

# No Stone Unturned

*During the economic recession Operating Engineers Local 150 helps out its own*

The economic downturn has had a devastating effect on the unemployment level for construction workers, and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150 has seen with the unemployment a variety of needs from its membership. Extensive measures have been taken through the course of recession to keep members fed, insured and working.

First, the Local 150 Food Bank was formed in early 2009 to provide boxes of food to members struggling to make ends meet. Members, employers, and outside organizations and donors contributed to this charitable fund, which has provided more than 2,500 boxes - filled with enough food to feed a family of four for one week, to members and their families.

The next immediate need became clear when workers began coming up short on the hours required to be covered by the Union's health insurance. Like too many of their Brothers and Sisters in the other trades, members were without work and unable to afford their self-pays. By utilizing the Member Assistance Fund and Union treasury dollars along with federal stimulus dollars, Local 150 was able to reduce a member's self-pay from more than \$1,200 per month to just over \$200.

To date, the Union has committed more than \$1.1 million to subsidize these self-pays. Local 150 has taken great care to cut its operating expenses in the face of reduced dues income, including not replacing retiring staff members. Diverting this money to keep members insured until the work picture brightens up is simply the

right thing to do.

Instead of waiting for the housing market to recover, Local 150 built alliances that got work going again on roads, bridges, wind farms, and other projects. From filling zoning board meetings to supporting wind energy projects and getting behind the proposed 28-mile Illiana Expressway to mobilizing the membership to lobby for the \$4 billion Jumpstart, \$31 billion Illinois Jobs Now and Indiana's \$12 billion Major Moves capital improvement programs, Local 150 and its members did not wait for work to come, but went out and got it.

Much of the work in the immediate future for Operating Engineers is road, bridge and infrastructure work, and Local 150's state of the art Apprenticeship and Skill Improvement Program held an extended training schedule this year, encouraging members to hone their skills on equipment like pavers, rollers and other road building equipment. The facility allows members to come in six days a week all year long to learn to operate new equipment or brush up their skills on equipment they have not run in years.

The goal for Local 150 during this difficult time has been to leave no stone unturned in the effort to put unemployed members back to work, and to help them stay fed, insured, and together as families until they walk back onto the jobsite.

*Provided by Operating Engineers Local 150*

## What's Your Story?



Does your company have a story to tell similar to Adjustable Forms on the opposite page? The Builders Association is proud to have on its roster not only solid contractors, specialty contractors and suppliers, but the best corporate citizens in Chicagoland.

For that and many other reasons, we instituted the CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP AWARD, which is conferred yearly at our Annual Meeting. Recipients have included Mark Johnson and Roger Price of Seyfarth Shaw LLP in 2008 and Jimmy Akintonde (left) of Ujamaa Construction in 2009.

We'd love to know about your company's philanthropic efforts. Contact Andy Cole at 847-318-8585 or [acole@bldrs.org](mailto:acole@bldrs.org). Also, be on the lookout for Corporate Citizenship Award nomination forms which will be sent to members soon. Let us know what your company has done for the community it serves.