



the animation guild

IATSE LOCAL 839

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Alexi Drosu

Alexi.drosu@tag839.org, 323-316-4222

New York Animation Workers Unionize

In a historic moment, The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839 to represent animation workers outside of California as they demand a voice in their working conditions.

New York, NY (Jan. 10, 2022)— Animation workers at Titmouse New York studios have overwhelmingly voted to join The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839—the first animation workers and production staff to do so in more than three decades.

More than 90% of animation workers at the studio signed union representation cards with The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839. In response, Titmouse voluntarily recognized the unit, which was certified by a neutral arbitrator on Jan. 7, 2022. This means that a committee of engaged Titmouse New York workers will soon sit at the bargaining table to negotiate their first union contract.

The organizing work done by the Titmouse crew is a testament to the power of animation workers coming together to demand an end to unsustainable workplace practices and provide a collective voice on issues that directly impact them on the job. This organizing milestone is the first time that The Animation Guild will represent animation workers outside of Los Angeles County since its charter was signed 70 years ago.

The Animation Guild is the only union representing animation artists and animation production workers in the United States. A sister local, the Canadian Animation Union, IATSE Local 938, formed in the last year and negotiated a first contract for Titmouse Vancouver workers.

“This historic moment is a cause for celebration as we begin a nationwide effort to ensure all animation workers are treated with respect and are afforded the same benefits and protections as those who are working in Southern California,” says The Animation Guild Business Representative Steve Kaplan.

Key issues for the animation workers include defining job roles and classifying workers accurately, addressing unrealistic schedules, paying overtime appropriately, improving health benefits, and establishing wage minimums to ensure a livable salary.



the animation guild

IATSE LOCAL 839

Members of the Titmouse New York Organizing Committee had these comments regarding their victory:

“This historic moment has given me a sense of agency I never thought I could be afforded in the workplace, especially as a production worker. Unionization felt unattainable until I saw the unstoppable force that is this organizing effort. I feel a deep sense of gratitude and relief knowing that this means current and future generations of New York artists and production staff will have their voices heard.” — Gray Rothey, Production Supervisor

“I'm overjoyed that my students and young peers will be able to thrive in an environment that supports them from today forward. To my fellow New Yorkers in animation and production, I'm confident that our collective pain is being recognized now that we have a seat at the table.” — Chrissy Fellmeth, Story Artist

"It is wild to look back on where I was two years ago, making pennies, struggling to break in and knowing that if I was to have a stable livelihood in this industry, I'd have to leave everything behind and go west. That was always the only choice I had. Now I am here standing with my fellow workers, thrilled to fully understand just how much of a choice we do have when we combine our voices and refuse to compromise." — T. Curry, Story Artist

“What this historic moment of unionizing means to me is a step closer to a brighter future for animation workers not just at Titmouse, not just in New York, but the animation community at large. I'm hoping that our victory here will be a catalyst for creating representation for animation workers spanning from coast to coast that aims to leave no one behind.” — Yves Menshikova, Background Designer

###

The Animation Guild, also known as Local 839 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), was founded in 1952. As a labor union, we represent more than 5,000 artists, technicians, and writers in the animation industry, advocating for workers to improve wages and conditions.