

SOAR in ACTION

A Supplemental Publication by the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees

November 2017

“MINE” VERSES OURS

Since 1953, the United Steelworkers Union has proudly represented the miners at Lucky Friday Mine (currently operated by Hecla Mining Company) in Mullan, Idaho – a strong, close-knit community of 650 residents that was founded in 1884 with the discovery of gold, lead and silver.

Mullan has its own library and bowling alley in the Morning Club – a building that was gifted to the town by Morning Mine Company

nearly 100 years ago. The town even has its own fire department, and an Olympic-size swimming pool that is available for community use. Mullan’s story is one of small town prosperity. Unfortunately, the current chapter is one of struggle.

According to Hecla’s website, Lucky Friday is projected to have another 20-30 years of “mine life.” *Our* life, however, was apparently not taken into consideration when you look at the company’s last offer.

In March 2017, after working for nearly one year without a contract, the 250 USW members of Local 5114 initiated an unfair labor practice strike against Hecla Mining (Lucky Friday Mine) after the company proposed a number of radical changes to the contract, including:

- Eliminating the bid system, a procedure where senior union members can put together crews and bid on various jobs,



For more information go to: www.usw.org/soar

- Reducing call-back protections in the event of mine closure and layoffs,
- Increasing insurance costs on workers, and
- Eliminating workers' ability to bank vacation time.

For our members at Local 5114, this strike is about more than protecting seniority or minimizing insurance costs. This strike is about assuring a promising future for the town of Mullan. Support for our striking members is obvious when you look around the community – signs of support

appear in storefront windows all around town. Local businesses and churches have backed the food bank that Local 5114 have organized for our members and families, and other unions have taken part in solidarity rallies and even picketed Hecla's shareholders meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Locals from nearly a dozen allied unions have donated to Local 5114's strike fund.

Recently, the Institute for Career Development (ICD) of USW Local 6163 and USW Local 7150 in Albany, Oregon, organized a 50/50 raffle and golf tournament. The proceeds helped purchase Halloween candy that was delivered to our striking members' families by a SOAR Chapter 12-7 member and activist, Garry Steffy, who drove more than 1,200 miles to show his support.

“District 12 SOAR members have been an important part of our continued battle against Hecla,” said Bob LaVenture, District 12 Director and SOAR member. **“I appreciate all the work that SOAR members contribute. I can't say enough about how important it is that our retirees get involved, stay involved, and become members of SOAR. They were the ones that fought for much of the benefits we have today, and they contribute greatly to the strength and future of our union.”**



Bob LaVenture
District 12 Director



Garry Steffy
SOAR Chapter
12-7 Member