

Union membership has its benefits

—Health care package among the best available

by Roger Gill, Administrator,
Local #12 Funds

The economic boom of the 1990s has brought unprecedented economic growth. Working people, it would seem, should expect to share in these good times through improved employee benefits. But a healthy economy doesn't necessarily mean great health plans for everyone. The folks who toil in the service industry are often left behind. Local #12 plumbers, however, enjoy a comprehensive benefits package that includes one of the finest health insurance programs available anywhere.

Many plumbers and other tradespeople work full time without any health insurance, retirement plan or other benefits. We all know that people need medical care. With high premiums and limited access, these employees frequently need to turn to government programs for assistance with

health care costs—if they qualify.

It is important to recognize employers in the service and construction industries who have assumed the responsibility of providing employee benefits. The contractors working with Local #12 understand the importance of integrating benefit costs into their operating budget.

LOCAL #12'S HEALTH PLAN

A joint board of "Benefit Fund Trustees," three from labor and three from management, oversee benefit plans for Local #12 plumbers. The health plan they manage allows members to choose from a vast array of doctors. Out-patient office visits require just a \$5 co-payment and there is no co-payment for a comprehensive array of additional services including maternity care, allergy treatment, physical therapy, surgery and x-rays.

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JACK DeLOUGHREY, Local #12 plumber, and his wife, Pat.

Putting a human face on benefits

The comprehensive medical benefits package that every Local #12 member enjoys may not be an inherently fascinating topic. In fact, when talk turns to co-payments, covered dependents and HMOs, eyes may start glazing over.

Putting a human face on the subject, however, drives the message home: Medical insurance is vitally important. Just ask Jack DeLoughrey.

A cheerful and well-respected plumber at the Boston Globe in Dorchester, DeLoughrey has been working in the trade for 40 years. In addition to taking

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"If it wasn't for Local 12, I think my life savings and my house would be gone. Thank God for my Union benefits."

-Jack DeLoughrey,
Local #12 plumber

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www.massplumbers.com

The mission of the LMCT is to protect public health and safety by ensuring that plumbing systems are properly designed, installed and inspected. Our goal is also to promote the mutual interests of our industry's licensed craftsmen and their employers.



Plumbing-Heating-Cooling
Contractors of Greater Boston
617-292-0418



U.A. Plumbers and Gasfitters
Boston Local 12
617-288-6200

LMCT Web site & directory

Management and labor are working together as never before.

In response to frequent requests for a listing of Local #12-affiliated contractors, the LMCT has published a contractors directory and launched a contractors Web site at www.massplumbers.com

The directory and Web site include individual profiles of PHCC companies and a summary of contractors' specialty areas. Both resources also include a listing of key industry contacts. The LMCT anticipates that the site and directory will be dynamic and plans to regularly update them.

Using the site's search feature, Web surfers can key in descriptive data such as anticipated job size and specialty areas. The site identifies those contractors that match the specifications.

Under the LMCT umbrella, Local #12 and the PHCC have developed a show booth and have been participating in a number of trade shows. Showcasing the work of contractors and Local #12 plumbers, the LMCT brings its message to events such as the spring Facilities and Maintenance

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THEY DID IT RIGHT Representing the LMCT at the Facilities and Maintenance trade show were (L to R), Joe Conley, Local #12 Training Coordinator, Joe Durkin, American Plumbing and Heating and Hugh Kelleher, Executive Director, PHCC of Greater Boston.

Local #12 and PHCC joint efforts

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trade show at the Bayside Expo Center in the spring.

Last fall, we presented our booth at the Facilities Management Expo at the World Trade Center. In November we attended the big Build Boston Construction Expo at the World Trade Center as well.

To obtain a free copy of the *Plumbing Contractors Directory* or for more information about the directory, trade show activity and other LMCT programs, call Hugh Kelleher at the PHCC, (617) 292-0418.

Log on to the LMCT
www.massplumbers.com

Health care benefits add up

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Other attractive features of the plan include:

- Dental care, including 100% coverage for preventative care
- Vision care, including a complete eye exam and new eyeglasses each year
- Chiropractic care, 100% coverage for doctors within network

How do plumbers find a responsible plumbing contractor in the Greater Boston area? Visit www.massplumbers.com, the LMCT Web site, or contact the PHCC of Greater Boston at (617) 292-0418. Plumbers can also contact Local #12 at (617) 288-6200 for information about union benefits and assistance locating affiliated contractors.

Jack McGinness and Jim

Lydon, Local #12 business agents, tell me they are often asked for contractor lists and that they are more than happy to supply them. According to McGinness, many plumbers have been contacting the Union lately to inquire about membership. "The primary reason these plumbers want to join is the access they will have to benefits."

The trustees do an extraordinary job managing and improving the benefits package. Along with Local #12 contractors and Union officers, they deserve credit for helping to ensure that member plumbers receive a tremendous health plan.

If you are a plumber and would like to learn more about getting improved health benefits, contact Jack McGinness or Jim Lydon at 617-288-6200.

Uncompensated Care Pool: A good idea gone bad

by Roger Gill, Administrator,
Local #12 Funds

In 1997, the state legislature, along with then Governor Weld, devised a plan to aid those in the Commonwealth who have no health insurance coverage: the Uncompensated Care Pool Trust Fund. Most people in state government and the health care industry refer to this as the "Free Care Pool."

The intent of the pool—to pay the medical bills of the uninsured—is a noble one. We as a society should take responsibility and insure that the health care needs of the destitute are met.

However, like many well-intended government programs, the Free Care Pool is flawed. As it now stands, the pool unfairly penalizes responsible employers and jeopardizes their ability to compete effectively.

There is no equity in the pool's current funding formula. Employers who provide health insurance, especially those who do so through a collective bargaining agreement, MUST contribute to the program. The problem is not that these responsible employers are asked to help share the pool's burden; rather, the program's flaw is that employers who choose not to provide health insurance benefits are NOT required to pay anything into the pool.

The responsible employer ends up funding the Uncompensated

sated Care Pool Fund, which in turn pays the medical expenses incurred by the employees and dependents of competitors. This makes no sense to reasonable people. Responsible employers don't pass the buck when it comes to health insurance. We should reward responsibility, not penalize employers for doing the right thing.

Fortunately, there has been a bill filed in the House that will address the fairness of the Free Care Pool. House Bill 1705 will distribute the expense of funding the program to all employers.

Some in the business community claim this is unfair. Many of those who don't currently contribute to the pool believe someone else should pay: the responsible employer.

Why is it fair to assess only those employers who provide health care benefits and leave those who do not alone? Obviously, because they have health insurance, the employees of responsible employers are not using the Free Care Pool. Conversely, employees of employers who offer no health coverage are likely to take advantage of the pool. Where is the equity?

Anyone concerned with fairness and equity should call or write his state representative and senator and request that they support House Bill 1705. Responsible employers deserve our support. Together, we can change this good idea gone bad.

Local #12's scholarship program

Each year, Local #12 awards five scholarships to its members' children. These include three \$1500 John J. Cotter Scholarships, one \$2000 Charles D. Sheehey Scholarship and one \$2000 Walter Wilson Scholarship earmarked for a student attending UMass.

1999 recipients were Francis Gallagher, son of Francis Gallagher Jr., Denae Perry, daughter of Edmund Perry Jr., Timothy Moore Jr., son of Timothy Moore Sr. and Katelyn MacKinnon, daughter of Paul MacKinnon.

The program is associated with the state AFL-CIO.

DO THE MATH

by Joe Green, Business Agent, Local #12

How many two-inch roof drains could be used in place of a single ten-inch roof drain?

Formula: $D =$ Diameter of larger drains
 $d =$ Diameter of smaller drains

To find the number of smaller drains:
 $D^2 \div d^2 =$ Diameter squared of the larger drain divided by the diameter squared of the smaller drain



Example:

$$N = 10^2 \div 2^2$$

$$N = (10 \times 10) \div (2 \times 2)$$

$$N = 100 \div 4$$

$$N = 25 \text{ two-inch drains required}$$

Agreement on new contract

As part of a new agreement with the Greater Boston PHCC, Local #12 plumbers recently began receiving raises

The agreement calls for wage increases totalling \$6.10 over the next three years. It also continues other important benefits for Local #12 members, including:

- A full package of health benefits, including dental and eyeglass coverage.
- \$4.08 per hour worked will be contributed to members' pension plans.

- \$2.58 per hour will be contributed to members' annuity plans.

Other agreement terms call for the creation of a new Safety Incentive Program to help insure that Local #12 members receive special OSHA training, additional pay for foremen and a new welding certification program.

Representatives of both the Contractors Association and Local #12 had met for several months to work out the new three-year agreement.

Distance learning previewed

Plumbers across New England will soon be taking classes at Local #12. There's nothing unusual about that. The union has always had a full slate of training programs. What is unusual is that the instructor will be based in Michigan or some other remote location. It's part of the local's new distance learning capabilities.

George Bliss, the director of training at the National UA, presented the concept in February at Local #12 to an audience of over 100 members, contractors and end-users affiliated with the plumbers and the pipefitters Local #537. Once the training center is outfitted with poly-cam teleconferencing equipment, instructors

in California will be able to have two-way, real-time communication with students in Dorchester.

According to Joe Conley, Local #12's training coordinator, regional training centers in Charleston, SC, Ann Arbor, MI and Sacramento CA will be tied into the distance learning system.

Eventually, students in New England will be able to earn an associate degree in construction technology through Eastern Michigan State University using the teleconferencing technology. Conley says that members who complete the UA apprenticeship program will automatically earn college credits that they can apply towards the degree.

Benefits ease Jack's ordeal

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care of the traditional plumbing at the plant, he maintains the ink lines and other specialized press systems. With his lovely wife, Patricia, and three adult children (ages 31, 32 and 33, he refers to them as "Irish triplets"), DeLoughrey looks back and says life has been good. Until tragedy—the "big C"—struck last year.

Radiation treatments, chemotherapy, operations, infections, complications: Since he was diagnosed with cancer in June of 1998, DeLoughrey's life has become a medical whirlwind. He was out of work for four months and racked up tens of thousands of dollars worth of medical bills.

"If it wasn't for the Union, I think my life savings and my house would be gone,"

DeLoughrey says. Still undergoing chemotherapy, he pulls a bill from a pile, shakes his head and says that one week's worth of treatment costs \$1,888. Insurance, he notes, covers just about everything. "Thank God for my Union benefits."

While he says things aren't perfect, DeLoughrey's prognosis is good. He's responding to the chemo, he's back at work, he's on the golf course and he's planning to return to the mountains this winter for skiing.

It may be tempting to consider a higher wage from a non-union shop that doesn't offer medical insurance or other benefits. Everyone likes to believe he's invincible. But life happens while you're busy making other plans. Jack DeLoughrey's story could be anyone's.

Me and my shadows

by Joe Conley,
Training Coordinator, U.A. Local 12

Local #12 is proud to participate in The Shadow Program. Sponsored by the AFL-CIO, school-age students explore career opportunities by "shadowing" tradespeople. As the "constant companions" of labor mentors for a few hours, young people learn about the world of work and receive some hands-on vocational training.

Recently, three students from Boston's Solomon Lewenberg Middle School, Thanh Nguyen, Rayshaun English and Marquis Roberts, fastened their educational seat belts for an adventure in vocational learning.

During their shop training at the Local #12 Training Facility, they learned and applied the mechanical disciplines of threading, soldering and plastic pipe assembly. These young men were impressed by the experience and indicated that they would consider the plumbing trade as their career path.

I enjoyed acting as the students' guide. Whatever work they end up doing, I believe these young people have success as their goal.

The Shadow Program is ongoing. We look forward to hosting future students.

For more information about The Shadow Program, contact Joe Conley at (617) 288-1010

Dear Mr. Conley,

Thank you for your time and helpfulness...

I learned how to make a pipe with flux. And I learned how to make a water pipe. It takes patience...

Thanks again for inspiring me to be a plumber...

Sincerely,

Rayshaun (Scooby) English

THE PIPELINE

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News and Information about the Plumbing Industry
A cooperative effort of U.A. Boston Local #12 and
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- Do the math

John Elliott Plumbing Company at your service

While the Deer Island Water Treatment Plant, the Big Dig and other high-profile projects may hog the limelight, there are many contractors affiliated with the PHCC and Local #12 working on less flashy—but no less important—jobs. Elliott Plumbing Company, for example, specializes in service.

Based in Boston, the shop handles calls from commercial and residential customers in Beacon Hill, Back Bay and the South End.

“Many companies don’t want to be bothered,” says Jim Lydon, Local #12 business agent, referring to the niche Elliott has developed. “But, there’s a lot of money to be made in service.”

The five-person shop offers plumbing, heating, gasfitting and sewer and drain cleaning. “We do anything and everything we can,” owner John Elliott laughs.

In business for five years, the owner says Local #12 has been a great resource. “Right now, the labor market is tight,” Elliott says. “But the union helps get me trained, reliable manpower.”

Focusing on service, as opposed to new construction, has its own unique challenges. Often, Elliott Plumbing works in old buildings (sometimes very old) and needs to deal with old brass systems. “Not everyone knows how to handle old brass,” Elliott says. “We do a fair amount of on-the-job training.”

For new construction, contractors typically work intensely on a project and rarely return to the site once it is finished. A company specializing in service, however, comes back often and therefore needs to develop long-term relationships with its clients. Elliott says he and his crew work hard to maintain positive customer relations.

Hoping to grow the commercial side of his business, Elliott looks forward to working on marketing campaigns with the LMCT. For example, the organization is helping the company sell its plumbing services to colleges and universities in the area.

Brigham and New England Baptist workers organize

A multi-union coalition of plumbers and other trade workers in the maintenance and engineering departments at Boston’s Brigham and Women’s Hospital voted to join the Maintenance Trades Council of New England. Similarly 24 employees at New England Baptist Hospital joined the coalition.

Local #12 Business Agent Jack McGinness, representing the Brigham plumbers, was part of the organizing campaign. The former Brigham employee says the campaign win was sweet.

Hugh Zazzarra, a Local #12 plumber at Brigham says he worked hard to bring the union to the hospital because “I want security for myself and for my family.”

With HMOs failing, reimbursement rates dropping and health care otherwise changing at a rapid pace, security is a concern among doctors, nurses and all workers in the industry. Nationwide, the AFL-CIO reports that one of its biggest sources of new members comes from medical employees.

The local union coalition offers an opportunity for the trades to join together for a collective voice. Other unions who participate in the Maintenance Trades Council include Operating Engineers Local #877, IBEW Local #103 and the New England Region of Carpenters Union.

New England Baptist is part of the CareGroup Health Care System. The union is targeting the CareGroup’s five other Boston hospitals including Beth Israel Deaconess.



THE LMCT'S NEW WEBSITE provides information about all Greater Boston member contractors, including a specialties chart, an individual page for each contractor and a listing of key industry resources. Visit the site at www.massplumbers.com

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*Labor and Management
Working Together*

Published quarterly
**Labor Management
Cooperation Trust**
**U.A. Plumbers and Gasfitters
Boston Local 12**
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