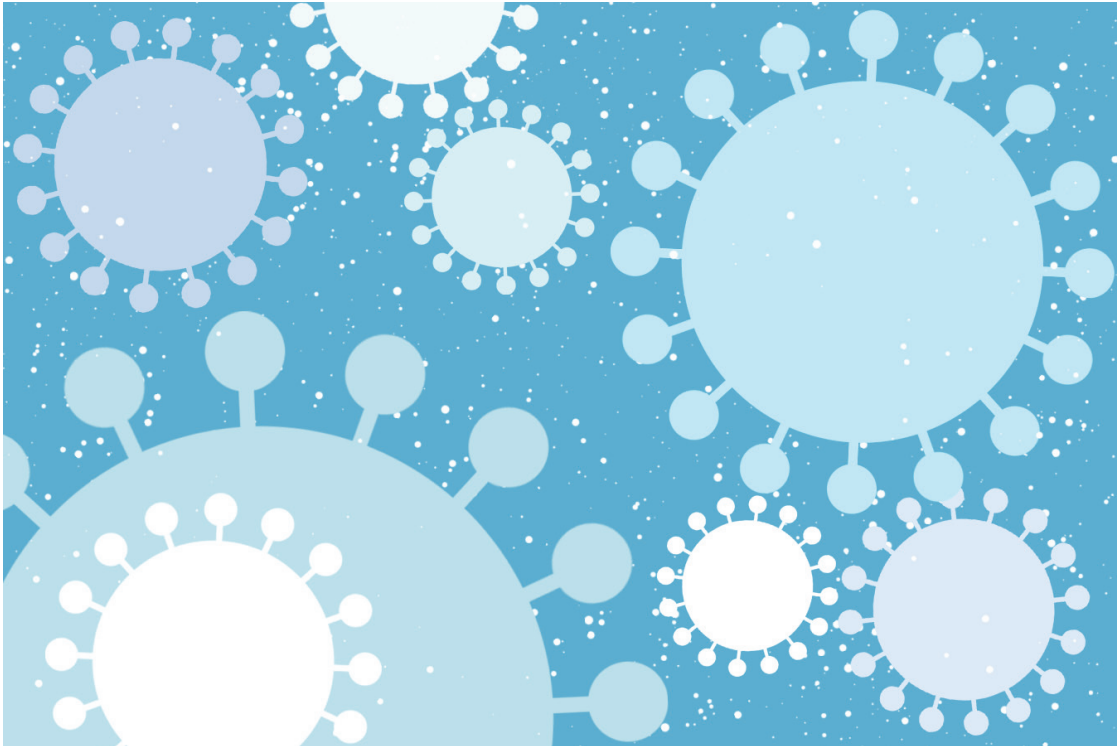




## WRAPPING UP A STRANGE YEAR



Every month I send out a message to the core team that works on *The Pegboard* to discuss the focus of the next issue of our union's monthly newsletter. TAG President Jeanette Moreno King, Business Representative Steve Kaplan and Field Representative Leslie Simmons write something every month, which is not easy when you've got a full time job and also juggle family and volunteer duties. Director of Communications and Content Alexi Drosu offers brilliant guidance on including member voices and spotlighting the committee work that moves the Animation Guild forward. This month we welcomed Kim Fay to the conversation; she just started as Managing Editor/Content Manager and will be assisting Alexi in the never ending task of expanding and improving the ways we share information with members and the animation community. And our talented, dedicated office staff at Local 839 keeps me posted on cur-

**WRAPPING UP A STRANGE YEAR** (continued on page 3)

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**THE PEGBOARD** is published monthly by The Animation Guild  
 and Affiliated Optical Electronic and Graphic Arts, IATSE Local 839,  
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IATSE LOCAL 839

rent issues and important reminders. I also ask TAG Committee Chairs for their input so they can expand their reach to members and share what's in store for the future.

In the December issue, we traditionally take a look back at the past year, and that is what Jeanette, Steve and Leslie have done very well in their monthly columns – I hope you enjoy reading their thoughts as much as I did! Before I started my own essay I thought, “Did we do anything but work from home this year?” Then I reread every Pegboard issue from 2020 and realized that I wasn't going to be able to fit everything in!

I know I'm not going to convince anyone else to reread all of those old newsletters, but for me doing so was refreshing. It was a reminder not only of WHAT we've done, but WHY we do it.

Turn the page to read some heartfelt reviews of the year from Jeanette, Steve, Leslie and a few other Animation Guild leaders who have taken the time and effort to share what's important to them. They touch on some highlights for the year, as well as some of the difficulties we've overcome, but it's all underlaid by the ongoing efforts from a team of members and staff who go above and beyond every day to continue the work of this labor union. They propel us ahead into what we hope will be a prosperous future. And they do the creative thinking and the necessary work that will improve the lives, wages and working conditions of our members and pay it forward into the communities around us.

It's been a strange and rough year for just about everyone. I'll say it one last time this year: we in the animation industry have been fortunate (in general) to be able to continue our work from home while many of our family members, friends and IATSE kin in the live action crafts have not fared as well. And while I do enjoy the sound of a snoring cat while I work (and the times when one or more of my fur babies joins me in a Zoom meeting), working at home – away from all of my coworkers and my colleagues at the Animation Guild – has not been easy. Comfy sweat pants and slippers are not an even trade for longer hours and internet lag!

I hope you all join me in looking for the light at the end of the tunnel, though. Here's to looking forward to a New Year, a vaccine in every arm, and eventually going back to work at the studios so we can see each other in person!!

— *Paula Spence, Pegboard Editor*

# **FROM THE PRESIDENT JEANETTE MORENO KING**



## **A MOST UNUSUAL YEAR**

As I look back on this crazy year with the pandemic, social unrest, climate change, and a test on our political system, I am amazed at the resilience of the human spirit; the determination to push through obstacles and find hope in every nook and cranny then nurture it like a flame in the darkness.

This time last year, I had been newly elected as President of the Animation Guild and my calendar was packed with meetings, work deadlines, and family obligations. News began to trickle in about a SARS-like virus spreading through China and parts of Europe but it all seemed so far away.

In mid-February I attended Officer Institute in Phoenix, a week-long leadership seminar offered by IATSE to all its union officers. On my return, my mind was filled with plans on how my term would play out. I was energized with a long list of goals, some loftier than others, that I was eager to get started on this agenda with the help of our newly-elected Executive Board, which was also primed for change.

Less than a month later, Los Angeles County was placed on a Stay-at-Home order. Everything on my agenda came to an abrupt halt. Our office scrambled to figure out how to continue serving our members while our office shut down and our staff started to work remotely with a computer system that wasn't designed for it. Most of our members were able to continue to work from home, so the level of service the Guild provided would need to be maintained. Our Business Representative, Steve Kaplan, navigated through these rough seas beautifully.

The animation industry was able to pivot quickly to work-from-home crews within a week and most productions continued along with little disruption. It is a completely different story for our union kin on the live action and live event side of the industry. Mid-March was when over

80% of IATSE members became unemployed, with no remedy in sight. As it stands now, live entertainment won't be coming back in full force until a vaccine is widely available and, even then, how long will it take for ticket buyers to feel comfortable enough to head back into the crowds? Live action TV and film production has slowly started to return but at great risk to the small limited crews allowed to work. It makes me sad that almost everyone in my leadership training class in Phoenix has been out of work for months. I wish them all the best and hopefully soon they all can return to some kind of normal.

At the Animation Guild, we slowly adjusted to a new way of business. Getting used to conducting meetings, studio visits, and social events through Zoom. For me personally, I feel that WFH has made it possible for me to juggle all my responsibilities a little easier. Although, I really do miss idle chit chat in the studio and getting to see my co-workers body language when we speak.

Despite all the difficulties this year has wrought, we still managed to have some real successes. We created new committees and groups that reflect the diversity of our industry with the People of Color Committee, Experienced Worker Committee, and Workplace Equality Committee plus a Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodiverse Voices Group.

We've had remote portfolio reviews for members and people hoping to break into our industry.

We've had remote visits to universities, high schools, and grade schools presenting a variety of people who have been successful in the animation industry to show that even those growing up in underserved communities have a path into a viable career.

We have hosted a variety of well attended panels covering a wide range of topics like Getting Started in Animation, Animation at Every Age, Latino Creatives, Inside the Negotiations Room, and LatinX Heritage Panel; plus more I'm certain I'm leaving out.

We had the largest delegation at our annual IATSE District 2 Convention, which was held remotely, and got four resolutions passed that will now move on to the national level.

And, finally, we are in the process of creating the Animation Guild

Foundation to help our members in need and create a way for direct outreach to our community.

It's been a roller coaster of a year and I, for one, look forward to our bright future.

In solidarity,

**Jeanette Moreno King**

***President***

*The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839*

[jeanette.king@tag839.org](mailto:jeanette.king@tag839.org)

*This letter was reprinted from Keyframe Magazine, Issue 12.*

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The Workplace Equality Committee will be holding a meeting on Thurs, Jan. 21, 2021 at 7pm. The goal of the Workplace Equality Committee is to combat discrimination, harassment and hostility toward employees. RSVP's are encouraged, but not required to attend the meeting. RSVP by emailing [workplaceequality@tag839.org](mailto:workplaceequality@tag839.org).

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**Are you interested in representing your fellow members at next year's contract negotiations?**

The Animation Guild's Negotiations Committee is made up of active and engaged members who are ready to join others in crafting meaningful proposals to achieve the best deal possible for our next Master Agreement. No prior experience is necessary – just a willingness to participate in monthly meetings and training sessions, and to work with others to represent all of our members.

So are you game? Negotiations will happen next year in late spring or early summer, but the preparation work has already started. Get involved with the Negotiations Committee by emailing [negotiations@tag839.org](mailto:negotiations@tag839.org).



# TAG LOCAL 839

Group for Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodiverse Voices



Inclusion.  
Accessibility.  
Equality.  
Support.  
Representation.  
Community.

TAGddnv@gmail.com

The DDNV group aims to recognize, uplift, and support Deaf, Disabled, and Neurotypical identifying members within the community. We strive to bring accessibility, inclusion, and respectful representation within TAG and animated media while also nurturing a safe environment for members inside and out of the office. Email [TAGddnv@gmail.com](mailto:TAGddnv@gmail.com) to join or find out more.

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Don't miss out on Animation Guild events! Keep your contact information up-to-date and sign up for our e-mail list at <https://animationguild.org/about-the-guild/change-address/>. You can GO GREEN – and save the Guild printing and mailing costs – by choosing to view our TAG publications digitally rather than receiving a hard copy in the mail. Visit <https://animationguild.org/about-the-guild/publication-preferences/>.

## **FROM THE BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE STEVE KAPLAN**



The year 2020 is coming to a close and it's been one of the most challenging years of my life. This is my first term as Business Representative for a Local that continues to see steady membership growth, as well as my first term as an MPI Director. The COVID-19 pandemic brought changes to our lives that few were prepared for or even ever contemplated.

While the pandemic forced us into our homes and made us more cognizant of keeping our hands clean and our faces covered when we did venture out, it did not keep the animation industry from growing. We have signed new companies to our agreement, seen Netflix undertake massive expansion of both its live-action and animation productions, and even forged relationships with Canadian and Australian animation companies who have created local entities to produce work and partake of the growth of streaming content.

As I mentioned, we have been forced to work from our homes where we created what was originally thought to be temporary conditions that now we've come to rely on. I am still sitting at my dinner table every day to work, only taking the laptop away to enjoy a small Thanksgiving meal with my immediate family. We have become Zoom/GoogleMeet/Teams/WebEx/BlueJeans experts, and chat applications like Slack or Discord have become even more important as a means to stay connected with coworkers, friends and family. The IATSE held two General Executive Board meetings and the District 2 Convention over Zoom, and I have to wonder what is in store for the Mid-Winter meeting and the Quadrennial Convention scheduled for next year. Through it all, I saw us come together and try to make this new normal work, while we struggled with fighting feelings of isolation and the dread of not being able to be close to each other.

I am proud of the work that has been done to foster community in our membership. We have had members form committees to recognize and lift up diverse sectors of our community, which only makes us stronger. I am grateful to the leaders and members of the Experienced Workers, Family and Membership, People of Color, Queer TAG and Workplace Equality committees and the newly formed Group for Deaf, Disabled and Neurodi-



verse Voices for the work they have done this year. If there is anything that sitting on various Boards of Directors has taught me, it is that committees are where the work happens, and I applaud the work of these groups to strengthen our community through their increased visibility and voices.

Next year marks the end of our current contract, which means we will be renegotiating our agreement with the producers. As of this writing, there are no dates set for our negotiations, nor have I heard of any being set for the IATSE Basic Agreement or the IATSE Area Standards Agreement, which typically precede our time with the AMPTP. While we have some items that need to be discussed with our employer partners, it is also important to realize that these negotiations will have to be different because of the different times we live in. I look forward to working with the Negotiations Committee to take the concerns of the members to the employers and come to a new agreement that addresses those issues.

As we support our Committees and Groups in community-building and negotiation preparations, I also feel we must continue to focus on organizing in animation so that we can maintain and increase our density in our contractual area. We cannot allow non-union companies to create a workforce that undercuts the conditions and benefits we have worked hard to establish and defend. We will soon be delivering an online “Call The Hall” form to allow members to submit information on where and when they are working, which will not only help us monitor what work is taking place, but also identify non-union animation studios so that we can negotiate new agreements.

I am excited to undertake this work and continue to support and represent our creative, diverse community. I sincerely hope that 2021 sees the end of the pandemic, the beginning of the repairs that are needed in order to fix what the last federal administration has broken, and allows us all to gather together again.

Please stay safe and healthy for the remainder of the holiday season, and have as happy and joyous a New Year as is possible.

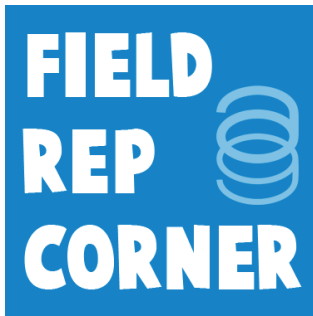
In Solidarity,

**Steve Kaplan**

***Business Representative***

*The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839*

[steve.kaplan@tag839.org](mailto:steve.kaplan@tag839.org)



## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE 'FIELD'

Earlier this year in April, I marked my first-year anniversary with The Animation Guild and it certainly wasn't the one-year anniversary I was expecting.

As I mentioned in a past *Field Rep Corner*, one of my favorite parts of my position as Field Representative is visiting our members at their studios. This obviously stopped when we all started to work from home. And while I miss seeing everyone face-to-face, I've actually grown to know many of you more during this lockdown than perhaps I would have with my occasional field visit and pop-in at your cubicle or office to check in.

This pandemic has definitely hampered our work/life balance, but I've still learned so much from the membership this year nonetheless. So, I thought I'd share a few of my observations of the membership for my last *Field Rep Corner* of the year.

- 1) **YOU ARE RESILIENT!** You have adapted to working from home. I know for some, it wasn't that hard if your career has included a large chunk of freelance work, requiring you to have a home office. But for others, it was a first. And you've stepped up and kept animation going.
- 2) **YOU ARE PART OF A LARGE COMMUNITY!** Thanks to Jake Hollander's creation of the TAG Discord server, despite being apart, the membership has come together to form a large bonded community. In this safe membership space, you ask questions, debate topics, share tips, sell equipment, form committees and more. It's been exciting for me to see the engagement and the desire to build TAG into an even greater union representing those working in animation. It's also been wonderful to see the support you provide each other during this difficult time. It may just be through an online platform, but it makes such a difference.

The Discord has definitely helped me in identifying issues and assisting as best I can. I think it's been eye-opening to members as well, understanding how my position and that of Steve Kaplan's is here to help and hash out problems you or a group of members may have with a studio.

- 3) **OUR COMMITTEES ROCK!** Since WFH started in March, the committees have continued in their respective missions AND NEW COMMITTEES HAVE FORMED! We now have a People of Color Committee, Workplace Equality Committee, Experienced Workers Committee and a Worker Action Readiness Planning (WARP) Committee. The Writers' Craft Committee, which really started up earlier in the year, has grown and we have one new group for the Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse Voices. If you want to get involved, join a committee! Each has their own channel on Discord and you can learn more about them on our website: <https://animationguild.org/committees/>

The FAM Committee has been there to support our working families and working with fellow IATSE locals on community events, such as the Halloween Drive Thru that was held at the Costume Designers Guild.

The Writers' Craft Committee meets monthly and their incredibly organized and focused approach has resulted in change happening with practices that have wrongly been considered an industry standard with the studios.

- 4) **WE HAVE AN INCREDIBLE STAFF!** Just like our members, TAG staff were relegated to home offices and we have adapted as well. Although a few of the staff come into the office once or twice a week to do work that cannot be done at home, we've all worked hard to keep the business of the union going and supporting members through all of this. It's not always been easy, and we definitely had lots to figure out in the beginning, but we are always here to help.
- 5) **THERE'S LOTS IN STORE FOR 2021!** The community building, activism and unity the membership has grown in 2020 will only continue into 2021. We'll be planning for contract negotiations next year and I encourage you to sign up to be an active part of the effort by emailing [negotiations@tag839.org](mailto:negotiations@tag839.org). And there's lots more in store, like the official formation of the TAG Foundation to help members in need!

It's been a pleasure serving our membership as your Field Representative (and Political Coordinator) this year. It's been tough for all of us. Please know, I'm always here to serve your needs, deal with your workplace issues and help in any way I can. I'm looking forward to the exciting year to come!

Have a safe and healthy holiday season and Happy New Year!

In solidarity,

**Leslie Simmons**

***Field Representative/Political Coordinator***

*The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839*

[leslie.simmons@tag839.org](mailto:leslie.simmons@tag839.org)

Call or text: 747.238.0287



*Field Representative Leslie Simmons volunteers in her free time through the LA Fed and Labor Community Services. On Saturday, November 14th, she was joined by TAG member Lindsey Pollard at a food distribution event in Burbank. Thank you, ladies!*





## **MEMBER PERSPECTIVE ROGER ODA**

### **YES, AND . . .**

Working in Animation you may already be familiar with the term “Yes, and . . .” — it is a practice in improv comedy to promote creativity. It carries an idea or joke from one participant to another and promotes open expression. You often see this idea in practice by SNL comedians, writers, and talk show hosts. As this year comes to a close, I believe that idea is well suited for our times. The idea of creating something new and better by making an environment more accepting.

Like comedy, our identities can be filled with complexity and contradiction. A workplace that can accept this and be willing to engage, can move forward into the realm of new possibilities.

“Yes, and . . .” comes from a place of collaboration. Our productions need an environment where we have discussions that can include all our different experiences: a studio that sees diversity as a strength; good ally who works together with POC, not from a place of guilt or benevolence.

A creative place that can hold complexity is important. In America today, the conversation seems to have stopped because we can too easily exist entirely inside our own echo chambers. This is not how to make content that can inspire people, or reflect who they can be. We make room for our identities without invalidating one another.

So I hope you will join me practicing more “Yes, and . . .” in the new year.



***The following letter was recently sent to  
TAG members working in the Writing craft:***

Dear Animation Guild Member,

If you are an Animation Writer who has been asked to pitch for an Intellectual Property owned by a studio, I'm writing to tell you that if you are not a weekly employee, and you have attended a work-related meeting for a union studio that is not de minimis (meaning a meeting that is short where no work was performed) that is time you should be paid for. Employers are required to pay for all time worked.

Any time an employer asks you to "give your take" or "give us your thoughts" on an Intellectual Property they own, or participate in a "Bake Off", the employer must follow the terms and conditions outlined in the collective bargaining agreement. You are performing the work of an Animation Writer, and the employer must honor wage minimums and minimum call rules. All applicable MPI benefit contributions must also be made for this covered work.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

If you are not a weekly employee, and you are directed to be present at a meeting set by a union studio (like attending a "pitch session" or "pitch meetings") this work-time must be compensated using the "daily employment" provisions of the Union agreement. The daily employment provision provides a 117.719% premium over the applicable wage minimum – 10% extra for no 40-hour guarantee, 4% for Vacation Pay, and 3.719% for Holiday Pay.

The current wage minimum under daily employment for a Journey level Animation Writer (21-022) is \$51.60/hr \* 117.719% = \$60.74/hour. Minimum call for daily employment work is four (4) hours (Art. 5B of the TAG Master Agreement). Our wage minimums increase each year close to the beginning of August by an amount determined in bargaining.

If you are not a weekly employee, and you are directed to provide "your thoughts" or "your take" this work time should be paid per the daily employment provision in the Union agreement, which includes any time spent researching the requested IP.

If you have been requested to attend meetings by your employer, please use a timesheet to record the time spent so that you can be properly compensated (wages and benefits). Complete the form with the specif-

ics for yourself and your employer, and use the Date and In/Out times to record time spent in meetings. Travel time to/from a meeting that is ordinary “home to work” travel should not be included.

I am planning to send a bulletin to union employers to remind them of their obligation to pay for all time that an individual works – not only is this a requirement of the union CBA, it is state and federal law. To assist me in reminding employers of their obligations under the contract and the law, please let me know if you have been required to perform covered work and have not received proper compensation. Although I can keep specifics confidential, I do need to know details, including studio names, production names, and dates to make an effective case to management.

The Animation Guild Writers Committee meets monthly via Zoom to discuss matters such as this. If you have any questions or would like to attend a future meeting, please send a message to [committee-writers@tag839.org](mailto:committee-writers@tag839.org).

There are links to some resources below – to the current set of wage minimums and to the most recent TAG Master Agreement. I’ve also included references to Federal guidelines regarding “hours worked” – which includes job-related meetings. If needed, I can provide you with a sample timesheet showing how to bill for time under the “daily hire” provisions.

Employers can require you to attend meetings – but they must compensate you for that time.

Best regards,

**Steve Kaplan**

***Business Representative***

*The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839*

[steve.kaplan@tag839.org](mailto:steve.kaplan@tag839.org)

We also posted a Q&A that covers some of this and more at:

<https://animationguild.org/asked-for-your-take-on-existing-ip-make-sure-to-get-paid/>

<https://animationguild.org/2018-2021-wage-scales>

<https://animationguild.org/2018-2021-master-agreement>

<https://www.dol.gov/whd/flsa/>

<https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs22.pdf>

# VALUABLE OR NOT?

## **Why Work Produced in a Test Cannot Be Used in a Finished Production**

*By Dan Weeks, Testing Committee Member*

As a member of the Testing Committee, I know there is an ongoing debate on whether or not the work produced in a test should be paid for. On one side, as argued by Llyn Hunter here in the Pegboard in 2016, is the idea that any labor that produces a “physical result” should never go unpaid. In economics, this is known as the “Labor Theory of Value.” The opposing viewpoint is that one should only pay for a product or service that one determines to be valuable. The economic term for this is called the “Subjective Theory of Value.” Which of these you prefer is not the question. The fact is the dichotomy between these two seemingly opposite and even incompatible theories of value lies at the very heart of the question: Should testing be paid?

But the answer to this question is not actually the point of this article. Rather, it is another issue that has arisen that is fundamentally related to this question of value, and that issue is a report of work produced for a test appearing in a final production.

Before the alarm bells go off in your head, dear reader, let me assure you: there have been very few such reports. In fact, there have been hardly any. But rumors do abound, and even just one report of such a thing should raise red flags for anyone pondering this question of value. If true, the effects would be immensely profound for those on both sides of the “Value” debate. Allow me to explain why.

Firstly, it’s easy for anyone on the “Labor Theory” side of the argument to see why this is wrong. It’s exploitative. It’s gaining a product of labor, which is from this point of view intrinsically “valuable,” without paying for it. Clearly this is a violation of our contract, and at the very least the spirit of labor laws.

But let’s look at it from the other side, from the Production standpoint. In this context, a Production is the “buyer”; they are the party trading money for goods and services. Generally, the buyer or customer always takes the “Subjective Theory” side of the argument. Surely from this standpoint, gaining a product of value without paying for it is a win,

right? Not so fast. See, by treating the gain of a product without paying as a win, one is outright admitting that the product is “Valuable.” And while this very well may be a win in the short term, in the long term it jeopardizes the entire position of tests remaining unpaid. This is because the only economic justification for testing to remain unpaid, from the “Subjective Theory” point of view, is that the “physical results” of testing are not actually considered “valuable” to the Production. That is, the materials, the references, and the sequences sent out in the test and what is to be produced by the artist, the test taker, are from pre-existing, already produced work from the Production. The vast majority of us who’ve taken tests can attest to this.

So as long as the “physical result” of a test are not considered “valuable” to a Production, then Productions can continue to justify the standard practice of not paying for that “physical result.” But the second anyone on the “Subjective Theory” side of the argument reverses this, this justification is lost. And this of course opens up the Production side of the industry to all manner of challenge.

And in the end, nobody wins.

So in conclusion, it doesn’t matter what side of the value debate you’re on. Productions cannot use the results of tests in their finished product. Such behavior is not only harmful to the artists taking the tests, but it’s destructive to the very practice of testing for talent as it exists today. Before you scoff at this, remember that testing as it exists isn’t just how productions can vet talent, it’s also very often how the least experienced, least represented individuals among us are able to get a foot in the door. And while thankfully actual reports of this kind of exploitation are extremely uncommon, I ask everyone in the membership to be vigilant; both those who are asked to take the tests, and those who are tasked to make them.

**HAS YOUR ART TEST BEEN USED IN PRODUCTION?**

**WERE YOU NOT PAID?**

**THAT’S WRONG!**

**CONTACT THE TESTING COMMITTEE TODAY**

**[testingcommittee@tag839.org](mailto:testingcommittee@tag839.org)**



## NOTES FROM A SHOP STEWARD DREW NEWMAN

Hey there, it's your friendly neighborhood Shop Steward here, letting you know that we exist and are at your disposal when stupid shenanigans plague your production and you want to speak safely with someone about what options you, your department, or your entire crew may have going forward. We may not have all the answers immediately, but we have immediate access to those that do. Just having a casual lunch group meeting with a Steward about a problem, and management becoming aware, can get the ball rolling on a solution. If that doesn't happen, we can start a dialogue with management on your behalf so that the workers affected can remain anonymous if they want. We're here to help you sort through all possible paths forward, from the most benign to the most nuclear of options, and then walk along with you. Don't suffer silently. We – your Shop Stewards – are listed on the second page of this issue, and on the website at <https://animationguild.org/about-the-guild/>

*When he's not recharging with a quick isolation trip to the Grand Canyon, Drew Newman is a Shop Steward at Bento Box (Empire). He also co-chairs the Animators Committee and crafts stuff out of wood that is frankly pretty darn great.*





## COMMITTEE UPDATES

The next meeting of the Experienced Workers Committee is scheduled for Monday, January 11, 2021, from 7:00 to 9:00 P.M. You can get a link to the attend the virtual meeting by emailing [committees@tag839.org](mailto:committees@tag839.org).

We are developing a survey regarding ageism in the industry which will be distributed to the membership. At the time of this writing it has yet to be finalized and distributed. We urge you to fill it out when you receive it.



The year 2020 has been one of the most difficult times and also one of the most extraordinary ones. We could not have conceived of a POCC in the Animation Guild even a few years ago. So we are grateful to all those that have come together with us to begin these first steps.

People of Color Committee was formed to be a support network for the 839 members of color. The committee has two types of meetings: one is exclusive to People of Color Union Members to provide a safe space to discuss topics amongst the POC Community; and the second is the “General Action Meetings” of the committee, which are open to all Union members (including allies) and will be more focused on advocacy and solidarity. If you are interested in participating in either, please contact us at [pocc@tag839.org](mailto:pocc@tag839.org).

We would also like to present a thought for this year: At times it can be easy to dismiss our jobs as frivolous, however, at the heart of our professions is the ability to imagine alternative worlds. A society cannot have what it cannot imagine. We can endeavor to envision worlds outside of the “here and now” to someday make real the ones we want.

**Roger and Lauren**  
*Local 839 POCC co-chairs*



# PHARMACY BENEFITS UPDATE

## **FINAL End of Year Notice:**

A change has been made at MPI. The Plan is switching the pharmacy benefits away from Express Scripts to CVS Caremark as of January 1, 2021. MPI will be sending notices out to participants soon. There is no action needed for plan participants. All participants will be automatically enrolled in the CVS Caremark plan.

The new CVS Caremark prescription plan will replace the Express Scripts prescription plan, and will be the only pharmacy plan option for MPIHP participants. Your pharmacy benefit and co-pays will not change and the CVS Caremark plan will have many of the same features you have become accustomed to and others that will further improve MPIHP pharmacy benefit. For example, participants taking specialty medications will now be able to pick up those prescriptions from retail CVS Pharmacy locations if they choose.

As we get closer to your new plan's start date, participants enrolled in Anthem Blue Cross will receive an updated membership card from Anthem Blue Cross reflecting the new prescription coverage through CVS Caremark. Participants enrolled in Health Net, Kaiser Permanente, will receive an updated membership card from MPIHP. The updated membership card will contain the new CVS Pharmacy information.

On or after January 1, 2021, you will be able to register at [Caremark.com](https://www.caremark.com) where you can see plan information, check drug costs and coverage, find personalized drug savings opportunities and more. For more information and answers to commonly asked questions, visit [Caremark.com/HelpCenter](https://www.caremark.com/HelpCenter).

You can review an FAQ that MPI will be sending to you at: <https://animationguild.org/ESI-to-CVS-FAQ>. If you have any questions or concerns, contact MPIHP by calling 855-275-4674, from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM PST, Monday through Friday, or by emailing [service@mpiphp.org](mailto:service@mpiphp.org).





## AN HONOR

On Veterans Day, MPTF honored their veteran community in a virtual pinning ceremony on MPTF Studios' *Organized Chaos*. Fifty-three veterans who live on campus and another 50 within the greater entertainment community received a letter with expressions of appreciation, including a beautiful fabric star cut from a retired flag.

MPTF's Veterans Benefits Assistance Program helps secure service-related pension benefits for members of the entertainment industry and their families. Even in this pandemic-stricken year, MPTF has served more than 1,000 industry military veterans and secured significant retroactive and recurring benefits. "Despite the impact of COVID-19 on VA systems and personnel, we are on track to surpass our 2019 outcomes," said Naomi Rodda, Director of Home and Community Based Services at MPTF. She notes: "There are so many veterans within our entertainment community. It's a fact that often surprises people. It's been gratifying to see that through our screening process and the huge volume of calls we've received during the pandemic, we've been able to reach even more younger Gulf War, Afghan, and Iraq war vets to help them with pension claim support." Thank you for your service, veterans!

If you're a veteran and member of the entertainment industry, we're here for you—to help understand and secure the rightful pension benefits you are due. To find out more, visit <https://mptf.com/>, call 323-634-3866 or email Naomi Rodda at [Naomi.Rodda@MPTF.com](mailto:Naomi.Rodda@MPTF.com).



*Caring is Infinite*

# IN MEMORIAM

**Ken Spears** passed away on November 6, 2020 at the age of 82, only a few months after his long time animation partner Joe Ruby left us. Ken and Joe were the writing team behind the creation of *Scooby Doo, Where Are You?* and other Hanna-Barbera shows. The two supervised Saturday Morning Cartoon Programming at ABC before establishing their own company, Ruby-Spears Productions, which produced many animated series, including *Alvin and the Chipmunks*, *Superman*, *The Plastic Man Comedy-Adventure Hour* and *Thundarr the Barbarian*.

**Dorris Bergstrom** passed away on October 24, 2020. As a talented young artist without formal training, she started her career in the Ink & Paint Department at Warner Bros. and soon moved up to be an Assistant Animator there and at Walt Disney Studios, Filmation, Hanna-Barbera, Bill Melendez, Inc., Ruby-Spears Productions and Bakshi Productions.

**Philip Walsh** died September 30, 2020. He worked as a Writer at Disney TV Animation and SD Entertainment.

**Martin Strudler** passed away on October 15, 2020. He was known as a Background Artist and Art Director for classic cartoons such as the *Pink Panther*, *Tweety & Sylvester*, *Muppet Babies*, *Pinky and the Brain* and R. Crumb's *Fritz the Cat*.

**Cullen Blaine Houghtaling** died on December 2, 2020. He worked as an Animation Director and Supervising Director on such well known projects as *The Simpsons*, *Ace Ventura*, *Spiderman* and the *Pink Panther* TV series, and won two Emmys for his work on *Tiny Toons* at Warner Bros.



# UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE ANIMATION GUILD

**EVERY FRIDAY**, Noon to 12:30 p.m.

**TAG Office Hours via Zoom Video Conference**

Reserve your spot: [RSVP@tag839.org](mailto:RSVP@tag839.org)

## PLEASE NOTE:

The office will be closed  
and TAG staff will be off  
during the week between  
Christmas and New Year's Day.

## DECEMBER

**December 25th**  
**Christmas Day**  
Contract Holiday

**December 29th**  
**TAG Tuesday**

Wear your TAG T-shirt and share your solidarity on social media while  
we work at a distance – there is strength in numbers!

## JANUARY

**January 1st**  
**New Year's Day**  
Contract Holiday

**January 26th, 7 p.m. via Zoom Webinar**  
**Virtual General Membership Meeting**

Register ahead of time to save your spot and receive a meeting link; watch  
your email account for details and instructions.

**January 26th**  
**TAG Tuesday**

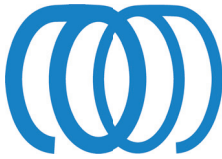
Wear your TAG T-shirt and share your solidarity on social media while we  
work at a distance – there is strength in numbers!

**January 30th, Noon to 5 p.m. via Zoom**  
**Afternoon of Remembrance**

Register ahead of time to save your spot and receive a meeting link; watch  
your email account for details and instructions.

Check the full TAG calendar, including special events and committee  
meetings, at: <https://animationguild.org/about-the-guild/calendar/>





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