



AFL-CIO Community Services and United Way Partnership

AFL-CIO Community Service Committee News

April 2009

April Fools' Day: Origin and History

The uncertain origins of a foolish day

By David Johnson and Shmuel Ross

April Fools' Day, sometimes called All Fools' Day, is one of the most light-hearted days of the year. Its origins are uncertain. Some see it as a celebration related to the turn of the seasons, while others believe it stems from the adoption of a new [calendar](#).

New Year's Day Moves

Ancient cultures, including those as varied as the Romans and the **Hindus**, celebrated New Year's Day on or around April 1. It closely follows the **vernal equinox** (March 20th or March 21st.) In medieval times, much of Europe celebrated March 25, the Feast of Annunciation, as the beginning of the New Year. In 1582, **Pope Gregory XIII** ordered a new calendar (the **Gregorian calendar**) to replace the old Julian calendar. The new calendar called for New Year's Day to be celebrated Jan. 1. That year, **France** adopted the reformed calendar and shifted New Year's Day to Jan. 1. According to a popular explanation, many people either refused to accept the new date, or did not learn about it, and continued to celebrate New Year's Day on April 1. Other people began to make fun of these traditionalists, sending them on "fool's errands" or trying to trick them into believing something false. Eventually, the practice spread from France throughout Europe.

Problems with This Explanation

There are at least two difficulties with this explanation. The first is that it doesn't fully account for the spread of April Fools' Day to other European countries. **The Gregorian calendar** was not adopted by England until 1752, for example, but April Fools' Day was already well established there by that point. The second is that we have no direct historical evidence for this explanation, only conjecture, and that conjecture appears to have been made more recently.

Whatever the explanation it seems that pranksters have made this a fun time, No Fooling, but I hope this day is as much fun for you as it will be for the guy or gal who pulls the next trick on you. Just relax and have a good hearty laugh and remember what goes around, comes around. Make it point to have fun; life is just too short to pass up an opportunity to laugh.

Shoe Box Project:

We are still actively collecting personal hygiene items for the homeless, unemployed and needy in the community. There are just a few days left to become involved. The items will be prepared for distribution in shoe boxes or tote bags by the young volunteers of our community as part of the United Way Youth Day of Caring. The Tamarkin Company has agreed to match dollar for dollar the donations made by their Teamster Union employees. They warehouse for Giant Eagle Supermarkets and have gotten Giant Eagle to agree to provide any excess and damaged personal hygiene items to us for the shoebox project. Once the shoeboxes are separated and ready for distribution, our local Feeding America food bank, Second Harvest, has agreed to distribute these items to all the Food Pantries in the area. Just to make sure you know, we need all items in by April 15th so we can transport them to the YMCA where the young volunteers can pack them for distribution as part of the United Way Youth Day of Caring on April 25th.

Community Outreach:

Mark your calendars for April 15th. We will be taking part in the Lifeline for Laid-Off Workers at the Chevy Center on that date from 10:00am to 6:00pm. We will be helping all workers in the community devastated by the economic downturn. Agencies from the Valley will be there along with the State of Ohio agencies to assist anyone who needs help. The event is being sponsored by UAW locals 1112 and 1714. Our thanks to them for helping everyone in the community by hosting this event.

Union Community Network Classes:

UCAN Classes were set to begin on April 15th and were to run for eight weeks through May 16, 2009 at The Girard Multi-Generational Center. One of the by-products of this economic downturn is the loss in revenue most locals have experienced. Yet this is a great opportunity for us to prepare the next generation of union leaders. They finally have time to be involved and come to the training without having to miss work. In order not to miss this chance to get our most loyal union members trained on how to be a caring and involved leader, not only in your local but in our Valley, we have postponed the classes scheduled for March 25th until sometime in late May or early June. I don't want any union to be without someone to help members facing difficulty in these times, please use this additional time to find members to attend these critical classes. More information is to follow.

NALC Food Drive:

This is one of our most important projects of the year. Last year Branch 385 set a record with 220,000 pounds of food collected. We can't sit around and pat ourselves on the back when you realize that Second Harvest, our local Feeding America Food Bank distributed over 6,000,000 pounds of food in our area last year. We have to dig deeper and work harder because even with that quantity of food being distributed, many children in our Valley went hungry at times during the year. Congressman Tim Ryan and Congressman Charlie Wilson are co-Chairing our food drive for 2009. Having them on board to do PSA's will get the word out to the community to ensure people know to put a couple of cans out for their mailman

to pick up. We can't expect those letter carriers to do all the work. Postal authorities worry about overtime costs when they are running a deficit and fight letting us do the food drive at all. We alleviate that fear by using as many volunteers as possible to help on the streets. Don't be surprised if you see Congressman Ryan or Congressman Wilson is out there helping. In fact we are asking as many elected officials to volunteer as possible to help that day. We want every retired union worker and every worker who has the day off to



Volunteer. We need everyone because that is what unionism is all about, working together for the common good. The photographs above are of carriers in Youngstown participating in last year's food drive.

Spaghetti Dinner:

We all pitched in and helped at the Lena, Mason, Christian Spaghetti Dinner last month. This past weekend we helped in Austintown with a benefit Spaghetti Dinner. Now we are being asked to help with the United Way spaghetti dinner to raise money for the United Way. We don't have to cook or serve; Fusillo Catering has arranged to do that. We just need a few volunteers to help collect money, clear tables and help with the Chinese auction. What we need most of all is to have as many union workers show up to share some time together eating some of the best spaghetti in the valley after ours. The date is Sunday, May 17th at



Mount Carmel Church. The pictures above show some of UCAN Counselors doing what they do best, cooking spaghetti. This was last Sunday when we helped with a benefit spaghetti dinner for an OEA member and a coach from Austintown Schools having health problems.

O'Charley's Bass Classic:

Every year we help the United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley with their Bass Classic. This year the event will be back at Evans and Pine Lakes, the construction at Pine Lake being completed. This year the event will kick off with a mixer on Thursday, May 28, at O'Charley's parking lot. UCAN volunteers will be the guests of the United Way. You need to plan on being at the lakes Saturday May 30th bright and early. This year we are planning different events to involve kids more. We also expect Joe Thomas, All-pro lineman from the Cleveland Browns, to be there. This event was featured on the Sports Time Ohio television network last year and they will be taping the event to include it in this year's programming. Needless to say not only are we getting kids involved in the outdoors but it is also a big fund-raiser for our United Way and we are hoping to have the state champion Ursuline Irish football team on hand to help us with the youngsters. Coach Dan Reardon believes building character builds not only champion athletes, but responsible citizens. For more information here is the link to the website to the United Way website for this event:
<http://www.ymvunitedway.org/bassclassic.aspx>

Phantom Game:

We had a great fundraising opportunity this past month. On Friday, March 13th, the United Way helped sell tickets for the Mahoning Valley Phantoms Hockey Team's final home game and United Way received 50% of the ticket sales. It was a great night out for a family with those who came to the game knowing that as they were having fun, they were also helping the needy of the Valley through our United Way. A special thank you goes to Bruce Zoldan, owner of the Phantoms and to the entire Phantoms team for their generosity helping the United Way and its volunteers in making this a huge success.

Button Up Coat Drive:

The final numbers for the coat drive are in. We collected and distributed 1740 coats this past winter to the needy of our community. Special recognition goes to Anna Masi from Help Hotline Crisis Center and to La France Dry Cleaning for all the did to make this drive a success. Also to our own, Rabb Marinelli and Don Gaudio, who always seemed to there when coats needed to be picked up or delivered. This coat drive serves as an example of what community is all about. Thank you to everyone for all the effort they put into this to make it a success.

Blood Drive:

United Way is planning a Red Cross Blood Drive for June 15th here at the United Way office. Please plan on giving the gift of life. More information as this gets finalized.

Earned Income Tax Credit:

As the federal tax season draws to a close preliminary numbers from the Super Saturday event at MYCAP and YSU have been reported. At the MYCAP in downtown Youngstown there was a 38% increase in people coming in for help in preparing their tax returns. At Youngstown State University there was a 20% increase in the number of individuals getting help with their taxes. That translates to a total of 130 people. Many more decided not to wait because taxes were being done on a first come, first served basis, but instead decided to make appointments to avoid long waits. More information on the entire tax season will be reported as soon as the IRS gives us the final data.

Suicide Prevention Workshop:

There are many union members that coach teens. We are pleased to announce that our United Way is co-sponsor of a workshop "Fighting the Demons – A Workshop on Youth Depression and Suicide for Coaches by Coaches." The keynote speaker is head baseball coach at Bowling Green High School and author of the book Fighting the Demons. Everyday there are 12 teen suicides in the United States. As mentors, coaches play a vital role in these young people's lives. Knowing the warning signs can really be the difference between life and death. The workshop is Friday May 15th from 8:00am to noon at the DeBartolo Club at YSU. Youngstown State University Football Coach Heacock will deliver opening remarks and Ohio State Head Football Coach Jim Tressel has prepared a video-taped portion for the program. Please spread the word about this to any coaches you may know and for more information have them contact dpiccirilli@helphotline.org or call 330 747-5111.

Annual Meeting:

This year The United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley will mark ninety years of serving the valley. As part of recognizing our loyal supporters, we want every union along with the companies recognized. We are working to match the information we have but would appreciate every local to let me know at the United Way the length of time you have partnered with us in serving the community. Please send a reply e-mail with your union information to pfraser@ymvunitedway.org or call Pete Fraser at 330 746-8494 to ensure labor is recognized. Now the date of this important event is May 7th at it is at 5:00pm to 7:00pm at the Davis Center of Fellows Riverside Garden in Mill Creek Park. Because of the tough economic times Bob Hannon wants to keep the cost as low as possible and still get as many

union members there that we can. As an added boost to local business we will be serving samples from Ohio Wine Imports so it is going to be just a wine and cheese buffet. Mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Mark Your Calendar:

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| • Youth Day of Caring | April 25 th |
| • United Way Annual Meeting | May 7 th |
| • NALC Food Drive | May 9 th |
| • Fighting the Demons Suicide Prevention | May 15 th |
| • United Way Spaghetti Dinner @ Mt. Carmel | May 17 th |
| • O'Charley's Bass Classic | May 28 th |
| | May 30 th |
| • United Way Blood Drive | June 15 th |
| • Book Bag Give Away | August 29 th |

Committee Calendar:

April 29th 9:00am is the next Community Service Committee scheduled meeting and it will be at the United Way office, 255 Watt Street in Youngstown.