# **UCU New Arrivals**









#### Congratulations everyone!

From left: **Juniper Karanovic Poff**, born December 18th, 2010 to Zach Poff (Film/Video); **Aaliyah Rodriquez** born July 9th, 2010 to Kelly Garcia (Financial Aid); **Jaylene and Skylyn DelValle**, born 2011 to Willie DelValle (Buildings and Grounds); **Eva Maxine Gemmill**, born May 31st 2010 to Kressent Pottenger (Public Programs)

The Union @ Cooper Union 30 Cooper Square, 5th Floor New York, NY 10003

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# What we've been doing



**COOPER UNION, NYSUT LOCAL # 37-901, AFT #6420** 

UNION @

President Betsy Alwin attended the Higher Education Council meeting in January at FIT. Meeting with NYSUT officials and other labor leaders, the discussion involved navigating some of the new precedents set by high court cases between unions and management.

activities and accomplishments:

It wouldn't be news to tell you that we've been enduring a lengthy negotiations that hopefully (by the receipt of this newsletter) will have finally drawn to a close. Amidst negotiations, the UCU ball keeps rolling. Here is a recap of our



March 24th, 2010: UCU members rally at City Hall and march to Wall St.

Several Arbitrations have been held. Two arbitrations were settled in favor of the union members. The UCU had to call an arbitration off, but an agreement was still reached. Another arbitration took place and is still being decided upon by the arbitrator. One more arbitration has yet to occur. We have settled one grievance for back-pay.

In mid-March, Leah Hebert, UCU Treasurer, left the Cooper Union to work as a Legislative Aid in the office of a State Assemblyman. Her duties as Treasurer are currently being handled by the President and the Secretary.

On March 24th, members of the UCU marched in the rally to Wall Street, standing in solidarity with our public workers, community and students to protest state budget cuts.

On the 25th of March, President Betsy Alwin introduced the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire 100th Anniversary program in the Great Hall. There were many wonderful contributors to the event, held to commemorate the historical tragedy that catapulted the Labor Movement into action. Cecil Roberts, President of the United Coal Miners of America was a surprise speaker. You can hear an excerpt of his inspiring speech at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZj5iCDe9eQ

# The Importance of Being Union

Labor unions have been getting somewhat of a bad rap lately for wanting "too much," for "bringing down the economy." Labor unions were formed to protect workers and demand equal treatment. These rights are procured in a contract - a negotiation between two parties. It is important to remember that whatever benefits union members receive, they were agreed upon by management. Amidst the news stories of recent attacks on bargaining rights, it may be difficult to remember what the larger goals and issues of Labor are. We can take a look at what the Labor movement has achieved in labor law thus far - even folks who don't belong to a union

# **UCU MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

# April 29<sup>th</sup> 12 - 2pm in the Peter Cooper Suite

Agenda: Contract Negotiations, Elections, Grievance Committee update, Financial Report and general information.

## The Importance of Being Union cont.

benefit from these struggles, fought and won in the last 100 years:

- 1. End to child labor
- 2. 8 hour work day
- 3. 40 hour work week
- 4. Paid overtime
- 5. Weekends (yes, they didn't exist as days off before unions)
- 6. Workers compensation for people injured on the job
- 7. Unemployment insurance
- 8. Paid sick leave, vacations, and holidays as standard benefits for most workers
- 9. Health Insurance for many workers
- 10. Pensions or 401Ks for many workers
- 11. Improved workplace safety and reduce on the job fatalities
- Civil Right Acts and Title VII which outlaws job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin
- 13. Occupational Safety and Health Act
- 14. Family Medical Leave Act
- 15. Minimum wage

While discussing what role unions have in America today, lets not forget what benefits most workers in America have today that's taken for granted. Those of you saying "Thank God it's Friday!" also remember to thank unions or there's a good chance you'd be working tomorrow.

Read more: http://billjaquette.net/what-have-unions-done-for-america#ixzz1I6DIvavE





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### Working overtime may harm heart

By Sarah Klein, Health.com, printed from CNN Health

If you've been saying for years that long hours at work are killing you, forward this article to your boss--it might literally be true. According to a new study, people who work more than 10 hours a day are about 60 percent more likely to develop heart disease or have a heart attack than people who clock just seven hours a day.

It's not clear why this is, but the researchers suggest that all that time on the job means less free time to unwind and take care of yourself. Stress may also play a role--but not as much as you might think. Working long hours appears to hurt your heart even if you don't feel particularly stressed out, the study found.

"Balance between work and leisure time is important," says the lead author of the study, Dr. Marianna Virtanen, M.D., an epidemiologist at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and University College London. "If you work long hours, the fact is that you may be exposed to higher stress levels and you do not have enough time to take care of your health." Doctors "should include long working hours on their list of potential risk factors" for heart disease, she adds.

Dr. Virtanen and her colleagues followed more than 6,000 British civil servants with no history of heart disease for an average of 11 years. The participants were all drawn from a larger, ongoing study known as Whitehall II that began in 1985.

During the study, a total of 369 people had heart attacks (some of them fatal) or were diagnosed with heart disease after seeking medical attention for chest pain.

Compared to people who worked seven hours a day, those who worked 10 to 12 hours a day had a 56 percent increased risk of heart disease, heart attack, or death. Those who worked for 8 to 10 hours a day were not at increased risk. The findings are "sort of a wakeup call," says Dr. Gordon McInnes, M.D., a professor of clinical pharmacology at the University of Glasgow, in the U.K., who wrote an editorial accompanying the study. Doctors should be extra vigilant about the heart health of patients who work long hours, he says.

The study doesn't say how, exactly, long hours at work might affect heart health. To try to pinpoint the effect of work time, Dr. Virtanen and her colleagues took a range of health factors into account in their analysis, including blood pressure, cholesterol levels, diet and exercise, and whether or not the participants smoked. They also factored in the workers' rank and salary, since socioeconomic status has been linked to heart health.

## Overtime vs. Comp Time: What's it All About?

**OVERTIME:** The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which prescribes standards for the basic minimum wage and overtime pay, affects most private and public employment. It requires hourly paid employees (who are not otherwise exempt, such as management) to be paid at least the federal minimum wage and overtime pay of one-and-one-half-times the regular rate of pay. The Act is administered by the Employment Standards Administration's Wage and Hour Division within the U.S. Department of Labor.

At Cooper Union, overtime pay begins when an employee has exceeded forty (40) hours per week. The employee's rate of overtime pay is equal to 1.5 times the employee's hourly rate.

**COMPENSATORY (Comp) TIME:** Cooper's comp time policy was not created by your Union. It is a federal law. Under FLSA, private employers are not eligible to use comp time in place of overtime. Employees may not be asked to "volunteer" to work late or exceed their regular hours without being paid. From time to time, schedules may be adjusted to accommodate special circumstances within a day or during a 40 hour week. No worker may carry hours over forty from one week into the next. For instance, a worker working 50 hours one week may not forgo the 10 hours overtime pay and agree to work 30 hours the following week.

The federal Wage-Hour Law places severe restrictions on the use of compensatory time to prevent employers from trying to avoid paying overtime. Both Cooper management and the UCU want the college to operate within the law. The UCU, with management's support, has worked hard to resolve this issue at Cooper Union.

The law regarding compensatory time is different for public employees such as police and firemen. Under the Act, only government agencies may legally allow their nonexempt employees time off in place of wages. For each hour of overtime worked, public employees receive no less than one and one-half hours of comp time.

Employees who "volunteer" or work overtime without pay make it difficult for managers to fully comprehend the true cost and manpower it takes for their departments to run smoothly.

Labor unions strongly appose comp-time legislation. Some reasons for oppositions include:

- 1. employees being pressured to take compensatory time instead of overtime,
- 2. employees being unable to freely schedule the use of their comp time which instead is restricted by employers,
- 3. employers offering comp time only in exchange for volunteer time, and
- 4. comp time arrangements in which hours do not count toward pension benefits.

# **How to Make Your Union Strong:**

#### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

Read and refer to your union contract and union staff handbook to be familiar with your rights.

#### ENFORCE YOUR CONTRACT.

Read union correspondence, e-mails and mailings to stay up to date with the issues.

#### SUPPORT YOUR CO-WORKERS.

Report contract violations or potential violations to your Area Representative or a union board member. Contact your Area Representative or a union board member if there are any changes in your job, if you have been asked to perform a duty not described in your job description or have been issued a discipline.

#### KNOW YOUR AREA REPRESENTATIVES.

#### Area 100: Dino Melendez

AVRAC, Curf, Engineering, Saturday-Program, Humanities, Writing Center

Area 200: Amy Westpfahl, Cara Di Edwardo Architecture, Art

**Area 300:** Contact a Union Officer or other area rep Buildings and Grounds

#### Area 400: Matt Jones (acting / appointed)

Alumni, Development, Continuing Ed, External Affairs, Student Services, Admissions

#### Area 500: Wayne Adams

Business Office, Computer Center, Lubalin Center, Design Center, Presidnet's Office, Office Services, Library