

Boilermakers Lodge Giving Back to Community

By Jane Barry, The Greater Saint John Community Foundation

Shipbuilding, railroading, mining and smelting, refining, pulp and paper, energy, hydro-electric construction and fabrication shops have grown and flourished with the services of boiler makers. These workers officially formed their union in 1893. Members across Canada and internationally have been key players in the development of increasingly complex major projects affecting our economy. Whether they polish, weld, fabricate, rig, climb, fit, rivet or forge, they usually work with metal indoors and out, often in locations, conditions and heights which would intimidate the average person. They are industrial experts at construction and maintenance.

Boilermakers Lodge 73 covers all the Maritime provinces and dates to 1973. Locally, such industries as pulp mills, Canaport LNG, Irving Oil and Point Lepreau are places where their 600 plus membership may work. Kevin Chaisson is the Business Agent for the Boilermakers Lodge 73 and Kim Blyth the Assistant Business Manager in New Brunswick. Their headquarters in the Spruce Lake Industrial Park features an impressive globe, full of symbolism of the skilled workers their trade represents.

Blyth explains that to be a member and pursue a career in this field, it is necessary to have completed high school, complete an aptitude test and participate in a four year apprenticeship program. Some of this is accomplished at the NB Community College level in 6 week blocks. Chaisson wants to ensure they open doors for young people making career choices. He adds "there can be a well-paid job for them and their families and mobility is an advantage".

"In addition to having people who do the physical work of constructing, repairing, maintaining, inspecting and operating the industrial and military infrastructure that allows us all to function freely in a modern and global economy, the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers gives back to society with many local and national initiatives that assist the communities in which our members or facilities are located" states the Union.

Like many of their brother unions, the Boilermakers are generous and quick to respond to requests for support from charitable groups in our community. They bring such needs to monthly union meetings for a vote with impressive results. Blyth estimates they have contributed approximately \$80,000 to several causes in 2009. They range from charities supporting health causes and sports, food banks across the Maritimes, scholarships, the Bathurst High School fund in honour of their basketball team, the Greater Saint John Community Foundation to the Joshua Group. Last Christmas, they contributed \$5,000 to area food banks. Because of the challenging environments in which they work, they relate to those who are experiencing health problems and give to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Juvenile Diabetes and the Lung Association.

If a community is affected by a plant shutdown or closure they often rally to help, for example, in Nackawic and Miramichi. Last year, they not only contributed substantially to the design and creation of the monument to workers at the W. Franklin Hatheway Pavilion at Lily Lake, but also to its construction. This year, they are a sponsor of the Saint John Mill Rats. Chaisson states "We are proud supporters of the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia building trades and the causes they take on. Boilermakers are also involved in helping those who have served in the military make the transition back to civilian life with a program called "Helmets to Hard Hats". They are very supportive of their members when a colleague or someone close to them passes away. "We are very proud of those within our organization and the communities in which we live" says Blyth.

The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers points out that members are well represented and can take advantage excellent wages and benefits, have opportunities for advancement, be part of contracts with very large employers over a wide geographic area, advocacy for and oversight of their interests for safe and secure working conditions as well as offer training and upgrading facilities and instructors.

Their website states: "The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers has served workers, industry and society effectively in North America, at the national and local level for over 125 years."

Information: 634-7386



From left are Kim Blyth, Kevin Chaisson and Daniel Dezain, who are proud to represent the Boilermakers Lodge #73, which makes significant contributions to the community. Photo: Kâté Braydon/Telegraph-Journal



***Community Profile is a weekly column highlighting community causes and work done by non-profit organizations in the Greater Saint John area. It is contributed by Jane Barry, executive director of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 506-672-8880, sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com
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