPARQ@ibew.org)



## Solidarity in Our Communities

Relationships with our IBEW sisters and brothers are important. So are the relationships we have with our employers.

But relationships between the labor movement and our communities often matter just as much. The NEARI Children's Fund Gingerbread Express is a program that links Cranston, R.I., Local 2323 members and other donors with public school students facing a bleak holiday season. Each student designs a gingerbread cookie cutout with information about his or her clothing needs and gift wishes. They are distributed anonymously to donors.

The program is run by National Education Association Rhode Island, a group affiliated with the NEA. IBEW members join forces with Teamsters Local 251, local law enforcement and state politicians to make the program a success. They have adopted the William D'Abate Elementary School in Providence, where all 450 students are eligible for donations.



Local 2323 members donate items and ask others to help. The local's Riding Club joined with Providence police to escort a Teamsters truck delivering the gifts. Members distributed gifts and saw the impact it had on the students. Business Manager Chris Buffery said, "In many instances, the gifts from the Gingerbread Express are the only gifts a child received. What a great way to feel the magic of the season.

"Maintaining our presence in the community is not only a central principle of the Code of Excellence, it is furthering our members' feeling of belonging and the values of relationships."

IBEW members take pride in being active in their communities. And when our members need community support—like

they did when Local 2323 members went on strike with 40,000 other Verizon employees in 2016—the public knows we're working people just like them, and they stand behind us. Our relationships through our public service help make that possible.

## SPARQ GOES LOCAL

### IBEW Locals 1245 and 396

Two IBEW locals and their employer have won the inaugural Edwin D. Hill Award for their expansive efforts to protect good jobs and Nevada power customers, a campaign that led to the landslide defeat last November of Question 3, a deceptive state ballot measure.

The ability to work with NV Energy was essential, Business Manager Jesse Newman said, noting that the partnership didn't originate with the campaign. "If we didn't have the relationship we have through the Code of Excellence, I don't think Question 3 would have been defeated," he said.

### CEO at the Local

Building a strong partnership takes commitment. NV Energy's CEO Doug Cannon is committed to continuing the practice of meeting with members and leaders of IBEW Local Union 396 twice a year to answer questions and discuss solutions to issues on the job. No surprise, these meetings are the most well-attended of the year.

