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## IBEW News



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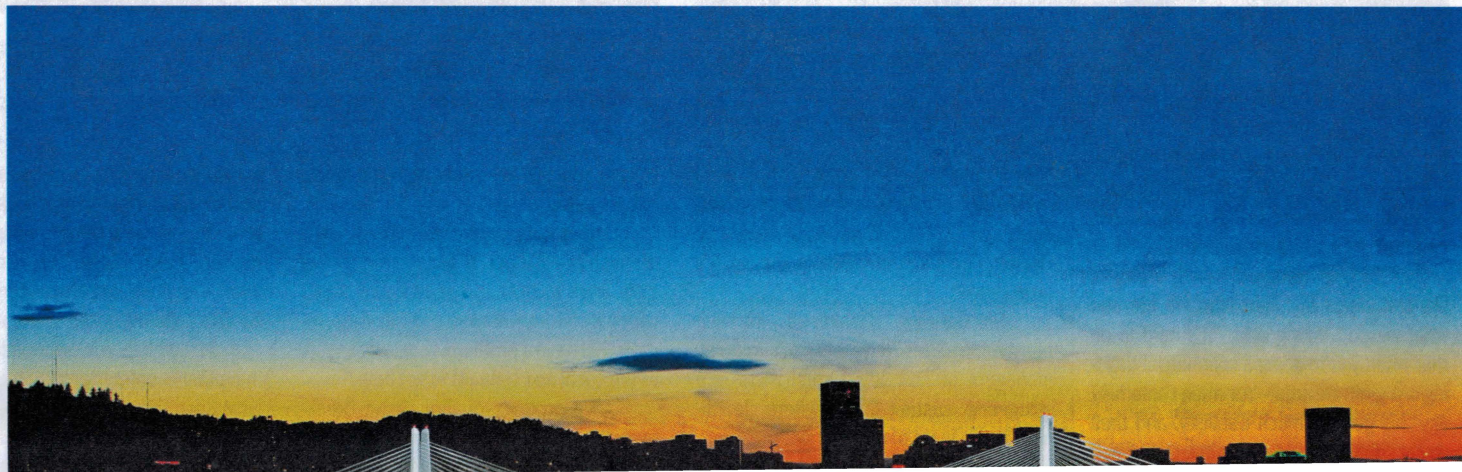
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the IBEW's high standards with the company's business model.

Contentious negotiations for members' most recent contract led to a brief lockout in 2013, but workers and Local 2284 leaders say they were able to reach a compromise and now maintain a strong and communicative relationship with management.

"The morale has been really good over the last year or two, and I think a lot of that contributed to winning the award," said Local 2284 member Raymond Taylor, who has worked at Milbank for 15 years.

Milbank also operates two other manufacturing plants in Missouri, one in Kansas City and another in Concordia, whose workers are represented by the IBEW.

"This is yet another example of a company manufacturing products in the United States and proving that they can be successful when they partner with the IBEW," said Jerry Kurimski, an international representative in the IBEW's Manufacturing Department.

To see other quality IBEW-made products, visit [IBEWmade.com](http://IBEWmade.com). ■

## Community Engagement Across IBEW Generations

Helping homeless families. Protecting the environment. Supporting military veterans. This October 18, IBEW members will have the opportunity to lend a hand where their communities need it the most.

The upcoming United Day of Action, "RENEWing our Connections to the Community," will partner experienced and younger members of the IBEW, so that together they can promote a nationwide effort of community engagement.

"There is no better way of bridging the gap between young and seasoned workers and ensuring the longevity of our organization than everyone coming together with a common objective: community involvement," said International President Edwin D. Hill.

Locals are encouraged to let existing RENEW (Reach out and Engage Next-gen Electrical Workers) Committees plan their local's activities, and locals that have yet to form committees are encouraged to involve younger members in the outreach effort.

"This will give younger members a chance to get their hands in organizing and leading their members," said Civic and Community Engagement Department International Representative Rateeluck "Tarn" Puvapiromquan.

Since 2011, dozens of RENEW committees have formed in locals across the IBEW to mentor the next generation of union members by fostering leadership and teaching them about the labor movement.

Participating locals are urged to unify the efforts by wearing United Day of Action T-shirts, which are available for purchase through Local Connections, and by sending any photos of their local's United Day of Action activities to the Civic and Community Engagement Department.

For more information about how to form a RENEW committee at your local, visit [www.ibew.org/IBEW/departments/CivicCommEngmt.htm](http://www.ibew.org/IBEW/departments/CivicCommEngmt.htm). ■

## In Calif., A Solar-Powered Leg Up

For many Bakersfield Local 428 members, California's thriving solar industry is an opportunity for job growth and stability.



*Homeboy graduates will have the opportunity to work alongside and learn from experienced Local 428 members during the construction of California solar plants.* Photo Credit: Photos used with permission by Local 428.

For some of the local's newest members, it's a second chance.

Local 428 is teaming up with 8minutenergy, a leader in the development and construction of solar projects, to create lasting career opportunities for graduates of a solar installation program.

"We have a great relationship with 8minutenergy, and this is just another idea they've presented to us that's really good for everybody," said Brian Holt, assistant business manager of Local 428.

Starting in 2012, 8minutenergy helped fund a solar installation program that offers courses to clients of Homeboy Industry, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization that has dedicated the last 25 years to helping former gang members and the previously incarcerated. The program trains its students in the fast-paced and grueling work of assembling solar photovoltaic modules, the heavy 3'x4' solar panels, onto the massive installations in developing solar farms.

After completing several weeks of training, about a dozen Homeboy graduates will help members of Local 428 in the

construction of two major solar farms that will begin later this year: Redwood and Springbok, both in Kern County. About 120 miles north of Los Angeles, they will provide power for about 65,000 and 85,000 homes respectively, spanning several hundred acres. The project is expected to take two years to complete.

While the solar training is valuable, 8minutenergy and

Homeboy were interested in helping the graduates to find more permanent and stable careers. This is where the IBEW comes in—throughout their work on the solar farms, said Holt, Homeboy Industry graduates will have the opportunity to work alongside experienced IBEW members doing the advanced wiring on the project, and the chance to take the entry exams to pursue an apprenticeship with Local 428.

"It helps them make that transition, where they can get good benefits and good pay," Holt said.

So far Homeboy Industry graduates have had a great record with IBEW-manned projects. Tom Buttgenbach, president of 8minutenergy, says his company approached San Diego Local 569 with the first round of Homeboy graduates two years ago, when work was about to begin on the Mount Signal solar farm, about 140 miles east of San Diego.

"We really highly value our relationship with the IBEW—as a developer we're obviously trying to make a profit, and it is our belief that well-trained workers are

better and faster and in the end deliver a lower cost point," Buttgenbach said. "If you do it right the first time, it ends up being cheaper."

The Mount Signal solar farm spans 1,940 acres, and at 266 megawatts, it provides power to 180,000 homes. Construction was completed last March. At its peak, more than 800 IBEW members were manning the project, including 12 Homeboy graduates.

"You stand on one end of these projects, and you can't even see the other end," said Micah Mitrosky, environmental organizer of Local 569.

Precision is vital in the installation of solar panels, which automatically adjust position to catch the most light from the sun.

At the solar farms in the California desert, temperatures can climb to 110° F, and work typically lasts 10 hours per day.

"The IBEW is great to work with, and Homeboy guys and gals are very hard workers—it's a hard program, and the reason why is we want to make sure you don't have just the knowledge, but the right mindset," Buttgenbach said. "The graduates all made a strong commitment to changing their lives, worked really hard and never complained."

Of the 12 Homeboy graduates who worked with Local 569 on the Mount Signal project, all are now enrolled in the local's apprenticeship program. Buttgenbach said that 8minutenergy and Homeboy hope to see the same results from the program's expansion to Local 428.

"At the end of the day, there is value in education. We are a firm believer in that, and we've worked with the IBEW very closely to structure labor agreements to capture that value," Buttgenbach said. "It's been a fantastic experience." ■