



Happy Labor Day

Unions strong at Bend site in EM A3

7 things you don't know about Labor Day B6

# The Dispatch • Argus

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Monday, September 3, 2018 | QConline.com | \$1.50

167TH YEAR

## UNION LABORERS EARNING WHILE LEARNING



GARY KRAMBECK / gkrambeck@qconline.com

Ironworkers Tyler Kendall and Dave Kincade, of Local 111 and Bevans Steel, assemble the framework for the addition to Black Hawk College Building 1 on Wednesday in Moline.

# Unions proud of value, history in Q-C

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The perception of union strength, while not what it once was, remains relevant in the Quad-Cities.

Local union leader's believe they still have it covered — beginning, middle and end — whether it's through apprenticeship programs that let people jump start a career and allow a person to earn while they learn or the salary, health care and retirement benefits earned throughout their careers.

"The best value we offer is training," said Jerry Lack, executive director of the Tri-City Building and Construction Trades Council.

The council encompasses 17 trades in the Quad-Cities area

— from boilermakers and bricklayers to sheet metal workers and sprinkler fitters. The council serves 8,000 skilled workers and helps manage the coordination of all of the area's building trades unions.

"Basically when you start out and get an apprenticeship your training is paid for," Lack said. "You earn while you learn. The salary — with health insurance benefits, retirement benefits — are accumulating while you are learning."

The council also helps provide training for journeyman as their careers continue, along with pay one can raise a family with, Lack said.

"You earn a good salary," he said. "A lot of careers out there don't have that anymore."

Lack noted the community

benefits from the times and money union workers provide.

"We are the ones that serve as coaches in the Little League," Lack said. "We go out and volunteer at programs for Big Brothers, Big Sisters program, youth programs. We are the ones doing all the volunteer projects in parks, throughout the community."

"Union membership promotes community involvement," he said. "That's the big key with our union trade members."

Montie Schell, business agent for the Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons Local 18, agrees.

"We are a group of hard-working individuals that are community-minded," said Schell, adding

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# Wage war?

## Costco paying nearly double minimum wage

SARAH RITTER  
Lee News Network

Cashiers hired to work for Davenport's Costco Wholesale this fall will make a starting pay nearly double the state's minimum wage and around \$10,000 more than the average cashier in Iowa.

Davenport Costco Warehouse Manager David Pierce said the company expects to have the 140 new local positions filled this week, before the store opens along 53rd Street in October. Costco raised its hourly starting wage this year to \$14 per hour, compared with the state's average pay for cashiers of more than \$9. Iowa's minimum wage remains at \$7.25.

After five years, he said a full-time cashier can earn more than \$25 per hour, including time-based annual bonuses, placing the wage well above Iowa's statewide average of \$44,730, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. He said Costco's average wage for hourly employees is \$23.

"At Costco, we know that paying good wages makes sense for our business," Pierce said. "An important reason for the success of Costco's business model is the attraction and retention of great employees. Instead of minimizing wages, it's a lot more profitable in the long term to minimize employee turnover and maximize employee productivity, commitment and loyalty."

Costco regularly tops lists of national companies for its high pay and benefits. Most recently, it was the top company listed on

a report by Indeed, which analyzed its database of 18 million employer reviews to determine the companies employees are most satisfied to work for. In late October, it's bringing those salaries and benefits to the Quad-Cities market for the first time.

According to a recent report by United Ways of Iowa, 66 percent of Iowa's jobs pay less than \$20 per hour, and 57 percent pay less than \$15 per hour.

But still, economist Peter Orszag, with Iowa State University, said most Iowa businesses currently pay more than the minimum wage. He said the fraction of workers earning the minimum wage is between 1 and 2 percent.

"A lot of businesses are currently finding out you can't get good help at \$7.25 an hour," economist Dave Swenson, also with ISU, said. "Look at the signs, fast food operations and different places pay \$9 an hour for starting workers. Walmart is paying around \$11.50 an hour. It's the case especially in metro areas because there's more demand for a rich diversity of workers. We're getting those bottom wages bid up."

Swenson noted when it comes to products and the number of membership-only warehouse stores, Costco won't have much competition in the Quad-Cities, save for Sam's Club. But when it comes to jobs, that's a different story, he said.

"There could be competition for labor, if Costco comes in and a lot of people want to make Costco-pay, it's going to be hard for firms to hold onto workers," Swenson said. "They may consider raising their pay near the Costco level. A Costco coming in can be very disruptive. But we

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# Court win could affect public sector laborers

## Janus ruling ended years of mandated union dues

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ROCK ISLAND — Local officials are divided over the impact a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision may have on public sector labor unions.

On June 27, the court ruled in favor of Mark Janus, an Illinois state government non-union employee who sued the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees claiming the mandatory payment of union dues violated his First Amendment rights.

The ruling, which ended 40 years of mandated union dues for public employees, was seen as a setback for organized labor.

"It's going to have a huge impact," said Scott Vyncke, treasurer for AFSCME Local 1234.

"Our local union probably won't be affected right away because all of our members are proud to be union members," he said. "Nobody is going to back out and try the fair-share complaint with us."

"It's their right, but we feel it's wrong," said Vyncke. "We negoti-

ate contracts; we get benefits for the employees. That's all fought for by due-paying members."

Vyncke, who is employed as the water distribution crew leader for East Moline, said he has been a union member for 31 years. AFSCME Local 1234, which covers municipal workers in East Moline and Silvis, has 79 members.

While public-sector workers are not required to join the union representing them, they still must pay dues. The union must negotiate on behalf of all employees, whether they are members or not.

Because all employees receive wage increases, pensions and benefits negotiated by the union, leaders of the unions believe workers should help cover the cost of negotiations and settling complaints.

In Iowa, the Janus v. AFSCME ruling will have little effect. As a right-to-work state, unions there cannot require membership or fair-share fees.

Illinois is not a right-to-work state. Prior to the ruling, Illinois law said fees had to be withheld from public employees' paychecks, regardless of their union status.

The case was filed by Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner shortly after

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