

UNITED ASSOCIATION OF PLUMBERS & PIPEFITTERS LOCAL NO. 123

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PLUM  
COMPANY  
U.A. LOCAL 111  
1900 - 1998

TRY  
U.A. LOCAL 624  
1915 - 1998

WEST-CENTRAL FLORIDA'S PIPING PROFESSIONALS SINCE 1900  
PLUMBERS & PIPEFITTERS  
**LOCAL 123**

125th Anniversary

Est. January 1900

TAMPA, FLORIDA

**1900 - 2025**

125-YEAR COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY

PLUMBERS & PIPEFITTERS  
LOCAL UNION **123** TAMPA BAY



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**PLUMBERS, PIPEFITTERS, & HVAC TECHS  
LOCAL NO. 123  
125TH ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATION**

**Saturday, June 28, 2025  
5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.**

**Tampa Airport Marriott  
Tampa International Airport  
4200 George J. Bean Parkway**

Registration, Photo Ops, Cocktail Reception.....	5:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Dinner Bell; Open Seating.....	6:00 - 6:15 p.m.
Welcoming Remarks, National Anthem .....	6:15 - 6:30 p.m.
Dinner Buffet .....	6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Remarks, Presentations, Dessert, Coffee .....	7:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Music, Dancing, Celebrating, Photo Ops .....	8:00 - 11:00 p.m.



## **SOLIDARITY AND DEDICATION TO OUR BROTHERHOOD CREATED AND HAS SUSTAINED LOCAL 123'S LEGACY**

Brothers and Sisters:

As we gather to commemorate 125 years of Local 123's history, I find myself reflecting on the extraordinary path that brought us here – and the legacy we now carry forward.

It's hard not to wonder what those early pioneers were thinking back in 1900, when a small group of plumbers in Tampa first came together under a modest wooden hall. They couldn't have known what their courage would set in motion, but they knew one thing for certain: that dignity, fairness and respect should follow honest labor.

That belief sparked the birth of a union – of a brotherhood – that has not only endured but thrived.

From the origins of Local 111 in Tampa and then St. Petersburg to the growth of Local 624 in Tampa and Local 583 in Sarasota and, finally, the unification that gave rise to Local 123, our history has been built by those who chose solidarity over silence, strength over surrender, and principle over profit. We've endured world wars, depressions, technological revolutions and shifting political tides. Through it all, the one thing that never wavered was our members' commitment to the craft and to each other.

This book is more than a collection of names and dates. It's a living record of sacrifice and progress – of calloused hands, early mornings, long hours and the relentless pursuit of better lives for working families. To every member who fitted, welded, plumbed, serviced, voted, mentored, fought and served, thank you.

And while this book honors our past, it also looks forward. The tools may change – digital plans, robotic equipment, high-efficiency systems – but the mission will not. Our unity, our training and our integrity remain the foundation upon which the future will rise. The next generation of Local 123 members will stand tall because of what we built together.

So here's to the next chapter. May we always remember where we came from, stay true to who we are and never stop building what matters.

With pride and solidarity,

Richard Cranker, Business Manager  
U.A. Local Union No. 123

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MADE IN USA

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United Association, International Office

*The History of U.A. Local No. 123, Tampa*

# A 125-YEAR PIPE-TRAD



# LEGACY OF ES SERVICE FOR WEST-CENTRAL FLORIDA

The United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States and Canada (the "U.A.") formed and chartered new Tampa-based plumbers and pipefitters Local No. 123 on [May 1, 1998](#), when it merged together long-existing plumbers and pipefitters [Local No. 111](#) of St. Petersburg and [Local No. 624](#) of Tampa. At that time, Local 111 had been in existence for 98 years, having been chartered by the U.A. on January 4, 1900, and Local 624 had existed for 83 years, having been chartered by the union on March 6, 1915.

But the lineage of Local 123 does not end there ...

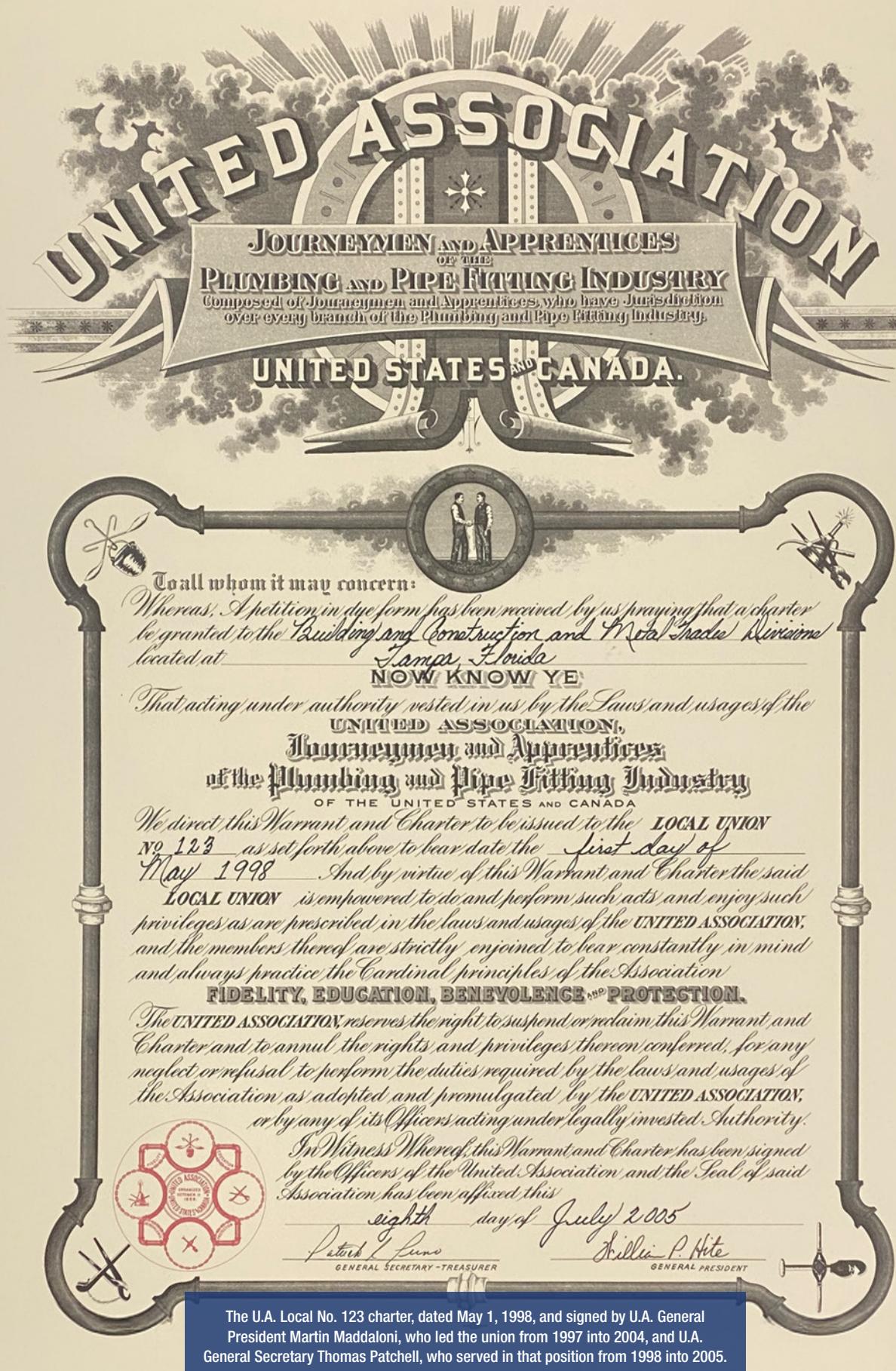
The U.A. merged marine pipefitters, helpers and apprentices [Local No. 766](#) of Tampa into the former Local 624 on July 9, 1948. Local 766 had been chartered by the union on May 9, 1940, to represent the fast-growing number

of fitters working in the burgeoning shipyards around Tampa as the country was preparing for World War II and already supplying its allies with war materiel.

The U.A. also merged plumbers [Local No. 583](#) of Sarasota into the former Local 111 on April 3, 1972. Local 583 had been chartered by the union on November 1, 1924.

And the U.A. merged marine pipefitters [Local No. 726](#) of Tampa into the former Local 111 on January 1, 1997. Local 726 had been chartered on March 28, 1983, to represent piping-industry workers in the shipyards and other marine industries that had been under the jurisdiction of Local 624 while the area's shipyards were experiencing a surge in shipbuilding production and shipping activity.

Although jurisdictional disputes occasionally occurred, while Local 111, Local 624 and



Local 583 coexisted from November 1, 1924, to April 3, 1972, and then when just Local 111 and Local 624 cohabited West-Central Florida, they generally did so with a spirit of brotherhood and harmony. For instance, during World War II, the three locals shared jurisdiction over a large U.S. Army base that was constructed and expanded in Venice, Florida, with a committee of two from each of the three locals providing supervision for the project.

At the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the U.A. awarded Local 123's oldest predecessor, Local 111, with its charter, Local 123 and its ancestors through 2025 have together helped build and maintain the Tampa Bay and West-Central Florida region. In doing so, a heritage of craftsmanship and quality sustained through highest-level training has been passed down onto Local 123 and its membership.

## LOCAL 111 SETS OUT IN TAMPA THEN MOVES ACROSS THE BAY

Just one year after being issued its charter on January 4, 1900, to represent plumbers in Tampa, Local 111 was in a flourishing condition. (Local 111 would not add steamfitters – which would later become pipefitters – to its trade classifications until 1908, and it would move locations and change jurisdiction across Tampa Bay to St. Petersburg in early 1913.) Its membership had remained steady at 12 plumbers, all of whom were employed either within the local's jurisdiction or by "traveling" to other sister U.A. locals around the state and country for jobs.

"Labor is well-organized here," Local 111 **Secretary Henry W. Shaw** even reported in the March 1901 U.A. *Journal*, the union's monthly membership publication. "Wages and hours

## U.A. ORGANIZED OVER 130 YEARS AGO

With a general lack of stable, national organizations to represent steamfitters and plumbers at the time, **Patrick J. Quinlan**, a plumber from Boston, sent a letter to **R. A. O'Brien**, a plumber in Washington, D.C., on April 25, 1889, proposing the formation of a new, national pipe-trades union. Subsequently, on October 7, 1889, 40 delegates from 23 piping-trades locals in 10 states and the District of Columbia assembled in Washington for a convention.

Four days later, the **United Association of Journeyman Plumbers, Gas Fitters, Steam Fitters and Steam Fitters' Helpers of the United States and Canada** (U.A.) was born on October 11, 1889.

The U.A. selected Brother Quinlan as its president, Brother Henry Collins of New York City as its vice president and Brother O'Brien as its secretary-treasurer.

Meanwhile, most steamfitters were attempting to sustain their own national union, the National Association of Steam, Hot Water and Power Piping Fitters and Helpers, that they had formed in 1888, soon after which it would become the International Association (I.A.). For two decades, however, the two piping unions clashed regularly over jurisdiction – before the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) ordered the I.A. to amalgamate into the U.A. in 1912.

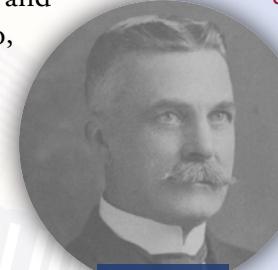
The union endured through two world wars and the Great Depression, after which on January 1, 1947, it changed its name to the **United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada**.

are good, and L.U. 111 strives to give the 'glad hand' to any who come her way."

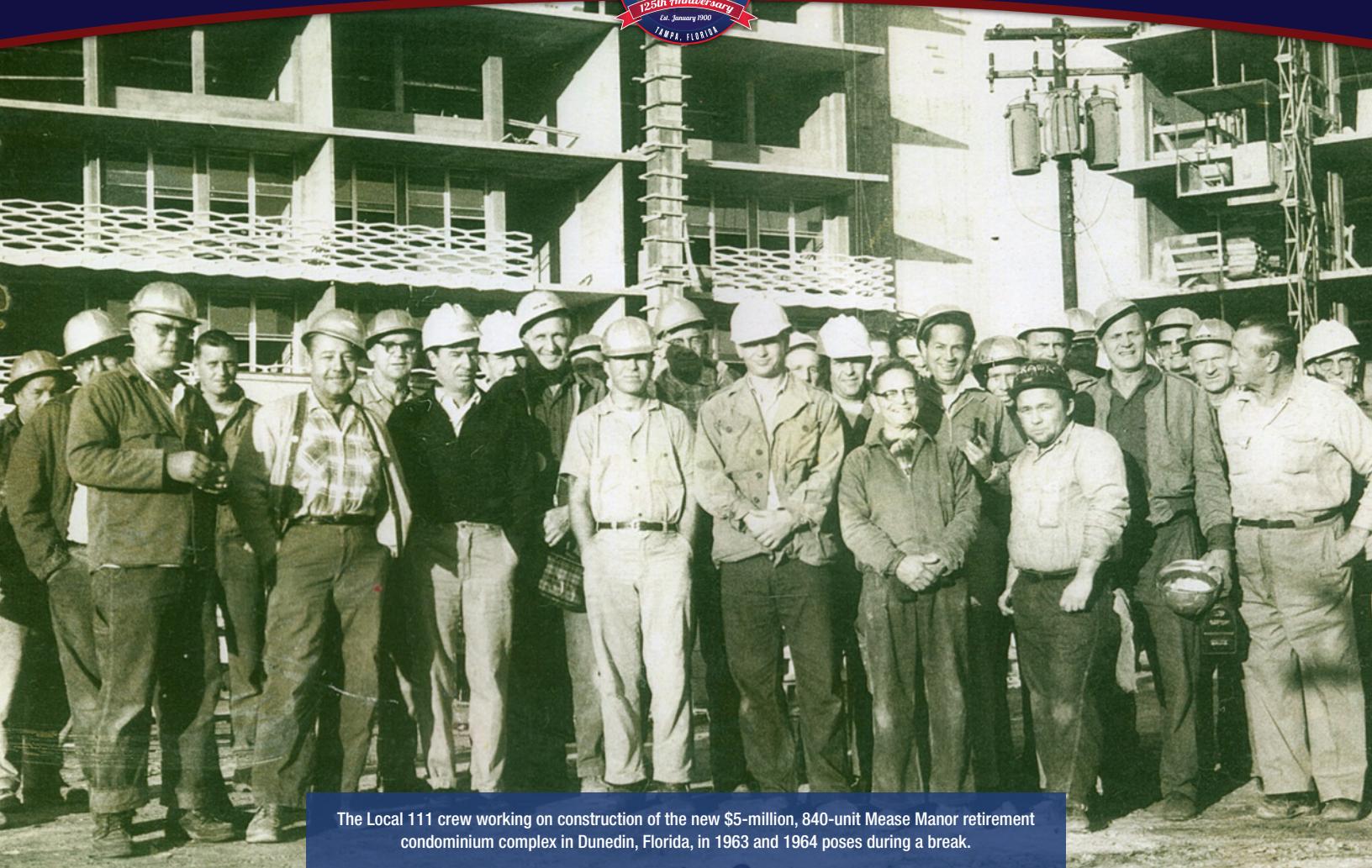
By 1913, however, employment conditions in Tampa for the Local 111 membership had deteriorated to the point that most of its members were working in St. Petersburg. With U.A. General Organizer William Lynn reporting in the April 1913 *Journal* that "the



Patrick J. Quinlan



Richard A. O'Brien



City of Tampa is still in a poor condition with all the building trades," Local 111 transferred its charter to **St. Petersburg** early that year.

After suffering through its final several years in Tampa, by the end of 1913 Local 111 was enjoying "admirable working conditions" and its journeyman wage scale had risen to \$5.50 per day. With its members remaining busy with work, after visiting the local during the end of that year Organizer Lynn was able to announce in the January 1914 *Journal*, "Local 111 is doing nicely."

The general organizer gave a similar report three years later in the March 1917 *Journal* after visiting Local 111, noting, "Everything is very satisfactory in that local." At the time, the local's journeymen plumbers and fitters were still earning \$5.50 per day and all of its members were working "under acceptable conditions."

With a large amount of shipbuilding taking place in the area boosting employment, the local's work situation remained stable when not strong. As such, in late 1917 the local's employing plumbing contractors agreed to a new work contract that provided a 50-cent raise to \$6 per day for journeymen and "excellent working conditions," as Organizer Lynn described in the January 1918 *Journal*.

With construction underway on the large Carlstrom Field and Dorr Field U.S. Army camps at Arcadia, Florida, to train prospective pilots in preparation for World War I, the local and the U.A. secured the work at union wages after the contractor at first refused to pay the scale. But the local's members stayed off the job until the U.S. Cantonment Adjustment Commission agreed that the union scale would be paid, after which Local 111 had jurisdiction of the project's piping workforce.

Following the war's end in November 1918, as construction work in its territory remained abundant, by April 1919 the local had organized all plumbers and fitters in and around St. Petersburg into the union. What's more, the local was still working under a favorable agreement with a wage rate of \$7 per day, which would be increased to \$8 per day before the end of the year.

Prosperity continued for Local 111 and its membership throughout much of the "Roaring Twenties," a period of tremendous economic growth and social change in the United States, and with its growing membership fully employed, the local hired its first business agent, **Brother W. K. Clegon**, in 1924. But construction slowed to a crawl by June 1927, during which time the local accepted a \$2 wage cut down from \$14 to \$12 per day.





## LOCAL 624 FILLS THE VOID WHEN CHARTERED IN TAMPA

During his visit to the area in late 1914, U.A. General Organizer John M. Ryan interviewed members of St. Petersburg Local 111 who were working in Tampa at the time and, as he reported in the April 1915 *Journal*, "found out from them that the sentiment against organized labor in

the City of Tampa has changed, and instead of being against the labor movement they are for it." After then getting the "unanimous consent" of Local 111, he went ahead with establishing a new U.A. local in Tampa.

With the assistance of longtime Local 111 member **Brother James F. Scott** – "an old battler and one who went through all the serious trouble of old Local No. 111" – after "two or three" preliminary meetings with some Local 111 members who lived in Tampa and also some non-union plumbers in the city, Organizer Ryan successfully organized a new local in Tampa. Subsequently, the U.A. issued the charter for plumbers and steamfitters Local 624 on March 6, 1915.

## LOCALS 111, 624, 583, 123 BUSINESS MANAGERS

Local 111 did not employ a fulltime business manager until 1977; Local 624 did not employ a fulltime business manager until 1944.

### Local No. 123

**Byron F. Boatright**  
1998 – 2001

**Glenn S. "Stan" McIntosh Jr.**  
2001 – 2012

**Todd A. Vega**  
2012 – 2022

**Richard E. Cranker**  
2022 – current

### Local No. 111

**Fred Stiles**  
1977 – 1979

**Daniel McKinnon**  
1980 – 1980

**Robert E. Lofley**  
1980 – 1982

**<none listed>**  
1982 – 1986

**George A. Willy**  
1986 – 1988

**Dennis J. Jones**  
1989 – 1991

**Bobby R. Floyd**  
1992 – 1994

**Ralph G. Schaefer**  
1995 – 1998

### Local No. 624

**J. E. McNerney**  
1944 – 1945

**R. L. Shaw**  
1945 – 1946

**Jones Bryan**  
1946 – 1954

**<none listed>**  
1955 – 1959

**Ted E. Davis**  
1960 – 1964

**Curtis D. Conyers**  
1964 – 1966

**Eugene A. Long**  
1966 – 1971

**Robert E. Lofley Jr.**  
1971 – 1977

**Daniel L. McKinnon**  
1977 – 1980

**Robert E. Lofley Jr.**  
1980 – 1982

**<none listed>**  
1983 – 1984

**Alan E. Lindsay**  
1985 – 1988

**John L. Rio**  
1988 – 1995

**Wayne Evans**  
1996 – 1996

**Byron F. Boatright**  
1996 – 1997

### Local No. 583

**<none listed>**  
1925 – 1938

**C. E. Jones**  
1938 – 1943

**J. W. McLeod**  
N/A – 1945

**H. O. Foxworthy**  
1947 – 1948

**Clarence W. Kerr**  
1948 – N/A

**Earl D. Handley**  
N/A – 1972

Although there was an abundance of work in the new local's territory that was dominated by the region's flourishing shipbuilding and **phosphate mining** industries, when Organizer Ryan returned to Tampa in early 1916, he found, as he described in the March 1916 *Journal*, "that there was plenty of dissension among the members of the local union, and that they had made very little progress since I organized them one year ago." Meeting with the Local 624 Executive Board and informing them of their duties to the local, he also reminded them to be "guided by our United Association constitution and they would have a local they would be proud of."

After Local 624 was able to stabilize itself as the decade progressed, the employment situation of its members improved, particularly in the Tampa shipyards. For instance, members working in the **Oscar Daniels Company** yards joined other trades in a two-week strike against the company in 1919 that gained the workers a "satisfactory settlement" with improved conditions.

With a large amount of work in Tampa as the local entered the 1920s, that summer its officers and Organizer Lynn met with the Master Plumbers Association and, as he reported in the September 1920 *Journal*, "satisfactorily adjusted all matters in contention." He went on to declare, "The settlement that we arrived at will bring better conditions and more money to our membership."

The "Roaring Twenties" also proved relatively prosperous for Local 624 as construction boomed at times and the general economy of Tampa, driven by tourism and significant real



Local 624 apprentice Eugene Long (center) displays his Florida State U.A. Apprentice Contest Fifth-Year Pipefitter First-Place Award after winning the competition in 1963, along with (left to right) Local 624 pipefitting training instructor S. L. Jones Jr., Business Manager Ted E. Davis, President C. B. May Sr., and Business Agent Norman LeBlanc.



The Local 624 graduation apprenticeship class of 1964 poses after receiving their completion certificates.



Local 624 Apprenticeship Training Program administrators and instructors (left to right) Joe M. Castro, Frank Whiteside, Bob Kocher, S.L. Jones and Donald Utt display the awards they received from the local in 1965 to recognize their dedication to the training program.

estate speculation and development, thrived. In particular, additional employment was supplied by residential expansion as Tampa's population rapidly grew.

## LOCAL 111: SEVEN DECADES TO MERGING WITH LOCAL 624

The Great Depression, the historic, decade-long human and economic catastrophe that began when the U.S. stock market crashed on October 29, 1929 (history's "Black Tuesday"), hit West-Central Florida and its tourism industry, as well as the U.A., hard, resulting in many members, including those with Local 111, dropping out of the union. The St. Petersburg local's membership declined from 30 total journeymen and apprentices in June 1930 to a low of 11 total dues-paying members in June 1934, after which the local only recovered to 23 members by June 1936.

Likewise, unemployment among members who remained with U.A. locals across the country, including Local 111, surged during

the depression. "Construction all but stopped, and this led to a significant decline in manufacturing," the official U.A. international history recounts. "The economies of both (the United States and Canada) spiraled ever downward, until unemployment reached extremely high numbers and workers began to give up altogether."

Meanwhile, as the U.A. history notes, the *Journal* ran several issues during the early 1930s that offered advice on how members could make their wages go as far as possible, although much of the focus of the articles was either on calling on the government to take action to help people or on trying to offer some hope and encouragement to the U.A. membership. But as its overall international membership declined and the U.A. held no conventions between 1928 and 1938, "the union held it together," the U.A. history states.

Some relief came from the Federal and state governments in the form of labor-friendly legislation such as the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931, which gave workers prevailing wages when employed on public-works projects, and the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which guaranteed employees the right to organize and bargain collectively. What's more, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's federal "New Deal" programs instituted from 1933 through 1938 generated construction and civic-improvement jobs throughout Florida and the country, including \$10 million in Federal funds for New Deal work projects, military expenditures and relief payments in St. Petersburg.

U.A. General Organizer Richard P. Walsh actually found Local 111 with a relatively positive general attitude when he visited St. Petersburg in early 1934. "Its morale is wonderful considering what they have gone through during the past three years," he reported in that April's *Journal*. "Here, as in many other



Local 123 retired Brother James Collins in his garden in Tampa in 2020.



Future Local 123 member Brother James Collins is shown in his U.S. Army photo during World War II.

Brother James Collins poses with the Merrill's Marauders, second row, sixth from the right, sometime during World War II.



## RETIREE WAS WITH FAMOUS UNIT DURING WORLD WAR II

Future Local 123 retiree Brother James T. Collins was only 19 years old when he volunteered for a dangerous mission in 1943 during World War II. As a member of the all-volunteer 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), nicknamed "Merrill's Marauders," Brother Collins and his fellow soldiers ended up behind enemy lines in Japanese-controlled Burma.

The Marauders, named after their commander, Brigadier General Frank Merrill, fought in the Burma Campaign during the war and were renowned for their deep-penetration missions behind Japanese lines, often engaging larger enemy forces. Specializing in jungle warfare, the Marauders disrupted the enemy's Japanese supply lines and communications.

Trekking nearly 1,000 miles on foot, battling the elements almost as much as the enemy, the unit of about 3,000 men sought to capture an airfield for a critical Allied supply route in the region. Conditions in the dense jungle were horrendous, and Brother Collins contracted malaria, as did many other Marauders while they also struggled to get supplies.

But the Marauders pressed on, inspired by their leader, Major Frank Merrill, who would die during the closing months of the war. In the end, they prevailed over the Japanese and captured the airfield at Myitkyina.

In 2020, Brother Collins received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor of the United States, for his role as a member of Merrill's Marauders. A 73-year member of the U.A. and Local 123, he passed away on June 23, 2021, at age 97.



places in Florida, a very friendly feeling exists between the masters and journeymen."

Despite the depression, the city's population increased by 50 percent between 1930 and 1940 and "vast stretches of undeveloped land provided an important inducement for new construction," according to the St. Petersburg Museum of History's *St. Petersburg Goes to War, 1941-1945*. As the city was able to quickly recover, the Local 111 membership grew to 52 total members, including seven helpers, by June 1939.

As Local 111 members were benefiting from a slowly recovering economy and building industry in West-Central Florida, including work on housing projects, the start of World War II in Europe and Asia in the late 1930s began to put an end to the Great Depression as the global conflict ultimately spurred strong economic recovery throughout Florida and the United States. U.A. locals nationwide, including Local 111, grew as a result of the work created by military production demands, which helped swell U.A. membership across



Local 624 delegates attending the 33<sup>rd</sup> U.A. General Convention in 1986 are (left to right) David Rush, Mike Lindsay, Bud Jagars, Al Lindsay, Charlie Woodham, Paul Roundtree, John Rio and Roy Roundtree.

North America from 81,000 in 1941 to 210,000 members, many of whom built and expanded shipyards, weapons plants, aircraft factories and other facilities to support the war effort.

Even before the United States officially entered the war following the Imperial Japanese attack on the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, the U.S. by 1940 was re-arming its military, which initiated a major construction boom. Likewise, West-Central Florida and the Local 111 jurisdiction were transitioning from grappling with the effects of the depression to actively participating in the war effort, leading to significant economic growth.

## CONTINUING A LEGACY OF GIVING

Make-A-Wish Foundation, The Children's Miracle Network Children's Hospital Telethon, Shrine Circus, Angels Unaware, Hillsborough Community College Foundation and the All Children's Hospital Foundation. Those are just a few of the charitable causes and organizations that Local 123 has supported over the years – continuing a legacy of giving back to its community that was fostered by its predecessor locals, Local 111 and Local 624, before they were consolidated to form Local 123 in 1998.

Among many other benevolent efforts, Local 123 along with the Mechanical Contractors Association of West Central Florida, which represents the local's employers, sponsored their first annual **charity golf outing** to benefit local area charities. Along with its Ladies Auxiliary No. 159, Local 123 has hosted many charitable events, including back-to-school supply, shoe and holiday gift drives for local schoolchildren.

Among the large amount of defense work that employed the local's members during the war was construction of the

**Venice Army Air Field**, which after it was opened in 1942 became a hub for various training programs, including those for the British Royal Air Force. Local 111 shared jurisdiction of the massive facility with Local 624 and Local 583.

Following the war, which ended with the Japanese surrender on September 2, 1945, after Nazi Germany's surrender earlier that year on May 8, steady employment continued into and during much of the 1950s as West-Central Florida experienced significant construction and urban development. Construction of the **A.W. Higgins Generating Plant** on Booth Point in Oldsmar, Florida, provided the local with significant workhours until the state-of-the-art oil-fired facility went online in 1954.

Meanwhile, in 1952 Local 111 secured a **Health and Welfare Plan** as a fringe benefit in its work agreement with employing contractors. The employers paid into a fund based on the hours worked by the members to supply them with health insurance through the plan.

But before the end of the 1950s, Local 111's nearly 300 members went on strike against the Plumbing Industry Council, which was representing their employing contractors, on May 26, 1959, to enforce their request for a 23-cent-per-hour total increase to their \$3.15 wage scale and healthcare benefit. The local's plumbers and fitters returned to their jobs nearly four weeks later after the two sides reached an agreement on June 22 on a two-year contract with 15-cent increases each year, giving the local's journeymen a wage scale of \$3.45 per hour and 10 cents per hour for benefits the second year.

While building new phosphate mines in the early 1960s among other projects that supplied the local with strong employment, Local 111 gained a new employer-funded



Local 624 members work on a job sometime during the 1990s.



**Pension Plan** benefit in 1965 to provide members with retirement benefits. The local's roughly 325 members also went on strike for three days beginning May 1, 1968, before gaining a three-year contract with a total 35-cent-per-hour pay increase for the first year.

The start of construction of the **Crystal River Power Plant** in St. Petersburg that September would provide more work for the local's members over the next 10 years. The nuclear generating plant located in Crystal River, Florida, would be completed in December 1976 as the third plant built as part of the Crystal River Energy Complex.

The U.A. also gave jurisdiction of portions of gas distribution in the entire State of Florida to Local 111 and Local No. 725 of Orlando on November 1, 1969. (*The U.A. would reassign gas distribution for the state to Local 803 of Orlando in March 1986.*)

Many of the local's more than 350 members worked on construction of the **Port Manatee Power Plant** in Parrish, Florida, during the early 1970s. The 1,726-megawatt oil-fired facility was commissioned in October 1976.

During that time, the local went on strike briefly beginning May 1, 1971, before returning to work three days later after agreeing

to a new, 23-month-long work contract with the Associated Plumbers and Mechanical Contractors of Pinellas County. The new pact called for the local's journeyman plumbers and pipefitters pay to be immediately increased to \$7.53 per hour upon and then to \$8.30 per hour six months later, including 91 cents per hour going to fringe benefits, before the contract ultimately set the local's base wage scale at \$8.31 per hour and employer healthcare and pension contributions at \$1.11 per hour for a total package of \$9.41 per hour.

Meanwhile, the U.A. significantly expanded the Local 111 territorial jurisdiction when it merged Local 583 of Sarasota into the St. Petersburg local on April 3, 1972. Because Local 111 had a large amount of work, including condominiums and the power plant, as well as a pension plan benefit, a majority of the Sarasota members embraced the amalgamation.

But beginning in the mid-1970s, employment conditions diminished, and work remained slow throughout the remainder of the decade. As a result, the local's membership



Local 123 retirees attending the first retirees meeting in Inglis, Florida, in September 1999 after the local was formed by the merger of U.A. Local 111 and U.A. Local 624 on May 1, 1998.

declined from a peak of 723 members, including 79 apprentices, in June 1977 down to 678 members, including 38 apprentices, in December 1979.

The local's membership continued to shrink throughout the 1980s as work faded, despite a surge in work at area shipyards and the construction of the **Florida Suncoast Dome** indoor stadium from November 1986 to March 1990 – which would become **Tropicana Field** after a \$70-million renovation to be the home field of Major League Baseball's new Tampa Bay Devil Rays (now the Rays) beginning with the team's inaugural season in 1998. During the course of the decade, Local 111 would see its membership drop precipitously from a high of 658 total members, including 38 apprentices, in June 1980 down to a low of 499 members, including just nine apprentices, in December 1989.

Although St. Petersburg saw significant construction and development in the 1990s,

particularly in the downtown area, the local's struggles continued as employment conditions remained challenging. While the U.A. merged marine-trades Local 726 of Tampa into Local 111 on January 1, 1997, the local continued to shed workhours and, subsequently, membership, falling from 509 total members in June 1991 down to 436 total members in December 1997.

## LOCAL 624: SEVEN DECADES TO MERGING WITH LOCAL 111

With the Great Depression of the 1930s well underway and severely affecting Tampa and Local 624 employment, in late 1931 the local had inquired to the U.A. international office about merging with its sister local across Tampa Bay, Local 111 of St. Petersburg. Although the Tampa-based local's dues paying membership would eventually drop to just six members in June 1933, the U.A. decided to retain the



Local 111 member Marjorie "Maggie" Otto, who along with Sheila Bausell were the first female members of Local 111 when they joined the local in May 1997, receives her 10-year U.A. Service Award from Local 111 officer Howard Blankenship (left) and Business Manager George A. Willy in 1986.

## FIRST FEMALE MEMBERS JOINED LOCAL 624 IN '75, LOCAL 111 IN '77

**Sister Billie Gardner** joined Local 624 on May 19, 1975, to become the local's first female member. She dropped out of the local at some point in the early 2000s and did not retire from the union.

**Sister Sheila Bausell** and **Sister Marjorie Otto** were the first female members of Local 111 when they joined the local on May 17, 1977. Sister Bausell retired and had 47 years of service with the U.A. and Sister Otto retired after 17 years with the union.

**Sister Yvonne Davis** joined Local 624 on March 3, 1980, and after retiring from the local has been active with the U.A. for 44 years.



charter at Tampa and continue Local 624 as a separate local.

By June 1935, as Federal and local measures to help curb the effects of the depression were taking hold, the local's membership had increased to 19 total members. That year, work on an addition to the **American Can Company** plant in St. Petersburg would provide employment for many of those members and others, as the local's membership rose to 22 members by June 1937.

By that time, the local was also able to get nearly all of the plumbing contractors in its jurisdiction to sign its union work agreement. Subsequently, after visiting the local U.A. General Organizer Richard P. Walsh was able to report in the August 1937 *Journal*, "I found a great change has come over this local within the last few months and membership is displaying great activity, led by their officers, who are extremely active, and I desire to congratulate them in this report for the success they have obtained."



Local 123 members with 50 years of service with the U.A. pose after receiving their service award during a ceremony in 2002.

A revival in the shipbuilding industry in Tampa before the end of the decade produced work for the local, as did housing construction, but an influx of travelers from other U.A. locals looking for jobs saturated the Local 624 jurisdiction. As such, with several ships under construction, on May 5, 1939, the U.A. chartered marine pipefitters **Auxiliary Local No. 624** to represent union members working in the burgeoning yards, and then on May 9, 1940, the union rechartered the auxiliary as marine Local No. 766 – which would be merged back into Local 624 after World War II on July 9, 1948.

With the war creating a large amount of military-related work in and around Tampa, including construction of **MacDill Army Air Base** before it would be activated in April 1941 and expansion of **Drew Army Airfield** as well as shipbuilding, Local 624 answered the call to supply the U.S. armed forces and its allies fighting overseas. As Tampa became a hub for training military personnel and shipbuilding



The Local 123 officers and members working on construction of the Bel-Mare condominiums complex in Bradenton, Florida, which was financed by the local's Build Fund which itself was funded through the local's Pension Fund investment, pose during a break in 2007.

– the city's shipyards were instrumental in building vessels for the U.S. Navy and Merchant Marine, creating thousands of jobs and helping to rescue the city from its economic struggles – the local's membership jumped from 22 journeymen in June 1940 to 99 total members, including four apprentices, in June 1943.

Following the war, downtown Tampa saw significant construction and development, particularly along Franklin Street, which was a major shopping hub, and in 1948 Local 624 established an agreement with the chemical workers to obtain some of the maintenance work at the area's mines. That same year, the local along with the U.A. carried out an extensive organizing campaign targeting "refrigeration and air-conditioning fitters."

Although shipbuilding had dramatically decreased after the war, resulting in Local 766 and its remaining 23 members being

amalgamated into Local 624, employment conditions remained stable throughout the balance of the decade and into the 1950s. By that time, the Local 624 membership had grown to more than 300 members.

Steady employment continued into and during much of the 1950s as West-Central Florida experienced significant construction and urban development, marked by both residential expansion and downtown revitalization efforts. Simultaneously, work in the local's outlying areas increased, including construction of chemical plants such as a massive **superphosphate fertilizer factory** for the F. S. Royster Guano Company that employed Local 624 members.

As the local progressed during the decade, it began gaining fringe benefits in its collectively bargained work agreements with its employing contractors. Initially, the local negotiated in

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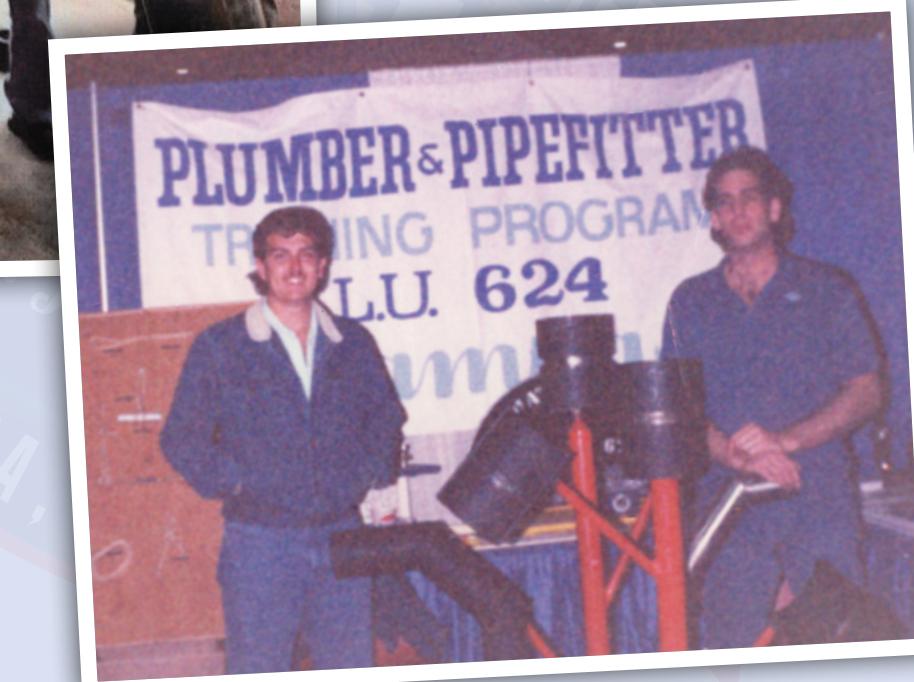
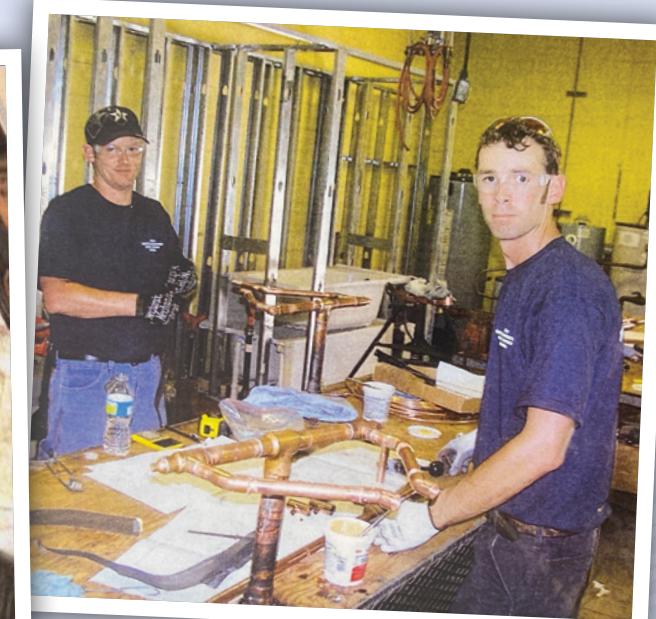
# LOCAL 123 APPRENTICE AND MEMBER TRAINING

Continuing a commitment to training its workforce that was practiced by its predecessor Local 111 and Local 624, which were combined in 1998 to form Local 123, the local has utilized the time-tested system of apprenticeship to train potential member plumbers and pipefitters. Through that method of education, apprentices work alongside experienced journeyman-level members on active jobsites while being paid to learn the piping trades.

The Local 123 five-year apprenticeship required more than 2,000 hours of on-the-job and classroom training each year before apprentices can graduate to journeyman-level status. Hands-on training in plumbing, pipefitting and Heating, Ventilation and Air

Conditioning (HVAC) is provided at the fully equipped and modern Local 123 Training Center at its union hall, which includes welding booths, rigging setups and real-world systems setups to teach the skills of the industry.

Apprentices earn wages while being provided with health insurance, pension benefits and nationwide job opportunities. Beyond the no-cost apprenticeship program, Local 123 journeyman-level members can continue to upgrade their skills as well, as Local 123 instructors are certified to teach the skills that ensure members are best in the industry.





Local 123 Business Manager Todd Vega (far left) stands with retirees (left to right) 71-year member Brother Edwin Olsen, 73-year member Brother Charles "Bud" Jagars and 72-year member Brother James Collins in 2020.

1956 for a new, employer-subsidized **Health and Welfare Fund**, into which contractors made contributions based on hours worked by members, and then in 1966 the local would gain a new **Pension Fund** retirement benefit.

Construction in and around Tampa and, subsequently, employment for Local 624 plumbers and fitters continued to gradually increase during the 1960s. Perhaps most noteworthy, construction of the 46,400-spectator open-air **Tampa Stadium** beginning in October 1966 employed local members until it was completed in November 1967, after which it would become the first home field of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers after it joined the National Football League as an expansion team in 1974.

Meanwhile, the local built a new union hall of its own in 1966 at **4422 East Columbus Drive** in Tampa. The local would continue to house its offices and hold its membership meetings

there until its 1998 merger with Local 111 to form Local 123.

Construction of the new, enlarged terminal at the heavily trafficked **Tampa International Airport** got underway in 1968 with several of the local's members working on the project until it was completed and its main terminal and four satellite terminals were opened in April 1971. Also in 1968, the start of construction of the new **Big Bend Power Station** in Apollo Beach across Tampa Bay from downtown Tampa for the Tampa Electric Company (TECO) supplied more workhours for the Local 624 members until the 180-megawatt, coal-fired power plant was completed in the early 1970s.

With a membership of more than 640 plumbers, fitters and apprentices as it entered the 1970s, a large amount of work generated by West-Central Florida's phosphate mining and processing industry for the global fertilizer market in the decade and the 1980s and 1990s continued to provide workhours for Local 624.

The local subsequently experienced stable when not strong employment conditions during the early and mid-1970s as construction work in and around Tampa remained robust, including ongoing construction of the Big Bend Power Station and work in the area's rapidly expanding suburbs and their numerous new malls.

The local's membership peaked from 906 total members in December 1980 to 927 members, including 133 apprentices, in December 1982 as Tampa entered an extended period of flourishing high-rise construction while phosphate-industry and airport work continued. What's more, the city's shipyards came back to life, providing more employment for the local's marine fitters, many of whom eventually were moved into their own local again when the U.A. chartered **Local No. 856** on March 28, 1983, for members employed at the Tampa Ship Repair and Dry Dock Company.

The second half of the 1980s proved difficult for Local 624 as strong, steady work in its jurisdiction once again faded, despite construction of the new 600,000-square-foot **Tampa Convention Center** in the city's downtown area that began in 1989 and would be completed the following year. But before the end of the decade, as a result of the challenging conditions the local faced its membership plunged to 598 members, including just 10 apprentices and 4 pipefitters, as of December 1989.

The cyclical nature of the construction industry continued in full force during the 1990s, and after a brief down period to begin the decade, the Tampa-area economy and construction in the local's jurisdiction experienced a robust rebound during the mid-1990s. Key jobs that employed Local 624 members during that period included construction of the \$139-million multipurpose **Amalie Arena** in downtown Tampa, nicknamed the "Ice Palace," that would open in

October 1996 as the home of the Tampa Bay Lightning of the National Hockey League; and construction of the \$168.5-million, 69,000-plus-seat **Raymond James Stadium** in Tampa that would serve as the new home field of the Buccaneers after it was completed and opened in September 1998.

However, employment dropped considerably after many of those larger projects were completed. Consequently, Local 624 again experienced consistent unemployment and a decrease in membership down to 563 total members in May 1998.

## WEST-CENTRAL FLORIDA PIPING INDUSTRY UNITES AS U.A. LOCAL 123

With the membership and, concurrently, the market share of plumbers and pipefitters Local 111 of St. Petersburg and plumbers and pipefitters Local 624 of Tampa decreasing and non-union competition increasing its incursion into the piping industry of West-Central Florida, on May 1, 1998, the U.A. consolidated the two locals to form Local 123. The single, larger local would increase the strength of the union

## LADIES AUXILIARY FORMED IN 2002

*"I feel that it would be beneficial for the local union to have a Ladies Auxiliary to encourage family participation."*

Just days after **Joanne McIntosh** sent a letter containing that line to U.A. General Secretary-Treasurer Thomas H. Patchell on February 25, 2002, the U.A. chartered **Ladies Auxiliary No. 159** for Local 123 on March 1, 2002.

The newly formed auxiliary sponsored its first Children's Christmas Party in December of that year, with more than 40 children of members of Local 123 as well as patients of the Moffitt Cancer Center attending. Since then, Ladies Auxiliary No. 159 has tirelessly raised money and made plans and arrangements for numerous causes and social and charitable events.



The Local 123 campus, which includes its Union Hall and Training Center.

throughout the region as it wielded greater strength and solidarity on behalf of the union piping trades.

The new local set out with a membership of more than 950 journeyman plumbers and pipefitters and apprentices. Former Local 624 Business Manager **Byron F. Boatright** served as the new local's first business manager, and former Local 111 **Business Manager Ralph G. Schaefer** served as the local's first business agent.

Early on and into the new "Y2K" (Year 2000) millennium, Local 123 members were busy with work as construction surged in their enlarged jurisdiction, including phosphate mine jobs and construction of the new **Ritz-Carlton Sarasota** that opened in 2001, while the industry was suffering from a lack of skilled tradespeople, prompting the Tampa-based local to open a satellite office in Sarasota in March 1999. "We could put five plumbers to work today," Local 123 **Training Director Julian Hyatt** even proclaimed in a January 7, 2000, *Bradenton Herald* article. "We have plenty of jobs but not enough plumbers."

After a lull during a recession in 2002, construction work remained steady into the second half of the 2000s thanks in part to a surge in new condominium towers. But the national "Great Recession," the most severe economic decline since the Great Depression of the 1930s that began in December 2007 and lasted until June 2009, significantly slowed employment for the Local 123 membership.

Regardless, the local peaked at 1,109 members in December 2008 before ending the decade with a total membership of 972 plumbers, pipefitters, service technicians and apprentices. Those figures would remain the local's high mark through its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025.

The local felt the highs and lows of the construction industry during the 2010s, with a construction boom at the beginning of the second half of the decade providing strong employment, including another major expansion of the Tampa International Airport expansion in 2016. However, the local's membership slowly decreased throughout



Local 123 Union Hall, 2025.

the decade, from a total of 928 members in December 2011 to a total of 767 members in December 2019.

The global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that struck the United States in January 2020 and lingered into 2023, by which time it had claimed the lives of more than 1 million Americans, then greatly restricted Local 190 as it did with most all of the country. During much of the early stages of the pandemic, the local limited access to its offices, hall and training facility and canceled meetings, events and training classes to help stop the spread of the disease before members returned in full to the jobsites.

Sadly, **Business Manager Todd A. Vega** passed away on February 28, 2022, while in office at the age of 60 years old. Current **Business Manager Richard Cranker** succeeded Brother Vega.

An unprecedented surge in construction work after the pandemic boosted the Local 123 membership to 813 total members in December 2023 and then to 846 total members in January 2025. By that time, the local's

jurisdiction was experiencing a historic boom in building with record-breaking construction across the region that, at the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Local 111's charter on January 4, 2025, had the skilled construction trades, including the plumbers and pipefitters, thriving.

By that time, in the spirit of its predecessor Local 111 and Local 624, Local 123 has established itself as the preeminent skilled piping workforce throughout its jurisdiction covering the Florida counties of Citrus, Desoto, Hardee, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Sarasota and Sumter. At the same time, the local continues to represent its member plumbers, pipefitters and HVAC technicians and provide them – through collectively bargained contracts – with fair wages, health insurance, retirement pensions, no-cost training and nationwide employment opportunities.

Through its union representation, its commitment to training that is on display with its five-year apprenticeship program and the solidarity of its membership, Local 123 will continue to supply the skilled and dedicated workforce that will continue to develop and advance West-Central Florida and the piping industry across the next 125 years. ■

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BUSINESS MANAGER

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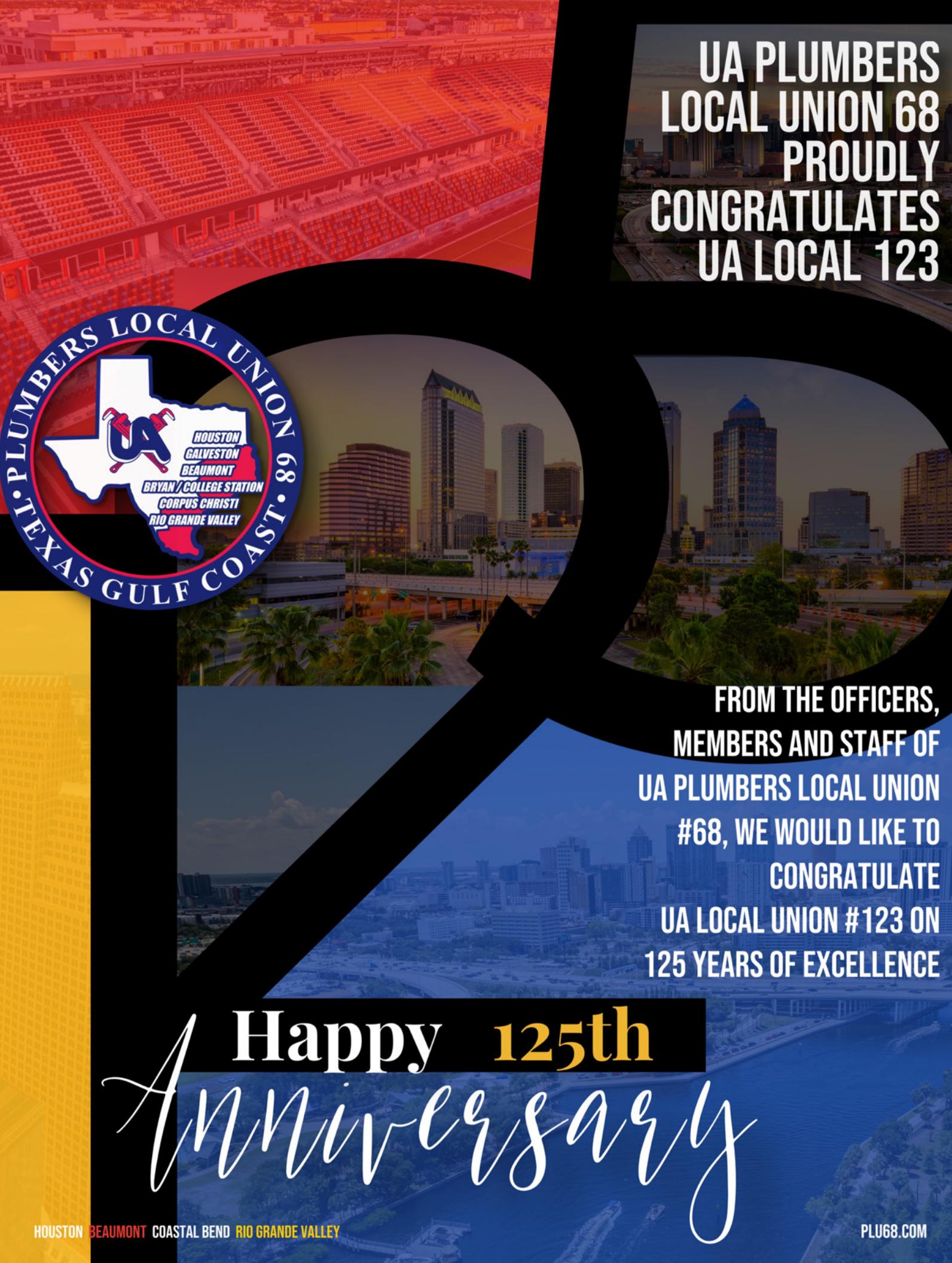
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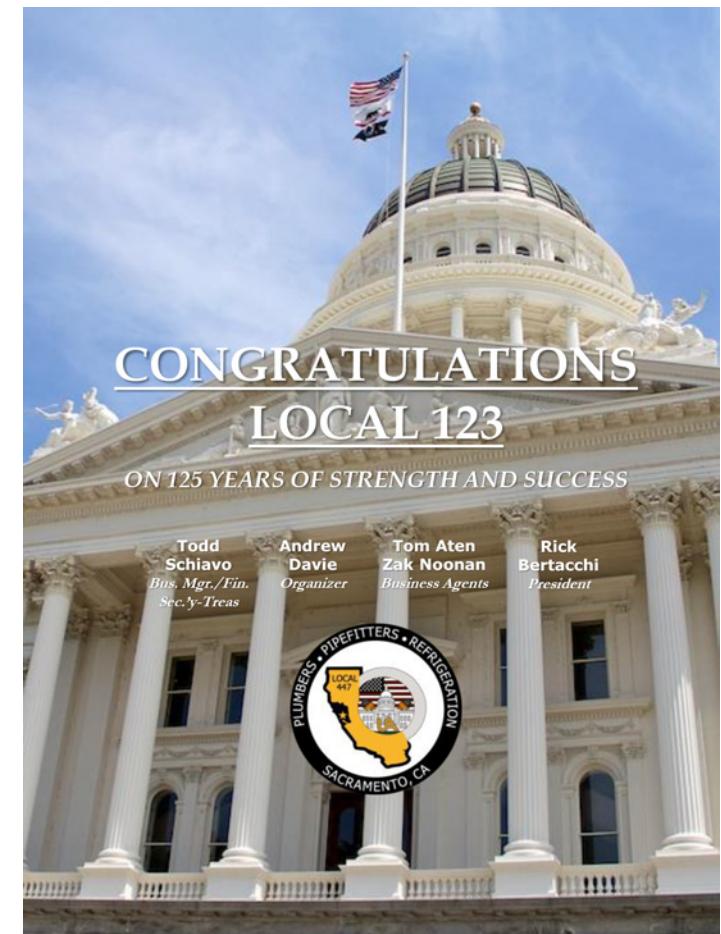
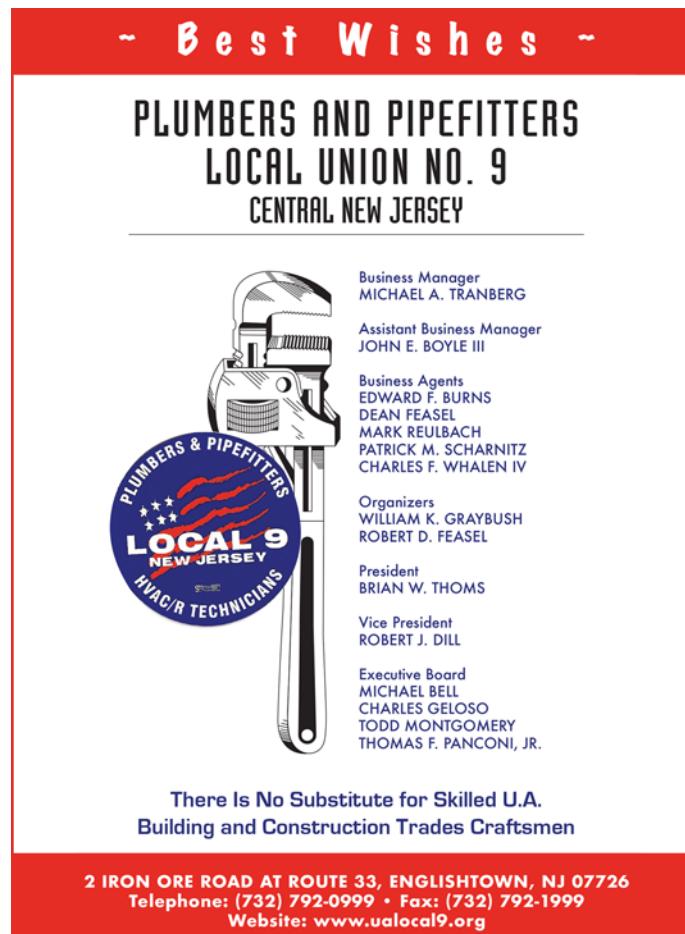
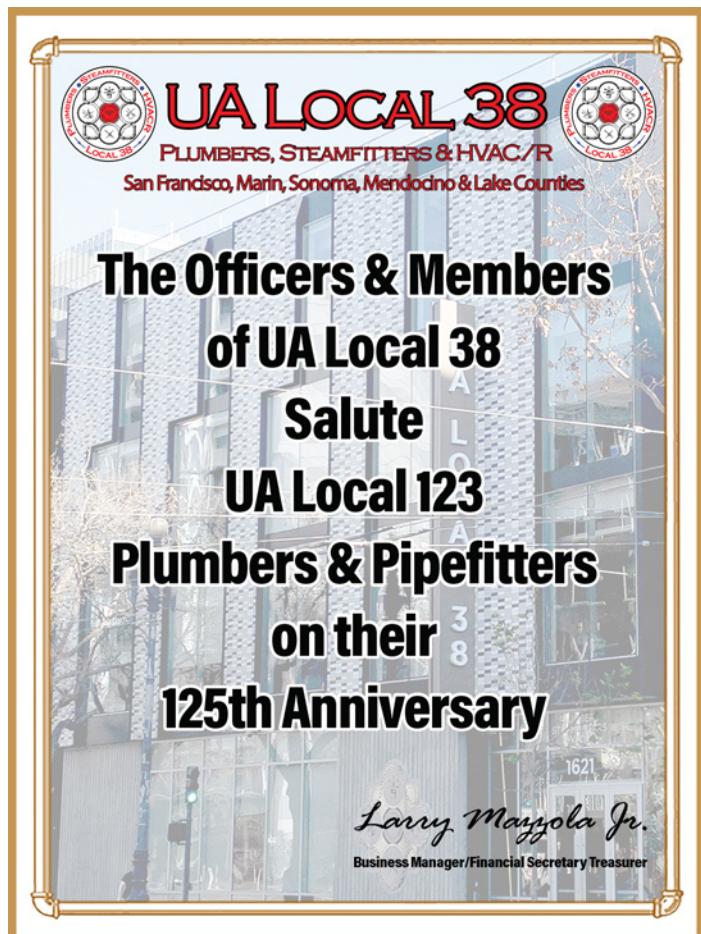
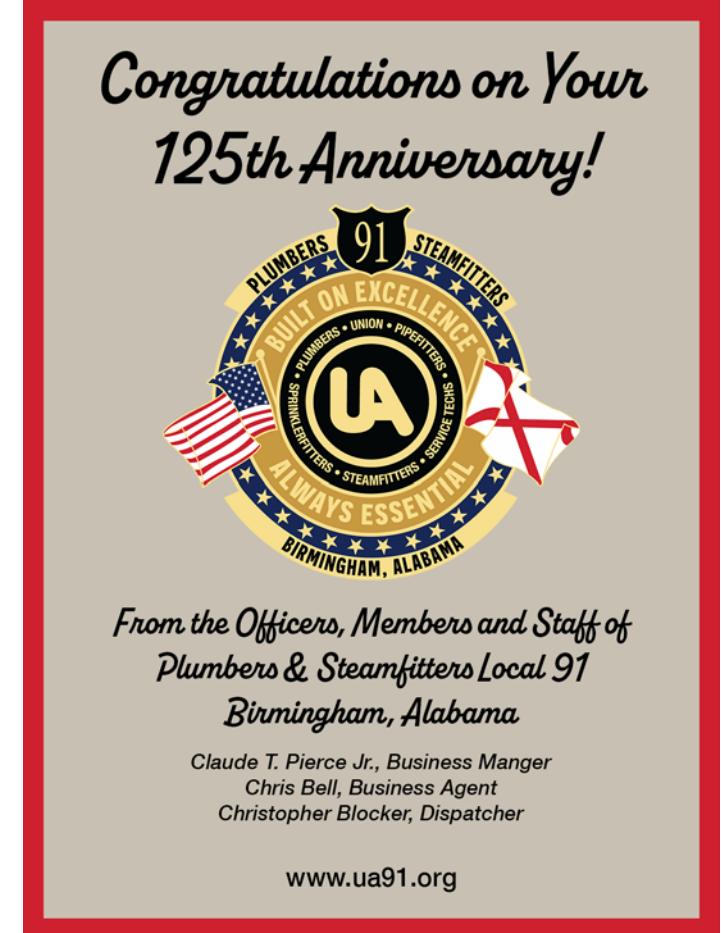
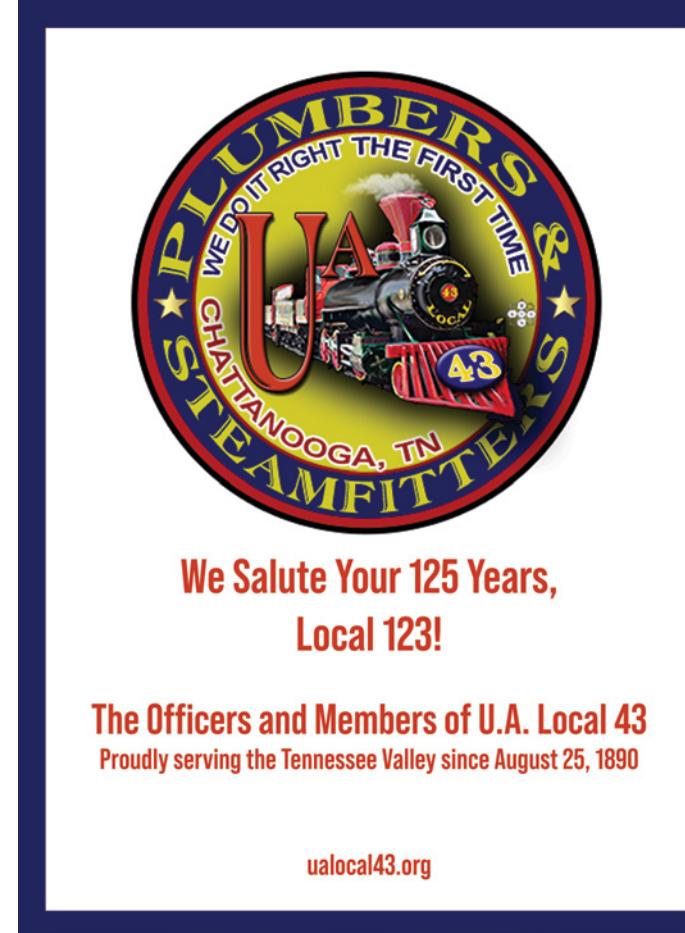
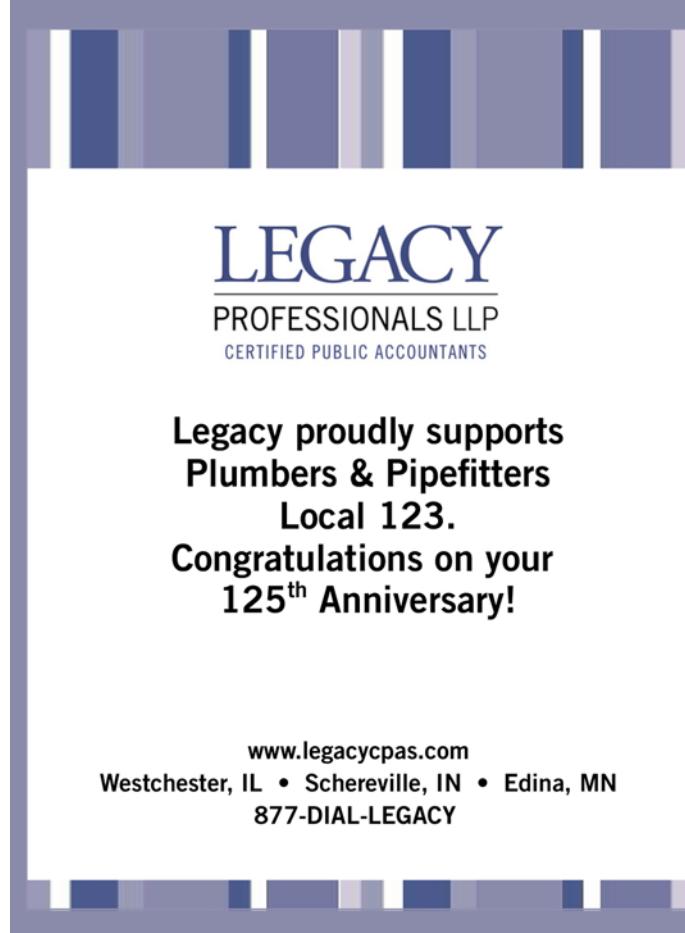
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