Ballots for the Local 79 elections were tallied on June 24, 2015. In a big victory, all ten members of the clean slate were elected.

Mike Prohaska was re-elected to the position of Local 79's Business Manager and former Executive Board auditor George Zecca was elected as Local 79's new Secretary-Treasurer. Local 79 President Kenneth Brancaccio, Vice President John Norbury, Recording Secretary Joe Cestaro, Executive Board Member Anthony Vita, Auditor Anthony Williamson, and Auditor Luis Montalvo were all re-elected to their positions. Chaz Rynkiewicz was elected to the position of Sargent-at-Arms and Jose Andino, the former Sargent-at-Arms, was elected to be a member of the Executive Board. Dave Moretti will be an auditor.

The Executive Board wishes to extend a special welcome to its new Secretary-Treasurer, George Zecca. Zecca has been a 29-year member of Local 79. He joined in 1986, became a foreman in 1987, was hired to join the staff of Local 79's Organizing Department in 1999, and then was selected to be a Business Agent one year later. He was appointed to the position of Auditor ten years ago, and then won re-election to that position in each subsequent Local 79 election. For the past three years, he has been President of the Building & Construction Trades Council of Greater New York's Manhattan Board of Business Agents. When asked about the various paths his career has taken, Zecca said, “When I started as a Mason Tender, I didn't know anyone. I worked hard, and was rewarded for that. If a member were to ask me for career advice, I would simply tell him or her that there is no substitute for hard work.”
I want to begin my message with a note of gratitude to Local 79 members who re-elected me and voted for all the candidates running under the banner of *The Clean Slate*. And for those of you who cast your votes for others, I want to thank you for your participation in this hard-fought election. It goes without saying that the Executive Board and I will continue to serve all Local 79 members to the best of our ability.

As most of you know, I have been a Laborer for 35 years, doing everything from the proud work of laboring with my hands to shouldering the responsibilities of a Shop Steward. I have spent years at the calling, doing the work every member does. I will never forget the cold, the uncertainty, or the pride in a job well done. Those experiences have influenced every day of my life as an elected leader.

I am first and foremost a Laborer, so I know our union from the perspective of my fellow Brothers and Sisters. I have never forgotten where I came from. My field experience helped shape a vision of what our union could be. My pursuit of higher education has helped me hone that vision and see a broader range of possibilities for myself, Local 79, and the labor movement.

I started as an Organizer on one of the largest campaigns in our union’s history and went on to coordinate the strategy for winning back the demolition market. When I first started as an Organizer, I lived and breathed my job. I gave up time with my family, friends, and community to join with my Brothers and Sisters to take back the construction industry. I have never lost that fire and believe that it is an essential component of any leader. The labor movement is clearly at a crossroads and it is more important now than ever for leadership to take Local 79 into the future. There are many tough decisions to make as we move forward. I assure you that I will tackle all those tough decisions and make Local 79 a bigger, stronger, and more progressive union than it already is.

Fraternally,

Mike Prohaska
Two apprentices from Local 79 recently testified in front of a city council hearing regarding oversight and accountability of contractors who are selected to build affordable housing in New York City. They spoke about the well-known shortcomings of the Department of Housing and Preservation Development’s procurement procedure for selecting contractors to build affordable housing, which has resulted in the selection and retention of contractors who often use illegal payroll procedures, steal wages from their workers, and employ shoddy construction practices. The two men also spoke about the difference between real in-depth union apprenticeship programs and “Building Skills,” a short-term training program that provides a labor force for affordable housing developers, but does not develop long-term, career-sustaining skill development. While their testimony was noteworthy, what was truly remarkable was that these two young men were not just two run-of-the-mill apprentices; rather, both of them made their way to the union apprenticeship program through a Pre-Apprenticeship Navigation Program, a unique program created by Local 79 for members of community based organizations such as Make the Road New York, Community Voices Heard, St. Nicks Alliance, the Staten Island NAACP, and the Osborne Association.

Local 79 began the Pre-Apprenticeship Navigation program in the fall of 2013. The objectives of the eight-night program were, and continue to be, to introduce men and women from partnering organizations to Local 79, the history and purpose of unions, and workers’ rights. It also assists participants with the process of applying to the Local 79 Apprenticeship Program, although admission is not guaranteed.

The two men who testified, Paris Simmons and Xavier Givens, came to the Navigation Program through the Osborne Association, an organization that works with formerly incarcerated men and women. The effect of the Navigation program on both of these individuals, as well as dozens of other program participants who are currently in training or out in the field, has been nothing short of transformational. When testifying, Paris Simmons spoke about the discrimination people from a re-entry background face when trying to find a job, and voiced his profound gratitude to Local 79 and the coordinators of the Navigation program for providing him with an opportunity to make a new life for himself. Xavier Givens also credited the program with helping him rebuild his life. In addition, he spoke about the shortcomings of the training the “Building Skills” program provides, and the troubling fact that it is only open only to NYCHA residents, which excludes people with criminal backgrounds due to the fact that they are not allowed to be on a NYCHA lease.

The Navigation Program will continue to build on its considerable success and offer opportunities for individuals throughout New York City to be educated about unions and to receive assistance in applying to become part of Local 79.
LOCAL 79 MEMBERS’ RETIREMENT SECURITY

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Local 79 members no doubt have looked at their paycheck stubs and noticed that there was an across-the-board increase for all Local 79 collective bargaining agreements that went into effect on July 1. In response to members’ requests, a significant portion of the increase was allocated to members’ annuities. For the vast majority of contracts, the contribution to members’ annuities is now $7.25/hour. Members’ annuities form an important part of many members’ overall retirement planning. To give an example: As of July 1, a member who works 2000 hours a year will receive $14,500 in his or her annuity. If this member continues to work at this rate for 25 years and the annuity grows at an average rate of five percent a year (which has been the average rate of return of the Mason Tenders’ District Council Annuity Funds over the last nineteen years), his or her annuity will grow to more than $700,000! While this is only an example—hours and years worked may vary and the rate of return could be lower or higher—it does give members an indication of the potential for substantial growth in their annuity over the course of a number of years.

In the past, retirees had to roll over or withdraw their entire annuity upon retiring. A recent change to annuity withdrawal rules, which took effect July 1, 2015, allows retirees the option to leave their annuity with the Trust Funds and apply for a withdrawal of any portion of their individual annuity up to two times each calendar year.

Local 79 members frequently have questions about their annuity accounts. The easiest way to access information about your annuity is to register with the Mason Tenders’ District Council Trust Funds. Go to local79.org click on the round Mason Tenders Trust Fund symbol, and then click on Registration. Once registered, you can log in whenever you wish to look at your annuity, pension credits and much more!

Local 79 retirees enjoying a dance at the Annual Spring Luncheon at Villa Barone

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MEMBERSHIP SERVICES!

THERE ARE NUMEROUS BENEFITS THAT ARE AVAILABLE ONLY FOR LOCAL 79 MEMBERS.

Included in the list of services is a Legal Services Plan (the “Plan”) that offers a variety of free legal services for eligible members, including coverage for family and matrimonial matters, residential real estate transactions, personal bankruptcies, landlord/tenant disputes, the drafting of simple wills, up to eight hours per year for immigration matters, and consultations on many other legal issues. The summary plan description (SPD) is available on our website (click on Member Services > Legal Services). The SPD describes the eligibility rules, the benefits to which you are entitled, your rights, and other important information about the Plan. The Plan is a dues-financed plan that is sponsored by Local 79 and is administered by a Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees consists of Mike Prohaska, Kenneth Brancaccio and George Zecca. The Plan’s Legal Services Director is Mike Prohaska.

Other services offered by Local 79 include: membership in the Actors Federal Credit Union; exclusive deals on products and services offered through the UnionPlus program; financial and credit card debt counseling services from the non-profit organization Greenpath; and so much more.

Local 79 is continually looking at other services we might be able to provide to members. One of our current initiatives is to assess members’ childcare needs. Please fill out the survey by going to the local79.org home page where you will find a related post with a link to the survey.

LEARN MORE > www.local79.org/member-services

For additional assistance with member benefits please contact Thom Thacker at 212-465-7928.
LOCAL 79 AND GREATER NEW YORK LECET
TEAM UP FOR A BIG WIN IN ALBANY!

LOCAL 79, GREATER NEW YORK LECET (LECET), AND THE MASON TENDERS’ DISTRICT COUNCIL POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (PAC) RECENTLY COMBINED FORCES TO WIN A MAJOR VICTORY IN ALBANY.

The issue at stake had to do with the extension of 421-a, a law that gives tax breaks to developers who build residential housing in New York City. With Local 79, LECET, and the PAC taking the lead, a coalition was formed to demand that if the law was going to be extended, prevailing wages had to be paid to all construction workers on the projects that received tax breaks. “The basic argument was that with public benefit, there needs to be public responsibility,” said LECET Executive Director Pat Purcell. “If you are going to enjoy billions of dollars of taxpayer subsidies, then you should be required to pay the workers on those projects a fair, middle-class wage.”

Local 79, LECET, and the PAC joined with the Carpenters Labor-Management Fund to form UP4NYC, an organization that would lobby Albany lawmakers to amend 421-a to include prevailing wage language. Under the leadership of President Gary LaBarbera, the New York City Building Trades joined the effort and the campaign got under way. Rallies were held in Albany. Meetings with legislative leaders and Governor Cuomo were held. Ads ran. News organizations began to write about and cover the issue of prevailing wages in ways that had never happened before. And the results started to come in. Governor Cuomo announced his support of including workers’ issues in the law, as did legislators.

In the end we were victorious. During the final hours of the legislative session a bill was passed, which extended the current 421-a law for six months. During this six month extension the real estate developers must come to an agreement with the unions on inclusion of prevailing wage language or 421-a will expire. “This was a major victory for us,” said Mike Prohaska. “But one thing is clear. There was great work done by our lobbyists, LECET and the PAC. But, without the involvement and commitment of Local 79 members, we would not have been successful. Once again the members of Local 79 proved themselves to be the most important and powerful weapon in our ongoing battle to increase market share and jobs.”
Las boletas para la elección del Local 79 se contaron el 24 de junio de 2015. En una gran victoria, fueron elegidos los diez miembros de la lista The Clean Slate.

Mike Prohaska fue reelegido en el cargo de Gerente Comercial del Local 79 y el ex auditor de la Junta Ejecutiva, George Zecca, fue elegido como nuevo Secretario-Tesorero del Local 79. El Presidente del Local 79, Kenneth Brancaccio, el Vicepresidente, John Norbury, el Secretario de Actas, Joe Cestaro, el miembro de la Junta Ejecutiva, Anthony Vita, y los auditores Anthony Williamson y Luis Montalvo, fueron todos reelegidos en sus cargos. Chaz Rynkiewicz fue elegido para ocupar el cargo de Sargento-at-Arms, y Jose Andino, el ex Sargento-at-Arms, fue elegido como miembro de la Junta Ejecutiva. Dave Moretti será otro auditor.

La Junta Directiva desea darle una bienvenida especial a su nuevo Secretario-Tesorero, George Zecca. Hace 29 años que Zecca es miembro del Local 79. Se afilió en 1986, ascendió a capataz en 1987, fue contratado para integrar el Departamento de Organización del Local 79 en 1999 y, un año después, fue seleccionado como Agente Comercial. Hace 10 años, fue nombrado auditor y, posteriormente, fue reelegido en ese cargo en cada elección subsiguiente del Local 79. Durante los últimos tres años, ha sido Presidente del Consejo de Edificación y Construcción del Gran Nueva York, que forma parte de la Junta de Agentes Comerciales de Manhattan. Cuando se le preguntó acerca de los diversos caminos que transito en su carrera, Zecca dijo: “Cuando empecé como albañil, no conocía a nadie. Trabajé duramente y fui recompensado por eso. Si un miembro me pidiera un consejo para avanzar en su carrera, simplemente le diría a él o ella que no hay nada que reemplace al trabajo duro.”

MENSAJE DEL GERENTE COMERCIAL, MIKE PROHASKA

Quiero empezar mi mensaje con una nota de agradecimiento para los miembros del Local 79 que me reeligion y votaron por todos los candidatos que se presentaron bajo el estandarte de The Clean Slate. Y para aquellos que votaron a otros, quiero agradecerles por haber participado en esta reñida elección. No hace falta decir que la Junta Ejecutiva y yo seguiremos sirviendo a todos los miembros del Local 79 de la mejor manera posible.

Como la mayoría de ustedes saben, he sido un trabajador durante 35 años, haciendo todas las cosas que me enorgullecen, desde trabajar con las manos hasta poner el hombro para asumir las responsabilidades de un Representante Sindical. El pasado año trabajando en nuestro oficio, haciendo el trabajo que debe hacer cada miembro. Nunca olvidaré el frío, la incertidumbre o el orgullo de un trabajo bien hecho. Esas experiencias han influenciado cada día de mi vida como líder electo.

Soy ante todo un trabajador, de modo que conozco nuestro sindicato, nuestra unión, desde la perspectiva de mis hermanos y hermanas. Nunca me olvido de dónde vengo. Mi experiencia en el trabajo me ayudó a formarme una visión de lo que debiera ser nuestro sindicato. Mi logro de una educación superior me ha ayudado a perfeccionar esa visión y veo una gama más amplia de posibilidades para mí, para el Local 79 y para el movimiento de los trabajadores.

Empecé como organizador en una de las campañas más grandes de la historia de nuestro sindicato y de ahí pasé a coordinar la estrategia para recuperar el mercado de demoliciones. Cuando empecé por primera vez como organizador, vivía y respiraba mi trabajo. Le quité tiempo a mi familia, mis amigos y la comunidad para unirme con mis hermanos y hermanas a fin de recuperar la industria de la construcción. Nunca he perdido esa pasión y creo que es un componente esencial de cualquier líder. El movimiento laboral se encuentra actualmente en una encrucijada, y ahora es más importante que nunca que el liderazgo conduzca al Local 79 hacia el futuro. En este avance, enfrentamos muchas decisiones difíciles. Les aseguro que abordaré todas esas decisiones y haré que el Local 79 sea un sindicato más grande, más fuerte y más progresivo de lo que ya es.

¡APROVECHE LOS SERVICIOS PARA MIEMBROS!

Hay muchos beneficios exclusivos para los miembros del Local 79. En la lista de servicios, se incluye un plan de servicios legales (el “Plan”) que ofrece una variedad de servicios legales para miembros elegibles, incluida la cobertura de asuntos familiares y matrimoniales, transacciones de bienes raíces residenciales, quiebras personales, disputas entre propietarios e inquilinos, la redacción de testamentos simples, hasta ocho horas por año para cuestiones de inmigración y consultas sobre muchos otros asuntos legales. La descripción resumida del plan (DRP) está disponible en www.local79.org (haga clic en Member Services, Legal Services). La DRP describe las reglas de elegibilidad, los beneficios a los que usted tiene derecho, sus derechos y otra información importante acerca del Plan. El Plan es un plan financiado por cuotas que está auspiciado por el Local 79 y administrado por un Consejo de Administración. El Consejo de Administración está integrado por Mike Prohaska, Kenneth Brancaccio y George Zecca. El Director de Servicios Legales del Plan es Mike Prohaska.

Otros beneficios para miembros que ofrece el Local 79 incluyen: membresía en la cooperativa de crédito Actors Federal Credit; transacciones exclusivas para una serie de productos y servicios ofrecidos a través del programa UnionPlus; servicios de asesoramiento financiero y de tarjeta de crédito provistos a través de la organización sin fines de lucro Greenpath; y mucho más.

www.local79.org/member-services
For additional assistance with member benefits please contact Thom Thacker at 212-465-7928.
Los miembros del Local 79 que miran los talones de sus cheques de pago seguramente han notado que ha habido un aumento para todos los convenios de negociación colectiva del Local 79 que entraron en vigencia el 1 de julio. En respuesta a las peticiones de los miembros, una parte considerable de este aumento se ha asignado a sus anualidades. Para la gran mayoría de los contratos, la contribución a las anualidades de los miembros es ahora de $7.25/hora. Las anualidades de los miembros forman una parte importante de la planificación general de jubilación o retiro de muchos miembros. Para dar un ejemplo: A partir del 1 de julio, un miembro que trabaja 2000 horas por año recibirá $14,500 en su anualidad. Si este miembro continúa trabajando a este ritmo durante 25 años, y la anualidad crece a una tasa promedio de 5% al año (que ha sido la tasa promedio de rendimiento del sindicato y de “Building Skills”) (Desarrollo de Destrezas), un programa de capacitación a corto plazo que permite sostener una carrera. Si bien su testimonio fue valioso, lo más notable fue que estos dos jóvenes no eran tan solo dos aprendices comunes; por el contrario, ambos participaron en el programa de aprendizaje del sindicato a través del Programa de Navegación Pre-Aprendizaje, un programa único creado por el Local 79 para los miembros de las organizaciones basadas en la comunidad, como Se Hace Camino Nueva York, Community Voices Heard, St. Nicks Alliance, la NAACP de Staten Island y la Asociación Osborne.

El Programa de Navegación Pre-Aprendizaje del Local 79 se inició en el otoño de 2013. Los objetivos del programa de ocho noches de duración eran, y siguen siendo, presentar a los hombres y mujeres de las organizaciones asociadas al Local 79, la historia y los propósitos de los sindicatos, y los derechos de los trabajadores. El programa también ayuda a los participantes con el proceso de solicitar su participación en el Programa de Aprendizaje del Local 79, aunque esto no signifique una garantía de admisión al programa.

Los dos hombres que testificaron, Paris Simmons y Xavier Givens, llegaron al Programa de Navegación a través de la Asociación Osborne, una organización que trabaja con hombres y mujeres que estuvieron encarcelados. El efecto del Programa de Navegación en estos dos individuos, así como en decenas de otros participantes del programa que actualmente se encuentran realizando la capacitación o trabajando en obras, ha sido nada menos que transformacional. Durante su testimonio, Paris Simmons habló de la discriminación que enfrentan las personas con antecedentes penales cuando tratan de encontrar un trabajo y expresó su profunda gratitud al Local 79 y a los coordinadores del Programa de Navegación por darle una oportunidad de construir una vida nueva. Xavier Givens también reconoció que el programa le había ayudado a reconstruir su vida. Además, explicó las deficiencias de la capacitación que ofrece el programa “Building Skills” y el hecho preocupante de que solo está disponible para los residentes de NYCHA, lo cual excluye a las personas con antecedentes penales ya que a ellas no se les permite tener un arrendamiento de NYCHA.

El Programa de Navegación seguirá creciendo sobre la base de su considerable éxito y ofrecerá oportunidades a las personas de todos los condados municipales (boroughs) de la ciudad de Nueva York para que puedan capacitarse en temas relacionados con los sindicatos, y recibir asistencia cuando soliciten formar parte del Local 79.
UPCOMING EVENTS 2015

Call Melissa Siciliano at 212-465-7976 for more info

SEPT 12 - Meet at 11 am
Labor Day Parade
46th Street between 5th and 6th Ave

SEPT 16 - at 5pm
General Membership Meeting
St. Vartan Church, 630 2nd Avenue

SEPT 19
St. Mary’s Walk and Picnic
Coney Island
(Chcek website in Aug for details)

SEPT 25 - Buses depart at 8am
Retiree Outing*
Belmont Park Race Track, Elmont, NY

OCT 16 - Buses depart at 8am
Retiree Outing*
Renault Winery and Tropicana Casino,
Atlantic City, NJ

* RSVP with Melissa Siciliano to attend these events

LOCAL 79 MEMBERS
HELP THE COMMUNITY!

On Saturday, June 16, nearly 150 Local 79 members and their families volunteered their time to transport and lay down stone dust on two pathways at Flushing Meadows–Corona Park in Queens. “To see such a large turnout of volunteers on the weekend is but one of many examples of our members’ dedication to helping out in the community” said Local 79 Business Manager Mike Prohaska. “We thank them for their time and effort.”