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Sheet Metal Workers Local #18

Apprentice Involvement in the Union

Statistics show sheet metal labor unions will experience a labor shortage over the next decade. It is estimated that for every five members retiring, only one qualified replacement will be available. Unions will need to provide contractors with more replacements.

It is apparent for unions to survive and remain strong that a commitment by the new members to be involved in their union is crucial.

By involving apprentices early in their careers in union activities, it will provide them with the necessary background to become active and loyal members. Developing an understanding of the attitudes of apprentices is an important issue. Creating an environment that focuses attention on early union involvement is essential for unions to survive and remain strong.

A survey and interviews were conducted to solicit information from apprentices of Sheet Metal Workers Local #18 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to determine what apprentices are receiving during their apprenticeship. The survey and interview results indicate a desire and willingness to learn and participate in the union. The apprentices felt the union should make an effort to keep in regular contact with the new members and the apprentices felt that there were not enough union activities available to them. Understanding the attitudes and concerns of the apprentices, suggests the need to establish a program designed at orientating apprentices as early as possible. The success of organized labor will depend on how we choose to deal with these issues.