

*a day in the life*



...in the sheet metal industry



**AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHERE YOUR LABOR OR MANAGEMENT PARTNER** is coming from is critical to building a good working relationship. With a general idea of your labor or management partner's daily life, you can figure out how best to approach him or her as well as gauge where you might

share similar goals and interests that can create a working foundation.

Read on for a glimpse into a day in the lives of

- a Business Manager,
- a Contractor,
- an Apprentice,
- a Chapter Executive, and
- a Training Director.

## ...of a Business Manager

By Cari Bilyeu Clark

**MEMBERS ARE SMART'S HEART AND SOUL;** each local Union exists to serve them. But in any organization, there must be someone who listens, looks (at the market, for instance), finds out where the entity need to go—and leads the way.

On the local level, that person is the elected Business Manager. One such elected industry servant is Patrick Landgraf, who takes seriously the trust placed in him by members of SMART local 18, based in Waukesha, Wisc.

Landgraf has worked in the sheet metal industry for 34 years. In 1998, he became an organizer for local 18; in 2002 he became a Business Agent. Six years later, he became acting Business Manager, finishing out the term of a predecessor. In each of 2009 and 2012, he was elected to three-year terms in his own right.

*How did all that happen?*

"I never intended to become a Business Manager," Landgraf says. "The office is 60 miles from my home."

After other agents working for local 18 encouraged him to assume the unexpired term, he says he gave in to destiny. "I wanted to serve the best interests of the local and the membership."

### What's involved

"I manage all the business affairs of the local," Landgraf says. Local 18, which represents 3,300 workers and 1,000 retirees, covers most of Wisconsin (local 10's jurisdiction covers four counties in the state's upper reaches). "I'm also the health fund chairman and sit on other local funds as a trustee."

Landgraf isn't alone in his work. Local 18 has nine agents, a financial secretary-treasurer, an organizer, and four administrative assistants. On average, the local's members annually work 4 million man-hours.

"This is not a nine-to-five job," Landgraf laughs. What is a "typical" day? There isn't one!

"It's a revolving door, he says. "I answer questions or concerns raised by my agents, settle grievances, and work on contract negotiations.

"I make sure all contract negotiations throughout the local go smoothly. I make sure language in the agreements matches what was negotiated by the Union and the contractors."

Landgraf also does a lot of traveling, such as to monthly satellite meetings around the state and to meetings for boards that he sits on representing the local union.

### Now a General VP, too

In November 2011, Landgraf was appointed to SMART's General Executive Council (as 10th General Vice President—he currently sits as the 6th General Vice President). How has a man who began working as a sheet metal worker transitioned to represent so many?

"The education department of SMART has great classes," he replies. "The Dynamic Leadership class was especially helpful. It includes psychological tests to help you to find out about yourself, your strengths and weaknesses."

He says that it's also important to learn how to manage other people, understand human resources, and to identify the management strengths and weaknesses of others so that you can work with them. "A certain temperament helps, too," he adds.

"Most of all, it's important to understand that this isn't about you," Landgraf says. "If you are in management for self-serving reasons, the local will suffer. That doesn't help anyone. You need to always keep in mind the best interests of the local—the workers who are relying on you for representation." ■

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## ...of a Contractor

By Cari Bilyeu Clark

**WHERE DO SHEET METAL CONTRACTORS COME FROM?** Answers vary. For Joseph Lansdell (Poynter Sheet Metal, Bloomington Ind.), it started with family. He and his brother Jon—an estimator/project manager for Poynter—are third-generation sheet-metal workers.

Now, 42, Joseph Lansdell was first attracted into management late in his apprenticeship when found work as a shop foreman.

His career between that point and becoming Poynter's President (in late 2007) was spent in operations or project management.

Today, Lansdell is a busy company president.

While Poynter does much of its work in Indiana, the company recently had jobs going in 10 states. One result: Lansdell drives more than 55,000 miles annually, seeing customers and visiting jobsites; one year, it was 68,000.

*That means in order to spend weekends with his family (and he does), Lansdell has to average more than 225 miles per day of driving.*

Recently, Poynter employed more than 270 SMART members in commercial/industrial HVAC and custom decorative work. The company works on HVAC and TAB for hospitals and science labs and large stainless-steel tanks for wine and beer manufacturers.

### What one contractor does

"When I get into the office, I go through the mail and my physical inboxes," Lansdell says. This can be demanding. Each week he sorts through—and responds, as needed—to an average of 1,800 e-mails.

"Then, I usually make or return about 12 phone calls," he adds. "Today, for example, I had a conference call regarding a bid we are working on—that took about three hours. Then I met with my shop people. We just purchased a new laser metal cutter, and we had to figure out how and where to place it in the shop."

The "shop" is actually a 100,000 square foot facility on 30 acres in Bloomington.

"Twice a week, I schedule a meeting to cover our entire project list with my staff. That takes about three hours," he notes. Lansdell also works out of Poynter's Indianapolis location. Additionally, he oversees Poynter's sister business—an air- and water-balancing service that employs 11 people.

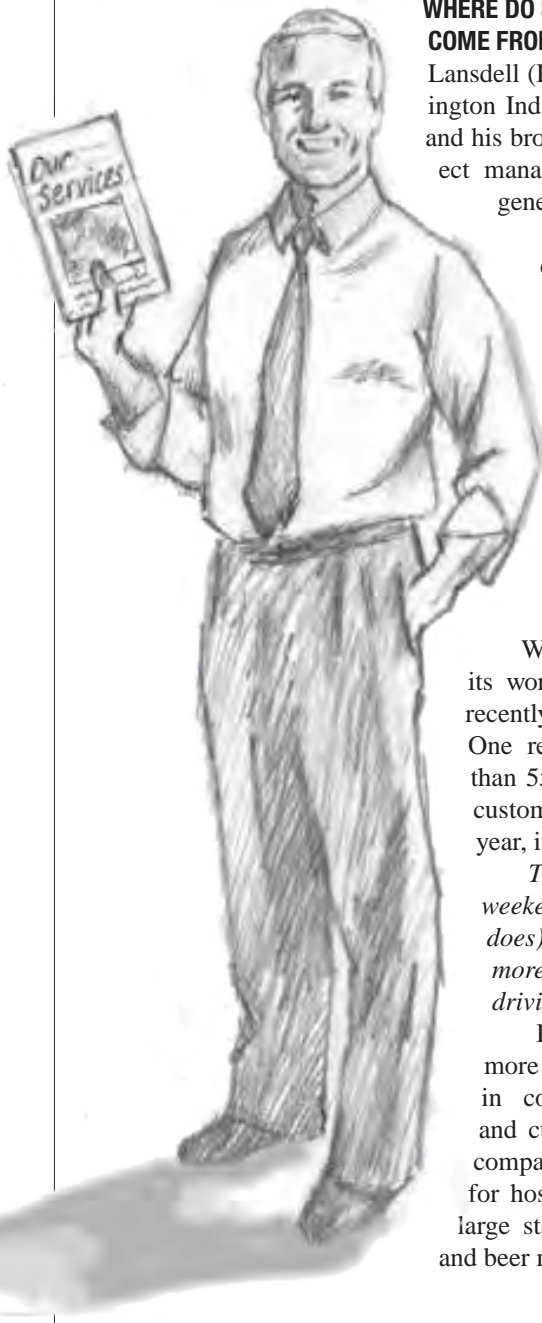
Although Lansdell doesn't bid jobs, he reviews Poynter's submissions (with a staff of nine estimators) before they go out the door on any bid day. Last year, the company completed and submitted 2,250 bids.

### Kids come first—then late-night work

"I try to do a good job of balancing work and family life. I don't take it home. I don't discuss work over the dinner table," Lansdell says. "When my kids go to bed, I put in a couple more hours on work, but when I'm with them, they get all my attention."

Recently, Lansdell finished out a five-year term on SMACNA's National Board of Directors and was named vice president of SMACNA's National Board. Additionally, Poynter's noteworthy success won him a spot on the "40 Under (age) 40" list put together by the Indianapolis Business Journal (see article and video at <http://bit.ly/PoBuCJ>). ■

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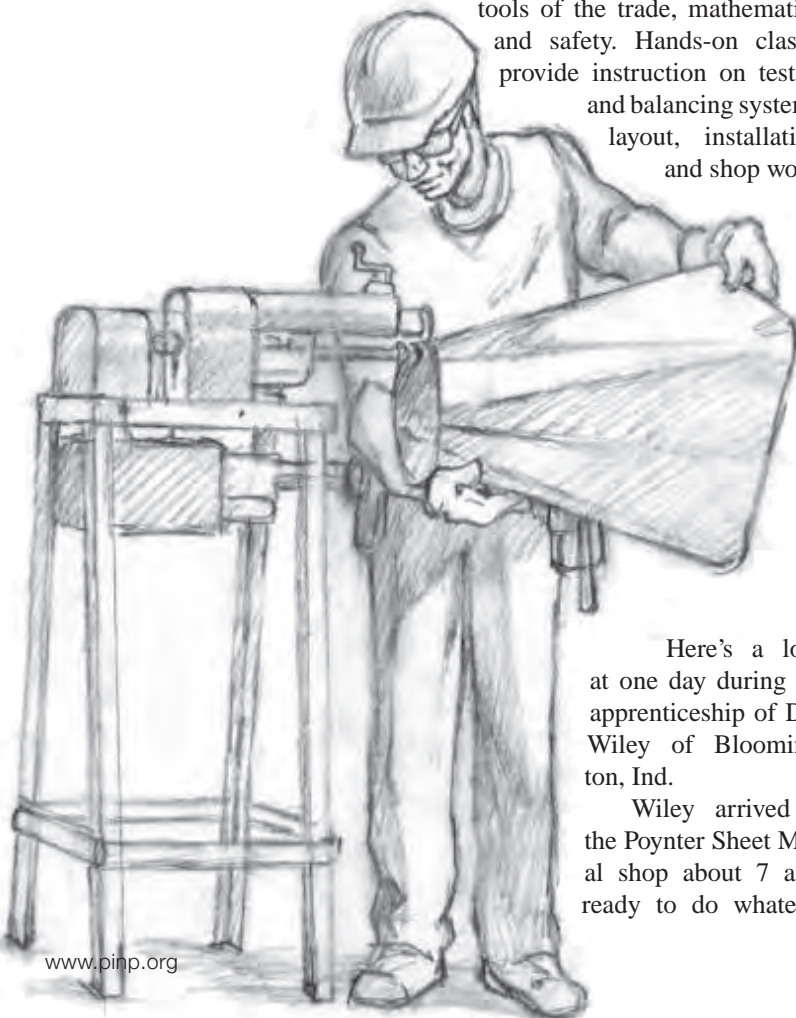
## ...of a Sheet Metal Apprentice

By Cari Bilyeu Clark

**TRAINING IN THE SHEET METAL INDUSTRY PRESENTS** challenges, which vary by geography. In Indianapolis, Ind., for example, five times each year apprentices spend one week absorbed in classroom and practical training.

“We require our apprentices to do these things because we want them to know how to survive on the job site,” says Tim Myres, apprentice coordinator at the SMART local 20 training center. “They can’t be texting or talking on the phone on the job, and most jobs don’t allow smoking.”

First-year apprentices spend their eight-hour class days learning the basics—the tools of the trade, mathematics, and safety. Hands-on classes provide instruction on testing and balancing systems, layout, installation, and shop work.



Here’s a look at one day during the apprenticeship of Dan Wiley of Bloomington, Ind.

Wiley arrived at the Poynter Sheet Metal shop about 7 a.m. ready to do whatever

work is on the docket for the day. “I recently went to a customer’s house with one of our salesmen to design a vent hood for a kitchen remodel,” Wiley says.

“I talked with the customer, made a drawing, and discussed what he wanted—to make sure we were on the same page.”

He went back to the shop, divvied up the work with other apprentices, and created the vent hood, which included invisible welds, a duct run, and laser cutting. When the hood was finished, he installed it.

### More than one way to learn

Wiley, who graduated in 2013, says he is fortunate to have had exposure to a wide variety of state-of-the-art equipment and construction at his employer. But he also has praise for the traditional methods of design he learned at the training center.

For example, he received instruction in laying out, measuring, and cutting duct by hand. Poynter got experience doing it on a plasma table.

“We aren’t getting the mathematical layout experience at work, so it’s good that we get it in class,” Wiley explains. “You see how things go together by hand and make sure you’re taking all the proper steps to get it done correctly.”

### Student-specific teaching

Other activities in an apprentice’s day often include theory and hands-on tasks in auto-CAD detailing and TAB for industrial projects.

Working through the International Training Institute (ITI) core curriculum also covers things like dealing with employers and customers. Apprentices also work to complete courses in technical writing, and Human Relations and Labor History.

“Our guys receive an associate’s degree from our local community college when they complete our apprenticeship program,” Myres says. ■

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## ...of a Chapter Executive

By Cari Bilyeu Clark

**SMACNA'S 93 LOCAL CHAPTER MANAGERS** have jobs that can make an impact on the working lives of a lot of people.

That's true for Bernie Brill, executive director of the SMACNA Mid-Atlantic Chapter, comprising Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, and the eastern portion of West Virginia.

Constantly on the go, Brill's responsibilities entail wearing many hats. "No two days are ever the same,"

Brill says. "Every day presents new challenges and opportunities.

One of his prime assignments: To increase opportunities for his 40 member contractors, 25 associate members, and others who are signatories to the local collective bargaining agreement.

SMACNA Mid-Atlantic is a two-person office, Brill's day might include

- participating in board and committee meetings;
- conferring with allied construction organizations on state legislative issues;
- writing and editing the chapter's monthly newsletter and Web site;
- training staff;
- attending briefing sessions on environmental issues;
- meeting with state officials on regulatory matters;
- visiting with member contractors and potential members;
- and much more.

Area legislative sessions (January,

February, and March) may see Brill testifying at legislative hearings and/or meeting lawmakers at legislative receptions, all the while, monitoring bills that have an impact on the construction industry and sheet metal companies in two state capitals—Richmond and Annapolis, plus DC's city council.

### Meeting contractor-set goals

"Our Chapter Board meets quarterly and sets the direction for our organization," Brill says. "I oversee the day-to-day operations and execute the means for the chapter to meet its goals and objectives."

Those responsibilities entail meeting regularly with the elected president of the chapter. Discussion topics can include the budget, monthly reports, programming, and financial matters.

Additionally, he tries to raise the visibility of the industry. To that end, Brill is a member of the District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce (on the Legislative Affairs Committee).

He also serves as a liaison with industry groups, such as the Washington Building Congress (WBC). Recently, Brill gave WBC members—mostly general contractors (GCs)—a tour of Stromberg Metal Works, Inc. in Beltsville, Md. The "hard hat tour" showcased the sophistication and the multiple products created by SMACNA and SMART.

Seeing CAD machines, plasma cutters, and automatic cutting machines gave the GCs a better idea of the sophisticated behind-the-scenes that takes place in a shop.

The tours help smooth information flow between GCS and their sheet metal contractors, which decreases response time when problems pop up.

Beyond the tours, Brill works to convince GCs to bid work out directly to sheet metal contractors (via "Airside Direct"). ■

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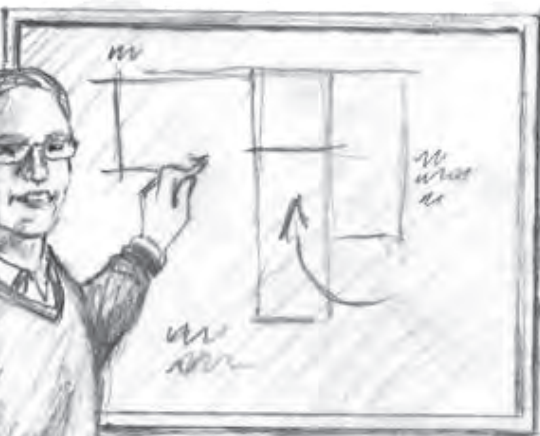
## ...of a Training Director

By Cari Bilyeu Clark

**THE LIFEBLOOD OF ANY LOCAL IS ITS JATC.** Maintaining a high standard of education keeps the workforce at its best, and that is the goal of Burnett “Buck” Paulsrud, training director of local 10 in White Bear Lake, Minn. Local 10 boasts approximately 4,500 members in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and northern Wisconsin. The training annex is in a suburb of St. Paul.

Early in his career, Paulsrud became interested in teaching, so he became a part-time instructor. Now, he is in charge of training 275 to 300 apprentices at any given time, with a staff of 20 part-time and two full-time instructors. “Our format [for training classes] is one eight-hour day every other week, and ten evening classes per year, for a total of 200 hours per year,” he says.

Paulsrud arrives between 5:30 and 6 each morning; the day school is in session from 7 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. “I plan my days, but the phone and whoever walks in dictate a lot of what actually gets accomplished on any given day,” Paulsrud notes.



Mark Szybatka is one of Paulsrud’s full-time instructors and acts as the JATC’s building supervisor. He was the youngest instructor in the history of the local when he began teaching part-time 25 years ago. He has been a full-time instructor for

10 years. “Education never stops, because technology and innovation never stop,” he says. “There are so many, many facets to sheet metal work.”

Szybatka was recently certified to teach construction of the new phenolic board ducting product made of foam. “When I have an idea, I take it to Buck, and we decide what’s best for our members.

One of those ideas is an open-weld class. “We allow the students to choose a project and coach them individually and help them by giving them options on how to construct that project,” says Szybatka. “It must be structurally adequate and built to code.”

He believes it’s important to ask students if they would buy their own work. “In our industry, it’s not acceptable to do a poor job. We have high standards for everyone.” He says “It feels really good when students get it.”

Something recently added to jobs is a hands-on mock up of a two-story house inside the school to demonstrate installation and maintenance in residences. Facilities include classroom space for plans and specifications, a welding lab, an industrial sheet metal shop, and service training takes place in a mezzanine area. It greatly improved the learning environment,” Paulsrud says.

Paulsrud is constantly improving class offerings, especially continuing education for Journeymen. One very popular class is Mechanical Code, which members need to pass our local certifications.

“If it is not economically feasible to run a requested class, the JATC arranges individual study for the member.” Paulsrud counts the development of a Journeyman-level training brochure as one of his most important recent achievements.

His goal is to keep and grow market share through upgrading skills, and maintaining and improving productivity. Paulsrud’s motto is, “Don’t wrap up—keep going!” ■

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