

Pencil this in: Unionism is on calendar at Buffalo HSC

BY DARRYL McGRATH

Union spirit isn't always seen in rallies and advocacy days. Sometimes, it comes in recyclable form.

Leah Doherty, a delegate and chapter secretary in the union's Buffalo HSC Chapter, collects paper calendars and distributes them to patients at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Buffalo.

She has been doing this for a dozen years; it's a project that she works on all year, and she has collected more than 4,500 calendars in that time.

And she doesn't think this is anything special. Instead, she credits all the chapter members who keep her effort in mind and donate a promotional calendar to her instead of tossing it away.

reminds men and women who are about to be discharged that others are welcoming them back to a life beyond the hospital.

Many veterans still prefer old-fashioned paper calendars for planning, as Doherty has learned, so the calendars really end up being used.

"Leah's been doing this for so long, and really without any special appreciation beyond the hospital and the patients," Dannenhoffer said. "To me, though, this is an example of how union members work together to assist others in the community."

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"It's my members who are providing 400 calendars a year," Doherty says. "Every time they open their mail and find one, they send it to me. That's the part that humbles me—that they would do this."

A WELCOMING GESTURE

Chapter President Ray Dannenhoffer, however, is quick to note that Doherty is the cohesive force behind this long effort, which is far more than just handing a calendar to a veteran. The gesture also serves as a connection to the outside world and

Doherty is the daughter of an Army veteran, but said the idea came to her more out of a desire to see all the promotional calendars that companies and organizations print each year go to a better end than a recycling bin. She distributes them throughout the year. A Roman Catholic, Doherty hopes that she is putting into practice Pope Francis' charge that everyone should be a steward of the environment.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

And she totally gets the continued appeal of an old-fashioned calendar that

requires a pen and leads to occasionally scribbled-out and rescheduled dates. She carries a bound planner and uses a paper calendar at home. She finds the variety of calendars fascinating, and has noted that so many religious denominations now produce calendars that there is indeed "something for everyone."

"It's about unionism," Doherty says. "We're reaching out and helping people who aren't in our union. It's the right thing to do, and it makes our union people feel good that their calendars are being used."



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEAH DOHERTY

BUFFALO HSC CHAPTER DELEGATE LEAH DOHERTY PROUDLY DISPLAYS TWO OF THE MORE THAN 400 CALENDARS SHE COLLECTS AND DISTRIBUTES EACH YEAR TO VETERANS IN THE BUFFALO AREA.