



Fifty-One

Newsletter of the Milwaukee Newspaper Guild

NOVEMBER 2016

www.milwaukeeguild.org

DON'T FORGET TO SIGN UP FOR INSURANCE

The insurance enrollment period is Nov. 15-28. If you do not select a medical plan by Nov. 28, you will not have health insurance for 2017.

For more on the plans, see page 2.

To enroll, go to gannettbenefitscenter.com or call (855) 442-4236, option 1.



SOCIAL EVENTS

Join your fellow Guild members for two socials to end the year right.

Fall Social (better late than never!)

Nov. 15
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Uber Tap Room
1048 N. Old World Third St.

Holiday Party

Dec. 15, time TBD
Turner Hall
1038 N. 4th St.

Hope to see everyone there! If you have questions about the fall social, contact **Katie O'Connell**. For questions about the holiday party, contact **Ashley Luthern**.

MOBILIZING EFFORT TO SUPPORT BARGAINING

The 2% workforce reduction across Gannett didn't change things in the Journal Sentinel newsroom (this time, at least), but it did give a clear picture of the future. Under Gannett, nothing is promised.

That's why it's so important for our Guild to come together and support our bargaining team. They're in for a fight. We have to let the company know we support the Guild team in what promises to be a brutal debate.

There's no better time to start than now. **Katie O'Connell** is leading a team of Guild members who have volunteered to help with mobilization efforts. This team is being tasked with educating our membership about issues that confront our bargaining team and organizing collective action.

The team's first step is to organize Guild spirit days, which will happen weekly on Thursdays. Please wear your Guild T-shirts and buttons then. If you



Wear your Guild shirt or button on Thursdays to support the bargaining team.

don't have a shirt or button, let **Michael Meidenbauer** or O'Connell know.

That's just the first step. The team will also create newsroom posters, host educational hours following bargaining meetings, and serve as the liaison between the bargaining team and the membership.

If you're interested in helping, email O'Connell at katieann.oconnell@gmail.com to join.

MEMBERS ELECT OFFICERS FOR 2016-'17

Local 51's leadership has changed just slightly for 2016-'17.

At a membership meeting on Sept. 27 at Turner Hall, Local 51 members voted to re-elect **Tom Silverstein** as president.

First Vice President **Ashley Luthern** is stepping down from the board of directors but remains in a key role as chair of the bargaining committee.

Members also elected **Emily Ristow** as first vice president and **Katie O'Connell** as second vice president. Re-

elected to continue in their same roles on the board were **Bob Friday**, treasurer; **Tom Content**, secretary; and **Ben Steele**, at-large member.

There remain two open positions on the board. One of the positions will go to a representative from the Sheboygan unit once the merger of the Sheboygan Press guild local with Local 51 is completed.

Anyone interested in serving on the board should contact Silverstein, Ristow or O'Connell.

CHANGES TO INSURANCE COMING UNDER GANNETT

For the third time in less than three years, health insurance providers and health savings accounts will be changing for Journal Sentinel employees.

And for many employees the changes won't come cheap, with lower HSA payments from the company and bigger penalties for smokers and for adding a spouse who can get coverage elsewhere.

As we shift from Journal Communications to Journal Media Group to Gannett, we are shifting from Humana in 2015 to UnitedHealthcare in 2016 to Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas come January.

Enrollment starts Nov. 15, and the deadline to enroll is Nov. 28. Enroll at www.gannettbenefitscenter.com. Employees who don't enroll won't have coverage.

Here are some takeaways from the first round of meetings held on the changes:

- **New deductible levels.** The Gannett options reduce the deductibles for the top two tiers, offering deductibles of \$2,600, \$1,500 or \$1,300 rather than our current \$5,000, \$2,600 or \$1,300. The price impact is mixed for employees who are considering a switch from the current plan with the cheapest premium — the HSA \$5,000 plan — to Gannett's lowest-premium plan, the HSA \$2,600 plan. A single employee will see savings of 20% on premiums, while increases range from 19% for families to 129% for an employee with one child. Married couples with no kids will see an increase of 54%, and an employee with at least two kids will see a jump of 62%.

- **Lower HSA contributions from the company for many.** All employees will be eligible for a \$250 employer contribution if they complete biometric screening (blood pressure, cholesterol test) by Feb. 28 or submit a form showing they have done such a test since March. Spouses don't qualify for an extra Gannett HSA contribution. In addition, a single employee signing up for the HSA \$1,300 plan will receive \$250 from the company, and a family signing up for HSA \$1,300 will get \$500. Gannett will also provide \$500 for any employee making under \$35,000 a year, no matter which plan.

For 2016, the HSA employer contribution ranged from \$338 for a single employee in the HSA \$1,300 plan to \$2,496 for an employee with family coverage in the HSA \$5,000 plan.

- **Big jumps in premiums, especially for single parents or childless couples.** Any Guild member

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who is insuring just himself or herself and one child will be hardest hit, because Gannett has no employee/one child insurance category. These rates are more than doubling in 2017 if employees stay at the same tier plan. Rates for couples with no kids will go up by at least 50% if employees stay at the same tier.

Rates for families and employees with no spouses or domestic partners are a mixed bag compared with 2016: Rates for families go up 31% for those on the low-deductible HSA \$1,300 plan, and down 3% for those on the HSA \$2,600 plan.

Single employees making at least \$35,000 will go up 13% for the HSA \$1,300 plan and down 33% on the HSA \$2,600 plan. Those making less than \$35,000 will see rates drop 6% on the HSA \$1,300 plan and 44% on the HSA \$2,600 plan.

- **Higher out-of-pocket maximums,** a concern for those dealing with major illnesses. JMG's out-of-pocket max was \$1,000 more than the highest deductible, but Gannett's HSA \$1,300 plan for a family is \$3,400 higher, and the max on the HSA \$2,600 plan is \$2,400 higher for an individual and \$4,800 higher for a family. Out-of-network maximums are even higher.

A Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas representative said the provider network is extensive, so that could mean fewer out-of-network fees for members. Employees should use the "Find a Doctor" link on bcbstx.com and look up providers under "Wisconsin" and "Blue Preferred POS."

- **Lower premiums for vision insurance,** providing monthly savings of \$1 to \$6 for singles, \$1 to \$14 for married/no kids and \$5 to 21 for families.

- **A switch to two plans for dental insurance,** down from three this year. Costs of the low plan

Please see **INSURANCE**, page 3

MILWAUKEE, SHEBOYGAN GUILDS APPROVE MERGER

On Sept. 27, the Milwaukee Newspaper Guild voted to merge with the guild in Sheboygan.

Members of Milwaukee's board recommended the merger after meeting with representatives from Sheboygan.

Once the paperwork is finalized, Sheboygan will become a unit of Local 51 and have a representative on Local 51's board.

Day-to-day business, such as recruitment and grievances, will be handled locally. Our finances will be merged, but any spending and major decisions will be subject to a vote from the board,

as our bylaws require. Milwaukee and Sheboygan will continue to have separate collective bargaining agreements.

Though Sheboygan's unit is small, having just three dues-paying members and representing fewer than 20 who work in the newsroom and other departments, Local 51 is hopeful this merger is just the beginning of a stronger foothold into other Gannett newsrooms in Wisconsin. To this goal, Sheboygan will be working on beefing up its recruitment and mobilizing, and we will continue our efforts here.

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are between the current "value" and "basic" plans and costs for the high plan are similar to the "premium" plan that was in place this year.

- **Bigger premium penalties for smokers.** JMG charged employees an extra \$100 a month in premiums this year, but that jumps to \$220 a month next year under Gannett.

- **Bigger spouse penalty.** The current penalty for insuring a spouse who's eligible for insurance elsewhere is \$100 a month. That increases to \$250 a month under Gannett.

- **New HSA account.** There will be a new HSA account to replace the HealthEquity accounts offered through JMG. There is a \$25 charge to roll over the HealthEquity account to the new account. You may keep your old account, but Gannett human resources staff warned that there may be a maintenance fee.

- **Change in pharmacy plan.** The provider for prescriptions shifts to CVS under Gannett, both for

30-day and 90-day (by mail) prescriptions. Prescriptions for ongoing meds are required to be filled at the 90-day level, but those can be picked up at CVS stores.

- **Phone-a-doc, get-a-prescription.** A Gannett TeleDoc service allows employees to phone a doctor with routine medical ailments/concerns, and this doctor will be able to authorize a prescription without the employee having to pay for an office visit. There are four free such phone calls allowed per year.

- **PTO.** There was also discussion of a new paid time off system that Gannett uses. Guild members won't be affected by that change at this time because our contract dictates vacation, personal day, holiday and sick leave policy.

In general, that plan increases total numbers of days off but also incorporates sick leave.

For those who want more information, there is a webinar scheduled from 1 to 2:30 p.m. on Nov. 17. You can also call (855) 442-4236 and choose option 0 or email questions to ea@gannett.com.

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First Vice President
Emily Ristow
Second Vice President
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Bob Friday
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Good & Welfare

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GANNETT LAYOFFS SHOW WHAT WE'RE FACING



Tom Silverstein

From the president

October was not a good month to be a newsroom employee at Gannett.

All the things we feared might happen happened. It just didn't happen to us.

Gannett's decision to fire 2% of its employees companywide after a bad financial quarter reverberated throughout newsrooms all across the chain and did nothing to allay any fears we, as newcomers to the company, had about our new boss. We should not be surprised though. This is what big corporations do when they don't hit their numbers — and let's face it, small companies like Journal Communications Inc., too, as we are so painfully aware. We can't close our eyes and be

blind to this fact even though we were spared because of Gannett's promise to the SEC that it would not cut editorial staffing for one year from the date of purchase.

It was painful to hear of all the cuts.

- Eight full-time and one part-time employee in the Detroit suburban papers.
- Two bargaining unit employees in Indianapolis.
- Two non-bargaining unit employees in Memphis.
- Four bargaining unit employees in Rochester.
- Seven newsroom positions at the York Daily Record.
- Five employees in Nashville.
- Eleven employees at the Des Moines Register.
- At least two reporters at USA Today.
- A total of 14 people at 10 publications across Wisconsin.

It's hard not to be discouraged about all these dismissals when you know that all it takes is one bad quarter for the company to kowtow to shareholders and make drastic cuts.

We still have another six months until our year is up and Gannett can treat us like the others. At least we have a contract that provides us with decent severance — although not as good as it once was — and requires the company to offer buyouts before it fires anybody.

Our contract expires on Dec. 31, but it is legally binding beyond as long as the company and union are not at an impasse in negotiations. We have not begun negotiations with Gannett despite the deadline for a new one coming up, mostly, it seems, because the company has been consumed with the process of folding our paper into its operation.

Negotiations are taking place with other Guild newspapers in the chain, and we will keep you updated on how those are going.

As always, it's important for us to stick together, communicate and support each other no matter what your position. It's also important to make sure you are learning newsroom digital skills so that you are ready for the transition Gannett is making away from newspapers.

If you feel you are not getting the training you need or aren't getting to put what you have learned to use, let me or any Guild officer know and we will work with newsroom management to get you that opportunity.

Let's be ready for whatever comes next.