

The Bus Stops Here

First Student Bus Drivers in Connecticut Join Local 671

The Wheels on the Bus go ‘Union Now.’”

That was the message on the matching shirts worn by First Student bus drivers in Manchester, Connecticut, on the day they voted to join Local 671 in Bloomfield.

“We’ve really come together,” said Michelle Cooley, a three-year driver for First Student. “Everyone is really excited and looking forward to seeing some changes at our location in the following months.”

Following the vote, 67 First Student drivers in Manchester became proud Teamsters.

Morale Booster

“Our morale has already gone up a lot and I believe it will continue to grow,” Cooley said. “Becoming Teamsters is going to make management understand and respect us more and realize we need to work as a team, not separately.”

And teamwork is what the Teamsters do best.

“This is the result of a joint effort between our local and the International Organizers,” said Tony Lepore, President of Local 671. “They did a great job and were there with us the whole time, providing a lot of support and assistance.”

The drivers’ main issues were wage increases, paid holidays, bereavement pay, respect, inequality in the way extra work was allotted and better bus maintenance.

Raising Standards

“Being there for as long as I have, I really didn’t feel like my current pay rate was what it should be,” said Gayle Connolly, a seven-year driver at First Student. “But things are really turning around—so much, in fact, that we’ve even had people who were initially

skeptical about unionizing come over and unify with us.”

The First Student organizing drive is part of a multinational campaign by the Teamsters Union to unionize school bus drivers. School bus workers are coming together to form their union with the Teamsters across the country. This latest victory only adds to the achievements in raising standards for school bus workers everywhere.

“We’re going to raise the standards for all bus drivers,” Lepore said. “They’ve been at the bottom of the food chain for a long time, but now they’re going to get some respect.”

First Student is the second largest school bus carrier in the United States and the third largest in Canada.

“We’re going to raise the standards for all bus drivers. They’ve been at the bottom of the food chain for a long time, but now they’re going to get some respect.”

— TONY LEPORE, LOCAL 671

