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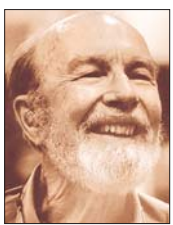
Thursday, May 25, 2006



(USPS 350-360)

Why Springsteen hit sour note in booking

Pete Seeger would appreciate one thing about this Milwaukee labor protest. It started as a grassroots movement.



Pete Seeger

It poured forth from longtime admirers of his folk music and social influence – the people who know that support of labor unions is as much part of his history as the environmental cleanup of the Hudson River.

At first they were delighted that a new album pays tribute to his music, protest lyrics and progressive conscience.

They were doubly delighted that the album, “We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions,” was the creation of the rock world’s working-class icon, Bruce Springsteen.

This culturally harmonious convergence was coming to Milwaukee June 14, part of an international tour by Springsteen and the Seeger Sessions Band.



Bruce Springsteen

[Seeger](#) continued Page 3

Senate conspiracy stabs AFT leader

Madison is not Cold War Moscow, at least not yet. But something of the Stalinist era has taken root in the state legislature. Public hearings and open discussions are truncated or nonexistent. Personal animosity and dubious reasoning are hidden in off-the-record party meetings. And often, no one publicly explains their final vote.

It is a dangerous process. Looking at how it was used to cut out the Milwaukee County Board in the scheme for a regional airport authority, the attorney general of Wisconsin is actually suing Rep. Jeff Stone under the open records law. “It’s very disturbing,” said Peg Lautenschlager. “The Legislature has been essentially conducting secret negotiations with special-interest groups on highly complex issues . . . They are precluding a full and open analysis.”

An unrelated, more bizarre case of secret motiva-

[Rosen](#) continued Page 10



SUMMIT OF SUCCESS – Moderator Rhandi Berth of WRTP listens as three union workers (from left, Isaac McCovery, Darletha White and Minnie Joy) describe their fight out of prisons and poverty. [See Pages 6 and 7.](#)



The busy gazebo at Union Square Park sounded best April 28 when AFM Local 8 brought a stirring brass quintet to Workers Memorial Day. [See Pages 2 and 5](#) for more on labor events.



And one reward of being union was winning this truck. [Page 8](#)

Radio sneers prove illegally dumb

By Dominique Paul Noth, Editor, Labor Press

What part of illegal don't you understand?

Comment

No one is more adept at creating demeaning one-liners and ludicrous generalities than the email parrot chain that exists among conservative talk radio shows, as everyone driving across the country twisting their radio dials can attest.

Over the years I've assembled quite a collection of these kindergarten catch phrases, which pour oil on a tiny kernel of corny truth and then pop it into a tubful of ideological excess. Robotic listeners salivate – before they get little seeds of silliness stuck in their teeth.

My favorite of late is aimed at the immigration movement, a blatant effort to silence debate. The translation for “What part of illegal don't you understand?” is simply: They broke the law to get here – case closed, so get off the street and shut up.

So what part of illegal don't I understand? The same part most Americans didn't during a decade of Prohibition.

The same “illegal” most Americans became defenders of in the civil disobedience marches and boycotts of the 1950s and 1960s.

(The mainstream media back then said the cause was just but won't get anywhere by boycotts and confrontation. Sound familiar? But those tactics did work, even into the 1970s when 17 million Americans boycotted grapes in support of migrant workers. It could be more easily argued that, when such protests stalled in the 1980s and 1990s — as the establishment got more sophisticated dealing with them — so did social progress.)

It's the same part of illegal we wish more residents had engaged in. That would have avoided a series of stains on our nation – not just slavery but the 60 years of racist exclusion of Asian immigrants. Those laws didn't stop until 1943, when we needed the Chinese to help in the war effort.

It is the stain of 1939 when FDR legally sent back to Europe the 932 Jewish refugees aboard the SS St. Louis, dooming many to Holocaust ovens. It was one of the events that turned thousands of US citizens to illegal behavior, pretending to be relatives of such refugees to ensure their safe entry into America.

It is the part of illegal we have delighted to see explode in other supposedly democratic countries. Today we regard as heroes those who defied the anti-Semitism and anti-Islam regimes in Europe and the apartheid laws of South Africa. This is the part of illegal we do understand since many (Gandhi, Mandela, King) once treated as lawbreakers emerged as the

[Illegal](#) continued Page 11

State candidates face grilling on health bills

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Should the state legislature continue to fritter over piecer size, concealed carry and gay households? Or should it finally do something about issues that centrally affect us all? Like health coverage.

In November, every Wisconsin voter has a say. So start asking everyone running: What will they do about the health tab that is crippling workers and businesses, leading so many companies to dump or curtail coverage?

The Bush administration

seems paralyzed and preoccupied, so please, can Wisconsin sensibly step in to correct a warped system where costs escalate in double digits every year? Can the state rescue the half million Wisconsin adults and children who don't have any health coverage whatsoever?

Actually, there's a statewide “partnership” solution sitting right there in a state Senate bill.

Find out where your candidates stand on that. And if they don't have a clue, find a better candidate. Because this issue has gone beyond nightmare for busi-

nesses and workers, and the crippling partisan bickering has got to stop.

Senate Bill 698, the Wisconsin Health Care Partnership Plan, awaits action in January. It is on the table, its backers candidly admit, to force candidates to discuss it. The debate may actually be helped because there is a rival proposal with a similar name.

But the Partnership Plan is the one proposal with real base numbers already vetted by actuarial studies through the nationally respected Lewin Group.

The voting power of its pro-

posed commission would be shared equally by employers and employees, with the state's office of insurance providing the umbrella and nonvoting experts adding input and analysis.

It sets a path for the smallest business in Wisconsin to pay

exactly the same for a worker's health coverage as the largest corporation -- about \$340 a month by current estimates, with further cost breaks for small low-wage companies and lower employer per-worker assessments for part-

[Health](#) continued Page 4



Standing alongside the gazebo where a brass quintet was playing were several community leaders. Among those waiting to speak or read names of the dead April 28 were (from left) MCLC President Willie D. Ellis, Vice-President Annie Wacker, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila D. Cochran and AFL-CIO field mobilizer Mike Balistriere.



WisCOSH leader Irene Herron-Steeger (right) greets the special speaker at the traditional Postal Workers Hall dinner after the April 28 remembrance: Wisconsin Atty. Gen. Peg Lautenschlager.

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Gazebo at gallop

The gazebo at Milwaukee labor's own park has seen a lot of business lately. Zeidler Union Square Park was actually the final destination of the March 23 immigrant march of some 25,000 persons. The crowds have been smaller since, but the activity has stepped up.

Gov. Doyle took notice. Unsolicited by the sponsors, he sent an emissary to proclaim April 28 as Workers Memorial Day in Wisconsin, thanking the Milwaukee County Labor Council and WisCOSH for its efforts at worker safety and its determination to remember those who died on the job. The names of the fallen, both in the state and in Iraq, were highlighted in the ceremony.

Two days earlier, the gazebo was filled with labor leaders, and members of 16 locals dotted the park, cooperating in a campaign to make Wal-Mart pay its fair share of health costs. There is unity among all unions in both this national effort against the big-box retailer's behavior -- and also for the fall elections.



At the Wal-Mart protest, SEIU Local 150's new president, Joanne Augsburger, spoke as moderator Dan Welch (president of UFCW Local 1444) listened. BELOW: Kicking off the parade of speakers was Sara Rogers, vice-president of the state AFL-CIO.



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Calendar

Wednesday, May 31

Executive Board Meeting
Milwaukee County Labor Council
3 p.m., MBCT, 5941 W. Bluemound Rd.

Wednesday, June 7

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO Delegates
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Thursday, June 8

HEALTH AND HYGIENE DRIVE

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Monday, June 12

GLOBAL TRADE CONFERENCE

8 a.m.-5 p.m., Concourse Hotel, Madison

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Seeger

From Page 1

But then the rank-and-file union admirers were taken aback — Springsteen's people had booked this Seeger tribute into the one large Downtown facility that is anti-union (some would say virulently anti-union), the Bradley Center.

Yet right around the corner or a few blocks away were unionized concert halls (the Milwaukee Theatre, US Cellular Arena, the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, the Marcus Amphitheater) of similar crowd capacity. And most are wide open (unbooked) for June 14.

"It just sticks in my craw," said one union stagehand, and he quickly found other union members who had similar problems swallowing this. They took their concerns to their union leaders, who similarly choked.

After all, Seeger, even at 87, remains a member of a unique group within the American Federation of Musicians: Local 1000, the only local with no geographical limitation since it covers traveling acoustic performers, many of them folk artists. Its president, John McCutcheon, is a Wisconsin native. Its vice president, Tret Fure, makes her base in Madison.

For six decades, Seeger has taken his banjo and beliefs on a seminal journey from Woody Guthrie, the Almanac Singers and the Weavers to a solo career as composer, performer and advocate for the common man. It's a voyage unsilenced by the McCarthy era, unshaken in his energy for peace and progress.

In creating this album, Springsteen is embracing his roots in Seeger, and he's clearly learned a lot about catchy melody to carry provocative lyrics. (Don't just dance mindlessly to "Born in the U.S.A." — listen to the words.)

Springsteen is also a member in good standing of not one but two AFM locals — in his New Jersey hometown, Asbury Park, and in New York City.

Surely neither would do this on purpose. Surely, Springsteen's affectionate moniker — the Boss — never before had rapacious corporate connotations.

Emails and phone calls started being exchanged among national entertainment unions, which are hardly naïve about the nature of tour bookings and similarly assumed neither Seeger nor Springsteen knew the local history behind the booking.

It may seem nasty to call the Bradley Center anti-union. Today it contracts for custodians with a company that has a union contract. And, of course, the highest paid union workers in the world play on its floor against the Milwaukee Bucks.

But since it was built in the 1980s with a big private gift and

then millions in taxpayer money, it has been hostile to the unionized entertainment world that surrounds it. Twice it has rebuffed organizing efforts by union stagehands. Currently it undercuts living wages by using non-union, volunteer, part-time, seasonal and temp workers for its food service, ushering and stagehand work.

The entertainment locals of Milwaukee work cooperatively (the musicians, stagehands, actors and related specialists are known collectively as MASH and march together in the Milwaukee County Labor Council's Laborfest parade). It is an approach being emulated nationally by the entertainment unions of the AFL-CIO.

So May 12 the local unions tackled the issue collectively and in a letter to Brother Pete Seeger and Brother Bruce Springsteen. Written more in sorrow than anger, they explained the situation, calling it "subtly ironic, baffling and infuriating," and urged a shift to another venue.

The letter was signed by AFM Local 8's president and secretary-treasurer, Robert Levine and Dave Lussier, Paul Friday for Local 18 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), an Actors Equity member, Daniel Mooney, and Secretary-Treasurer Sheila D. Cochran for the MCLC.

Backed in contacts by Seeger and Springsteen's colleagues and friends, the letter was in transit as this newspaper went to press.

So readers should check to see where the June 14 concert is booked. And if it's still at the Bradley, look for leafleting at the concert by many unions, plus some street protest music of their own. If not, there is real meaning in the title "We Shall Overcome."

-- Dominique Paul North

In Memory

Curtis C. Crain

He was the master carpenter for all the sets and all the years of the old Melody Top Theater -- and then he spent another 25 years as technical director at the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, retiring in 1991.

Curtis Crain also worked in the 1950s as a stage manager at WTMJ-TV and on the sets of the movie and television industry in California

His full life, which started with a performing arts degree from the University of Wisconsin system (now UW-Eau Claire) and a stint at Chicago's Goodman Theater, ended May 6 at age 77 in Cape Coral, Florida, where he and his family were considering moving. He had originally retired to Glendale.

He was also president of Stagehands Local 18 and nearly a 50-year member of the union into his retirement.

His carpentry skill led to many side businesses that saw his ideas displayed on the sets of major sitcoms.

Symphony old-timers recalls him as a memorable storyteller and a bridge between management and labor, and he counted many figures of the entertainment community among his friends.

John J. Michalowski

Delegates in April took a period of silence for one of their own - a longtime representative to the Milwaukee County Labor Council, John J. Michalowski, who died March 30 at age 68 from complications of an illness.

A past president of his own local, Machinists Lodge 916, and a past Secretary-Treasurer at District 10 of the IAMAW, Michalowski was also a 37 year employee of General Electric Medical Systems, an avid hunter and a doting grandfather.

The labor community shares the sorrow of his widow, JoAnn, his three children and many other relatives.

State honors Parker

Tom Parker, the longtime president of the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO who

died Jan. 1, was honored by the state legislature this session with an official resolution acknowledging his decades of service to workers and the state of Wisconsin.

Praising Parker as "a lifelong union man who worked tirelessly for workers' rights," both houses of the legislature commended his service to labor-and-management teams in Milwaukee and Wisconsin and presented his widow, Marie, with a copy of this special Joint Resolution 75.

The resolution was sponsored in the Assembly by Reps. Josh Zepnick, Fred Kessler, Frank Boyle, David Cullen, Suzanne Jeskewitz, Margaret Krusick, John Lehman, Christine Sinicki, Barbara Toles, David Travis and Robert Turner, and in the Senate by Tim Carpenter, Spencer Coggis, Jon Erpenbach, Mark Miller and Jeff Plale.

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Health

From Page 1

time workers. Workers would pay deductibles (\$300 a year for individual, \$600 for family) and co-pays (\$15 office visit, \$10 generic drug prescription, \$20 brand name).

It radically reduces the number of uninsured. Some 80% of Wisconsin's half million uninsured live in a family with a full time worker, but that worker's employer doesn't provide affordable health insurance. The self-employed, early retirees and farmers could opt in at the same cost.

The bill has bipartisan support -- it was introduced by Democratic Senator Russ Decker and Republican Representative Terry Musser.

It would be legislatively authorized but not government controlled. The only stipulation: Every employer must buy in for its employees -- public and private, small and large.

That creates an immense pool of coverage, a fair-share split of costs between workers and companies and a structure that attacks the current 25% administrative overhead of the current multi-headed system. (In contrast to that bulge, the administrative costs for government's Medicare are about 3%.)

The Partnership Plan requires every company to join yet it retains provider choice. It also requires "best practice" and wellness initiatives to further reduce costs and promote quality.

It doesn't include vision or dental care unless deemed medically necessary but it allows employers to provide that coverage and to negotiate even deeper benefits to lure workers. It creates clear and capable health insurance for every worker and their dependents. It also avoids the growing national problem of people who thought they had good, carefully determined insurance

but learn through illness that they don't. It also provides equal coverage ("parity") for mental illness.

The Partnership Plan evolved over four years from forums on "the state AFL-CIO health plan," but David Newby knew from the start that it would eventually morph into another name.

Newby, president of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, has worked behind the scenes with business, medical experts, community and advocacy groups and elected officials to gain support and hammer out a detailed bill. Republican Musser calls it "a win-win -- it rewards people for working and levels the playing field for small companies."

This summer Newby will be a central champion and expert in presenting the bill to the public (he's already started as a panelist in the Fourth Street Forum airing May 26-28 on public TV).

But as a pragmatist in politics, he realized a union label could cut both ways, particularly given the union animus that keeps popping up in legislation.

Nor would a union label be accurate. The Partnership Plan's most obvious beneficiaries are business owners since it reduces -- by 40%-65% in most cases -- and then controls their health costs. It's good for workers, who would all be covered, but it requires their embrace of deductibles and co-pays.

It may actually be initially better for non-represented workers, who lack the union bargaining where health coverage protection has long been a centerpiece.

There is another major change that no longer makes Newby seem one of the lonely voices in the wilderness.

Public awareness has caught up with him, as has public frustration.

As Labor Press was interviewing Newby about the bill, the national headlines and water cooler chats

Facts to scare you: Let's combine the surveys and analysis of such highly regarded outfits as the Commonwealth Fund and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, add some facts from the US Census Bureau and the Harvard Medical School -- and start cringing:

- There are approximately 46 million Americans without health insurance, and the victims are moving rapidly up the economic scale.

- Moderate to middle income Americans of working age who lacked health insurance for at least part of 2005 rose to 41%, a violent swing up from 28% three years earlier.

- The percentage of individuals having no insurance and earning under \$20,000 a year rose to 53%.

- One-third in that group visited an emergency room or stayed in a hospital overnight (or both), compared with 15% of the insured. The insured as well as the taxpayer picks up most of these expensive costs through higher insurance rates (often with lowered coverage) and taxes. Those who can't

get or can't afford health insurance, or gamble that they won't need it, are clearly no longer in the low-income range. We're in an economically broad health care crisis right now.

- Costs prevent more than 41% of uninsured adults from seeing a doctor, compared with 9.2% of those with coverage. And 51% of women without health insurance haven't had a mammogram in two years, compared with 22.8% of their insured counterparts.

- 59% of uninsured with chronic conditions skipped doses of essential medication or went without because it was too expensive.

Even families with health insurance have been taken to the cleaners by the current jumble of health plans and health finance systems. The bankruptcy courts show that. A family crisis -- averaging just \$3,000 in medical bills -- is the major trigger of family bankruptcies, which are usually undertaken by people with assets to protect. Fully 76% of those filers had health insurance, with a lot of very small print.



David Newby

were all about a new study that revealed that older citizens in England were twice as healthy as Americans at half the cost. And Massachusetts was making waves for bipartisan legislation to cover all its citizens -- which was a good news-bad news story.

That Massachusetts plan still lacks details but it clearly lets businesses escape a fair share of costs and the middle class there looks to be clobbered by mandated payments.

So this is hardly the model to follow. But Massachusetts does reflect a growing trend within the states -- to step boldly and sometimes desperately into essential domestic concerns that Congress and the White House have ignored or dithered away.

"State rights" today are suddenly about education initiatives, business enterprise, courtroom

Newby on health care

Our current health care system simply isn't working. We are paying almost twice as much per person for health care as any other country in the world, yet we are ranked 24th in the world for the health of our population. Almost no matter what the measure, we don't do well.

We also have the shame that despite all the money we spend 46 million Americans have no health insurance at all.

The principal way that working families get access to health care is through their employer. That system in its current form is breaking down. We are close to the point where neither workers nor employers can afford the cost of health insurance.

We wanted to keep the Partnership Plan as simple as possible, to reduce the huge (and largely unnecessary) administrative costs in our current system. We wanted to divide the costs in an affordable and fair way between employers and employees. And we wanted to level the playing field between employers on health care costs, so that all employers pay their fair share and no employer could profit by not providing health insurance or by offering only sub-standard health insurance that unfairly shifts costs to workers and their families.

The Wisconsin Health Care Partnership Plan will no doubt have its detractors, both those who would oppose it on narrow ideological grounds and those special interests who profit so greatly from our current system. But the Partnership Plan is practical, affordable, and achievable. If we have the courage to effectively organize to get it passed.

reforms, poverty programs and even global warming -- all issues in which dozens of states are way ahead of the Beltway politicians.

Wisconsin now has a real chance not just to join the parade but actually lead in health coverage, returning our state to its innovative history. We are, after all, the place where national models were set in worker compensation

and unemployment insurance.

Newby and his growing chorus of businesses and health experts are harkening back to that tradition to move us forward.

Now it's up to the public to move the state candidates forward. Face them not just because your standard of living depends on their decisions. So does your life.

About that other health bill . . .

To keep the Newby bill clear, think Senate 698 and definitely think Partnership.

Because a contrasting bill called the Wisconsin Health Plan -- once a name floated for the Newby proposal -- was introduced by departing Republican Rep. Curt Gielow and Democratic Sen. Jon Richards. Its background developer is another familiar name - David Riemer, one of the architects of Welfare to Work, a key aide to John Norquist, a key figure in Gov. Jim Doyle's first Herculean "no tax increase" budget and a candidate for county executive in the 2004 race against Scott Walker.

Riemer has been at pains to point out that his W-2 concept didn't anticipate what would happen under Tommy Thompson -- a wholesale feeding frenzy by private companies while few citizens found real jobs. Critics of his health bill fear similar loopholes.

It hasn't yet been evaluated. It seeks a large private insurance pool. The payment avenue has not

been determined but the sponsors suggest a payroll tax on businesses and employees.

It relies on "market-driven incentives" that virtually leave intact the current health insurance company structures and overhead.

That would certainly have more appeal to the private health industry but it deeply disturbs the consumer groups that say straightforward competition doesn't work in the health field. People who fear illness or are sick cannot shop particularly rationally. They need guidance without a profit motive.

This plan would also include that health savings account approach pushed as a cure-all by President Bush but lacking appeal to any household making under \$150,000 a year.

"I like Riemer and I welcome the debate -- I think it will be good to have this comparison and this discussion," said Newby. "I think our Partnership Plan is the really bold and effective one rather than providing a subsidy for a failed system."

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Changing society by remembering it

If a 93-year-old can show up at two major labor events, what's your excuse?

Former Mayor Frank Zeidler spoke up first (**near right**) at the Bay View Massacre celebration on May 7, moderated by USW leader Douglas Drake (background). A gorgeous day at the outdoor marker brought a crowd of about 120 union members and elected officials to spread around the grass (**below right**), absorb the rallying call for worker rights from several speakers and then to marvel at Zeidler's humor and historical recollection.

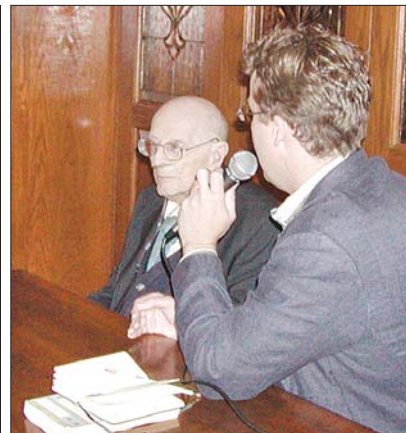
If they were impressed by his memory then, they should have turned up a week later, on May 13, at Turner Hall for another event sponsored by the Wisconsin Labor History Society.

Returning to the site where the group was founded 25 years ago, the society focused on Wisconsin's progressive vision of the union past. The living embodiment was Milwaukee's last Socialist mayor, but Zeidler (**far right**) was no mere monument. Aided at the mike and in the repartee by a UWM assistant professor of history, Aims McGuinness, Zeidler jumped all over the historic map without missing a fact in a 90-minute question and answer session.

Spotted in the crowd packing Turner's main dining room was David Newby (**front left in the photo below**), the president of the state AFL-CIO who will need all the inspiration he can muster from Wisconsin's progressive tradition.

Newby will be battling suspicious business leaders and a sideshow-prone state legislature to get Wisconsin moving on health coverage reform.

See information package on facing page.



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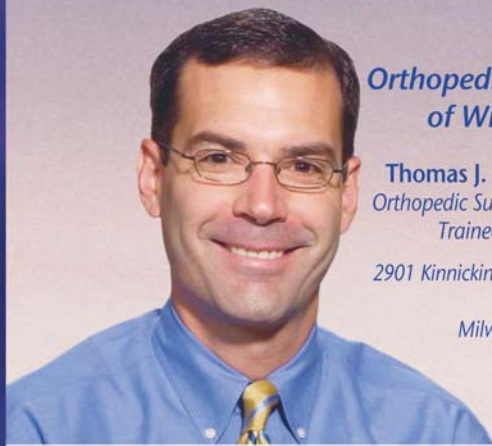
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Working to dig Milwaukee

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

The outside doors to Laborers Local 113 Hall were thrown open May 6, so sunny and breezy was the Saturday as 90 citizens and a dozen public officials mingled inside for breakfast, lunch and fervent discussion.

Were this New Orleans in hurricane season, nature would not have been so openly invited in at the fourth and largest ever African American Labor and Community Summit. But this was "Milwaukee: The Hidden Katrina" where the storm clouds of poverty can gather even under clear skies, where waves invisible to the broader community lap higher around a neglected central city.

Hope was at hand despite some grim statistics. But hope came mainly in the spirit and success against the odds contained in the personal stories being shared.

Was this enough? Does a larger Milwaukee connect to the deteriorating anchors of our social levees? Or will we need water physically drowning us before we sense disaster?

Anthony Rainey does wonder about that. A UAW worker at Master Lock, Rainey provided the stark, haunting black and whites of inner city streets, homes and check cashing centers, all blown up to poster size and scattered around the hall.

Rainey, one of the hard-working team assembled by MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran to put on the event, worried aloud: "If we all

don't do something now, within 10 years it will be our citizens carrying signs pleading for help like we saw in New Orleans."

It was an appropriate warning. This crowd was seriously attentive, frequently spontaneous in applause and visibly touched by the tales of triumph and loss. But most in attendance were to some degree already attuned to the dilemma. The stories at this summit deserved, even demanded, an ever increasing audience. It is now up to the Summit attendees to spread the alarm.

There was a youth movement present. Mixing defiant rap riffs and gutsy but lyrical phrases, the "Young Poets" Muhibb Dyer and Kwabena Nixon breathed life into their "Stop the Violence" message, putting a generally middle aged crowd inside the mindset and the language of young people living and dying on the inner city streets.

A panel of high school students was hosted by Khalif Rainey, son of Anthony but also a staff outreach coordinator for US Rep. Gwen Moore. Here were students who knew little about unions (even though a couple were brought to the panel by IBEW's Stanthia Grier through her work with the Parklawn YMCA) but knew a lot about focusing on their own future despite the temptations of drugs, gangs and stalled dreams.

Lawrence Robinson, Takira Collins and Precious Sumlin inadvertently revealed part of their bigger problem — not just poverty and limited resources but the attitudes they encounter at interviews and job fairs. Here are students blessed with strong social skills and good academics, yet an adult business world often sees them as too young or only suitable for retail work, though they have such

goals as nursing, teaching and engineering. The impressive thing was their refusal to be stifled.

The most provocative and articulate panel was composed of workers who had survived their own youthful errors and also the worst that poverty and then mainstream society could throw at them. Today they can testify to the redemptive power of hard work, family-supporting pay and stubborn attitude that they won't fall back but will always move ahead.

Their panel was moderated by Rhandi Berth, director of special projects for the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP), which has connected 2,500 residents with good jobs.

Four on the panel had survived prison or drug addiction — or both — to become skilled union workers. Eddie Doucette and Isaac McCovery, both advanced apprentices in Operating Engineers Local 139, openly discussed their troubled past and their turnaround. That required self-realization and determination in a penal system where they found some help but no true focus on rehabilitation. On the outside they needed people, unions and programs that gave them a chance.

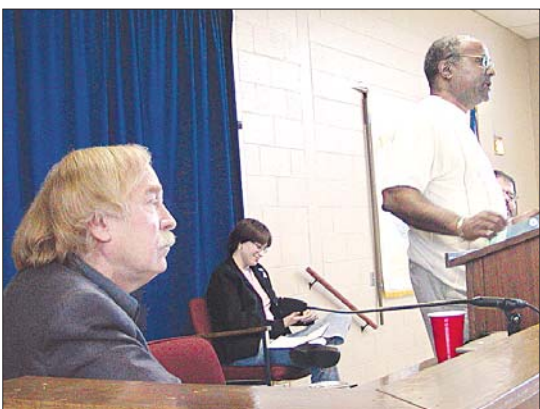
And they needed that attitude that nothing would drive them back to the past life and everything would drive them forward. "I got the foot in the door and then the shoulder — and now I'm pushing hard till the rest of the body is in," joked McCovery.

Minnie Joy recounted a 10-year journey through drugs to self-determination and top productivity within Laborers Local 113. Darletha White moved through health problems and crime to become one of the brick-layer apprentices nimbly and

Continued Next Page



A reverse image negative catches poets Muhibb Dyer and Kwabena Nixon in mid-story at the summit. BELOW: Columnists Eugene Kane (at podium) and Joel McNally were part of the panel moderated by Pam Fendt (background).



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out of poverty's deep muddy



Candor as well as speakers were applauded during the daylong summit on poverty. RIGHT: Prodded gently by moderator Khalif Rainey, high school students Takira Collins (center) and Precious Sumlin discuss what today's youth face in Milwaukee.



From Page 6

happily scaling the scaffolding around City Hall.

Vernez Blackmon survived another sort of prison. It is known as Welfare to Work.

She brought gales of familiar laughter from the crowd as she discussed it – the dead-end dump jobs she was offered, the convoluted advice, the assumption that any client on welfare was lazy, the “job-ready” rules that meant the reader you were the less help you could get. The only people enriched by the program were the private agencies that ran the program. “W-2 is the biggest pimp out there,” she said.

Blackmon started getting work and moving ahead on her own initiative. When her unionized panelists were asked to reveal their wages and did, she noted with a smile, “I’m not doing that good.”

The W-2 program as an example of “poverty pimps” was a central theme of the media panel. With humor and pointed sarcasm, two noted columnists skewered both the results of W-2 and the continuing desire of media outlets to hide the depth and breadth of community poverty.

The latter point was a subject of derision for Joel McNally,

once the Milwaukee Journal’s most noted political columnist whose writings continue in the Shepherd Express and who also serves as co-host of WMCS 1290’s “Morning Magazine.”

The other columnist, Eugene Kane, continues as the lone provocative metro minority voice at the Journal Sentinel, and it was his column on “poverty pimps” that inspired Cochran to put together this panel.

Kane offered a note of caution – that he is individualistic and not a mouthpiece for anyone, and that the problem of newspaper reporting on poverty concerns

was not an issue of his colleagues’ competence but more about what their managers decide is worth reporting.

McNally was noted inside the newsroom for his battles on newspaper priorities and he has continued those thought wars since his departure. His view is blunter: “They don’t think poor people are their subscribers.”

Adding an evangelical flair to the discussion was Robert Miranda, a noted Latino columnist and activist. Adding some sobering facts and overviews was Atty. Patricia Delessio of LAW (Legal Action of Wisconsin). The moderator was Pamela Fendt, senior policy analyst for the UWM Center for Economic Development.

The stories propelled discussion of related issues – police-citizen relations, a prison system hardly focused on returning better citizens to less crime-ridden neighborhoods, the complex motivations that encourage gangs, dropouts and drug use, the difference of today’s culture in its cynicism about getting off the poverty treadmill, the ways to convince even more young people of the value of training.

And health care. Further setbacks in that community concern also circled the hall, more invisible waves to cope with.



Bob Clark of Making Connections re-emphasized the need for jobs and attention.

It was clear that Saturday that St. Michael’s Hospital, long a main service center for the poor, Medicaid recipients and low-wage families, was shuttering its doors, continuing a deterioration of health care for the inner city.

Actively petitioning attention at the Summit were physicians from the Milwaukee Medical Clinic, set up at Mt. Sinai to educate health professionals and serve the diverse inner city population as a University of Wisconsin outlet. But the physicians revealed that UW was handing over operations to Aurora, which has been a profit-oriented nonprofit and seems intent on reducing both staff and mission.

The impending waves are high indeed. But Cochran summed up one of the main lessons: “We’re going to get people more jobs that will move them out of poverty, and I mean real jobs that create real pride and real families.”

To that end, organized labor took a moment for plaques and recognition for pioneer black trade unionists who had focused on the work ethic but also on deeper public education and increased civic involvement.


The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, chaired here by Martha Love, helped arrange the tribute.

Posthumously honored was Paulette Copeland, a pioneer for public education at the MTEA union. Ailing and unable to attend were UAW Local 438 longtime activist Janie Jackson and Smith Steel Workers’ retiree Ollie Thompson (whose award was accepted by longtime colleague and union successor Paul Blackman). Present and still working for the inner city community was recent CWA retiree Mary Jo Avery.

MATA, the public access channel, taped the discussions and is preparing them for future broadcast.

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Painters' union rewards safety on job with a STAR raffle

Safety on the job was the centerpiece. Some \$80,000 in prizes including a 2006 Colorado Chevy truck were the considerable motivation and reward.

The combination drew union painters and allied trades from throughout Wisconsin to the Waukesha County Expo Center's Arena on April 29 for the first STAR Luncheon.

The raffles at this inaugural event left virtually every attendee erupting in glee and then toting home boxes of winnings — CD/DVD players, plasma and other TVs, job site radios, electronic equipment. There were no losers — everybody got a prize bag. Even gift certificates for Red Wing shoes were one-stop shopping as the shoe company set up a table, samples and a fitter.

One extraordinarily happy Madison painter, Andy Miller, won the fully loaded Chevy with some loaded painterly additions — the logo of District Council 7 of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) and the announcement "My Union Gave Me This Truck" on the back.

If Miller of Local 802 retains this rolling advertisement of the union and its safety programs as he tools around the



With the grand prize looming alongside him, John Jorgensen calls out the raffle winners in a union event where no one walked away empty-handed.

state, IUPAT will pick up his union dues for the year.

STAR stands for Safety Training Awards Recognition. Adam Holmes, an organizer for DC7 and also one of the safety instructors, noted that more than 200 painters had within the last year completed one of the three safety programs required for this luncheon — courses that require hours of training and often night school — and had maintained the 800 safe hours of work mandated after completion. Almost two-thirds of those Wisconsin workers were in attendance at the luncheon, and you had to be

present to win a prize.

DC7 has long emphasized safety in its construction and related work. More than 3,500 completions had been recorded by 2005 in the six safety courses it helps offer.

For the STAR eligibility, workers had to be certified in one of three programs involving such things as OSHA safety expertise or the IUPAT's own Scaffold User and Erector course.

Business Manager and Secretary-Treasurer John Jorgensen, his voice almost hoarse from announcing the raf-

file numbers and winners, pointed out that, along with the workers' dedicated extra hours, the program would not be possible without management buy-in, planning and close cooperation.

Signatory contractors have committed a nickel for every hour of union painting work to underwrite the courses, luncheon and prizes. The rewards in strong safety records and uninterrupted construction have proven self-evident.

Only Milwaukee area contractors failed to buy in to the STAR initial year, said Jorgensen, which has made members of the excluded Local 781 unhappy, but he fully expects them to be on board next year.

The painters' union has long prided itself on its continuing education programs, not just in workplace safety but also on updating its members' skills and knowledge of construction materials and methods in an ever-modernizing environment.

It also has been active offering a formal state indentured

apprenticeship program in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training Standards.

The trades involved are hardly what the average homeowner thinks of when slapping on a new coat of paint. Apprentices and journeymen through ongoing education must master some ever-changing fields. The IUPAT offers intense preparation and training in glazing and glass work, drywall taping and finishing, and decorating as well as painting methods. Many of its members have overlapping skills in these specialties.

Noting that the average age of its union members was in the mid-40s, Jorgensen expected his union to continue its pressure and even make more gains in adding minority and women to the painter rolls through recruiting and apprentice programs.

One of the union's business reps, Dean Wanty, was central in organizing the STAR event, prizes and operation.



Madison painter Andy Miller (left) drove home the big prize — along with congratulations from union event organizer Dean Wanty.



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Unions get close on Free Choice Act

As Mike Hall points out at the new AFL-CIO weblog (blog.aflcio.org), while you are reading this, a worker will be fired for doing something perfectly legal and supposedly protected by the nation's labor laws - trying to join with their co-workers to form a union in their workplace.

As long as that's the game it will be hard to compete with anti-union campaigns or the sad reality, Hall points out, of being fired without recourse because the boss doesn't like your hair color.

If there's any good news to this in an election year, more Republicans are signing up to support the US Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 1696 and S. 842).

It would strengthen workers' rights to choose representation by requiring employers to recognize a union after a majority of employees sign authorization cards. It also would provide for mediation and arbitration of first-contract disputes and authorize stronger penalties for violation of labor law when workers seek to

form a union.

The AFL-CIO union movement have signed up 215 backers in the House, three short of a majority, and 42 in the Senate.

Republican lawmakers aren't likely to allow a vote on the legislation if it does gain majority support. But as the clock ticks down for November elections, politicians react to grassroots pressure.

At the ballot box, one struggling income carries the same weight as one millionaire. And the politicians know it.

And there is another way to get the balance back between labor and management as the labor laws originally intended. Get the balance back in the US Congress - and throw in the state legislature while you're at it.

Putting tech ed first

More than 170 participants crowded the Carpenters Hall in Pewaukee May 9 for a symposium underwritten by the National Science Foundation that also gave "best business partners of the year" awards to a union (Plumbers Local 75) and the Auto Dealers Association of Mega-Milwaukee (ADAMM).

ABOVE: The shortage in tech skills brought business, government, labor and students together to hear from a range of experts - including MATC economics guru Michael Rosen, see Page 10 - not only about the crisis in tech interest and ability but also setting out practical solutions for counselors, schools and businesses.

BELOW: Prof. Kenneth Gray - whose ideas were profiled last month in the Labor Press - was not only the keynote speaker but participated in the hands-on breakout sessions. Supported by the MCLC as well as major contractor groups and corporations, the symposium was put together by the 21 Century Urban Technical Education Project in partnership with MATC.

- Photos by Sue Ruggles



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Rosen

From Page 1

tion and petty politics erupted on the last morning of Senate sessions May 4.

Decided in the GOP caucus so that no Republican had to justify the action on the floor, the Republicans voted to reject Michael Rosen from the state technical college board where he had been serving since last summer — and quite well, according to other board members.

Gov. Doyle, who had appointed Rosen to a non-labor seat on the board (Senate approval is usually routine), called the action “a partisan stunt.”

Rosen, an economics instructor at the Milwaukee Area Technical College and a frequent radio and forum guest on issues such as fiscal policy and education, is also president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 212, the MATC faculty.

The MATC unions are currently in contentious bargaining and have expressed severe unhappiness with college President Darnell Cole and his impact on morale. Cole has dismissed the criticism as stemming just from Rosen and “fringe supporters,” but the teachers gave a lie to that last month. Running for the first time in years against opposition, Rosen and his union slate won an unprecedented 81% support from the faculty, with a record 693 members turning out. It hardly seemed coinci-



Sen. Carpenter (left) and Rosen chatting at a labor event.

dence that one week after the teachers demonstrated that deep backing of Rosen’s views and style, the Republican senators decided without public debate to vote Rosen off the Wisconsin Technical College System Board, which sets policies and establishes financial aid to the state’s 16 colleges.

Only Republican Sen. Mike Ellis, who arrived too late to hear the caucus marching orders, sided with the Democrats to keep Rosen.

Did his colleagues have a reason?

“As far as I can tell, they just don’t like him” said Ellis.

“Now, I have a different view. If I had a problem with Rosen, I would have called him in for a talk. But I didn’t. I also trust one of my constituents, Greg Weyenberg, an AFT guy who said he was fine and highly qualified.”

“Unless the guy is a crook, I think any governor has a right to appoint whoever he wants to a public service board.”

Majority Leader Dale Schultz would only say questions had been raised about Rosen’s demeanor, which brought an outraged response from northwestern Wisconsin Democrat Robert Jauch: “Failure to provide specific reasons will be a smear on the Senate. It is an insult to every citizen in Wisconsin who likes to think that someday they could serve.”

This sideshow stalled the Senate wrap-up — indeed, the Senate must now reconvene this summer. It helped stretch the session into the wee hours, delaying an embarrassment for the GOP leadership, which failed in its efforts to impose immovable tax freezes on public officials through the state constitution. All versions of these com-

plex formulations lost through a mixture of GOP cold feet, belated common sense and an outbreak of true conservatism, which normally encourages local democratic control.

The Rosen issue “wasn’t on anyone’s radar screen,” noted Democratic Sen. Tim Carpenter. Ellis agreed.

Both senators worried aloud about the precedent. To reject an appointee without extended discussion of reasons, such as qualifications or philosophy, is either a power trip or retribution.

“It sends a chilling message to anyone interested in public service, that you can be voted off because someone doesn’t like you,” said Carpenter. By that standard, you could pretty much empty both houses of elected officials.

The move is emerging as a big mistake when half the Senate and all the Assembly are in front of the voters in November.

The AFT, a statewide union, is outraged by the “capricious decision.” A member of teacher union WEAC said: “If we needed motivation statewide to dump these crazy Republicans, they handed it to us.”

The rejecters also didn’t do their homework — they would have found tech college presidents (outside Milwaukee) perfectly comfortable with Rosen on the board — particularly with tech ed emerging as a primary engine for economic growth.

He is the only representative of an inside workforce, particularly savvy on complex issues and how to pursue grants for businesses. Already he has helped with workplace advancement grants and a statewide joint curriculum committee.

“He knows his stuff,” said a non-labor member of the board, “I think his presence has been important and amazingly helpful. He articulates his views. He brings the most knowledgeable perspective.”

A labor representative on the board, state AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Phil Neunfeldt, regularly seeks to work across party lines on issues, “and this one just baffles me,” he said. “It so easily can be perceived as payback or union animosity.”

By not giving public reasons, the GOP has opened itself up to some fascinating speculation about why they would do something so politically dumb.

• In a February committee meeting on a collective bargaining bill, GOP senators suggested that any union service was a

“conflict of interest” in serving on a state board. There was shock among the large contingent of labor members present, some volunteers on state boards.

There was eloquent rebuttal — particularly from Sen. Jeff Plale, a Democrat hardly a pushover for union interests.

There was a realization that this concept was not only ridiculous but by extension could keep veterinarians off agricultural boards and business leaders off virtually every public policy board.

But it did reveal the continuing union animus within the GOP. Was the Rosen vote a backdoor result of such thinking, something the senators dared not articulate too openly because it would be politically devastating?

• Last fall, there was a telephone smear campaign against the Rosen appointment aimed at minority legislature members and quickly derailed given Rosen’s track record on civil rights.

Cole denied any role in this, though a Labor Press story found some of his supporters involved. In his Milwaukee magazine web column May 16, journalist Bruce Murphy speculates that this time the Cole gang succeeded.

• Was the vote a warning to any advocates of positions different than the GOP bills cutting back tech funding to shut up or we’ll get you?

• Was the vote not about Rosen but an overreach to “demean Doyle” in a year of hot political feelings?

• And then there is the strange duplicity of the River Hills Darling. That’s GOP Sen. Alberta Darling, described by many as a champion of Cole’s penchant for privatization.

A week before the Senate rejection of Rosen — yet a full eight months after Rosen began service on the board — she mailed him a letter of congratulations on the appointment, saying “it is wonderful that someone with your talents and knowledge will be serving on the board as a representative of the public.”

She not only voted against him but Madison sources say she helped lead the charge in the secret Republican caucus. Was the letter just a way to deflect accusations of investigation? (Labor Press asked Darling to respond. She declined.)

Some partisan wars are inevitable, but the degree of clandestine machination is “as bad as I’ve ever seen it,” said one senator. Given the recent past, that’s saying a lot.

-- Dominique Paul Noth



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Illegal

From Page 1

moral icons of their nations.

It is the illegal disguised as legal that Thomas Jefferson complained about in the Declaration of Independence. One of the charges against King George III was that "He has endeavoured to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners" and "refusing to pass other [laws] to encourage their Migrations hither."

It is the part of "illegal" we wish more people had supported. We understand from the Nuremberg trials after World War II that citizens as well as the military should refuse to obey laws that offend humanity.

As we also understand that leaking of bad government behavior, from the Pentagon Papers to the existence of secret terrorist prisons overseas and rendition of suspects to nations that torture, morally exposed larger offenses against our laws than the laws broken to reveal them.

All these examples — and there are many more — are not pointed out to oppose the "rule of law" so ingrained in all sides of civic expectation. But let's clarify what that rule really is. It does not defend legal obfuscation to disguise the higher laws being broken. It does forcefully oppose the vigilantism the border Minuteman engage in, trying with threat of posse to impose their views on an issue of moral complexity.

But the mass immigration marches are well within the American rule of law, a willingness to confront our national behavior without threat of violence, a protest that does not insist on a single pathway to legalization but galvanizes a common problem.

Through history, the United States has focused not on some automatic "rule of law" but on the "rule of good law."

We have never just blindly accepted everything a government passes or interprets. We



The hundreds of immigration marchers out front May 1 crossed all of Veterans Park to assemble at the makeshift speakers' stage. At this point the marchers still filled the Downtown streets side by side, stretching full ranks all the way back to Wisconsin Ave. and Jefferson St.

petition for redress. Our nation has been on its most perilous ground when the laws on its book attack the natural law of family unity and the value of a single human life. (Not to mention those laws that seem motivated by skin color, greed and status quo.)

The irony today is that conservatives and liberals agree on one thing in the debate — that our current immigration laws are contradictory, incoherent and mired in red tape. This is the part of illegal that makes so many catch phrases in the talk radio world simply laughable in the face of modern realities as well as truthful history.

Take another favorite: "My ancestors got here legally; they should, too." How can these people be so sure? There were few restrictions on immigration until the 20th century, which brought its own turmoils and false documents. But from the 1800s on, despite minor restric-

tions compared with today, there was rampant fraud, deceptive entry and corruption. The federal government, American companies and even states were taking kickbacks and violating minimal standards of naturalization and the legal requirements of "good moral character."

Few of the strident voices flocking to the felony stance of Rep. James Sensenbrenner can

know there isn't a horse thief in their background, or his, for that matter. That's lost in time.

Those so-called "legal immigration lines" that people say today's illegal immigrants should leave the country to go stand in — who makes those lines, who's in them and how did they get there? Money and influence as well as relatives in the US play a part, as have years

of delay and line-switching. Studies suggest a fourth of illegal immigrants were once legal but governments and companies also failed to renew, failed to inform or simply lost their applications.

Our immigration laws have changed dozens upon dozens of times over the centuries in response to economic concerns, social fears, systemic corruption and the conflicts of war and peace. What was legal then is illegal now and yet there has been one constant: The infusions of fresh immigrants revitalize enterprise and, over time, given residency and rights, actually elevate wages and the economy.

The most amazing thing about the current immigrant protests is that the "illegals" — as they are labeled to demean them — are standing up with pride alongside their legal brothers and sisters. Their boldness openly scares some of those talk show listeners, but it is in an American tradition of speaking out for the human condition.

Group action to change the law is an essential part of the American experience. Defying the law peacefully carries consequences, but defying laws driven by one class against another have historically brought not punishment but rethinking across the divide.

This is the part of illegal we had better understand. And sometimes did.



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Product Defects
Fires & Explosions
Farm Accidents

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Medical Malpractice
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Machinery Accidents

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1-800-682-3434



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WAUKESHA, WI 53188

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GREEN BAY, WI 53142

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Sick... who has time?



Aurora Quick Care Get results today

Aurora Quick Care's advanced practice nurses, for a fee of \$30, will assess your symptoms, conduct a simple test and, within 15 minutes, provide you with either a prescription for your illness or information about how to manage your symptoms and/or receive additional care.

Tests Offered:

Severe Sore Throat	Insect Sting
Pregnancy	Mononucleosis
Ear Infection	Minor Rashes
Seasonal Allergies	Ringworm
Sinus Infection	Poison Ivy
Swimmer's Ear	Bladder Infection
Pink Eye	Bronchitis

We also offer:

Vaccines:
Well Tetanus, Meningitis, Pneumonia (seasonal), Flu (seasonal)

Screenings:
TB Testing, Diabetes, Lipid Profile (cholesterol)

Prices of vaccines and screenings may vary. Patients must be 6 months or older, and 9 years or older to receive vaccines.

Open days, evenings and weekends.

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(920) 739-0289

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INSIDE Aurora Pharmacy
17280 W. North Ave.
(262) 784-4902

*INSIDE Brookfield Square
near JC Penny*
95 N. Moorland Rd.
(262) 786-9037

Butler
INSIDE Aurora Pharmacy
12601 W. Hampton Ave.
(262) 373-1869

Greendale
*INSIDE Southridge Mall
near Old Navy*
5300 S. 76th St.
(414) 423-5538

Kenosha
INSIDE Piggly Wiggly
2801 14th Pl.
(262) 553-9325

Menasha
INSIDE Piggly Wiggly
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