

The

August 2002

Grapevine



The Official Newsletter of *Angus Council Branch*

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for Two at the

Liz McColgan Health Club

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FREEPOST SUCCESS

System returns more mail than ever before

Earlier this year the Branch decided to opt for a Freepost address in an attempt to assist with communications between the Branch and its members. The system has now been operational for a period of four months and has been of great help, especially with the recent questionnaire which was distributed with the last issue of the Grapevine with over 3000% improvement on the previous questionnaire.

The Freepost system allows you, the members, to send mail to the branch at no cost to yourself by using the following FREEPOST address:

**Unison - Angus Council Branch
FREEPOST SC07380
FORFAR
DD8 1ZR**

EUROPEAN HEALTH AND SAFETY WEEK

Win a day for 2 at the Liz McColgan Health Club

The European Week of Health and Safety begins on 14 October 2002. One of this year's themes is stress awareness. You will shortly see posters and information appearing on notice boards in workplaces where there is a safety rep. A number of you replied to our survey citing stress as a problem. The HSE have recently launched a publicity drive to try and reduce work-related stress. Further information on this can be found at www.hse.gov.uk.

As a tie-in with European Health and Safety week, the Liz McColgan Health Club and Physiotherapy Centre has kindly donated the prize of one day's use of the fitness suite for two people.

It is recognised that exercise is a valuable de-stressing tool as well as being a general benefit to the individual. If you'd like to spend a day in Carnoustie sampling all that the Liz McColgan Health Club has to offer then enter the competition on the back page. The answer to the question is contained within this article.

ANGUS COUNCIL – FREE ACTIVITIES FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY WEEK

Sorry, these activities are for Angus Council staff only. If you're interested in the possibility of your employer running similar activities, please contact Louise Trayner on (01307) 473314 to obtain details of guest speakers and interested companies.

Angus Council is running a tie-in with European Health and Safety week at various locations within the Council. These will be run during the week of 16th – 20th September. Most activities will be held in both Arbroath and Forfar, but Angus Health Fair will be held only in Forfar. The dates shown on page 2 are specific to each location.

Grapevine Welcomed

The "Grapevine", launched in May this year, has been warmly welcomed as a step in the right direction and the ideal tool for informing the members of the current situation regarding the many problems or questions they have. If any member has a particular question or item that they wish to be mentioned in the newsletter then please send them to Bob Bruce at the Freepost address below or email brucera@lineone.net

Remember to use the FREEPOST address for any written correspondence

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ANGUS COUNCIL – FREE ACTIVITIES FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY WEEK—*continued from front page.*

ARBROATH

- Activities in Arbroath will be held at Bruce House and Saltire Leisure Centre. For most activities, it's ok just to turn up at the appointed time, but the Mind Mechanics Course on Thursday 19th has limited places and must be booked beforehand. This half-day course will give you an MOT (Motivation or Tedium) test and help you rediscover your motivation. You may also like to try the Positive Thinking course on Tuesday 17th, or the Mental Health Awareness talk on Monday 16th.
- There are several activities on Relaxation and Meditation, looking at how to de-stress your life and how to relax using meditation.
- Tesco are holding a taster session with their healthy eating products with prizes and food baskets available. This will also cover healthy living and discuss things such as sun protection.
- If you're feeling adventurous and looking for exercise then try the belly dancing class at Saltire Leisure Centre on Tuesday 17th.
- Why not try the sessions on offer? If enough people are interested, the Council will organise staff-only classes. This week provides the perfect opportunity to try before you buy! Speak to your line manager to organise time off to attend these classes. Traditionally there hasn't been a big uptake of the activities in Arbroath, so why not change that this year?

FORFAR

- The Positive Thinking course aims to help you maintain your motivation and make lasting changes, be they financial, diet etc.
- If you're looking for de-stressing and relaxation, then try the Tai Chi class at Lochside Leisure Centre on the 16th.
- County Buildings Board Room will be put to its best use ever on the 17th when a belly dancing class is followed by a line dancing class.
- The benefits of Physiotherapy and Chiropractic health will be explained on the 17th and 20th respectively.
- Angus Health Fair spends an entire day at the Reid Hall on Thursday 19th. Contributors include Acupuncture Info, Dietitians, MacMillan Service, Cruse Bereavement Care and contributors on Homeopathy and Reflexology among many others. Go to the Reid Hall and there's sure to be something to interest you.
- By popular demand there will also be men-only and women-only classes on men's and women's health issues.
- Clive Ross, the Pension Fund Manager, will also be available to discuss your financial health and answer questions on your pension contributions.
- If after all that you want something more energetic then the self-defence class or step aerobics may be for you.

Full details of the classes and times will appear on notice boards shortly. These activities have been organised by Personnel and are also being run as part of Scotland's Health At Work (SHAW). As such, time off to attend the classes can be arranged with your line manager beforehand. As many people as possible are urged to attend and to make this week a success.

If you want any further information on the full range of classes and activities, please contact Judith Harding on (01307) 473363.

JOB EVALUATION UPDATE

In the recent questionnaire a number of members expressed an interest in more information concerning Job Evaluation. This article shall attempt to explain the system. In future issues it is envisaged to have updates on the progress of the process.

Job Evaluation formed part of the Single Status Agreement which UNISON members accepted after being balloted. It affects all APT&C staff and manual workers. Responsibility for the annual pay award remains at a national level, however each individual Council is responsible for introducing its own grading and pay structure. This is to be done using a nationally agreed Job Evaluation Scheme which shall assess job content and not individuals.

The scheme is managed by a Job Evaluation Steering Group which has UNISON and other union representatives on it. A project team has also been established, which includes trained job analysts. The scheme operates by selecting a representative sample of jobs called benchmark posts. A selection of employees within these posts have been interviewed to create job overview documents which are agreed with the post holder and their manager. These benchmarked posts are then scored and placed in a rank order which will not take into account the current grading, salary or status. This information is then used to design a new grading structure to replace the existing. All non-benchmarked jobs are then fitted within the new structure and every employee will then be informed of the result.

Currently Angus Council is in the process of preparing the rank order of jobs after the benchmarking exercise. Additional posts have been included in the benchmarking exercise to clarify the structure. As all employees have not been involved with the benchmarking exercise the UNISON Branch understands fully the concerns of all employees but feels that there is little to be gained from rushing the agreement on the rank order as this is a very important part of the Job Evaluation process, however the original completion date of April 2002 has been put back to early 2004.

Angus Council have produced a series of leaflets to help employees understand the scheme. A new update is expected shortly, however copies of the latest leaflet or more information is available from the Project Manager, Frank Kelly, on 01307 473217.

You can Telephone or Fax the Office

01307 468950

BRANCH BACKS BORNEO EXPEDITION

Local Member's Adventure Benefits Autistic Children in Scotland

Angus Council Social Worker, Alison Green is to undertake an adventure through the Sabah region of Borneo on foot, bike and raft, in aid of The Scottish Society for Autism.

Alison has now raised over £2500 in sponsorship due to a donation of £250 from the local UNISON Branch. The two week adventure, which begins in mid September, will have Alison climbing Mount Kinabalu, peaking at 13,455 feet, cycling 120 miles on roads even rougher than Angus has to offer, through the Crocker mountain range, and white water rafting down the Padas River. I'm sure that we all wish Alison a safe journey.

The Branch are pleased to consider sponsoring members and any request should be directed to the Branch Office.



Branch Chair, Allan Fegan is pictured presenting Alison with the cheque

SUPERANNUATION CHANGES

It has recently been obvious that members are unaware of the implications in changes to the legislation governing the Superannuation Scheme in relation to ill health retirement.

Previously an employee who had been declared unfit to return to their post and no suitable redeployment was available would have been retired on the grounds of ill health on the advice of the Council's doctor.

In 2000 a change was introduced which meant that only a specialist in Occupational Health could recommend ill health retirement and that this would be based on the employee being unfit for any work until normal retirement age.

The implication of this is that members can find themselves being dismissed from their jobs on the grounds of capability due to ill health with the major difference being that they cannot access their pension until the date they would have retired normally.

This is not a problem peculiar to Angus Council, but one which is causing serious distress to many UNISON members throughout the country.

Questionnaire Preliminary Results

The return has been reasonably good for the questionnaire which accompanied the last issue of the newsletter in May. To date 160 have returned, however that still leaves over 1000 non-returns. This may mean that a large majority of the members are happy with the level of service, or that over 1000 members never received it. The returns received have been very helpful and have indicated a few areas that we are lacking, such as communication, but this is a two way street, so please help yourself by communicating any problems to the union.

Articles Wanted

If you have an article for the newsletter then please post it to the Communications Officer at the Branch Office using the Freepost address or email the article in a text or MS Word format to brucera@lineone.net.

The next issue of the newsletter is due in November and any articles should be in by mid october

WELFARE REPORT

Help Us
Look After You

UNISON Welfare provides a support service to members suffering from ill health whether temporary or long term which might include financial support or perhaps convalescence if required. Illness can be caused by many factors including debt, bullying at work, stress and many more. We are here to listen and support.

The welfare of our members is wholly reliant on communication by members and fellow colleagues. All too often the member has returned to work, or worse, before the Branch is notified, so please let the Welfare Officer, Allan Fegan, know as soon as possible, preferably by leaving a message at the Branch office (01307 468950) or by contacting him at his office on 01307 473847.

Let UNISON deliver the service you, as members, deserve.

Remember to use the FREEPOST address for any written correspondence

Unison - Angus Council Branch, FREEPOST SC07380, FORFAR, DD8 1ZR

Health & Safety

Snippets

Our new reps attended Stage 1 of the TUC Health and Safety training at Dundee College. The course took place one day a week for 10 weeks and covered things such as safety reps' rights, current legislation and investigating complaints.

Bill White of IT said, "The course was interesting and got me thinking along the right lines, as I had little knowledge of health and safety before this. It made me more aware of my rights as a safety rep. I enjoyed attending the course and would recommend it to anyone thinking of becoming a safety rep."

Jimmy Adams of Education agreed, saying "I found the course informative and interesting. I particularly enjoyed meeting safety reps from other backgrounds and workplaces and learning about their experiences and the type of problems they encounter."

Three of our safety reps attended the TUC Stage 2 training, also at Dundee College. Charlie Lorimer of the Chief Exec's, Ann Bell of Social Work and Donald Ritchie of Housing were unanimous in choosing the project part of the course as a highlight. Charlie found it helpful to link the project to current issues in his department. Ann took the opportunity to produce a comprehensive report on stress issues facing Mental Health Officers in Social Work. Again, the opportunity to hear about issues facing other reps was a positive part of the course.

If you're interested in becoming a safety rep, please contact Louise Trayner on (01307) 473314 (Roads Department) or leave a message in the Branch Office on (01307) 468950.

Are You Due To Retire?

If you are about to retire then please contact the Branch Office as soon as possible. The branch have a policy of paying the one-off subscription for the retired members section for any member who is retiring, however **we need to know!**

Fuel Allowances

The Branch have set up a working group to collate views of the members and gather information from other sources to establish a position when we enter into negotiations with the employer locally, which formed part of the single status agreement. The group are currently waiting for information and a meeting with the employer will be convened in the near future.

Nursery Nurses Grading Claim

This was to be discussed at a meeting of COSLA in June but to date no information has been forthcoming on their position. Local claims have been rejected and the it is now again a national issue. Further information should be available at a meeting of UNISON Scottish Local Government Forum which meets on the 27th August and the Branch Secretary will write directly to all nursery nurse members thereafter.

Sick Leave Whilst on Annual Leave

Members should be aware that Angus Council now require staff who are ill whilst on annual leave to produce a doctor's certificate if they wish to claim back their annual leave. This applies even if you are ill for 1 to 7 days.

CONTACTS WANTED NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Unfortunately we do not have contacts in every workplace therefore we are currently looking to create a network of contact persons to aid with the distribution of local Branch literature. The contacts will only be requested to hand out literature as and when it is received. You would not be asked to carry out any other UNISON duties unless you wished to become a Workplace Rep or Health & Safety Rep, etc. If you are willing to help then please complete the slip and send it to the Branch Office using Freepost

Workplace Contact

Name: _____

Workplace Address: _____

Contact Phone No: _____

European Health & Safety Week Competition Entry

To win the use of the Health Suite for 2 people, just answer the following simple question, the answer to which is contained in this newsletter.

Question: When does the European Week of Health and Safety begin?



All entries must be at the Branch Office by the 23rd September and can be returned using the UNISON freepost address. The winner shall be drawn on 24th September at the Branch Executive Meeting.

LizMcColganHealthClub

European Health & Safety Week Competition Entry

Answer: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Phone No: _____

You can Email the Office

kate.leiper@qick.com