

# Horizons

NEW

Message From Nate Gooden:

## *Let's make it happen on Election Day*

As we approach yet another election season, it's important that as retirees, you recognize the importance of what you contribute to the political agenda. Many people try to downplay the importance of a single vote, but I'm here to tell you, single votes are what make up the masses, and it's the masses that form the foundation of our political process. When the UAW negotiated to have Election Day declared a legal holiday for UAW-DaimlerChrysler workers, it was done so that all UAW members could get out and cast their votes on critical issues that could mean the turning point for many union families.



The absentee ballot is just as significant. If you think getting to the polls may be difficult or impossible, request your absentee ballot so that your vote can be counted and your voice can be heard.

We have worked extremely hard to support candidates who support our agenda, but if we do not get to the polls and demonstrate where we stand, we have failed ourselves.

Because of our efforts at getting union households to the polls, we can be credited with a majority of the votes that put U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, a premier soldier for Michigan families, in Congress.

We are powerful in numbers and must be just as unyielding in position. As union members, fighting for our fair share is nothing new—getting our fair share is where the work comes in. There are no excuses. The UAW has opened the door to facilitate change. And, as the saying goes, "Let's make it happen."

Please refer to story on page 3 about important issues that will be affected by this year's federal elections.



## **New editor up for the challenge; seeks your ideas**

By Tanisha Davis-Perez



As the new editor, I view *New Horizons* as your microphone to broadcast the political priorities, needs and successes of the UAW-DaimlerChrysler retiree community. My hope is to offer a platform that reflects the feelings and ideas of retirees, one that informs as well as inspires.

grandparents talk endlessly about their days of struggle. My brothers and sisters may have turned their backs on good storytelling, but I absorbed as much as I could and tried to understand the importance of fighting for what you believed in.

Although I am a new member of the communications team at the National Training Center, I'm not new to issues and concerns that affect retirees. My grandmother worked as a maid for 36 years until arthritis stunted her daily routine. And unfortunately for her, pensions were not part of her retirement options. So, I have a personal connection to the older

As the youngest child in an extended family household, I have always been a fan of nostalgia. I've heard my parents and

## New Editor

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generation that raises issues about things that matter, such as Social Security, health care and prescription drugs.

As a mother and wife of a UAW member at DaimlerChrysler, I also understand the important role the UAW has played in creating a social safety net for retirees and resisting attempts to destroy it.

There are 58,000 UAW-represented DaimlerChrysler retirees, with 17,000 surviving spouses—a larger population than exists among active workers. You have a loud voice and must be heard.

I encourage you to help make this newsletter a success by providing your suggestions, ideas and stories.

While I look forward to the challenge of making *New Horizons* something that I can be proud of, I want it to be something that UAW-DaimlerChrysler retirees can look to with great regard as well.

## Is that your final answer?

1. When was the first bargaining agreement reached between the UAW and Chrysler?
2. What was the first vehicle to bear the Chrysler name?
3. Where was the original Chrysler headquarters located?
4. Before the Dodge brothers merged with Chrysler Corporation, they built engines for what auto company?
5. What was the first Chrysler vehicle to be featured in a color magazine ad?

*Answers on back page*



## Walking does the body good

By Tanisha Perez

Retirement is often synonymous with kicking back, relaxing and enjoying some of life's pleasures, but there should always be room for good health and fitness. It's no secret that as we get older, our bodies slow down and pastimes we once enjoyed can become more difficult. Getting out of a chair or raking the yard can be more work in our later years than we care to admit. A simple remedy? Walking.

Walking has become the number one exercise among Americans of all ages. It's cheap, healthy and has a myriad of benefits. Walking is an excellent activity for seniors because it has relatively low physical risks but huge health advantages. They include a stronger heart, lower cholesterol and even weight loss. So, coupled with a good diet, walking can lead to a healthy life.

Between the ages of 30 and 80, we lose between 30 and 40 percent of our muscle mass, which reduces the body's physical strength. Walking as a daily exercise can decrease the rate at which we lose muscle mass, and in many cases, can replenish what age and lack of exercise has depleted.

Lisa Piccinini, fitness director at UAW-DaimlerChrysler's National Training Center, says you're never too old to start a fitness program.

"Walking is probably the easiest program to start, and it's a great way to maintain your physical independence since its not high impact and not bad on the joints," she says. "But, like with any program, go into the routine slowly. Work your way up."

Besides making you feel good, walking doesn't require much physical endurance to get started. Just grab a pair of comfortable walking shoes, a water bottle and maybe a partner to make walking an enjoyable exercise. Having a walking partner is motivating when you have someone else who is just as dedicated as you are to staying healthy.

Piccinini suggests a starting goal is a good 30-minute walk, but this could be broken into 10- or 15-minute intervals throughout the day.

"Don't skip on your walking shoes," she adds. "You don't have to spend a ton of money, but invest in a good pair of walking shoes."

Before beginning a walking regimen, however, consult with your doctor. Individuals who have a history of heart disease, poor circulation, diabetes or even a pre-existing foot condition may need to approach an exercise program at a slower pace than others do.

### The road to healthy walking

- Before walking, it's best to do light stretching to get the body warmed up and to prevent injury to muscles.
- Drink plenty of water, before, during and after walking.
- In hot weather, pay attention to outside temperature to prevent heat exhaustion.
- Try a lightweight shoe with good cushioning, or even a shoe with insoles and orthotic inserts to make walking easier.



# Where do we go from here?

*Hashing out key issues in this fall's election debate*

By Tanisha Perez

It's one thing to vote and be counted but quite another to know exactly what your vote means to the political agenda.

This election season, there is a great deal at stake for retirees. Social Security has been threatened, Medicare must be strengthened and lack of prescription drug coverage makes staying healthy a *privilege* that is becoming more and more difficult for many to afford.

For many years, legislation has been the key to protecting the rights of retirees through the guaranteed benefits of Social Security—the most successful anti-poverty program in America. And although Medicare is not the strongest health care system, millions of seniors depend on it. There's no question that change is needed, but how much change heats up the debate.

Both Democrats and Republicans are trying to come up with an appealing agenda for seniors, but Democrats are proposing more comprehensive, cost-effective changes in line with their traditional role as supporters of union members and working families. Let's check out some of the issues that will be impacted by the outcome of this year's elections for the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.



- **Social Security** - The big debate with Social Security is simply how to preserve it. While Republicans want to tap into Social Security to take care of the budget deficit, Democrats are hard at work trying to protect it. Over 64 percent of all seniors' income is derived from Social Security. Unlike pensions and 401(k) plans, Social Security has been the only guaranteed form of income for retired workers. Let's work to keep it that way.
- **Prescription Drugs** - While several bills have been introduced to handle the rising costs of prescription drugs, the most important modification proposed by Democrats would include prescription drug coverage as part of Medicare. Republicans favor increased coverage through private insurance companies. Because Medicare was created in the 1960s, before prescription drugs became such a large part of health care costs, the program did not include a drug benefit.
- **Medicare** - Democrats are calling

prescription drug coverage Medicare's missing piece. We need to support candidates who will work to make Medicare a more affordable and comprehensive health care option. Medicare is expected to be one of the issues in the November election. Concerns include the size of premiums and out-of-pocket expenses and the amount of caps paid for health care.

- **Pensions** - It's no secret that the average pension is not enough to fully fund retirement, and most pension plans are built around Social Security as a "starting point." Some of the ideas proposed by Republicans would mean substituting individual investment accounts for Social Security's guaranteed benefits, which would put extreme pressure on collective bargaining to raise negotiated pension benefits.

At such a critical time in the history of federal programs, retirees must keep a keen eye out for candidates who support preserving Social Security, protecting Medicare and creating a plan to cover the rising cost of prescription drugs. With Republicans in control of the House of Representatives and proposing unattractive changes to these programs, staying on top of legislative action and electing progressive candidates this fall is extremely important. The livelihoods of our retirees depend on it.



## Getting connected

With the world of technology taking society by storm, being computer savvy is no longer a leisure but a necessity.

Check out this list of popular sites that can be useful to retirees who are armed and ready to battle the Web.

- [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org) – *The American Association of Retired Persons.* Provides individuals 50 and over with a wealth of information on politics, health, travel, leisure, money matters and more.
- [www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org) – A Web site specifically geared toward retired union workers: excellent source for current news on political issues.
- [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) – The federal government's Social Security site. Provides online forms, benefit information, current news and a calculator to project Social Security benefits.
- [www.retired.com](http://www.retired.com) – A fun-filled site packed with great articles, how-to information, trends and travel.

# Retiree's chance visit to park saves drowning girl

By Tanisha Perez

Frank Serra Sr. has heard the old saw about "being in the right place at the right time" a million times, but he didn't discover its true meaning until July 4. His spontaneous visit to Riverfront Park in St. Clair Shores, Mich., set the stage for him to save the life of a drowning girl.

"We were supposed to be in about six different places that day," says Serra, the recently-retired benefits plan representative at Centerline Parts Distribution Center.

The 57-year old UAW Local 1248 member and his wife had just settled on a spot in the park when Serra heard cries for help. He ran to the railing and found a 14-year old girl trapped in the sea wall's undertow and on the verge of going under.

Serra jumped over a safety rail and into the powerful current of the St. Clair River where he was able to grab hold of the girl. She and a friend had gone swimming but couldn't reach the sea wall ladder to get out and decided to drift down river. Her friend was able to pull herself out, but she was unable to reach the ladder.



"I had no idea the current was so strong," said Serra, whose wife Mary had bystanders go for a life preserver when she noticed his quick exhaustion. "Once I had her and calmed her down, I couldn't get back to the seawall. I was getting extremely tired and the six or seven minutes we waited on the life preserver

seemed like 45 minutes."

After a failed attempt to reach a life preserver thrown in the water, the girl's friend jumped in with a preserver and all three came out safely. Although they needed oxygen, Serra and the girl were unharmed.

Looking back, Serra remembers his mother's advice to always be prepared. In this case, that preparation came 18 years ago when he took swimming lessons at the UAW Family Education Center at Black Lake.

Serra says he's proud of his daring rescue. "Of course I feel like a hero. You can't help but feel good about yourself when you save a life."

**If you have story ideas, comments or suggestions on how New Horizons can better meet your needs and interests, contact Tanisha Perez at 313-567-3300 or e-mail [tdavis@ucntc.org](mailto:tdavis@ucntc.org)**

**Answers to UAW-DaimlerChrysler quiz**

1. April 6, 1937;
2. Chrysler Six;
3. New York City;
4. Ford Motor Company;
5. 1927 Chrysler Imperial 80.

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