



Driving Standards

Durham School Bus Workers Join Local 838



The **FACTS**
on **DURHAM**



"I need a voice. A happy driver makes a safe driver. I wanted the Teamsters because I would like to vote on policies in the workplace."

—REGINA SHADE, DRIVER

For 10 years, Nathaniel Brown has worked hard, transporting children to and from school. Brown doesn't ask a lot of his employer in return, but what he and his co-workers do need is justice.

"I've seen routes changed and my hours and pay shorted. A lot of promises were made and none of them were fulfilled. There was no justice behind some of the things they've done," Brown said. "We needed to organize a union so we could have a voice. We needed to do it our way because the old way wasn't working."

Brown and his fellow drivers and monitors with Durham School Services in Kansas City, Missouri have voted overwhelmingly, 203-63, to join Local 838, sending a strong message to the company that they are standing united for safety, fairness and proper treatment on the job.

Sweet Success

The 290 workers had tried to form a union twice in the past, but decided to go with the Teamsters in their final, successful effort. They prevailed despite resistance from Durham management in their efforts to join the union. At the union election, management attempted to ex-

clude the workers from viewing the vote count.

"I am so happy about this vote. I've been here a while and wanted to help the young people who had been scared of management before, but we all spoke our word today. Everyone was fed up with having a buddy system instead of a seniority system and with the lack of safety. We are long overdue for a change," said Rosie Randolph, a 12-year monitor.

"I wanted the Teamsters because I wanted a better workplace. Management has sick time, snow days and benefits, but we don't," said Dana Smith, a 10-year monitor. "I don't have the health plan here, because if you pay for it, forget being able to pay rent. It costs too much. There are people that have worked here 27 years with no retirement, with nothing to fall back on."

"I need a voice. A happy driver makes a safe driver. I wanted the Teamsters because I would like to vote on policies in the workplace," said driver Regina Shade.

Fired Up

Throughout the campaign to organize, the workers stuck together, attending

rallies and meetings and showing their support for forming a union in every way possible. Single mothers juggled family responsibilities with attending organizing committee meetings, while many who work long hours to make ends meet put in the extra time needed to help organize.

"This group was fired up, ready to sign cards, hold meetings at night after work and just ready to go," said Billy Thompson, President of Local 838. "Their energy was unbelievable and they wanted this so badly. They are a pleasure to work with."

The workers had a huge amount of support from the Kansas City community and faith leaders, including strong backing by the Kansas City Teachers & School Related-Personnel, American Federation of Teachers Local 691, and Reverend Kenneth Ray of the Baptist Ministers Union, representing more than 100 churches, among other supporters.

Clint Zweifel, Missouri State Treasurer, told the workers in a letter, "As a Teamster myself, I understand the importance and benefits union membership brings to the workplace...I voice my full support for the Teamsters and the employees of Durham School Serv-

ices...There has never been a more important time for workers to have the right to organize."

On the Air

During the campaign, the workers also made their voices heard in the media, appearing on KKFI 90.1 FM, where they were interviewed by Judy Ancel, Director of the Institute for Labor Studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

On the program, Phyllis Deason, a driver, said, "We need better buses, driving standards and safety for our children. The only way we can do this is to organize with the Teamsters."

The Durham drivers and monitors in Kansas City are now looking to the future and looking forward to negotiating a Teamster contract.

"We've wanted this for the past two years, and finally having our union is wonderful!" said Muriel Gaston, a 14-year driver. "We tried twice before to form a union, but the company wanted us to give them another chance, so we did, and nothing changed. This time we did something for ourselves and joined the Teamsters."

- Durham School Services is the U.S. subsidiary of National Express, a huge and profitable multinational company based in the United Kingdom, with operations in the U.S., Canada, Spain and the U.K.

- Durham is the nation's second largest student transportation provider.

- National Express's North American division operates more than 16,400 school buses, with 22,500 workers helping deliver 1 million students to school every day.

- More than 2,900 workers at National Express subsidiaries (Durham in the U.S. and Stock Transportation in Canada) are Teamsters.