



BLET Auxiliary News

Working to bring about safer working conditions for Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen, educate spouses, and enhance the lifestyles of railroad employees and their families.

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Winter 2010

Anita Caruso, President • Sereena Hogan, Vice President/National Legislative Representative
Linda Maher, Secretary • Helen Brand, Treasurer • Gina Forman, 1st Vice President • www.bletauxiliary.net

2010 Regional Conventions

SMA, Cincinnati, Ohio

By Jewell Graben & Anita J. Caruso

Members of the BLET and the Auxiliary enjoyed a truly memorable week at the historic Netherland Plaza Hotel in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio, June 13-18, 2010. The event was hosted by BLET member Jerry Sturdivant and his lovely and extremely talented wife Peggy.

The meeting was a grand success from the opening ceremony until the last dance at the banquet. We were especially pleased to carry on the Auxiliary tradition of presenting the flags representing each of the ten southeastern states in the SMA at the opening ceremonies.

At the Auxiliary's first luncheon meeting on Monday members and guests were welcomed by the SMA Auxiliary Chairperson by proxy, Sister Jewell Graben, who expressed Sister Bettye Dollar's regrets that she could not attend due to a broken foot. SMA Co-Chair Lynn Popwell was also unable to attend due to her husband's surgery.

Tuesday's luncheon meeting featured DLC Andy Harp, who spoke to us about issues facing BLET members and informed us that he is now in a couple of movies and how that came about. It was a most interesting and entertaining time. National Auxiliary officers were also given an opportunity to speak to the attendees.

Sister Graben and her daughter Alice, along with occasional help from Anita Caruso, spent long hours at the Auxiliary table selling tickets for the SMA Auxiliary Raffle. The BLET National Auxiliary extends our most sincere thanks to the BLET brothers, sisters, and guests who purchased raffle tickets, bid on our prints, purchased our cookbooks, and bought mulligans at the golf tournament. We especially would like to acknowledge the SMA tradition of the "passing of the hat" that collected over \$1,000 for the BLET Auxiliary Scholarship fund.

The SMA committee went all out to see that everyone had a good time and enjoyed their visit to our meeting. Beginning with a riverboat dinner cruise, a trip to King's Island, a baseball

— continued on Page 5

Excellent Work, Officers and Delegates!

By Anita J. Caruso, National President

Hats off to all our National Officers and delegates on the back for a job well done at the First BLET Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada, during the week of October 4 -6, 2010.

It is a daunting task to attend a National Convention as a delegate and our members were well prepared, full of enthusiasm, and ready to work. This is the sign of a devoted group of officers and delegates. Many in attendance were there for the first time as representatives of their respective auxiliaries or region. Their insightful questions and the courtesy extended by all during the proceedings were truly appreciated.

A debt of gratitude goes out to the National Officers who arrived early and worked together toward getting everything ready for our meetings. Helen Brand and Gina Forman tirelessly worked at the registration booth for two days selling tickets for the BLET Banquet. Debbie Keele, Rachael Grimes, and Linda Maher also worked at the booth to ensure that all our delegates and officers were registered.

— continued on Page 3



Newly elected National Officers: Anita Caruso, President; Sereena Hogan, Vice President/NLR; Linda Maher, Secretary; Helen Brand, Treasurer; Gina Forman, 1st Vice President/Outreach Coordinator; Becky Schneider, Past President; Kathy Hurst, 2nd Vice President/Assistant NLR; Darla Fent, Chaplain; Lawana Poss, Alternate Secretary; Terri Fleming, Alternate Treasurer



From the President:

The time has flown by since we conducted our First BLET National Auxiliary Convention in early October 2010. It's been a little hectic for me wearing two hats for the past seven weeks, but I weathered the storm and now it's my pleasure to turn over the secretarial duties to our newly elected National Secretary, Linda D. Maher. The boxes of records and files have been inventoried, shipped, and settled into their new surroundings in Linda's home in Willoughby Hills, Ohio, near Cleveland. I look forward to helping Linda get acclimated to this job and I know she is anxious to get going in her new position. Her first few months will be harried, but I know she has the resolve to get through it. Welcome to the Executive Council, Linda; I know you'll make a great addition to our group.

The National Convention proceedings progressed flawlessly due to specific guidelines and early, intense preparation by Past National President Becky Schneider. Our national officers and delegates in attendance were amazingly well versed in their duties and the proceedings moved along at a steady pace. (See article "Excellent Job, National Officers & Delegates, front cover).

I had my first official trip representing the Auxiliary as National President the week of October 24-26, 2010. I was invited by Ken Kertesz, Pennsylvania State Legislative Board Chairman, to attend their state legislative board meeting in Hershey, Pennsylvania. I was asked to give a presentation on the Auxiliary and I invited his legislative members to help increase our membership by encouraging their spouses to join our organization.

I have received many phone calls with questions pertaining to the Auxiliary but one in particular, from a couple of new Auxiliary members, really piqued my interest. These ladies had questions relating to fundraising efforts. They wanted to explore some options for fundraising events and methods for getting the word out to other BLET Auxiliary members. If any of our members is pursuing a fundraising project, you are welcome to submit an article for this newsletter and advertise it. Our website can also be used to advertise your fundraising project. These are two good ways to let other members know what you are selling and give them an opportunity to purchase your goods. The El Paso Area Auxiliary 591 does a yearly bake sale. If you just want to share ideas pertaining to fundraising, this would be a fantastic way to exchange ideas and spur interest from others in this area.

Along this same line, we'd like to begin a new column for retirees in the Spring\ 2011 edition of the newsletter. We'd like to hear from retirees around the country to find out how your life is going now that your spouse is retired. Maybe he's home all day, maybe he's not. Did he take a part time job? Is your calendar filled with travel plans, trying new recipes, visiting relatives, hunting. You get the idea. Those of us who are headed toward retirement soon are interested in what you might have to share so we will have some idea of what's in store for us when the "big day" arrives in our lives. Please send your stories to our Publisher & Editor, Sereena Hogan, to be put in the "Retirement Rocks" column of the newsletter. If we don't have any submissions within about a week of the due date, "BEWARE retirees!" I know who you are AND I will call you and politely ask if you'd like to be the first to submit an article. Please don't make me call you; jump on the bandwagon and send an article in yourself! I'm counting on you to help make this new column a success!

As the year comes to a close, we must thank our troops at home and abroad, for without their ultimate sacrifice we wouldn't have much to celebrate. May the blessings of the season be with each of you. Enjoy your families and be careful while traveling this holiday season!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, everyone!

In Sisterhood,

Anita J. Caruso, National President, BLET Auxiliary
3341 S. 1112th Street, Omaha, NE 68144
(402) 330-6348 bunziegia@cox.net



Excellent Work, Officers and Delegates! continued from front cover...

Thank you to our Past President Becky Schneider for all her work making arrangements for the convention, coordinating with the BLET, typing the resolutions submitted by the Executive Council, creating the credentials, and arriving early to make sure things were in order. Thank you /sister Schneider for carrying out the duties of your office at the convention and for the last four years!

A special thank you goes out to National VP/NLR Sereena Hogan for being the National Liaison for the Jurisprudence & Bylaws Committee that consisted of Kathy Hurst, as Chair; Darla Fent; and Lawana Poss. They put in an entire day on Sunday, October 3, going through the proposed resolutions and getting them in final order. This is a very important committee assignment and the members on this team did a fantastic job in reviewing the proposed resolutions and organizing them for the delegates and national officers for discussion and subsequent vote.

Another important committee assignment is the Finance Committee. Our National Treasurer, Helen Brand, was the National Liaison for this committee and the other members were Teri Fleming, Chair; Teresa Bullard; and Rebecca Hanson. They did a fine job of auditing the books, going over the financial reports, and reporting their findings to the members.

Our National Chaplain, Linda Maher, did a wonderful job in her duties, leading the meeting with insightful messages, poems, and prayers. Kathy Hurst handled her duties as Chair of the Jurisprudence & Bylaws Committee very professionally, moving our proceedings along efficiently at a steady pace. I'd like to thank Rachael Grimes for arriving early each day to check in our delegates and officers, sign in our guests and do whatever else she was asked to do in a

cheerful, proficient manner! Thank you to Debbie Keele for assisting our scribe, Jo Anne Anderson. Jo Anne did an incredible job in recording the minutes of the proceedings and providing copies to us each day for review.

A big thanks goes out to BLET National President Dennis Pierce, Chuck Anderson, Dave Ditzel, Ken Kroeger, and all BLET Arrangement Committee members for their logistical help and guidance. Without their expertise, assistance, and financial support, we would not have been able to have many of the extra amenities that were provided during our convention.

I would also like to thank the BLET for providing a professional photographer for our group picture and the photos of the newly elected officers, and to John Bentley for attending our meeting to take pictures during the proceedings. All of this would not have been possible without the assistance of our BLET brothers. The BLET Auxiliary appreciates how much you always extend your hand to us and how you made the auxiliary feel so appreciated during the convention.

I would also like to thank the 10-15 visitors and guests who came to our open meetings. We made a lot of new contacts by having these guests attend and we benefited greatly by having so many of them join the BLET Auxiliary.

Last, but certainly not least, I thank my wonderful, supportive husband, Sam, for his help, kind words of encouragement, and for always being in my corner. He is an inspiration to me because of his many years of work with the BLET. I know I would not be in this position without him, and his guidance these past nine years has been invaluable. His calm demeanor and insight have been a Godsend and I am very thankful to have him as my mentor. Sam, I appreciate all you have done to help me and all you will do in the upcoming years for the BLET Auxiliary!

Tidbits from YOUR Secretary, Linda Maher



Time has passed quickly since our convention in Reno this October. I would like to say thanks for the privilege and honor to serve the membership as your National Chaplain from 2006 through 2010, and also for being elected to serve as your new National Secretary. What an honor!

Even though our positions start December 1, we have all been busy with the transition. I look forward to working with Anita and Helen to

serve the Auxiliary and to help it grow in membership. This is something that we should all try to commit to and remember, "Ask one to be one!"

While in Reno, my husband Pat and I had the opportunity to visit the California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento, California. We were able to tour through many cars and view displays where we found articles from the GIA. We are a part of history and should do as much as we can to grow in the present and preserve our spot for the future for our great organization.

I attended the meeting for Division 607 in Cleveland this November, where National President Dennis Pierce, National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert, and Vice President Gil Gore were in attendance. It was an honor to see these national officers take the time and interest to attend local division meetings and talk to the BLET membership to answer questions and concerns of the members one-on-one.

My office will be up and running as of December 1, and I will be available by phone, (440) 944-6579, or e-mail at bidykaili@aol.com to assist in any way I can. Please feel free to contact me.

Notice to all Auxiliary Secretaries

Yearly packets will be mailed out on December 29, 2010. These

packets will contain the Annual Report form, membership cards, and other miscellaneous forms to fill out. I need your national dues remitted, directory information sheet filled out legibly with your officers' and current members' names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. Once I have received your dues, I will mail new auxiliary pins for any new members, along with your dues receipt.

Member-at-Large News

Yearly dues of \$50.00 for working (active and associate) members-at-large and \$30.00 dues for retired or widowed members, are due in my office by March 1, 2010. If you do not wish to remain a member, please let me know so I won't have to bother you with additional mailings and reminders.

Scholarship Applications

BLET Auxiliary Scholarship applications can be obtained on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net. You can also connect via a link from the BLET website at www.ble.org, under "Departments," BLET Auxiliary. Scholarship applications for the 2011-2012 academic school year are due in my office April 1, 2011. Please be sure to follow the Instruction Sheet completely so you will know what documents need to be submitted with your application. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered. If you have any questions, I would be happy to give you some guidance.

You will also find our article along with many articles pertaining to scholarship opportunities in the BLET Newsletter that comes out in February 2011.

From my family to yours, I would like to wish everyone a very safe, peaceful, happy, healthy and blessed Christmas, New Year, and Holiday Season.

Linda Maher can be reached by phone at 440-944-6579, by e-mail at bidykaili@aol.com, or by mail at 29215 Miller Road, Willoughby, Ohio 44092.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS! By Anita J. Caruso, National President

Welcome to the following new members who joined the BLET Auxiliary while attending the National Convention. We are pleased that you enjoyed your time in our meetings and decided this was the right path for you to take with our organization.

New members are: Jessica E. Cole, Baraboo, Wisconsin; Jerry Bullard (Associate Member) joined Auxiliary 212 in Big Spring, Texas; Ken Kertesz (Associate Member) joined Auxiliary 11 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Debra E. Fulling, Robinson,

Illinois; Maria Benn, Bridgeport, New York; Dawn Jones, Iuka, Kansas; Rosie Friedrichs, Salt Lake City, Utah; Jennifer Mills, E. Springfield, Pennsylvania; Pam Stokes, Ennis, Texas; Mary M. Cummins, Park Forest, Illinois; Herbert Harris, Jr., Washington, DC.

We appreciate the fact that you want to be involved in the BLET Auxiliary. If there is anything that any of us can do for you, please do not hesitate to contact one of us!

2010 Regional Conventions - cont'd from front page

game at the Great American Ballpark, and golf; and ending with the banquet in the beautiful Pavilion Ballroom, a great time was had by all.

Our meeting was a great success and we look forward to seeing everyone next year in Asheville, North Carolina. Thanks again to our wonderful Committee!

EUMA August 8-12, 2010

By Becky Schneider

The 72nd annual Eastern Union Meeting Association was held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at the beautiful and fitting Station Square Sheraton Hotel overlooking the Monongahela River. Tom and Sue Caruso Co-hosted the convention along with a number of dedicated committee members who made the entire affair one to remember.

The convention kicked off with a wonderful welcome reception in a room overlooking the river. The following morning, Opening Ceremonies were highlighted by a very moving "empty chair" memorial service for our fallen members and the presentation of a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol to Bill Dopico, member of BLET Division 700, in memory of Andrew Monheim who was killed in the line of duty in March. Following the opening ceremonies, the Switching Operations Fatality Assessment (SOFA) Committee gave a first-ever presentation outlining committee makeup, why the committee exists, and the goals they are trying to achieve.

Following the business portion of the afternoon Auxiliary meeting, members were treated to a special demonstration by hotel chefs, instructing us on how to make blintzes with different kinds of fillings. The Chefs were funny and entertaining and should possibly consider a comedy cooking show on the Food Channel.

The evening culminated in a wonderful dinner cruise aboard the beautiful Princess Gateway Clipper paddlewheel boat along Pittsburgh's three rivers area. On a somber note, prior to dinner a floral wreath was dedicated to our fallen members and dropped into the river by BLET National President Dennis Pierce.

The golf tournament at Cranberry Highlands was enjoyed by all those who participated and, for the non-golfers, a tour of Heinz Field, home of the Pittsburgh Steelers, and Carnegie Museum were on the agenda, as well as a shopping trip and lunch in the famous strip district.

Workshops filled the last day, and the entire event ended with a wonderful banquet in the Sheraton's Admiral Ballroom. Dino Raptis was on hand at the cocktail reception to shoot individual photos of everyone, which were developed right away and presented to guests at the end of the evening. Scholarship funds were raised for the EUMA's ever growing scholarship program, and a special thanks goes to Kathy Raptis for her hard work in procuring donated items for the raffle tables.

This conference included many unique special touches and everyone had a great time. Thanks to all who made this year's EUMA the

success that it was. We look forward to seeing everyone in Long Island next year!

Southwestern Regional Convention

By Helen Brand

The SWCM was held September 13-16, 2010, in San Antonio, Texas. The Hyatt on the River Walk was a great place to stay and within walking distance to the Alamo. The River Walk offered shopping and a variety of restaurants to choose from as well as the barge rides.

On Monday, Anita Caruso and I attended the Golf Tournament to help Bobbi and Leland Eoff. We enjoyed our day spent there and it was a learning experience as well. The tournament was a success due to all the preparations beforehand done by the Eoffs. We cannot thank them enough for all their hard work, and also thanks to all the hole sponsors and to those who played. It was everyone working together that made the day a success.

The auxiliary meeting on Tuesday afternoon was informative with several guest speakers. Each had a question and answer time after their presentations. We got some great information from United Health Care, BLET Director of Regulatory Affairs Steve Bruno, and Designated Legal Counsel Steve Young.

Thank you to all who worked hard to make the SWCM a successful meeting. Hope to see everyone in El Paso next year!

International Western Convention

By Sereena Hogan

The 70th Annual International Western Convention convened in Bismarck, North Dakota, July 13-17. Co-Chairmen Mike Muscha and Ron Huff put together an agenda filled with opportunities for fun, fellowship, and education.

In addition to the golf tournament on Wednesday morning, attendees were given the option to tour the nearby Capitol Building, the Old Governor's Mansion, and the Heritage Center. Following the Opening Ceremonies on Thursday morning, members and guests were invited to attend the Auxiliary meeting at which we had some presentations by DLC, BRCF and John Casteel. Back by popular demand was the Railroad Jeopardy Game, enjoyed by all.

On Friday, those attendees not participating in the training workshops were treated to a tour of the Railroad Museum, Fort Lincoln State Park, and the Custer House. The closing banquet on Friday evening featured entertainment by the Cowboy Action Players. For those who wished to stay, a guided walleye fishing tour was scheduled for Saturday morning. Many thanks to Mike and Ron and their committee for doing a great job to make everyone feel welcome and show us a good time in Bismarck. We wish you both well in your retirement! Thank you also to everyone who participated in the Auxiliary Scholarship Raffle, which yielded a nice sum of money for the Scholarship Fund. The next IWC will be held in San Luis Obispo, California – see ya there!

Legislative Update

By Sereena Hogan, National Legislative Representative



The hubbub of the mid-term elections has finally died down and thank goodness those awful television commercials are gone. Now we are left wondering how we

will get anything done in the next two years. Between the GOP-controlled House, the Democratic Senate, and the White House, agreement among these three factions is likely to be difficult to come by on any issue.

A Sad Goodbye

As reported in my November legislative update posted on the Auxiliary website, a serious loss to the causes supported by the BLET occurred with the unexpected defeat of Congressman James Oberstar (D-MN), Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. In an hour-long interview before Thanksgiving, the Congressman lamented his loss and the committee work he is leaving unfinished. He stated that he considers the failure to pass the multi-surface transportation bill that moved out of subcommittee in 2009 as one of his biggest unfinished agendas. Because of the long-time working relationship between Chairman Oberstar and ranking member John Mica, and their ability to achieve common goals, he believes that the change in leadership and his defeat will result in longer delays in legislation.

The Chairman stated, "Going forward, you'll have to rebuild all those personal relationships and committee structural relations. And that will take time and will take something out of the process." He was adamant that the country must push forward in developing high-speed rail. Following a recent trip to France using the country's high speed rail service, Train à Grande Vitesse, or TGV, he said you could put a glass of wine on the table in the rail car and it would not flutter, but returning to the

United States passenger rail system was like returning to a third world country.

Before concluding the interview, Congressman Oberstar told reporters that he did not see his name on any lobbying firm in the future, but rather prefers "to be of service to transportation in the broadest policy sense . . . and particularly to safety."

We are grateful for his 36 years of service, his concern for the safety of railroad workers, and his belief in moving rail infrastructure into the 21st Century. He will be sorely missed by all of us in the rail industry.

BLET President Dennis Pierce has stated that we will continue to remain on track with our legislative agenda. We have friends on both side of the aisle and, as President Pierce pointed out, "What matters most is who will work with us on our agenda and help us get each of our members safely home every day." That being said, in the weeks and months ahead, we could possibly have some critical legislative issues arise that will require us to act immediately, with as little as 24 hours' notice, so please stay tuned for any legislative alerts coming your way from the National BLET Office, the BLET DC Office, or from me via the e-mail address I use for e-mail alerts, bletauxiliarylr@comcast.net. If you wish to receive those alerts and are not already on my e-mail address list, please contact me at vp3sereena@aol.com to request that you be added to the list.

BLET National Elections

The Auxiliary has been working to support the BLET's "get out the vote" effort in the ongoing elections for the BLET National Division officers. Both the BLET and the Auxiliary have revived our mobilization networks in an effort to encourage each and every member to return their ballot in a timely manner. If you are reading this prior to December 15 and the BLET member in your home has not yet returned his/her ballot, please do what you can to help get that ballot in the mail. All ballots must be received by December 15, 2010. No matter

which way you vote, your participation in this election is a great opportunity for us all as union families to show the railroads and ourselves that we are strong, organized, and a unified force to be reckoned with!

FRA, USDOT release National Rail Plan Update

On September 28, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) released an update of the National Rail Plan in a report, titled "Moving Forward: A Progress Report." The report is a joint effort of the Federal Railroad Administration and the USDOT and builds on the preliminary report that was mandated by the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 and submitted to Congress in October 2009. The report outlines numerous factors — past, present and future — that support the improvement of rail infrastructure in this country and how important it will be to the future as the population grows, energy costs increase, the reduction of carbon emissions becomes ever more important, and our nation strives to compete in the global economy.

The report outlines a vision for high-speed intercity passenger rail; discusses the importance of a high-performance freight-rail network; and outlines how rail can help the USDOT reach strategic goals for safety, state of good repair, economic competitiveness, livable communities, and environmental sustainability. Once the National Rail Plan is completed, it will establish the framework needed to begin laying a foundation that will improve the transportation network. To see the full report, go to <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/2010/fra1710.html>.

Locomotive Cab Safety, Security

In spite of increased security measures enacted by the "Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007," which provided for substantial funding for general railroad enhancements, and Amtrak security enhancements; the development of a national strategy for rail transportation security; requirements for railroad carrier security assessments and

plans; development and implementation of a railroad security training program; due process for rail workers subject to security checks; and whistleblower protections, we recently learned that our operating crews are still in grave danger. A CSX conductor was shot to death in the cab of a locomotive in June of this year during a robbery attempt while the train sat in a siding. Although the engineer on that train survived, he was also shot and seriously injured.

This incident occurred just four days after public release of the Teamsters High Alert 2 rail security report which revealed that 51 percent of train crews surveyed had no way to lock or secure the cab of their locomotive against unauthorized access while occupied, and 73 percent reported that they had no way to lock the cab while it was unoccupied. In a September 22 letter to FRA Administrator Joseph Szabo, BLET President Pierce highlighted data from the two Teamsters Rail Conference High Alert surveys, showing that most BLET members are unable to secure their cabs from attack, and that little has changed over the past five years.

President Pierce offered to develop a PDF-based reporting form that BLET members could access via the BLET website to electronically report specific instances of an inability to secure their locomotive cabs. He also said the BLET would compile and maintain the data from these reports, if FRA was prepared to accept their validity.

The FRA was additionally asked to take the following steps:

- Revise its interpretation of 49 C.F.R. § 229.45 to include malfunctioning and uninstalled cab locking devices as “conditions that endanger the safety of the crew” and issue a Safety Advisory to that effect.
- Revise the Task Statement for the Locomotive Safety Standards Working Group of the FRA’s Railroad Safety Advisory Committee to include the development of standards for securing locomotive cabs.
- Make locomotive cab securement a prominent feature in FRA’s final report on cab conditions, which is mandated by Section 405(b) of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008.
- Empower operating crews with the right

to manage their locomotive consist so that an air conditioned locomotive is on the point whenever any locomotive in their consist is so equipped, to reduce exposure caused when crews are forced by heat to leave cab windows open.

- Revisit outdated glazing requirements.

Harvard Med School, WGBH team with BLET on Fatigue Project

The BLET is working in conjunction with Harvard Medical School, the WGBH Educational Foundation, and the United Transportation Union to create a website for railroaders that provides them with practical information about sleep, sleep disorders, and fatigue management.

Experts from the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School and media producers from the WGBH Educational Foundation are developing an educational website for BLET and UTU members and other railroaders, and are seeking input from BLET members in developing the site.

BLET National President Dennis Pierce encourages members to participate in the survey in order to help them understand what information will be most important

for railroaders so that they can design the best website for our members. The survey is anonymous; members will not be asked for their names or other identifying information, and it should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

The WGBH Educational Foundation is PBS’s largest producer of educational web and television content, such as the science series NOVA. The website is sponsored by the Federal Railroad Administration’s Human Factors R&D Program and supported by the Office of Safety.

To complete the survey, BLET members are encouraged to go to <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BBLHSEXZA>. Regular updates on website progress can be found at <http://sleep.med.harvard.edu/ext/railroaders/>.

For more information concerning the survey, please contact BLET Director of Regulatory Affairs Steve Bruno at 202-624-8748 or bruno@ble-t.org, or Arthur Smith at WGBH at 617-300-3927 or arthur_smith@wgbh.org.

2011 Budget

Although we are already two months into the government’s new fiscal year, the 111th

Deadline extended to Dec. 31 to Register Eligible dependents for Health Care

Thanks to an agreement between the Cooperating Railway Labor Organizations (CRLO) and the National Carriers Conference Committee (NCCC), BLET members now have until December 31, 2010, to register their eligible dependents (up to age 26) for health care. The original deadline was November 3.

The special open enrollment period applies to BLET members covered by the Railroad Employees National Health and Welfare Plan, or the National Railway Carriers and United Transportation Union Health and Welfare Plan.

The special enrollment period for the completed Dependent Add Form and other required materials has been extended and must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2010 (vs. the original date of November 3, 2010) in order to have the eligible dependents covered by your Plan. **THIS EXTENSION IS FOR ADDING CERTAIN DEPENDENTS ONLY; NO OTHER CHANGES WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

For questions or to request another Dependent Add Form, contact Railroad Enrollment Services at 1-800-753-2692.

Above information excerpted from December 1, 2010 Newsflash on BLET website. For more details and background information, please go to www.ble-t.org/pr/news/newsflash.asp?id=5055.

Congress has yet to pass a budget. Despite a Democratic majority, it is unknown whether they will be able to put a budget in place before adjournment. It's no secret that this Congress has been one of the more contentious in our nation's history, and with the Republicans salivating in anticipation of taking over the House next month, it is not looking promising that the Democrats will be able to gain the necessary votes to pass a budget.

Although the economy is slowly recovering, the talking points about controlling the deficit are alive and well. There is absolutely nothing wrong with controlling our spiraling deficit, but you can't have it both ways. The Republican party wants to cut everything, but they refuse to relent on allowing tax cuts to expire on the very wealthiest Americans that would contribute \$700 Billion to the deficit over the next 10 years.

Perhaps there could be a compromise – give the wealthiest Americans their tax breaks in exchange for their promise to spend them on rail infrastructure. Works for everyone, right? Of course, that's silly, but it gives you something to think about.

During the holidays, once Congress adjourns sine die, enjoy yourselves and your families and take some time to focus on the things that are most important to you in your life.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Ramadan, and Happy New Year!

Sereena Hogan can be reached by phone at (520) 297-0944; by mail at 8720 N. Myrtle Dr., Tucson, Arizona 85704, or by e-mail at vp3sereena@aol.com.

Summary of Legislative Issues Requiring Action:

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) - Please encourage your representatives to support the proposed amendment to the FMLA to allow the time that railroad operating crews are required to be available for work to be included in the total hours worked per year so that they are more likely to meet the FMLA eligibility criteria of 1,250 hours worked in a 12-month period.

GA-46000 Lifetime Maximum Adjusted for 2011

The lifetime maximum benefit for the Railroad Employees National Early Retirement Major Medical Benefit (also known as ERMA or GA-46000) Plan will increase from \$118,900 to \$126,200 on January 1, 2011.

At the end of 2001, Labor and Management agreed on various procedures to administer the annual changes in the amount of the lifetime maximum benefit under the ERMA plan. In conjunction with the formula established in 2001, a new lifetime maximum was calculated for 2011 by utilizing the October 2010 consumer price index (CPI) data for Hospital and Related Services and Physician Services.

Additionally, for individuals who have reached the lifetime maximum, the incremental maximum available is applied to eligible expenses submitted for dates of service on or after the effective date of the new maximum. For 2011, this amount will be \$7,300.

This change will apply to all railroads and crafts participating in ERMA.

Excerpted from November 30, 2010 Newsflash on the BLET website at www.ble-t.org.

A Big “Thank You” to our BLET Designated Legal Counsel

As we celebrate Thanksgiving and move into the December holidays, we often take time during this season to give thanks and count our many blessings. The BLET National Auxiliary wishes to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the BLET Designated Legal Counsel (DLC) who not only provide legal representation for our BLET members with their exceptional knowledge of the Federal Employers Liability Act (FELA), but also provide monetary support to educate BLET and Auxiliary members and help our organization grow.

There are many who do not understand the role DLC fills beyond representing BLET members who are injured or killed on the railroad. They also provide much appreciated funding for our regional conventions and other meetings and classes, helping to offset the cost for attendees. And they do a great job of educating our Auxiliary members as to how we, as spouses, need to proceed should our spouse be involved in an accident or sustain an on-the-job injury or, God-forbid, be killed in the line of duty.

Oftentimes, our DLC sponsor events that provide fun and fellowship for BLET and Auxiliary members, such as family picnics, holiday parties, and other opportunities to get to know others who share this same unique lifestyle that we as railroad families experience on a daily basis.

We extend a huge dose of gratitude for DLC's continued support of DLC in connection with the publication of this newsletter. While they do not pay all of the associated costs, they do subsidize a large amount of the printing and mailing costs. In addition, they take turns writing articles about topics that are of interest to our readers. We offer our deepest thanks for their continued support of the families, spouses, and BLET members who benefit from their informative articles as well as the other information contained in our newsletters.

Thank you and Happy Holidays to all our DLC!



Kathie Bailey-Todd, Debbie O' Donohue, Madeline Salisbury, and Anita Caruso at the SWCM in San Antonio.



Auxiliary meeting attendees at the SMA in Cincinnati, Ohio.



At the IWC in Bismarck, ND, John and Brenda Casteel present a check for \$1000 to Sereena Hogan for the Auxiliary Scholarship Fund.



Member-at-Large Pam Kelley gets a birthday hug from her husband Brian Kelley, Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman.



Members of Helen Gould Auxiliary 235, Osawatomie, Kansas, presented to BLET National Secretary Treasurer Bill Walpert the silver GIA Delegate Pin that belonged to their auxiliary and was worn at conventions by their delegate. No one is sure about the age of the pin, but the members wanted it to be kept in the historical collection at BLET National Headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio. **Left to right:** Bill Walpert, Debbie Keele, Helen Brand, and Madeline Salisbury.

Are you proud to be a “Redneck?”

By Terri Fleming, National Alt. Treasurer

Some are offended by the term “redneck” while others use the phrase for jokes. For me personally, I’m proud to be a redneck. Allow me to explain. The term redneck, according to wikipedia.org, was adapted by active Union coal miners in the early 1900s in Appalachia, Kentucky, and western Pennsylvania. Men in the coal mines proudly wore red handkerchiefs to show themselves to be a union man or a striking union man. They also wore the red handkerchiefs to build multiracial unions of white, black, and immigrant miners. The red handkerchief was a sign of solidarity. After discovering this fact about the meaning of redneck, my definition and idea of that phrase has changed.

Solidarity in a union is a must. At the National Convention, I observed many men and women proudly wearing their BLET and Auxiliary badges, and I felt that it was a great way to show union teamwork and solidarity today. Being a local chairman’s wife for many years, I have observed and discovered that the only way that a union can survive against the carriers today is by total unification. Every union member today must be an active participant in order to receive fair wages, fair work practices, and fair legislation. When we, as auxiliary members, are called upon to contact our legislative representatives, or any other action, we all need to participate for the good of the union to show our solidarity. In doing so, we set an example of support for our spouses in their work lives. Sometimes I feel that the Union vs. the Carrier is a losing battle, yet if the union members stand strong together, who is to say what the union could accomplish.

Maybe we should adopt the idea of our fellow union brothers, the United Mine Workers of America, and become more of a redneck union. Would you be willing to stand proud against the carriers and push for what we believe in? It may be a different century from the original rednecks, but the principles are and will always be the same. Thankfully we do have a union to back us and allow us a means to fight, yet it is up to us to pick up the red handkerchief and stand strong for our beliefs. Do you think you could be a proud redneck?

Mark Your Calendars Now for the 2011 Regional Conventions!

June 12-17, 2011

**84th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association
Asheville, N.C.**

Hosted by Brother Dewey Brown at the DoubleTree Biltmore. E-mail Brother Brown for details: drbtownblet26@yahoo.com.

August 2-7, 2011

**73rd Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association
Long Island, N.Y.**

Hosted by the members of BLET Division 269 at the Hyatt Regency Long Island, Hauppauge, N.Y. For details, e-mail Jim Brown: loco542@optonline.net or visit www.euma2011.org.

August 21-27, 2011

**71st Annual International Western Convention
San Luis Obispo, CA**

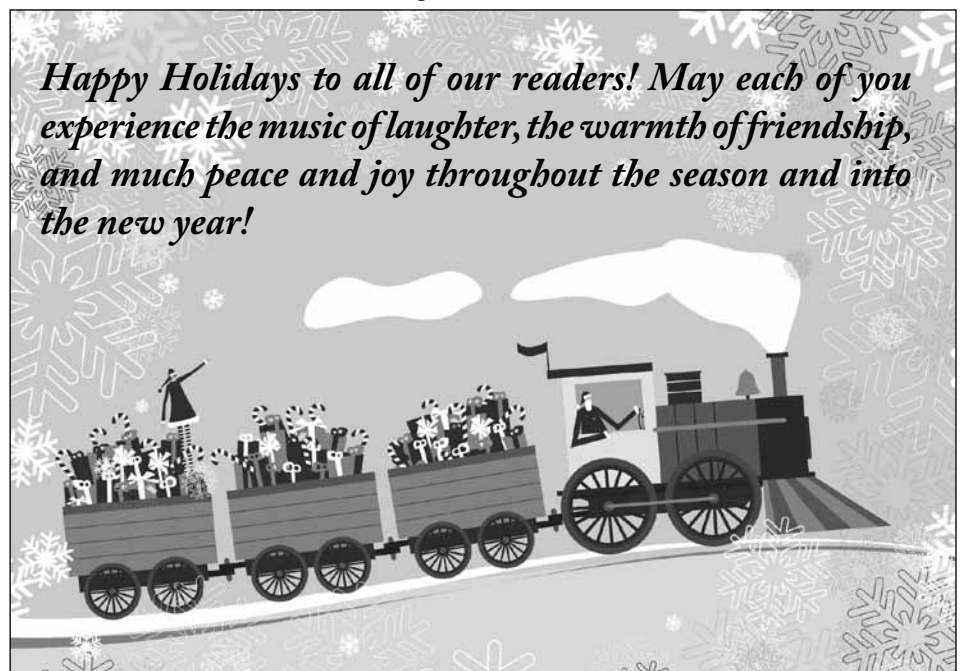
Hosted by Brother Mike Galvani and the members of BLET Division 664 at the Embassy Suites Hotel-San Luis Obispo. For details, e-mail Brother Galvani: sloble664@wildblue.net or call (805) 927-2967.

September 18-22, 2011

**76th annual Southwestern Convention Meeting
El Paso, Texas**

Hosted by Larry & Becky Schneider and the members of BLET Division 192 at the Camino Real Hotel. For details, e-mail Brother Schneider: lschneider7@earthlink.net or visit the SWCM website, bletswcm.org/index2.html.

Happy Holidays to all of our readers! May each of you experience the music of laughter, the warmth of friendship, and much peace and joy throughout the season and into the new year!



Order Mainline Cooking now!



The first and second editions of Mainline Cooking are both now available. Both cookbooks features a variety of recipes submitted by BLET Auxiliary and BLET members across the country, as well as some amusing railroad trivia. Order forms are available on our website, www.bletauxiliary.net, or you may fill out the order blank here and mail with your check to:

Anita Caruso
3341 S. 112th Street
Omaha, NE 68144

Please send me _____ cookbooks.

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Address _____

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\$3.50 each for orders of 10 or more,
or \$5.00 each for orders less than 10

TOTAL: _____

Please enclose check or money order payable to BLET Auxiliary.

From the 1st Vice President:

I am honored to be given the opportunity to serve the Auxiliary for another four years. Thank you to all the delegates and National Officers for taking time out of your busy lives to attend our First Quadrennial Convention in Reno, Nevada, in early October. It was truly inspirational to see how everyone worked together to perform the tasks at hand.

It was exciting to me to see so many of you with whom I was already familiar and to meet new sisters and brothers. We gained some new members at the Convention and had several attendees who expressed interest in starting new local auxiliaries in their areas.

I look forward to serving you in the future and am here to offer any help you may need with getting your auxiliaries organized. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Gina Forman
National 1st Vice President/National Outreach Coordinator
63 S. Hood Street
Peru, Indiana 46970
765-475-9902, tweetys95@scglobal.net



Greetings from Editor/ Publisher Sereena Hogan:

Warm holiday greetings to all of our readers! I hope that your holiday season this year is not too hectic and stressful. Certainly that is not how it is intended to be!

I am extremely grateful to the North American Rail Foundation (NARF) this holiday season for the wonderful gift they have bestowed upon the Auxiliary by providing us with a fantastic new iMac large screen desktop computer on which to create our quarterly newsletters and other organizing and training materials. As your editor and publisher, I have the honor of housing this computer in my home office here in Tucson and I am using it for this issue of the newsletter. It is a huge learning curve for me to switch to the Mac environment after so many years of using a PC, but I know the effort will be worth it in the long run. Many thanks to Phil Sullivan, Executive Director of NARF and all of the board members who voted to approve the purchase of this fantastic new computer!

National President Anita Caruso and I have just completed several days of working to finalize the Journal of Proceedings of the National Convention and implementing the revisions to the Constitution and Bylaws that were voted on at the Convention. The new Constitution and Bylaws will soon be available on the Auxiliary website, www.bletauxiliary.net.


Please send us your stories, articles, photos, poems, etc., for our publication. You can e-mail them or snail-mail them to:

Sereena Hogan, Editor & Publisher
BLET Auxiliary News
8720 N. Myrtle Drive, Tucson, AZ 85704
Phone: 520-297-0944, e-mail: vp3sereena@aol.com

The next issue will be published in March 2011. Please have submissions to Sereena by February 28.

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Serena Hogan, Publisher, BLET Auxiliary News
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