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Mine is near the end after Andrew.

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Salters [ART ON SCREEN – mixed picket line photo]

Thanks, Doug. The bottom line is that we have to talk the talk. But that alone isn't enough. Especially at the local level, we have to *walk* that talk.

Our local associations are what sell this union. It is local, grassroots action that will engage our members in their local associations and provide the strength we need. Put simply, union pride begins at home.

To talk about the kinds of grassroots activities that work in our locals, the best resources to turn to are our local presidents.

I'd like to introduce Andrew Reeger, president of the Chesaning Education Association, who has served our country as a United States Marine and now teaches special education at Chesaning Middle School.

Reger [ART ON SCREEN – Member and student photo]

I'm Andrew Reger and I'm a proud member of the Chesaning Education Association, which is part of Region 11.

Chesaning is a small community southwest of Saginaw. Like other small towns across this state, everyone knows everyone. Our local economy is based on farming and small businesses, both of which are struggling right now. And just like every town – big or small – Chesaning is full of parents who want their children to have it better than they did – and look to their local public schools to help make that happen.

That's why it's so important for my members to be an active part of the community, working together for our students. Just like many you, I can confirm what Doug's polling says – the citizens of Chesaning view my members positively because they see what we do for Chesaning's students.

But if they didn't see that dedication, that caring, that willingness to go the extra mile, it might be very different. As union members, we all must be active participants in our communities. We need to be involved in the charitable activities that happen in our hometowns.

We need to be a group that people think of when they're wondering how to get the help they need to get a project done. We need to be a presence at student football games, concerts and fundraisers.

All those things are why my members are proud of being part of the Chesaning Education Association – and why I'm proud to volunteer my time as their local president.

Negotiating for fair wages and benefits that allow my members to raise families in our community is certainly important. But that's not the main reason why any of us got into this

profession.

We got into education because we cared about kids – and wanted to help students succeed.

[ANDREW – ADD TO THIS AS YOU SEE FIT]

That’s why we wear our union colors on our sleeves. In Chesaning, we literally do – with four different styles of shirts to meet our members’ preferences, such as the stylish model I’m wearing today.

That’s why we get involved with the local school board elections and take those board members to dinner every month to maintain great relationships.

That's why we forge strong partnerships with our community's business leaders, even serving as ushers for the World-Famous Chesaning Showboat.

These are just some of the reasons why my members are proud to be part of the Chesaning EA. And we talk about that pride – amongst ourselves and with our family, friends and neighbors.

My local isn't unique. There are locals all over the state the work hard to build union pride. Everyone does it a little differently in their community – and that's what makes us all

strong.

Where are the folks from Ypsilanti? There, the EA and ESP locals have worked together, forming a coalition that cannot be stopped in its efforts to make their schools a great place.

Jointly working to elect friends of public education. Bargaining so that everyone benefits, rather than being divided and conquered.

Reaching out to the community and showing how every employee in the district works hard for students, from teachers in the classroom to support staff who stay into the wee hours of the morning to ensure school is ready for students the next day.

Need more examples?

MEA's members in Grand Rapids rallied for safer schools where students can focus on learning.

Cass City's members who advertise and reach out to the community to show the dedication of the teachers to the students and the district.

Pinckney's members who do everything from marching in parades to lobbying the school board to reinforce their value to the community, especially in fighting back ill-conceived attempts at privatization.

Our members at Battle Creek's Kellogg Community College who worked together with the community to elect a board that cares about the preparation they provide area students and the job training they provide area workers.

Utica's members who raise PAC funds like mad so that we can elect friends of public education.

The list can and should go on and on and on.

Because we all do great things locally that we're proud of.

We need to shout about that pride – so that our members can *feel* it; so that our communities can *see* it; and so that the opponents of organized labor can *hear* it and understand that Michigan's unions will not sit quietly while the middle class dream we've strived for is attacked by corporate special interests.

As an education union, we're in a unique position to show the value of organized labor to our communities.

Because advocating for our members' working conditions *and* our students' learning conditions

are one in the same.

And we have an example we can look to. A local that took that sentiment from the bargaining table all the way to the picket line, showing how a well-organized, pride-filled local can be the best advocate for what students need in the classroom – in this case, smaller class sizes.

And a local president whose leadership, class and dedication to her members is a model for all of us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the Wayne-Westland Education Association, Nancy

Stracken.

(REGION 2 WAVES PICKET SIGNS FROM W-W)

Strachan [ART ON SCREEN – Wayne-Westland shot 1]

Thank you Andrew. I'm Nancy Strachan and I'm a proud member of the Wayne-Westland Education Association.

First, I have to thank all of you. My members and I truly felt as if the whole state stood shoulder to shoulder with us during our recent work stoppage. Letters of support and donations from across the state lifted my folks and inspired them to keep on walking. There are no words to

express our thanks.

I especially want to thank Iris, Steve, Peggy and Lu, along with *all* the other MEA leaders who walked with my members on the lines.

Many thanks to MEA staff who volunteered their time to the cause, walking with my members and supporting our efforts. They would not leave until they personally handed the checks to each and every member that they walked with for the week.

Special thanks to my bargaining team and our UniServ director Evelyn Baran. Without their commitment our work stoppage would never have been supported by the members of Wayne-Westland or our community.

And boy did our community support us.

The businesses of the community brought our members coffee, doughnuts, and pizza. One grandmother noticed that her grand-daughter's teachers' hands were getting cold from carrying the picket signs. She went to the store and

brought back gloves.

On the first day, pizza was delivered to our office. When we called to thank them, the woman who answered the phone said we must be mistaken – the pizza parlor isn't open on Monday. **I know where we'll be ordering our pizzas from now.**

A young man at one of our high schools walked with the teachers every day, wearing his black clothes to show support. On Friday when we returned to classrooms, our members gathered around the flagpole and said a prayer. The young man asked if he could walk in with the

staff – they said, “**No, you can lead us.**”

I’m proud of my members. And I’m proud of my community – my “**union town.**”

In Wayne-Westland, we’ve been proud union members for a long time. We’ve felt it. We’ve talked it. And last month, we showed it.

That collective union spirit didn’t just spontaneously happen overnight though. We had to nurture and grow it. It took many years of planning and communication with our members and our community. We weren’t just proud all

of a sudden when we hit the picket lines on
October 6th.

It's not about just a t-shirt or a sign or a button –
although those things helped show our pride.
At the core of what we believe and what we
walked those lines for is a dedication to our
students.

To making sure they're learning in classrooms
that aren't overcrowded. Where they can get the
individual attention they need to be successful.
Where they – and their teachers – are valued.

It's important for me to say that our fight isn't over. We're still bargaining. And while I can't discuss it further due to a court order, let me simply say that we will keep at it until we get a settlement that we can be proud of, addressing the needs of our students and our members.

Andrew is right. MEA's mission statement is right.

There is an unbreakable link between our students' learning conditions and our members' working conditions. What we do at the

bargaining table affects our students' daily lives and academic success.

It's up to us – all of us – as individuals, as locals, and as a statewide association to make it clear that we are critical to the education of our young people. And it's *that* education that will secure a strong future for our state, our economy, and our students.

On behalf of my members in Wayne-Westland, I thank you for your support and your solidarity.

Salters [ART ON SCREEN – Wayne-Westland shot 2]

When it comes to Wayne-Westland, I have only four words: **They...did...it...right.**

I was proud to stand with them for their students and their members. And I continue to be proud, not just of them, but of all of us. Of this association and what it stands for.

I hope this morning has helped you feel that pride. I hope it has inspired you to share that pride – to talk about it and show it to others.

I hope you realize the connection of your everyday work to your pride as a union member. How it affects your fellow members, our local, state and national economies, our communities and, especially, our students.

During lunch, you'll be going into region meetings where you'll be able to stand up and speak out about your union pride.

You'll be discussing how to share this union spirit back home. What's going on locally that you can stand tall and be proud of.

And how to get your members to feel and share

their union pride along with you.

We are in challenging times, but just as in the past, this association will rise to those challenges because of the ideas, hard work, dedication, and PRIDE of all of you and your members back home.

Thank you.

[ART ON SCREEN – MEA logo]