



## 2017 USW Constitutional Convention RESOLUTION

### Resolution No. 20

## Building Unity Through Helping Others

**WHEREAS**, in its thirty-third year of operation, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund allows Canadian Steelworkers to reach beyond their workplaces to dramatically improve the lives of fellow Canadians and workers throughout the world; and

**WHEREAS**, financed by a negotiated contribution through Steelworker collective bargaining agreements, the Humanity Fund feeds the hungry, houses the homeless, provides tools for workers and communities to help themselves, provides educational opportunities to workers and trade unionists, and advances an agenda of human rights and workers' rights in a global economy; and

**WHEREAS**, now backed by over 60,000 Steelworkers, the Fund has forged alliances with unions and community groups in the developing world. Among its recent projects are: union health and safety training with Peruvian miners and Colombian local union leaders; vocational skills training for war affected youth in Liberia; women's health and participation in Bolivia, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico; worker and human rights education with Bangladesh garment workers; support for victims of human rights abuses with women in Colombia; human rights education in forestry communities in Chile and India; and support for democratic community economic development in South Africa, Mozambique and Guatemala as well as a campaign for corporate accountability of Canadian mining companies in their overseas operations; and

**WHEREAS**, by connecting Steelworkers in the North to peoples of the South, the Humanity Fund has vividly demonstrated how the seemingly separate problems facing workers in different countries are in fact similar in origin and nature and how common strategies may be adopted to promote human and workers' rights and reduce poverty everywhere; and

**WHEREAS**, among the many benefits of the Humanity Fund are a more active and aware USW membership, new teams of skilled activists in international solidarity, a union better attuned to the threats of a world economy, an enormous amount of goodwill and a favorable perception for our Union; and

**WHEREAS**, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund has contributed over \$4 million to global solidarity over the last three years, including support for Canadian Steelworker communities affected by flooding or wild fires in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Cache Creek, British Columbia and Fort McMurray, Alberta, and assistance to resettle 18 Syrian refugee families in Canada; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States has restrictive laws that continue to make it difficult to fund the same type of Humanity Fund in the U.S. as currently exists in Canada; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2004, our Union established a separate U.S. tax-exempt organization, the Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization (SCEO), which includes in its mission the promotion of human and civil rights efforts, the strengthening of educational opportunities for working families and the providing of financial assistance in cases of natural disaster; and

**WHEREAS**, the SCEO, through monies obtained by way of cooperative agreements and grants from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Labor, delivers health and safety training to over 20,000 workers annually, and provides funding for medical surveillance of current and former nuclear workers; and

**WHEREAS**, since 2005, the SCEO has contributed nearly \$2.6 million for relief to our members who were victims of hurricanes, tornados and flooding throughout the United States and has supported union members devastated by natural disasters worldwide, including the earthquake in Haiti and earthquake and tsunami in Japan; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to the good work of the funds, we estimate that each USW Local Union is responsible for at least 100 hours a year of volunteer service, having an estimated annual impact of \$5 million on our communities where we live and work; and

**WHEREAS**, this volunteer work includes a variety of projects including collecting food for the hungry; clothing for the needy; mentoring children; collecting toys for kids; caring for veterans and the elderly; helping survivors of domestic violence, and raising millions of dollars for various non-profits that help millions of people and support dozens of charitable causes in the United States, Canada and around the world; and

**WHEREAS**, Steelworker members, associate members, retirees, staff and their families often focus charitable efforts on projects and fundraising that help laid-off, locked out, displaced and striking USW members and their families, showing the true meaning of solidarity and unity; and

**WHEREAS**, USW activists in Next Generation, Women of Steel, Civil and Human Rights, Leadership Scholarship, SOAR and elsewhere have stepped up to lead many of the

these projects, proving that community service helps build leadership, organizing and other skills applicable to other important roles in our Union; and

**WHEREAS**, the USW has a proud history of assisting the United Way and other charities, and in 2016 partnered with the Jefferson Awards Foundation, an organization committed to promoting and honoring community service in the United States, by becoming a Jefferson Awards Champion; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2016, the Union launched the USW Cares Jefferson Awards program as a way to highlight USW members and retirees in the United States and Canada for their amazing community service work; and

**WHEREAS**, in just two years this project produced some 250 nominations from across the United States and Canada, and resulted in winners being named in each USW District and from the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR); and

**WHEREAS**, Priscilla Puente, a member of USW Local 13-227 in Pasadena, Texas, won a national Jefferson Award in 2016 for her work helping domestic violence survivors earn family-sustaining employment and economic freedom from their abusers at USW-represented workplaces, bringing great pride and attention to our great Union.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:**

- (1) The USW reaffirms our gratitude for the members of our Union in Canada for their leadership in leading the way in assisting workers around the world and encourages and supports the continuation and expansion of our Canadian Steelworkers Humanity Fund by negotiating the SHF contribution clause in bargaining units that do not yet participate, and increasing the contribution rates for bargaining units that do participate.
- (2) We urge all USW Locals in the U.S. to communicate with their members, associate members and the public to make them aware of the opportunity to contribute to the SCEO, so that it may carry on a similar tradition in the U.S.
- (3) Our Union urges all USW Locals in the U.S. to work with the SCEO through our Union's Health, Safety and Environment Department to utilize the knowledge and expertise provided within our programs to provide necessary health and safety training to USW members.
- (4) The Union continues to support and honor the community service of our members, staff and retirees, including by expanding training at local and district education events, and through Women of Steel, Next Generation, SOAR, Civil and Human Rights, Leadership Scholarship, and other activist programs.

- (5)** We will continue to build our partnerships with the Jefferson Awards Foundation, the United Way and other allies who support our mission of building leadership through community service and volunteerism, who support a strong labor movement, and who help USW members and their families in times of need.
  
- (6)** The USW pledges to continue highlighting stories of our members and retirees and the impact of their community service efforts with the goal of inspiring others to serve, including by regular promotion of this work on USW communication channels such as the USW@Work magazine, Union Websites and social media, and whenever appropriate, help promote these stories in local and national news media.