

BLET AUXILIARY

*Working to bring about safer working conditions for
Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, educate spouses,
support each other, and enhance the lifestyles of
railroad employees and their families*



Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen

Auxiliary

Since 1887

www.bletauxiliary.net

Mission

The mission of this organization is to support the interests and welfare of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) Auxiliary and railroad families, especially the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and the organizations of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Rail Conference, our members, and their families throughout the United States, and our sister auxiliary, the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC) Auxiliary in Canada.

Purpose

The overall purpose of this organization shall be: to provide support and promote issues that affect the health, safety, welfare and quality of life of railroaders and their families; to promote higher education within the families of its full members; to give assistance to widows, widowers, sisters and brothers, when needed, especially during times of duress; and to render assistance whenever and wherever needed to further our mission.

History

The BLET Auxiliary was established in 1887 by a committee of ladies assisting with BLE Convention arrangements, who saw the need to establish an organization to bring cohesiveness to the groups of women already meeting in railroad towns all over the country. On October 16, 1887, Auxiliary 1 was organized in Chicago, Illinois, and the organization continued to grow with auxiliaries throughout the United States and Canada promoting the work of our organization.

Over the past decade, the Auxiliary has undergone many changes. While still maintaining the importance of its social and support roles, we recognize the need to be involved in the issues affecting our spouses, our members, and our families. Our meetings are no longer closed, they are open to spouses and immediate family members of BLET members who are interested in learning what we do. We have also created an Associate Membership for those who would not otherwise qualify for membership, but want to be a part of our efforts. Our organization has become a forum for education and information exchange, and a way to meet and talk with those who share common issues. The days of standing on the sidelines are coming to a close. Our members now actively participate in rallies and informational protests, educating the public as to what obstacles our spouses face on the job every day. We have made the transformation from reactive to proactive, and our participation continues to increase.

In 2006, not only our name changed, but other major changes were enacted. We moved from one International organization, to two National organizations. This change followed the merger of the BLE into the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Rail Conference in 2004.

The BLET Auxiliary works closely with, and our relevance has been recognized by, the BLET National Division. The only exception we make in working with the BLET is our non-interference in contractual issues, unless we are specifically asked. We do, however, make suggestions on issues affecting our families, such as health care and insurance.

WHAT WE DO • WHAT WE CAN DO

Just What Does the BLET Auxiliary Do?

Over the past twenty years, our organization has evolved from a social organization to an organization geared more toward action and increased involvement relating to the working conditions of railroaders. The social and support aspects remain an integral part of who we are, only our emphasis has changed. The railroads seem to be returning to the robber baron ways of the late 1800's, and our role in keeping the railroads from successfully making that return is just as important now as it was then. Outlined below are just a few of the contributions we have made in recent years.

Education

An important function of the Auxiliary is to provide information to the spouses and families of BLET members. Information such as: the difference between the Federal Employees Liability Act (FELA), which covers railroaders hurt on the job, and state run worker's compensation programs; what actions should be taken in the event of an accident or injury, and employees' rights; and legislative issues which directly affect railroad employees health and welfare. We accomplish our educational goals through our quarterly newsletter, legislative alerts, seminars, auxiliary meetings, and meetings at regional conventions.

Support

Working for the railroad is very different from most jobs because of the lack of schedules. Being a family member of a railroader also makes life different from that of friends and extended family. For that reason, part of our purpose is to support each other on every day issues, and even more so, in times of need or crisis. The Auxiliary provides a central point for families to turn to in the event of emergency or need.

Workplace Issues

Since the inception of Remote Control Operations (RCOs), Auxiliary members have stood with our BLET brothers and sisters participating in numerous informational protests all over the country with regard to the use of remote control operations, emphasizing both safety and security issues pertaining to the technology, and the issue of inadequate training of RCO operators. As these devices continue to be introduced throughout the country, the Auxiliary will be there to draw the attention of local media sources, as well as

informing both State and Federal legislators of the problems inherent with its use, and the safety risks it poses to railroad employees and the public. Some of our members have also been instrumental in continuing to work with BLET Divisions and local government agencies in passing resolutions to require the FRA to issue regulations rather than the current unenforceable guidelines.

The most recent campaign directed at the National Mediation Board (NMB) provided our members with the opportunity to help the BLET "convince" Board members that the Carriers' request to be released from good faith contract negotiations should not be granted. Our members fanned out to make sure rank and file BLET members had the information necessary to contact the Board. The campaign was successful and the Carriers withdrew their request.

A local Auxiliary in Houston staged an informational protest regarding the excessive locomotive cab temperatures experienced during the hot summer months. The members involved, armed with the factual data provided by BLET members, wrote letters and made attempts to meet with Company officials. When their efforts were ignored, they organized an informational protest across from one of the larger switching yards, invited all forms of media, visual, print and radio, and let the public know the types of conditions engineers faced. An immediate response was received from the company acknowledging the problems, and they began allowing engineers to take breaks to cool off, provided gatorade on the engines, and issued a timetable for equipping engines with working air conditioning units. The Carrier had given lip service to the Local Chairmen in the area for several years, but with one organized effort by BLET members, spouses, and families, immediate improvements were seen.

A problem concerning housing brought about by the hub agreements on the Union Pacific forced new engineers to work hundreds of miles from their home. Because they could not afford to have two residences, many were sleeping in their cars and using the shower and bathroom facilities at the yard offices (men and women). This type of situation led to excessive fatigue and posed a potential danger not only to the engineer and crew, but also to the public. A group of Auxiliary

spouses, with the blessing and help of the BLET National and local Division members, met with and were able to resolve some of these issues with the Carrier allowing engineers to avail themselves of unused hotel rooms that were already paid for by the Carrier. This compromise has gone a long way in abating the rest issues that were posing a serious problem.

A member-at-large was able to stop the CSX from housing crews in a facility previously abandoned because of black mold. By contacting the area health departments and elected representatives in the community, the CSX withdrew their plan, and no one's job was at risk.

* * *

When the BNSF first introduced the "no tolerance availability policy" in 2000, a group of spouses and families converged on their headquarters in Fort Worth protesting the unfairness of the policy. Because of the attention this event drew, they temporarily backed off the stringent policy. The time has come to once again draw attention to their ridiculous policies, charging employees who only lay off to exercise their scheduled visitation rights, and show lawmakers that the railroads' rhetoric regarding quality of life issues is nothing more than lip service. All of the railroads abuse their employees in this manner, and we can make a difference in letting them know their policies need to change.

Legislative Issues

The Auxiliary has been very involved in the last 22 years with legislative issues affecting railroaders, both active and retired. We played a major role in the passage of Railroad Retirement Reform in 2000 and 2001, by having representatives lobby in Washington, DC, and by keeping up the pressure via phone calls, letters and email to our legislators. Also, one of our members performed a valuable function in attending a majority of the Congressional hearings regarding Amtrak and keeping both the BLET and the Auxiliary apprized of its status.

We continue our efforts to promote much needed legislation through the grass roots efforts of our mobilization program, working in tandem with the BLET mobilization coordinators. Every single member makes a difference when our elected representatives are advised of our issues and our support of those issues.

With the recent change in Congressional leadership, issues that we have worked on for a very long time, such as fatigue, hours of service, and rail safety are starting to be heard on Capitol hill. Issues such as rail security, use of new

technology, and transport of radioactive materials are also being given long overdue attention. Now more than ever, we have a solid chance of being heard, and we need every voice we can muster to make sure that we are heard.

Members are active at the state levels as well, working on legislation which is not addressed at the federal level (e.g. carry-all safety, minimum crew requirements, cab safety, and grade crossing safety). Our goal is to have an Auxiliary State Legislative Representative in every state that has a BLET State Legislative Board, to work with that Board on behalf of families. We have found that when you bring a representative of the families into the political process it garners additional attention.

What We Can Do

We can do so much to help our spouses and our families attain a better quality of life. Even something as small as keeping up with email can be a valuable function. During the fight for Railroad Retirement Reform and the first campaign on the National Mediation Board to retain craft autonomy, our nationwide network of Auxiliary members, and the BLET members' lists were our best tools in informing the greatest number of people as to the status of these issues.

The relationship our organization has with the BLET National has never been stronger, and we hope to enhance it even more. Since every area of the country has problems that are unique, in addition to those that are experienced system-wide or nationwide, having a local Auxiliary allows an established forum to address those issues, with the support from the National Auxiliary. There is strength in numbers, so it is increasingly important that we continue to grow and increase our solidarity for the benefit of our spouses, our families, and ourselves.

BLET Auxiliary Programs

Legislative Department

The Legislative Department of the BLET Auxiliary was established to address quality of life, legislative, safety and security issues affecting locomotive engineers and trainmen, their spouses, their families, and our communities. The Department has grown over the last decade thanks to our National, State and Local Legislative Representatives, who have worked tirelessly both at the Federal, State, and local levels to bring about quality of life changes. The Auxiliary works closely with the BLET National Legislative Representative, as well as State Legislative Board Chairmen in lobbying our legislative bodies on issues affecting the work place and quality of life. Individually, Auxiliaries work with their local BLET Divisions in support of issues that may affect a particular area, such as cab temperature issues, remote control issues, carry-all vans, rail security training and labor issues in general.

Legislative updates are provided in each of our quarterly newsletters to keep member informed about the issues currently "on the radar," providing background information and the status of those issues. The National Legislative Representative is also responsible for sending out legislative alerts whenever we are called upon to act on a particular issue. These alerts contain background information, the status of the issue, and the message our members need to convey to their elected representatives. Our legislative alerts have become an important tool by which we can help the BLET Legislative Department. In order to assist our local Auxiliary Legislative Representatives, we have posted a page on our website, www.bletauxiliary.net, which provides monthly updates to inform local auxiliary members on legislative issues at their monthly auxiliary meetings.

During the 2001 International Convention, the position of Auxiliary State Legislative Representative was established to provide additional support for state and local issues. We still have positions available and encourage anyone interested in the legislative aspect of our organization to contact either their State Legislative Board Chairman or the Auxiliary National Legislative Representative, Sereena Hogan.

The Legislative Department depends on all of our membership to be an effective voice in Washington, D.C., and in each state. Politics and legislation may not sound exciting, but is amazingly interesting once you understand how it works and what is at stake, and often is the only way to truly make changes.

Scholarship Program

The BLET Auxiliary Scholarship program provides \$1,000.00 scholarships to the sons or daughters of both Auxiliary and BLET members, with at least two (2) years of concurrent membership. Established at the International Convention in 1981, this program was set up with a strong financial base, and with each passing year, the number of scholarships awarded continues to grow. Recently, several of the Regional

Conventions have donated one or more scholarships to the Auxiliary, in addition to donations from BLET State Legislative Boards, the National BLET Division, and Designated Legal Councils. Individual auxiliaries and members have also held fund raisers to help our youth, or donated gifts for raffling off at the regional conventions. The cost of education in this country is skyrocketing and this program affords our members one more way of helping their families.

Requirements for qualifying for a BLET Auxiliary scholarship also include the applicant's acceptance or enrollment in an accredited university, college or institution of higher learning. Recipients are chosen on the basis of academic record, leadership, character, and personal achievement. To continue to be eligible for a scholarship beyond the first quarter/semester, the recipient must maintain a satisfactory academic status.

Mobilization Program

The effectiveness of an organization depends on its ability to speak with one voice for a common cause. The Mobilization program was established in 1997 as a way to address issues affecting BLET members, and ultimately their spouses and families. This program is the most efficient way we have of communicating with each other on important issues. Since our organization is spread out across the United States, we needed a way to timely contact one another. The Mobilization Program meets that need through telephone calls, e-mails, and correspondence. Most recent successes of this new program involved participating on numerous occasions to help pass the Railroad Retirement Reform legislation; education of the public and elected officials on the dangers Remote Control Operations; educating the public about the Administration's attempted sabotage of Amtrak; and the campaign on the National Mediation Board to prevent the Carriers from shirking their duty to negotiate the national contract in good faith with rail labor. Especially during the Railroad Retirement Reform fight, our network provided the ability to contact GIA members during crucial votes, allowing us to respond timely (given we only had two hours to make a difference).

Care and Assistance Program (CAP)

Established in 1921, the Care and Assistance Program is our organization's way of saying thank you to long time members. These members are usually older and their incomes are such that some of life's little pleasures are out of their reach. The CAP program provides financial assistance to qualifying members and helps them to maintain a little bit more of the dignity they deserve. All of the current CAP recipients are grateful for what we do.

Why You Call BLET Designated Legal Counsel (and why it should be the first thing you do)

BLET Designated Legal Counsel (DLC) are a group of attorneys who understand and specialize in the practice of the Federal Employers Liability Act (FELA). FELA is the law applied when railroad workers are injured on the job. Many states have worker's compensation laws, but those laws do not apply to railroad injuries. The lawyer down the street may know how to represent someone in a worker's compensation claim, but probably knows nothing about how to represent a railroad employee under FELA.

When an accident or injury occurs on the job, the first thing you should do is contact a BLET Designated Attorney. They not only respond immediately, they also provide valuable information to help you in the event the case goes to court. Their role is to not only protect you from the unscrupulous practices of the Carrier's Claims Agents, but to also preserve any evidence you might need in the future. One of the agreements they make in order to become "Designated Legal Counsel" is to offer free advice. You are under no obligation to hire designated counsel, but because of their expertise, you would be well-served by doing so in the event it becomes necessary.

Designated Counsel helps out the BLET in other ways, too. They attend the Regional Conventions every year, and educate our members regarding FELA law, current trends, and current practices. Not only do they provide invaluable information, they also have a designated fund set up to help defray some of the costs of the regional conventions.

The attorneys who make up the BLET DLC are very astute as well. They know how difficult it sometimes is to be the spouse of a railroader, and they do their best to get information to spouses and families. They also work closely with the Auxiliary in our efforts to educate, sponsoring informational seminars geared toward the type of information we need in the event an accident, injury or, God forbid, a death occurs.

A current listing of BLET DLCs can be found on the BLET Auxiliary website, www.bletauxiliary.net, on the BLET website at www.ble-t.org, or in the monthly BLET News. Most of the law firms have websites, email, and "800" numbers. We urge you to visit their websites to learn more about what they can do for you, your spouse, and your family.

Always remember, the Carriers are unscrupulous in their treatment of injured employees. You need someone on your side protecting you.

When tragedy strikes, what can you do?

By BLET Auxiliary Member-at-Large Kathie Bailey

Kathie Bailey is the widow of G.Y. Bailey, who was killed in a head-on collision in dark territory in Shepherd, Texas, on September 15, 2005.

It's the middle of the night - you're sound asleep. Your husband is at work, just like every other normal day. The doorbell rings several times. Startled, you roll over, look at the clock - it's 3:21a.m. You get out of bed and start down the hallway to answer the door. Quickly you check the children's rooms on your way, just to make sure they're in bed asleep and safe. They are, and you breathe a quick sigh of relief. Then you realize, you have a grown child that doesn't live at home. Your heart skips a beat as you ask who's at the door. They answer you, but it's mumbled, and you can't understand. Did they say "sheriff"? You ask again, and you still can't understand clearly. Your heart skips another beat. You take a deep breath, and crack the door. It's not a sheriff; it's your husband's friend from work, his union buddy. You're groggy and confused, thinking, "What is he doing here at this hour?" He stands in the doorway just looking at you while you keep asking him, "What's going on, why are you here?" while he just stands there, not saying anything. He finally tells you, "You need to listen to me. There was an accident, two trains in a head-on collision." All of a sudden you get this surge of adrenaline. Your heart begins to pound like it's going to pop out of your chest. Your hands begin to shake and you feel like you are either going to pass out or be sick. You tell him, "You're scaring me. Where is my husband? How bad is he hurt?" His friend and union brother just keeps shaking his head and telling you that you need to listen to him, as he sits you down, kneels in front of you and holds your hands while hanging his head. The next words that come out of his mouth are words that you NEVER want to hear. "G.Y.

What to do when a railroad official or claims agent contacts you to inform you of an injury to or death of your spouse:

- 1) Make the railroad official contacting you in person identify themselves; make certain they are who they say they are.
- 2) Find out exactly where your spouse is located and what his/her condition is.
- 3) **DO NOT** allow any railroad representatives into your home.
- 4) Get the pertinent information and **DO NOT** volunteer any information. Make **NO** statements - verbal, written, or recorded.
- 5) If in public, get the needed information and walk away. Again make **NO** statements.
- 6) If a railroad official calls you on the phone, get the needed information and hang up. Again, make **NO** statements. From this time forward, monitor all calls if you have Caller ID and an answering machine.
- 7) **DO NOT** sign anything.
- 8) **DO NOT** accept anything from them.
- 9) After initial contact, and after you have the needed information, have no further contact with any railroad official or claims agent until after you have contacted a **BLET Designated Legal Counsel**. Make certain that the railroad official is informed that they are not to contact you or any member of your family from this time forward until you want to make contact with them.
- 10) At the hospital, **DO NOT** allow any railroad official or claims agent into the hospital room or treatment area.
- 11) Instruct any railroad official or claims agent that they are to have **NO** contact with the patient, family, or any medical personnel treating your spouse. Inform them that **BLET Designated Legal Counsel** has been notified. This will back them off very quickly.
- 12) **DO NOT** allow any railroad official or claims agent to make **ANY** decisions concerning medical treatment or arrangement for your spouse.
- 13) Sign **ONLY** necessary medical forms for the treatment of your spouse that are from the hospital. **DO NOT** make statements to any medical personnel except in regard to the medical treatment for your spouse.
- 14) Make certain that all medical personnel, including doctors, know of these instructions and abide by them. Insist that the Doctor/Patient confidentiality be observed.
- 15) When and where you can, especially if your spouse has been medicated, make certain that your spouse gives a consistent history of the accident to each medical provider who may inquire. Consistency of the explanation of the event is very important as these medical providers will be questioned by the railroad officials.

didn't make it." Your whole world spins out of control and crashes down around you in a million pieces at that very second. I know they were the hardest words this man has ever had to say to a friend and union brother's wife, and I pray that I NEVER have to hear those words again.

If you're like me, you think that happens to "someone else." Now you become that "someone else." Emotions run raw in a tragic situation; all hell breaks loose in your life and you have to deal with things you never dreamed you'd ever be dealing with. Too many spouses are not involved enough in the railroad worker's work and union that he belongs to. If you are one of those spouses, you won't have the slightest idea as to what you should and shouldn't do at a time when panic sets in and your brain and body go into "auto pilot" to get through what is happening, and your spouse isn't there to help you through this mess that is now called your life.

Things your spouse should always have on hand in the case of an injury or death:

- 1) Names and phone numbers to your local division's union officers: Local Chairman, President, Secretary/Treasurer, Vice President, Chaplain.
- 2) Names and phone numbers of the BLET Designated Legal Counsel members in your area.
- 3) All insurance policies: Health, Disability, Job Insurance, Life Insurance
- 4) Your current will. Whether we want to believe it or not, everyone needs to have one.
- 5) Any other important paperwork, such as a living will, DNR, power of attorney, or organ donor information.
- 6) Names and phone numbers of the BLET National Auxiliary Officers at www.bletauxiliary.net.

Two and a half years before my husband was killed, one of his best friends dropped dead of a massive heart attack in the parking lot at the yard office about 10 minutes after getting off of a train and tying up. It was February of 2003 and his friend was only 56 years old, happy, healthy, and had never had any type of heart or health problems. His friend left behind a 37-year old widow - with whom he was getting ready to celebrate his 3rd wedding anniversary - and two grown children in their early to mid twenties. It was a real wake up call for us. We have four children between us - two of them grown, two in their early teens and one precious grandson. My husband and I both then decided to make out our wills and get our affairs in order "just in case." Now, you are probably thinking, "I'm too young to have a will or have life insurance." Well, we thought that too, but we did it anyway, and thank God we did. If you and your spouse are lucky, you won't have to use wills, life insurance, etc. until you are very old. But in our case, the "just in case" came much sooner than any of us ever imagined.

At the time my husband was killed, he was the Local Chairman of BLET Division 62, a primary member on the BLET National Safety Task Force, the Safety Captain of the Houston Service Unit Safety Committee and, in 2003, he was nominated by Union Pacific as a finalist for the John C. Kenefick Safety Award. He ate, lived, slept, and breathed for his family, the BLET, and the railroad. When his friend died suddenly in 2003, he and I sat down - with the help of our close friend and BLET Designated Legal Counsel Bob Tramuto of Jones and Granger - and gathered information that a railroad workers spouse would need to know if they were ever involved in an accident, whether injured or worse yet, killed. I can honestly say that if it weren't for me being interested enough in my husband's work and his BLET union, I wouldn't have made it through the last 14 months. His BLET union brothers and sisters were there for me and our family, hundreds of them. They had my back when I needed them the most, and for that alone I will be eternally grateful to our union family. My husband would be so very proud of them for stepping up and taking care of our family. I feel it is imperative to share with you some things a railroad worker's spouse should know, "just in case" something happens to you (see highlighted boxes on pages 9 and 10). God knows, I hope none of you will ever need it, but if you do become that "someone else," I hope some of these things will help your family, just as they helped ours. Just for the record, my husband's accident happened around midnight and the railroad never called me. A claims agent showed up at 4:38 a.m. and was asked to leave our property immediately. The claims agent was informed that we wanted no contact with the railroad unless it was through our BLET Designated Legal Counsel, Bob Tramuto.

As I have said before, you just never know. I hope none of your families will ever have to go through such chaos and devastation.

But if they do, having as much information available at all times will help them

REMEMBER... Anything you say to a railroad official and/or claims agent will be used against you and your spouse in order to protect the railroad's interest. Call a BLET Designated Legal Counsel as soon as possible and be governed by their advice and instructions.

know what to do and not do. Please feel free to contact me at any time. I can be contacted via e-mail at kdbailey@sbcglobal.net or by mail at 10051 Barr Lake Dr., Houston, TX, 77095.

Stay safe out there on the rails!

