

play ▶ back

American Federation of Radio and Television Artists • Screen Actors Guild • CHICAGO

IN THIS TEMPLE
HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE
HE SAVED THE UNION
OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN
SHRINED FOREVER

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*A house divided
against itself cannot
stand.*

Abraham Lincoln



Welcome to the new look *Playback*. We are revamping the shape and style and adding content. We believe the articles and columns inside will match the beauty of the cover and layout. At the outset, I want to thank our *Playback* redesign committee. With Jay Disney's eye-popping design elements, Ilyssa Fradin, Donna Fulks, Herb Graham, Dennis Kelly, Laura Penn and Nancy Sellers concentrated on the focus and content. Great work all!

As the "new" executive director, I came in to this position with big shoes to fill, and a lot of excitement for the potential of Chicago AFTRA/SAG. Heraclitus' famous quote, "There is nothing permanent except change," has never been more evident than now.

What an amazing time to work for a union, but it's not for the faint of heart. The environment for our union is anything but placid. I come to this position during a time of challenge and great promise. Eileen Willenborg has left me an excellent staff and a great foundation to accomplish our ambitious goals. So what are we going to do? **Organize! Organize! Organize!**

I am heartened by progress we have made just in my first year here. We have established an organizing committee that is strong and innovative.

If we are to survive and thrive in the modern economy, we have to innovate technologically, be unafraid of the whipsaw changes in our industry and we have to educate new people in our performer and media community. We have to become a part of our city on a level other than our collective bargaining rights. During my tenure, it is my goal for us to become a high-profile institution that stands for excellence and activism in the midwest at large. We also have to revitalize our commitment, as members and staff, to this union. It may sound corny, but around the office our favorite phrase is: "It's a new day!"

We must look at our industry with new eyes and with renewed purpose. Our staff has answered the call. Most nights I can't get them to leave the office. This is a dedicated group of people who give their all for the members. We also have many committed members who I see spend countless hours in the service to this union. I hope every member will ask themselves, *how much do I really know about my union? And what can I do to make Chicago AFTRA/SAG better, stronger and more a part of my life?* If you don't consider yourself a joiner, please try to make an exception. We need you. The benefits of your participation will far outweigh the time you sacrifice. Your commitment as a member to help your union grow is what will ensure that we truly make it a "new day."

In upcoming issues, I will bring action items to you, the member. These will be challenges to you to get involved, be part of your union and part of the community. Staff is here to support what our members endeavor to do. Don't be absent during this exciting time in your union's history. Be there for the changes. You don't want to miss it.

- Eric Chaudron

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SAG BRANCH PRESIDENT



I was a non-union actor. Hey, we all were. No one is born a union actor. When I was a kid, I just wanted to be an actor, like those people on TV or in the movies. Community theater, high school drama department, college theater degree, no one told me I'd have to join a union to be a professional working actor. And, when I did join the union, I still didn't know what it meant. I did know I was going to get paid more and on time and that I could be represented by one of the big agents that I coveted from behind the counter of my Starbucks day job. But being a union actor didn't mean anything more to me than that.

Funny how time and experience can change an actor. This past September, I was given the honor of being elected your SAG Chicago Branch president. I had served the council for 10 years prior, doing all sorts of committee work, but

You will probably be hearing more and more talk about organizing in the coming months. After all, AFTRA dedicated the increase in the initiation fee to organizing. And there have been many activities going on here in Chicago and across the country to put those efforts into high gear.

All that talk has gotten me thinking about what organizing really is. And, no, I am not going to trot out all the old slogans and play *Solidarity Forever* in the background. That would be for a chat about traditional organizing. For broadcasters like me, such organizing is — relatively speaking — easy. We are mostly working in one place, and the union representatives can come to us. For the freelance community, it's considerably more complicated. There's no single studio or stage or other venue where the performers gather. There are agents and producers, and it's lots of work just to find the people you want to organize. But I'm not talking about traditional organizing right now.

If organizing is about helping people understand how the union can make a difference in their lives, then organizing has to go far beyond getting someone to “sign up.” It's about being proud to be a member of AFTRA, and identifying yourself as AFTRA, even when you are not actively trying to get someone to join.

Here's the way I see it. If a performer or fellow broadcaster asks you a question about the job — anything at all, from “Who is that

guy?” to “Where is the office?” — and if you help them, *that* is organizing. If you always act as a true professional, and do your best work every day, that is organizing. If you are always generous with praise and even constructive criticism, that is organizing. If people think of you as someone who wants everyone there to succeed, then you are organizing. When a member, or someone who wants to be a member, calls the AFTRA office, the way our staff answers and handles the call is organizing.

The bottom line is that we are “organizing” just by doing our jobs well, and helping others do their jobs well. We are showing them that we in AFTRA are true professionals. And that shows our colleagues that AFTRA *is* about the profession. And who wouldn't want to be a part of that?



- **Craig Dellimore**

running for president was not an easy decision. My family, friends and peers said I was crazy to take this on. Then one actor asked me what would be my goal if I were president of the Chicago Branch. And I knew! I remembered how unaware I was when I first became a union member, and I knew I had to do this.

See, I truly believe that we are a group of amazing, talented and somewhat tragic people. Who else in their right mind would go out day after day to be rejected? But even more so, who would go out on a job and not know their rights to a decent wage and safe working conditions? Who would work on a set and then sign a contract without knowing the terms of that agreement? Who would pay an agent a commission and not question how much is being taken? Who would choose to make a

career as a professional actor and not know what their union does for them? Well, unfortunately, too many of us.

I got active in my union because I wanted to understand what my union was doing for me and what I can do for my union. Now, I'm representing more than 4,000 members across nine states! How am I to reach each and every one of you to let you know that your union is part of the greatest labor movement in history, and no matter what is happening politically on a national scope, your union is there for you? You are your union.

Screen Actors Guild and the Chicago Branch provide many services and benefits. Your union has a dedicated staff that can help you with contracts, agents and casting concerns. They can also help you create union work. Through the Conservatory and other committees, we

have ongoing industry and educational seminars and workshops, free to all dues-paying members, hosted in the Kaufherr Members Resource Center. Your union keeps you posted on auditions, negotiations, events and the labor movement through our e-newsletter, *The Activator*. There are countless more benefits to being a union actor.

So, that's my goal as your SAG Chicago Branch president: To educate, inspire and empower professional actors to be the best union actor they can be. Hopefully, I have inspired you to ask some thoughtful questions and hopefully, you'll come to your union, get involved and make a difference.

In solidarity,

- **Ilyssa Fradin**



Listening Tour Comes to Chicago

On March 18 and 19, more than 120 Chicago members attended the Listening Tour meetings led by AFTRA President Roberta Reardon and SAG Secretary-Treasurer Amy Aquino.

The joint AFTRA and SAG Presidents' Forum for One Union is holding focused and informal discussions between the elected leadership of the two unions with diverse groups of members in several Locals and Branches across the country. The forum is working to establish a common vision for a single successor union representing professional performers, recording artists and broadcasters working in the entertainment and news media industries. The forum is not a formal committee, nor is it working on an actual "nuts-and-bolts" plan for creating a new union, rather it is designed to be a place where leadership can hear from working members, with the goal to work together to build a shared vision. These member-to-member discussions are only informal at this point. There is not yet any actual plan or timeline to formally combine the two unions.

Direct input from working members is critically important to successful creation of one new union. The presidents have agreed to jointly conduct the nationwide Listening Tour in as many Locals and Branches as possible across the country to hear from members about their concerns for the future. The tour examines a wide range of important questions such as: how is members' work changing, how might members better equip themselves for the future, and how would a successor union better serve all members? The Listening Tour is talking with members throughout the country who work under all of the contracts.

The Presidents' Forum has conducted a comprehensive review of member input received at Listening Tour meetings across the country. In every location, members have expressed overwhelming support for the creation of a

unified national union representing actors, recording artists, broadcasters and other media professionals.

The information coming out of these meetings will be presented to the AFTRA National Board of Directors and the National Board of Directors of Screen Actors Guild in May.

AFTRA President Roberta Reardon observed, "I am very proud of the strong partnership and clear vision that AFTRA and SAG members are forging together through this process. We have come a very long way in a short period of time, and I applaud each and every member who has participated in this exciting and important endeavor."

SAG President Ken Howard noted, "Each step we take together brings us closer to our crucial goal of becoming one union. I look forward to sharing our work with the SAG-AFTRA Relations Task Force and, ultimately, the SAG National Board."

Members will continue to receive regular updates regarding the progress in the work to build one new successor union. For more

information, AFTRA members may visit AFTRA.com and SAG members may visit SAG.org.



The misinterpretation of **check avail**, **first refusal**, and **on-hold** for commercial work has again reared its ugly head to cause confusion among performers, casting directors, talent agents, producers, etc.

Always remember that there's a *financial difference* between check avail, first refusal and on-hold.

Check avail and first refusal do not convey any commitment on the part

the person who calls you that you are treating the on-hold as a firm booking. This means that you are holding a specific day and will not accept other work. And, in the event of a commercial cancellation, you will be entitled to a day's pay or your guarantee, whichever is greater.

It's always good to hear that a casting director or producer thinks you were so perfect for the commercial that they want to check your availability

notified in writing about the financial commitment helps protect you from the dreaded "you said-I said" battles. When there's money involved, these battles often don't go well.

It really is easy to convey to the caller that you know the difference between check avail, first refusal and on-hold. When you're called and put on-hold for a commercial, simply say, "I'm treating this as a firm booking." Depending on their response, you'll soon find out if

But I thought I was booked!?

of the casting director, your agent or whoever you're speaking with. It carries no contractual commitment on either side.

Check avail is just that — someone is calling to see *if* you're available. If you are available, then let them know that as you speak, you are available on the days requested. But if later you're offered a firm booking for a different commercial, then you may accept that firm booking without notifying the original caller. Keeping common courtesy in mind, you should probably let the original caller know you're no longer available.

If, after discussing a first refusal with your talent agent or casting director, you do receive a firm booking for other work, again, you really shouldn't refuse the firm booking. However, since first refusal is one step above check avail, it really is common courtesy that you immediately notify your agent or the casting director that you have accepted a firm booking for the day(s) in question and are no longer available.

On-hold constitutes a booking. It is a commitment and you must treat it as a firm booking and confirm your understanding by repeating back to

in case the advertising agency agrees with them — or if it's been indicated to the advertising agency that their client likes a couple of performers for that single principal commercial role, the casting director will again want to check your availability. Often if there is a small group of contenders, the casting director or producer may ask for a first refusal because he or she would like to hear from you the minute someone else is vying for your attention. However, none of these scenarios means you've booked the gig — it's just a headsup that you've made it to the next round and final casting is not finished.

More often than not, when you're given a check avail or first refusal, you are not notified that you have been released. That's just the nature of the business. But it is always correct that you let them know that you've accepted other work and are no longer available for theirs.

In this day of e-mail, texting and tweeting, it is suggested that when you are placed on-hold, given a firm booking or called in for a commercial fitting, that you get that in writing. There have been miscommunications between agents and performers that simply should not happen. A simple request that you be

they know the difference — and the dialogue can begin.

Of course, if you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call the AFTRA/SAG office at (312) 573-8081.

Movie Club

**Attention AFTRA/SAG
Members in Good Standing:**

If you are interested in receiving an occasional free sneak preview movie pass, please join the AFTRA/SAG Movie Club. Send your name and email address to Kathy Byrne, director of TV/Theatrical Contracts at kbyrne@aftra.com.

Passes will be sent via email a few times a year as they become available.



The KMRC Video Suite Sweet

By Laura Penn

As a paid-up member of AFTRA, SAG or AEA, you have free access to our very practical studio facilities at One East Erie in Chicago. There's parking around the corner and plenty of food within walking distance. Spend the day working on your acting career at the Kaufherr Members Resource Center.

This is a perfect place to meet with other actors in Chicago. Pick up flyers about upcoming events, gather information to inspire your new ideas and think about what do next. You can sit and read a book or a play — there's quite a selection of donated entertainment, scripts and directories. Bring a notebook and explore this facility to the best of your ability.

Of course there's free Wi-Fi, so feel free to bring your computer. Or, just use the computers and printers already provided. There's a phone and fax, too.

You will also find the locked Audio Suite and Video Suite — my favorite place in Chicago. I was amazed to discover this useful, free “secret,” and I am happy to share these details.

The Video Suite is equipped with a digital video camera, a new Pentium computer with LCD flat screen and a DVD player/burner, editing software (Pinnacle Studios), and very comfortable chairs. There are two banks of stage lighting on dimmers, umbrella lights on stands to act as focus marks and a green screen background.

Create a very professional-looking demo reel in HD! Record and post your auditions on the Internet, email it to your agent or just rehearse in front of the camera. Free training and technical guidance is provided. Call the AFTRA/SAG office for the class schedule, (312)573-8081. There's often someone there to read with you and help with the technical details, especially if you call in advance.

The K in KMRC is for Kaufherr. At his death, long-time Chicago voiceover talent Jerry Kaufherr created the trust that provided the seed money (and several years of continued support) to open the center. It's a privilege to be provided with this space. It is sustained for us by a group of people who believe in local arts and creative entertainment. You can meet this group, the KMRC Committee, on the fourth Wednesday of each month at noon. Current committee work is primarily in two areas: operations and fundraising. The KMRC needs to raise money to continue. (See page 7.) Join the committee and get involved. Call the office to volunteer, (312) 573-8081.

Audio and Video Training

To use the video studio and audio studio, you must attend a training class. Training is offered on the first Wednesday of the month, 5 – 9 p.m. The class covers the basics of using the audio studio and a brief introduction to the video studio. An advanced video training class is also offered several times a year.

Call the AFTRA/SAG office at (312) 573-8081 or Kathy Byrne at kbyrne@aftra.com to sign-up. Reservations are required.

A variety of other training sessions and seminars are available and are announced in *The Activator* and on The Hotline, (312) 867-3710. You must be a member of AFTRA, SAG or AEA to use the center.

The KMRC is open:

Monday, Tuesday, Friday
9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Wednesday, Thursday
9 a.m.–9 p.m.

Don't forget, the KMRC observes all AFTRA and SAG holidays.



Bill Borah and Ilyssa Fradin
in the KMRC Video Suite.

Fundraising and the KMRC

Last November, the Kaufherr Members Resource Center sent its annual fundraising appeal to Chicago AFTRA and SAG members who reside in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin. We are happy to report that we raised nearly \$10,000 through the end of the year. 2010 was the first year that our donations have increased year-over-year since the economy crashed in 2008 — so this is a very positive development. A heartfelt *thank-you* goes to the 68 individuals who wrote checks to support the KMRC.

Many of those who responded, including broadcasters, donated for the first time. The gifts ranged from \$10 to more than \$1,000. Twenty-three members gave \$100-\$499, two members gave \$500, one donation was for \$1,000, and two donations were well over \$1,000. The average gift was \$148.

Think about it, though, we have nearly 3,700 members who reside within 100 miles of Chicago, have access to the KMRC, and received the appeal letter. If 10 percent of that number – 370 – had contributed \$100, we would have nearly met our fundraising goal of \$40,000.

The Center is an asset to every AFTRA/SAG/AEA member, especially those who reside in the greater Chicago metropolitan area. The KMRC is free and members should continue to “work the perk.” Since it opened in 2001, more than 30,000 AFTRA/SAG/AEA members have registered to use the KMRC. Since 2008, the KMRC is where more than 100 signatories to the unions’ contracts have held auditions for their movie projects, and numerous union TV pilots, commercials and non-broadcast/industrials were cast there, too.

As we said in the annual fundraising letter, “Bluntly stated, we are in a funding crunch because there will be no further grants from the Kaufherr Trust,” which by its terms had to spend all of its money by 2009 and ceased operating at the end of that year. If the KMRC is to remain open and free to all union performers; if it is to continue its training programs, Casting Access and Agent Access for union performers; if the video and audio studios are to remain open and available at no charge; if performers are to have access to computers, printers, faxes, telephones and high-speed Internet – literally an office without charge in the heart of Chicago’s River North production area, we must raise more than \$10,000 each year. We simply will not be able to sustain the KMRC unless we raise significantly more money than the 2010 annual campaign generated.

Even though we fell short of our fundraising goal, we were well ahead of the amounts donated in 2007, 2008 and 2009. Remember, you don’t have to wait until December 31, 2011 to make a donation to the KMRC. You can make a tax-deductible donation at any time during the year. So, if you weren’t able to send us a check last year, why not do it right now? Your donation is tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. You can send a check, payable to the KMRC Inc., to the AFTRA/SAG office (One E. Erie, Suite 650, Chicago, IL 60611), or you may contribute online by credit card at KMRCChicago.com.

Think of it as an investment in your career and a way to support the actors, singers and broadcasters who will follow you.



KMRC and Facebook

How often have you visited the KMRC website in the past month? How often have you visited Facebook in just the last day?

You can now stay up to date on all of the events and training offered at the KMRC while you are on Facebook. Find the KMRC Chicago page, like it, and visit often!

Please don’t go away shaking your head if you don’t eat, breathe and sleep new technology. The important thing to remember is that your unions are reaching out to members in a variety of ways, and if one doesn’t suit your needs, another will.

Information on events at the KMRC will still be posted at KMRCChicago.com, included in The Activator, and available on The Hotline, (312) 867-3710.



AFTRA and SAG Reach Tentative Agreement with Industry Representatives on New Non-Broadcast/Industrial Contracts

The Joint AFTRA and SAG Non-Broadcast/Industrials Negotiating Committee have reached a tentative agreement with industry representatives on terms for three-year successor agreements to the SAG Industrial and Educational Contract and the AFTRA National Code of Fair Practice for Non Broadcast/Industrial/Educational Recorded Material. The contracts were set to expire on April 30, 2011 and will now be effective May 1, 2011 to April 30, 2014.

The new agreement includes a 4.04 percent overall increase in minimum compensation during the term of the agreement, with a 2 percent increase effective on May 1, 2011 and another 2 percent increase effective on Nov. 1 2012, 18 months into the term of the contract. The agreement also obtains a 0.2 percent increase in employer contributions to the AFTRA Health and Retirement Funds and the Screen Actors Guild-Producers Pension and Health Plans, effective on May 1, 2011, which raises the total employer contribution from 15.3 percent to 15.5 percent, as well as the addition of new media to the areas of jurisdiction covered by these contracts.

To more clearly reflect the type of work produced under these agreements, the contracts have been renamed the AFTRA National Code of Fair Practice for Corporate/Educational Recorded Material and the Producers-SAG 2011 Codified Corporate/Educational Contract.

Screen Actors Guild Negotiating Chair Ed Kelly said, "We are pleased to have reached this tentative agreement. I

want to recognize the hard work of our committee and of the staff members who helped support our efforts during bargaining. This is an important and meaningful agreement to our many members across the country. We were all focused on working together to remove as many obstacles as possible in order to encourage more work under this contract.

AFTRA Negotiating Chair Mike Kraft said, "For union performers, securing work under this contract often makes

the critical difference in qualifying for health and retirement benefits and in smaller markets such as Cleveland, this contract is our 'bread and butter.' I'm very happy that we have reached this tentative agreement with the industry, and that our committee worked together so diligently and so well. I applaud the leadership of my SAG co-chair, Ed Kelly, and the expert guidance of AFTRA Co-Chief Negotiator Mathis L. Dunn Jr. and his SAG counterpart Ray Rodriguez." Kraft also serves as president of the AFTRA Cleveland Local.

Commercial Rate Reminder

Effective April 1, free bargaining with principal performers for TV session and use fees and with radio performers for commercials made-for-Internet and commercials made-for-new media **ceased**. Please visit AFTRA.com or sag.org or call the AFTRA/SAG Freelance Department, (312) 573-8081, for the new rates.

TV Commercials:

Made-for-Internet Minimum:

Principal on-camera eight-week option: \$787.65, one-year option: \$2072.70
Principal off-camera eight-week option: \$592.25, one-year option: \$1558.55
General extra - Unlimited rate: \$323
Hand model - Unlimited rate: \$492.90

Made-for-New Media Minimum:

Principal on-camera eight-week option: \$787.65, one-year option: \$2072.70
Principal off-camera eight-week option: \$592.25 one-year option: \$1558.55
General extra - Unlimited rate: \$323
Hand model - Unlimited rate: \$492.90

Radio Commercials:

Made-for-Internet Minimum: Actor, announcer solo, duo eight-week option: \$349.60, one-year option: \$920
Made-for-New Media Minimum: Actor, announcer solo, duo eight-week option: \$349.60, one-year option: \$920

Sound Recordings Code Extension Ratified

AFTRA members who work in sound recordings have ratified an 18-month extension agreement to the 2007–2010 AFTRA National Code of Fair Practice for Sound Recordings.

Voting by phone or Internet closed February 8, 2011 with affected members voting 99 percent in favor of approving the 2010–2011 extension to the Sound Recordings Code. The extension is retroactive to July 1, 2010 and runs until Dec. 31, 2011.

The 18-month extension agreement includes:

- An increase in the record labels' contributions to the AFTRA Health and Retirement Funds for both royalty and non-royalty artists,
- Improved communications between AFTRA and the record labels to inform newly signed royalty artists of their guaranteed health insurance benefits and AFTRA member services,
- Re-defining the length of a "side" or a recorded song from 3½ to 4½ minutes, which reflects the change in popular music since the original definition was placed in the Code in the 1950s.
- The creation of the AFTRA/Recording Industry Committee, which will meet throughout the year in both Los Angeles and New York to resolve contractual issues and discuss and make recommendations to matters affecting the operation and administration of the AFTRA Sound Code.
- The commencement of negotiations for a new Music Video Agreement, which will govern the employment of performers hired for music videos.

AFTRA and SAG Members Ratify New TV and Film Agreements

In January, AFTRA and SAG members voted overwhelmingly to approve a new, three-year contract covering theatrical and television production under the Producer-Screen Actors Guild Basic Agreement and Television Agreement, Exhibit A to the AFTRA Network Television Code and the CW Supplement, which applies to both unions.

AFTRA, SAG and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers reached a tentative agreement in November on the deal that provides increases in base rates, contributions to the unions' benefits plans, expanded employment opportunities and other improvements for working performers.

Overall, the memberships of SAG and AFTRA voted 93.52 percent to 6.48 percent in favor of the new agreement. Ballots were mailed to 137,437 members of AFTRA and SAG, of which 25.09 percent returned them. The final vote was certified by Integrity Voting Systems, an impartial election service based in Everett, Wash.

The new pact goes into effect on July 1, 2011 and remains in force until June 30, 2014.

Upcoming AFTRA Contract Negotiations

Right now, AFTRA members around the nation are preparing for the successful renegotiation of our two outstanding major national collective bargaining agreements:

- AFTRA National Code of Fair Practice for Network Television Broadcasting (aka: the "Front of the Book") which covers all on and off-camera talent appearing on television programming such as reality shows, syndicated dramas, daytime serials, game shows, talk shows, variety and musical programs, news, sports, and promotional announcements, will expire on Nov. 15, 2011.
- AFTRA National Code of Fair Practice for Sound Recordings, which covers Sound Recordings on all media and all music formats, as well as audiobooks, comedy albums, cast albums and any other sound recording utilizing vocal performance, will expire on Dec. 31, 2011.

Wages and Working Conditions meetings for the AFTRA National Code of Fair Practice for Sound Recordings will be held in Chicago this spring and early summer. Members who work under this contract are encouraged to participate. Please call Jolene Jones at the Chicago office to volunteer, (312) 573-8081.

Negotiations will start on the Sound Recordings Code in late summer and on the AFTRA Front of the Book in the fall.





Dennis Kelly and Ami Silvestri



Kelly Demaret and Branch President Ilyssa Fradin



SAG Award Show Viewing Party

Almost 100 Branch members and guests enjoyed themselves and cheered for their fellow actors January 30 at a Screen Actors Guild Awards viewing party. The Chicago party was held at Sub 51 at Hub 51.



Tony Castillo



Stacey Elaine



SAG Foundation board member Nancy Sellers



Chicago Executive Director Eric Chaudron and Branch council member Mary Kay Cook



Grace McPhillips and husband Corbett Lunsford

Concerning the Contract: *Local Hire*

“Local hire” is one of those terms that is used, and often abused, in our neck of the woods. You, as a performer, want to work, and it can be very tempting to want to negotiate your services in order to secure a job. Your agent, likewise, wants to seal a deal in a competitive environment where many other agents are submitting talent for the same roles. Producers (i.e., your employers) are looking for the best performers for the job, but have budget considerations and are typically eyeing the bottom line with every move they make. The crux that is sometimes created is when a producer offers less than AFTRA/SAG minimum terms as they pertain to travel provisions, and whether directly expressed or implied, you or your representative accepts that offer.

Local hire is when you work in the market of your current residence. You are able to drive to the work location in the morning, return home in the evening and are not in need of accommodations to rest at the end of the day. Conversely, if you are not local, you are considered on “overnight location.” By nature of your distance from the location, you are treated with travel provision coverage under the terms of AFTRA’s and SAG’s negotiated agreements, including, but not limited to, airfare or mileage reimbursement, accommodations and per diem to cover any meals not provided on set. Your workday begins when you depart from the hotel and return to the hotel. This workday structure is what we refer to as “portal to portal.”

If you are working on an overnight location, there are only two exceptions that would allow for these terms to be reduced or waived. First, if a producer working on location in our region brings in overnight performers within a 500-mile radius, he or she may opt to take advantage of our 500-mile travel waiver.

This waiver allows for waived travel pay (your compensation for travel time) for the incoming and outgoing travel days for day performers working on television or theatrical projects. For example, if a production company from Los Angeles films in Detroit and hires a performer from Chicago (or anywhere within 500 miles); the salary for the day of travel when no other work is performed that day may be waived. Aside from this, all other provisions of the contract (transportation, accommodations, portal-to-portal workday, per diem, etc.) are applicable, and you must be treated as an overnight location performer.

The second circumstance involves a producer working at the producer’s base of operations. Our TV/Theatrical Contract provides that when a producer is working at his or her home studio or base of operations and brings you to that home base, the producer is obligated to pay a \$75 travel allowance up until the commencement of employment and must pay for your transportation

(airfare or mileage reimbursement). All other terms, such as accommodations and per diem, must be negotiated. For example, a producer’s base of operations is in Detroit and he or she regularly produces in Detroit. When a producer hires a performer from Chicago to work in Detroit, the performer would receive \$75 plus mileage (currently reimbursed at 30 cents). Any other provisions related to travel would have to be negotiated by the performer or the performer’s representative.

Waiving any of the travel provisions weakens the contract terms members fight so hard to gain in negotiations. Falsely claiming local hire and traveling at the end of a long workday is unsafe and could put you at risk. It is your responsibility to report misuse of the terms of the contracts in order to keep strong contracts for your future. Your AFTRA/SAG staff is available to answer any questions pertaining to the travel provisions. If issues arise, do not hesitate to call, (312) 573-8081.

Demystifying SAG Low Budget Agreements

On February 9, 25 filmmakers and actors gathered in the KMRC for a seminar aimed at demystifying SAG Low Budget Agreements. Kathy Byrne, director of TV/Theatrical Contracts, was joined on the panel by Chicago SAG council member/producer Mary Kay Cook and producer/Flashpoint Academy teacher Amy Rising. The panelists covered the various aspects involved with signing the Student Film Agreement and SAG’s Low Budget Agreements.

The focus of the seminar was to correct the misconception that there is too much paperwork involved in signing one of SAG’s contracts for independent filmmakers. Over the years, the process has been made very simple and welcoming for filmmakers to hire union talent.

Tentative dates and topics for future seminars include: June, Working with SAG’s Ultra-Low Budget and Modified Low Budget Agreements; October, Working with SAG’s Student Film and Short Film Agreements. If you are interested in attending one of the future seminars, please call (312) 573-8081 to be added to the email notification list.



Restructuring AFTRA's National Broadcast Steering Committee

AFTRA is in the process of restructuring the AFTRA National Broadcast Steering Committee with the goal of improving member communication and coordination among the AFTRA shops with the same owners. One of the many outcomes anticipated from the restructuring would be increased leverage and coordinated strategy with our employers to obtain good contracts for the benefit and protection of AFTRA members.

AFTRA has begun to activate Ownership Councils for all AFTRA units that have more than two AFTRA shops in the owner group. For example, all CBS-TV owned and operated shops will meet via phone conferences on periodic bases to update each other on issues in the shops and determine if a union response should be local or national in nature. This type of periodic communication among union representatives appears all the more important now that many broadcast owners are consolidating their labor relations. AFTRA staff often talks with other AFTRA staff, in particular owner groups, however, Ownership Councils will permit local union representatives to become more engaged in these national ownership discussions.

In addition to addressing hot issues, bargaining proposals and concessions, this proposed increase in communication among owner groups can build proactive bridges between local units, such as an exchange of ideas on training and education in local shops, solidarity among shops and possible joint bargaining goals, if deemed appropriate by the particular Ownership Council.

Building on the Ownership Councils is the proposal that each Ownership

Council will select one or two representatives (depending on the size of the council) to attend the bi-yearly Broadcast Steering Committee (BSC) meeting. Currently, the BSC is made up of local broadcasters selected by the local AFTRA Board. Again, depending on the size of the local, there can be from one to five representatives from each local attending BSC. The proposal to have Ownership Council representative attend the BSC will assure attendance of a representative from every broadcast owner group. BSC will be guaranteed perspectives in BSC discussions on national recommendations.

Consolidation in the broadcast world and in corporate labor relations requires greater communication between AFTRA locals. Implementation of Ownership Councils and Ownership Council representation at the BSC is one more avenue in maximizing AFTRA's effectiveness and strength in an ever-changing world.

Do you read
The Activator?

AFTRA Shows Keep Local Actors Working

Chicago AFTRA actors have enjoyed the employment provided by two television series in the area, one in Detroit and the other right here in Chicago.

Set and shot on Chicago, Fox's *The Chicago Code* hired almost 200 local performers during the first season. Members also enjoyed the benefit of a Detroit production, *Detroit 1-8-7*. More than 170 Chicago members were cast for work on the ABC show.

In February, Chicago AFTRA invited members that had worked on *The Chicago Code* to a special screening hosted by series star Matt Laurie.

At press time, members are hoping that both shows will be renewed.

Save *The Chicago Code*.

Despite steady numbers, the show's second season is not guaranteed. *The Chicago Code* airs 8 p.m Monday on Fox.

Do you enjoy the show and the boost it supplies to the local economy, including jobs for Chicago performers?

Fans of *The Chicago Code* started an online petition. Join in the effort. A link is available at KMRCChicago.com.

What breaking news did you miss? Did you hear about all of the events presented by the KMRC, including training and workshops?

Print newsletters are great, but you can't beat email for quick communication. Stay informed.

Subscribe to *The Activator*, the Chicago AFTRA/SAG e-newsletter. To add your name to the official Chicago email list (union business only and the list will not be shared), send your name and union ID number to [Natasha Beals](mailto:Natasha.Beals@aftra.com) at nbeals@aftra.com with "add me" as the subject.

Thought you were on the list but haven't seen a copy lately? There is a new issue of *The Activator* every couple of weeks. If you haven't received one this month, or if you've changed your email address, please resubscribe today!



AROUND TOWN

In December, [David Pasquesi](#) was named [Best Actor](#) at the 2010 Best of the Midwest Awards.

The annual awards show honors the best films and filmmakers showcased throughout the year at the Midwest Independent Film Festival, the nation's only film festival solely dedicated to Midwest filmmakers, presenting audiences with regionally produced independent cinema every month. This year-round film festival sits proudly at the center of the independent film scene in Chicago and the Midwest and is dedicated to celebrating and strengthening the Midwest filmmaking community.



In October, [Women In Film Chicago's 2010 Focus Awards](#) honored Emmy Award-winning documentary producer Jamie Ceaser; legendary broadcast pioneer and Chicago AFTRA member Merri Dee; and Chicago-born Hollywood icon Raquel Welch, *at left*.

The Focus Achievement Awards recognize and honor women who have made a significant contribution and impact in the industries of film, television, advertising and new media. The evening benefits the work of Women In Film Chicago, supporting the careers of women in the content-creation industries.

Nominated by Chicago member Ceoria M. Coates, [Dawn Gray](#) of the Gray Talent Group Inc. was named Screen Actors Guild's [Agent of the Month](#) for November.

"Dawn is the hardest-working agent I have ever had the pleasure of dealing with since I joined SAG," wrote Coates. "...she is really very dedicated in trying to help actors to improve on their craft. She suggests ways to sharpen your acting ability and is helpful in suggesting resources that will be beneficial to us. Dawn is easy to communicate with and is extremely patient when listening to your concerns. She spends as much time with a person as is needed...She is never patronizing!"

At right, Gray's staff had a surprise party for her to celebrate the honor.



The [2010 AICP](#) (Association of Independent Commercial Producers) Chicago Show was an incredible success in November. The event is a celebration of the industry and the amazing body of work produced in the Midwest. This year, Optimus produced the sponsors' reel of some 35 companies supporting the event, including AFTRA and SAG. Held at the Chicago Cultural Center, more than 1,000 people attended.

In April, Chicago AFTRA/SAG held another of the popular [Everything You Always Wanted to Know About the Unions But Didn't Know Who to Ask!](#) events at the Acting Studio Chicago. Several dozen pre-union performers turned out to learn about AFTRA and SAG. On hand to answer their questions were Grace McPhillips, AFTRA/SAG actor, film producer; Craig J. Harris, AFTRA/SAG actor, Emmy Award-winning screenwriter; Marisa Paonessa, franchised agent, Paonessa Talent Agency; and Chicago AFTRA/SAG staff Jamie Marchi, director of freelance; Kathy Nelson, director of membership; and Kathy Byrne, director of TV/theatrical contracts.



Work the Perk! AFTRA/SAG Conservatory

By *Stephen Spencer, Co-Chair Conservatory Committee*

Your Conservatory Committee is working hard to bring programming of interest to our fellow union actors, and we've started out the year with some very successful events. In January, a capacity crowd attended The Business of Doing Business panel, which included casting director Claire Simon, talent agent Todd Turina and CPA Greg Mermel. In February, lucky participants got to work with veteran voiceover agent Susan Farlik to learn how to create a successful voiceover audition. In March, casting expert and teacher David Murphy of The Greenroom returned to enlighten us on techniques of incorporating improvisation into commercial auditions. Workshops slated for the coming year include



a panel on the rising business of online casting, with representatives from Casting Networks, Breakdown Services and Voicebank; a mock TV and Film audition workshop with the fabulous casting team from Paskal Rudnicke Casting, and the reprise of Ann Jacques' popular ear-prompter workshop. May brought our annual Red Hot Headshot event. To keep our programming vital, we want your



feedback! Last year, we heard that participants needed cheaper parking, and we worked out a deal with the building parking lot. We now offer a four-hour parking ticket for just \$10. It's easy to let us know what you're thinking. Simply email your thoughts and ideas to chicago.conservatorycommittee@gmail.com. Remember, AFTRA/SAG Conservatory programming is a benefit of union membership. It's offered to AFTRA and SAG members in good standing. Cost to you? Free! Not sure what's going on in the KMRC? Go to www.KMRCChicago.com and click on the Events tab. Make sure you stay tuned to *The Activator*, the Chicago AFTRA/SAG e-newsletter, for upcoming Conservatory events at the KMRC. **Work the perk!**



Another benefit of your membership is access to scholarship programs available to eligible members and their dependents.

Kyle McCreeley, son of Chicago AFTRA/SAG member Jane McCreeley, returns this month from Japan where he attended Kobe University.

Kyle was a recipient of an AFTRA/Heller Memorial Foundation Scholarship. Information about it and the SAG Foundation's Dale Scholarship is available at AFTRA.com and SAGFoundation.org.

AFTRA

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AFTRA & SAG Members Protest Anti-Labor Bills

Since the beginning of the year, anti-labor bills have been introduced in dozens of states. It is believed that if these actions succeed, anti-union efforts may spread across the country and ultimately could affect labor organizations like Screen Actors Guild and AFTRA.

Dozens of Chicago AFTRA and SAG members traveled to Madison, Wis. in February and March, and participated in Chicago's We Are One rally April 9.

“It was an honor to stand 3 1/2 hours in 12-degree weather on a snowy afternoon in Madison with my brothers and sisters from every union you can think of, as far as the eye could see at the base of the capital building,” said Chicago SAG member Shawn Patrick O’Donnell. “To join a union is to become part of a family, brothers and sisters working for the best for all. If you don’t know about the history of unions and of your union, do your homework.”

The right of working people to join together and collectively bargain is enshrined in law. It is fundamental to unionism and allows working people to choose to have a common voice on wages and working conditions in their industries. If the proposed action in Wisconsin succeeds in denying union workers their fundamental right to join together and bargain collectively, it could happen anywhere.



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CALENDAR

- May 7 Conservatory Headshot event
- May 27 Office and KMRC close at 1 p.m.
- May 30 Closed, Memorial Day
- June 6 Conservatory Event
Film Auditioning with
Paskal Rudnicke Casting
- June 13 16th Annual Joint AFTRA/SAG
membership meeting
- July 1 Office and KMRC close at 1 p.m.
- July 4 Closed, Independence Day