

25 May 2023

IUPAT District Council 7

Scholarship Essay Contest

Growing up with a grandfather who has been in the union for about 30 years, he has always shared with our family the benefits of considering a trade after high school, as well as joining a union. My father then, based upon my grandfather's convictions, decided to join the union as well, almost 6 years ago. This topic has been a discussion in our house for many years, therefore, I have many insights.

My name is Madelynn Fuller. I am currently attending UW-Platteville and intend to major in elementary education and become a kindergarten teacher. I will also have a minor in coaching, (specifically for softball) as I enjoy children and the sport. I will be heading into my sophomore year there, this fall. With the constant conversations between my father and grandfather about unions, and how much they are about advocating for their workers, I can see why it would be beneficial for myself to look for a teaching position within a union. I feel as if a union could only be of benefit for an employee. To have a group of individuals who take on the role of ensuring fair wages, vacation time, and employment conditions, it would be of tremendous benefit as a new graduate beginning in the teaching field.

As a young woman who is just venturing out into the workforce, it can be very overwhelming to think of everything that should or could be asked when interviewing. General questions about where to look for a job, moving out and being fully independent with daily tasks and bills, but also once you have decided on a position, what will your anticipated salary be, what will the current employees be like and will you have a good working relationship with

them. It is a lot to think about and have to adjust to initially. In signing on with a union, a lot of those intimidating tasks would already be spelled out when seeking employment. Things like salary and equal pay, will not be something I'd have to worry about, as the union advocates for all its members and negotiates fair wages across the board. Healthcare benefits would also be something to consider with the union, as their benefits are typically more affordable, fairly priced in regards to paying for services and what services are paid for you, and the union chooses this based on how they see it would benefit their employees. The biggest reason to join a union, that I see, is when it comes to retirement. Another subject discussed a lot amongst my grandfather and father, because this is something that my generation could easily not be considering when starting out with their first actual job out of college. When, in fact, this is exactly what I should be focusing on! I want to do what I love, but also be assured that there is money being put aside for me to allow for a comfortable retirement later in life. I want to enjoy my new chosen field of course, but I also want to ensure that I have the means to enjoy my life after, as well.

To circle back and answer the question "do you think unions are still relevant today," I would answer, absolutely! I actually wonder why all places aren't unionized. What can be so wrong with having a larger number of people advocating for you and ensuring things are fair across the board? Especially for those of us just entering the workforce, it can be intimidating to ask for things versus just walking into a position knowing this was all negotiated ahead of time and you will always have someone looking out for your best interests. With further research, after applying for this scholarship and discussions with family, I have found that teachers unions are still around, but not as heavily endorsed as once previously. The AFT-Wisconsin labor organization is still available, and is specifically for those in the teaching profession, with

options for employment in both Menasha and Hortonville. Unfortunately, after Act 10 was endorsed, it has worked against the teacher laborers and decreased both salary and benefits.

In conclusion, working for a union is definitely something to consider. When considering relocation versus choosing a job that is in my hometown, being a part of a union definitely brings up more to discuss. Although I would like to stay closer to home and teach in a school that I went to school at, it may not be something that is available or it may be more beneficial to seek employment elsewhere simply because of the union aspect. This essay has given me a lot more to think about and will guide me in a direction of looking more at the bigger picture. And, it also just opens up more conversation to be had with my father and grandfather.