



December 2007  
Issue 1

# KN G NEWS

Kingston Newspaper Guild – News For, From and About the Union Workers at the Daily Freeman in Kingston, New York

## HEALTHCARE WILL BE CHANGING IN 2008

### What's at Stake?

- Healthcare for you and your family
- The amount of hours you're asked to work
- The scope of jobs you're expected to perform and your salary

Blaise S. Thanks to everyone who attended the MVP EPO information session earlier this month regarding the healthcare of *Freeman* staff.

The consensus among attendees was that we'd do well to switch from the GHI and CDPHP plans to MVP alone and so we will. We should be getting the sign-up sheets sometime before the end of the year, so keep your eyes open.

The MVP representative at

the meeting promised to help employees in getting new ID numbers within the first week of 2008 and said the actual cards will follow soon thereafter.

According to information provided by the company and MVP, their plan looks to be cheaper than both of our previous plans. Doctor visit co-pays are lower than CDPHP's and drug co-pays are less expensive than either existing plan.

Representatives have said

MVP would offer an opportunity for each enrolled employee on the plan to receive \$300 back from them in exchange for doing an online personal health assessment. MVP promises the survey is private. It most likely will include some basic advice on diet and smoking cessation, but they won't have the ability to detect if you've taken the advice, however.

If you have any questions contact Blaise, Bonnie, Dwayne, Joe or Tom.

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*We're on the Web!*

[kingstonnewspaperguild.org](http://kingstonnewspaperguild.org)

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## Kingston Newspaper Guild

TNG-CWA Local 31180

**News For, From  
And About  
Daily Freeman  
Union Workers**

Joseph M. Gerace There is no doubt in the newspaper world: adequate staffing leads to a more desirable product, which leads to higher readership, which translates to higher revenues. Proper staffing makes us relevant and trumps freelance work 95 percent of the time.

Original content holds a publication in contrast to its competitors. I could tune into WAMC any time and hear Hank Gross' latest news brief. I can see a freelancer's photograph on the front of some free Ulster County weekly.

You can only get Paul Kirby's reporting or Tania Barricklo's photos from one place. That's why people read the *Freeman*.

In short, what draws readers to the *Freeman* is the connection our staff makes with our community.

An anecdote: Some mornings I breakfast at the crowded counter at Dietz Diner where 8 out of 10 patrons are retirement-age men by themselves scanning the *Freeman*.

They're reading their local news,

features, classifieds, the obits.

Every once in a while I hear one gabbing at a waitress speeding by about something they've seen in our paper. Sometimes it's praise, sometimes it's critical.

When the reader's off-hand remark is plaudits for a photo or a piece of writing I beam with delight. It's among the best feelings in the world knowing that people are entertained and informed by the 'product' you helped create.

But, when they're speaking ill of the paper, my paper, I fight every impulse to jump onto the counter, a foot not-so-firmly planted in my home fries, and scream: "You don't understand! The people behind that newspaper are short staffed, worked to the bone and over caffeinated! They have the talent and the motivation; if only we had the resources to meet your expectations 100% of the time!"

But alas, I fear my reentry into Dietz Diner would be jeopardized by such a desperate defense strategy.

So I keep my mouth shut and take pride, no matter what, in the time, money and piece of mind that Guild employees sacrifice to make the *Freeman* the best possible paper.

Leave it to the compassionate reader to assume the errors of the *Freeman*'s mismanagement.

Our product would benefit greatly from one extra photographer and a full staff of writers. All of the gifted employees management has hired are evidence that they are capable of filling existing seats with gifted individuals.

The lopsided crawl toward technological equivalence is relevant in today's media marketplace, but if management can't first lift the undue burden from the back of the existing workforce, any gains over our competitors will be for nothing.



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## *What's the Guild done for you, lately?*

Tom Wakeman  
Each time the Guild scores a victory for a worker in the Downstairs Unit, no matter how minor, I'm reminded of the union's importance overall. You should be, too.

Paid vacation is something we all take for granted, but you have unions to thank for this benefit. In the *Freeman* mailroom, unfortunately, we're still fighting.

Earlier this month a mailroom employee came to us with a complaint that he wasn't paid for time off he took during Thanksgiving week. This employee had worked for the company for more than six months, and according to the contract between the company and the Guild, was allowed to take his first week after six months of service.

His manager gave him the week, but not the pay. The

Guild took the complaint to Publisher Ira Fusfeld, who agreed to pay the worker.

Non-union employees usually cite dues as the reason for not joining the Guild.

Every penny counts, but dues amount to less than 1.5 cents per dollar of pay. If your gross pay is \$200, that's \$3 in dues. So let's talk about what you get for your \$3.

**A VOICE:** Without the Guild, there would be no contract outlining rights and benefits. Management would make the rules.

**JOB SECURITY:** Without a Guild contract a manager would be able to fire you for any reason, at any time, with or without cause. Our contract ensures any firing after a 90-day probationary period must be justified by "just and sufficient cause."

**A RAISE:** Agreed, the pay scale in the mailroom is shameful, but were it not for the Guild nobody would make even that much. The publisher has said that if he had his way, nobody in the mailroom would make more than minimum wage.

**GRIEVANCES:** When the Guild believes an employee has been wronged, this is the process we go through to see things are made right.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY:** The Guild helps ensure the company is providing a safe workplace. Poor lighting in the mailroom? The Guild saw to it that the problem was solved. Van safety? The Guild paid for printed reports for drivers to notify management immediately of safety problems, and get them corrected quickly.

Is that a fair trade for about \$3 a week? I think so.

## *The Guild is Looking for a Few Good People*

The Guild needs members willing to contribute time and effort towards making the *Daily Freeman* a better place to work.

That means building camaraderie among the troops.

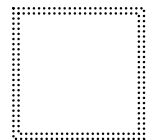
We're looking to throw parties, get-togethers, shindigs, events and things like that so you can get to know the people who work with you at the *Freeman*.

If you'd love to be a

member of organizational team responsible for inventing party ideas, booking venues, and having fun, contact us.

Help us make the *Freeman* even better!

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