

Project Ideas

USW Women's Councils and Local Union Women's Committees

In other fliers *“WOS” What’s it All About*, *WOS Guidelines for Local Union Women’s Committees*, and *WOS Guidelines for Women’s Councils* more detailed information is presented on the goals of each group and how they function. For a better understanding of this flier we need to review some basic differences and similarity in their goals:

Local Union Committees (**“Committees”**) seek to reach **ALL** union sisters in their local. This is usually done through sponsoring activities that deal with women’s concerns, basic education and skills needed to become leaders/activists, and building a strong identity as a group that mentors both the beginning and most active activist.

Regional Women’s Councils (**“Councils”**) seek to bring together the Chairs and Co-chairs of Committees within a geographic region of their District. Through quarterly meetings they share information and develop projects/activities that can help the local union structures grow. Additionally they provide an avenue for the sisters and Director to interact. And expand the USW identity outside the union into the geographic region they cover.

Each has its own structures and specialized goals together they serve to build an interactive mentoring network for women in our union.

A Women’s Committee Can:

Educate women on their rights, obligations and responsibilities to themselves and other women.

Educate and work with male membership on understanding women’s issues and perspective.

Provide a safe environment for women to discuss current workplace, community or personal issues and

Project Ideas

strategies for change. Provide advice and guidance to the leadership on issues important to women.

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Lobby for legislative improvements.

Act as mentors to young and newly organized women.

Organize informal educational and social events with community and local committees.

Identify women’s education and training needs to ensure union courses and programs are accessible and applicable.

Develop and educate membership on contract language targeted to help women and working women in the local.

Assist in organizing and educating new members.

Things Other Committees and Councils Have Done:

Raise awareness of women’s roles in the workplace and the local union:

- ◆ Honor women who were the “first” in your workplace with a luncheon, awards, posting letters of recognition or articles in your newsletter
- ◆ Invite active or retired sisters to speak about the changes they have experienced; for a women’s committee meeting, luncheon, old fashion union picnic//potluck, library event, or community or school event.

Project Ideas

- ◆ Plan an event on March 8 “International Women’s Day” or during March “Women’s History Month to honor women’s successes and reaffirm women’s commitment to the struggles still facing women and working class families.

Support women’s shelters and centers:

- ◆ Feature speakers from the shelter on stopping violence against women or how to help women who are victims.
- ◆ Plan awareness marches, floats for parades, letters to the editor and legislation to stop violence and punish offenders.

Sponsor “Women of Steel” nights or events to help the union in its goal to build solidarity:

- ◆ Women’s Phone Bank night.
- ◆ Take Your Children to the Union Hall, to a meeting or sponsor summer camp for children about the union.
- ◆ Host Union Families Night with films, food, and games around everyone’s need for a union and the roles they play at work and home to make the union stronger.
- ◆ Sponsor family carpools or buses to events

Poll and raise awareness on issues effecting women in your local; then draft and submit contract proposals; and host educational meetings around your issues.

Submit resolutions on women’s issues to the USW Constitutional Convention.

Support fund-raisers and informational events for women to attend or union families to meet candidates who support our issues

Project Ideas

Plan educational events to help women understand union structure, new legislation, breast cancer, or other health issues affecting women,

Hold events to educate community on pro-union history:

- ◆ Get a booth in the mall for career day
- ◆ Hand-out materials at a fair and visit with women about the benefits of a union
- ◆ Set up a “Women of Steel” table at the library with information important to working class women
- ◆ Sponsor a play on famous women in the labor movement in March – Women’s History Month

Increase visibility of Women of Steel by forming teams at community events.

- ◆ Breast Cancer and Diabetes Walks
- ◆ Parades, Fairs, and Labor Day Events
- ◆ Health Fairs, Informational Day at the Mall

Hold events to bring understanding between diverse groups (young & old; men & women; various ethnic backgrounds; sexual preference tolerance)

- ◆ Plan a potluck social with booths from various pro-union groups union made products, and information for working women, Make it an ethnic affair asking people to bring a dish to celebrate their heritage. Have entertainment from churches, ethnic groups/dancers, and children singing or dancing groups.
- ◆ Have a speaker in during special ethnic celebrations (see calendar of action) to tell about customs and beliefs. Serve food from that ethnic group, play music and wear clothing from that land.

Project Ideas

Honor new sisters organized into the USW

- ◆ Invite them to your local union meeting to talk and welcome them to the community of labor.
- ◆ Hold an event where you honor the newly organized sisters in your geographic region and ask them to talk about their campaign and what it now means to be union
- ◆ Honor the volunteer organizers in the District with an event – dinner, picnic, dessert night, etc.
- ◆ Make a flier with a picture of your WOS on it saying – **welcome to our new sisters to the union** and leaflet it at the plant gate

Sponsor ideas for child-care to help others get active in events and projects:

Create a fun room at the union hall for meetings. Ask older children to care for the children during a meeting. Everyone pays \$1.00 or \$2.00 everyone wins

Develop coloring books and story books for various ages that show and talk about the union

Offer to provide child-care when the organizing department needs volunteers to house call. Nice job for someone who can’t volunteer because of injury or age.

Sponsor a system whereby every new female employee is given a Big Sister from your Women’s Committee. The Big Sister can:

- ◆ Take them to a union meeting
- ◆ Introduce them around
- ◆ Eat lunch and talk about the union one day a week

Most of all just be creative and have fun planning and holding the event.



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Project Ideas

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Thought to Ponder:

To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world