

Welcome Back Bits & Bytes

continue from pg. 1.....

If you need to contact the union about an urgent matter, please call us at 212-815-1932. Whenever you contact us, be sure to include your full name, the name of the agency you work for, and your telephone number including area code. If you leave a telephone message at the office, it's a good idea to give your name and telephone number twice: once at the beginning of the message and once at the end. Be sure to speak slowly and distinctly—sometimes the contact information is missing or garbled and we have no way to get back to you.

—Edward W. Hysyk
President

Make the Connection

continue from pg. 3.....

• Sign up for the e-alert list. Go to www.local2627.org. Click on the News and Alerts box in the left menu bar on the home page. Fill in the contact form using *your personal e-mail address*. Once we receive your contact information, we will add you to the e-alert list. You will receive about two or three e-mails a month concerning union-related issues.

We want to hear from you

Make the communication two-way—send us an e-mail at LocalOffice@Local2627.org. (If you don't have e-mail, check out the article "E-mail Puts You in Touch" in this newsletter.) Tell us what you're interested in, what activities you'd like to get involved in, and what ideas you have for improving the life of the local. We look forward to hearing from you!

—Gary Goff, 2nd Vice President &
Chair, Communications Committee

Fall Schedule of Local 2627

General Membership Meetings

Tuesday, September 18 • Tuesday, November 20

6:00 PM

District Council 37 • 125 Barclay St., Room 2 • Manhattan
Refreshments will be served

Bits & Bytes
Local 2627
125 Barclay Street
New York, NY 10007



Bits & Bytes

Affiliated with District Council 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO • 125 Barclay Street, NYC, 10007
212-815-1932 • FAX: 212-815-7690 • Vol. 2, No. 1 • Summer 2007 • www.local2627.org

Welcome back Bits & Bytes

LOCAL 2627's *Bits & Bytes* newsletter was initiated by former local president Robert S. Crilly, but it was suspended after several issues owing to his long illness and the press of other business. Since that time, our local has grown exponentially—almost doubling in size to 3,800 members—making it more important than ever to have a newsletter that can reach all our members.

Who we are: a snapshot of Local 2627

Local 2627 members are essential to the running of every city agency. We install programs and maintain the computers. We collect, track and analyze the vast amounts of electronic data involved in providing services to the people of New York including housing, health, sanitation, fire, police, transit, transportation, schools, water,

youth development, parks and recreation, environmental protection. . . you name it, we're doing it.

Of all the locals in DC 37, Local 2627 is probably the most geographically dispersed. We represent members in 60 different city agencies and authorities. Most of these agencies have more than one location. CUNY members, for example, work in more than 20 locations, and there is at least one Local 2627 member in almost every high school in New York City. Some of our members work on Rikers Island for the Department of Corrections. We even represent members who work for the Department of Environmental Protection in the upstate watershed area. Some locations have only one member.

Local 2627 is responsible for over 25 different civil service titles, and many of these covered titles contain several levels. The majority of our members have permanent civil service status, but we also have members who are provisional and some members in noncompetitive job titles.

In the last eight years the average salary of Local 2627 members has increased by approximately 22 percent, from \$47,405 to \$60,543. This does not include any additions to gross, such as longevity payments.

Connecting our members

It would be great if the local could have regular on-site visits at every location where our members work. Unfortunately, with a membership that is so dispersed throughout the city and that works 24/7 in some shops, this is not always possible. While we have on-site visits when possible, we must also rely on other means—our website, our information line, our growing network of elected shop stewards, and now this newsletter—to connect our members.

Later newsletters will cover contracts that are specific to our members, time and leave regulations, and your contractual and legal rights as union members. We also look forward to your suggestions for future newsletters. Please send your suggestions to: **Local 2627 Newsletter, 125 Barclay Street, New York, NY 10007**. You can also e-mail ideas for the newsletter to BitsandBytes@Local2627.org.

How to contact Local 2627

For non-newsletter matters you can contact us through the local's website at www.local2627.org (click the "Contact Us" link on the left menu bar). If you contact us by e-mail, use your personal e-mail address: we cannot respond to you at your city e-mail address.

(Continue on back page)



What's Happening in Albany

Union members at DC 37 Lobby Institute April 21 line up for question-and-answer session in preparation for lobbying their legislators. Union efforts in Albany have an impact on Local 2627 members. See page 2 for the full article on what's happening in Albany and why it's important to you.

What's Happening in Albany—and Why It Matters to You

FOR MANY YEARS, working people have felt shut out of the political debate in the New York State legislature. The recent election of Governor Eliot Spitzer has given union members renewed hope that our voices will be heard in Albany. But in order to be effective, we need to become informed. Bills that would improve members' pension benefits continue to be the legislative priorities of our local. Topping the list is a bill that would reopen Chapter 96 of the state pen-

sion law, an early-retirement option for Tier 4 members of the New York City Employees' Retirement System (NYCERS). Under this plan, Tier 4 members could retire with full benefits at age 55 with 25 years of service by making additional salary contributions to their pension plan.

Another bill the local is promoting would increase our members' pensions. Pension calculations are based on the employee's "final average salary." Under current law the final average salary for Tier 3 or Tier 4 members is computed as the average of wages earned during the three consecutive years of a member's career that provide the highest average wage. If the wages of any one year exceed the other two by more than 10 percent, the excess amount is excluded from the member's pension. This bill would raise the amount to 20 percent and greatly benefit members who get promotions or work a substantial amount of overtime in their final years.

At present Local 2627 members who work at the Transit Authority do not receive health insurance in retirement unless they have put in 25 years of service; all other city employees receive health insurance in retirement if they have put in a minimum of 10 years of service. Our local is pushing a bill that would enable our members who work at the Transit Authority to qual-

ify for health insurance in retirement when they reach 10 years of service. This issue has been a major inequity for some time: TA employees do the same work as city employees in the same civil service titles; it is only fair that they receive the same benefits.

Our local has been actively promoting these bills in the legislature by lobbying and otherwise educating state politicians about their importance. It is critical that our members continue to raise these issues with their elected officials. They should also contact Governor Spitzer and ask him to sign these bills when they come before him in the future. The education process for state legislators on pension bills often takes several years from initial introduction through signage by the governor. Sustained effort on the part of our union will help achieve these important victories.

Support for pension bills has generally been challenging in the state senate, which has a Republican majority, so members who live in districts with Republican state senators should make a special effort to reach out to them about these bills. All members should tell their legislators and Governor Spitzer to make these bills a priority in the next legislative session

—Peter Jablin
Chair, Political Action Committee

Stay up to date on legislative matters of concern to Local 2627. Check out the new "Political Action" section of the Local 2627 website at www.local2627.org



125 Barclay St.
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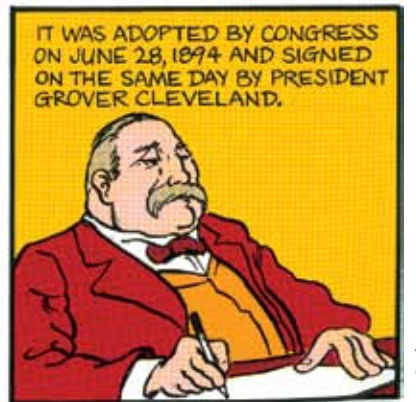
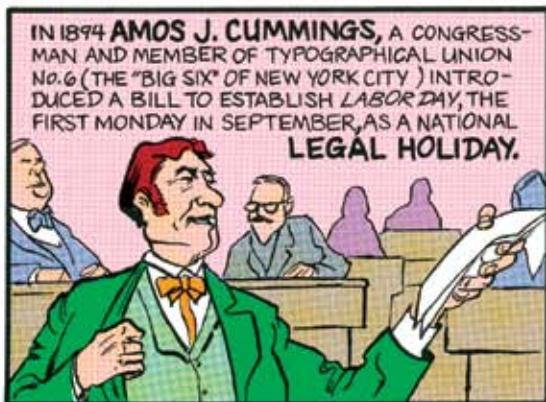
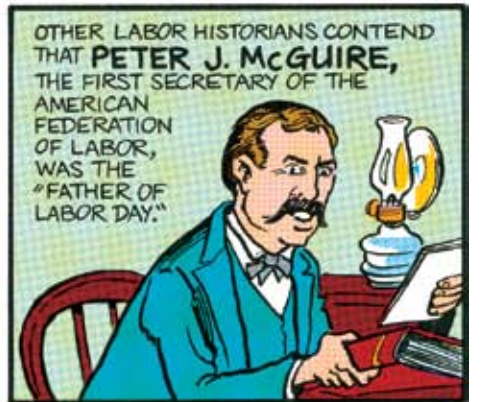
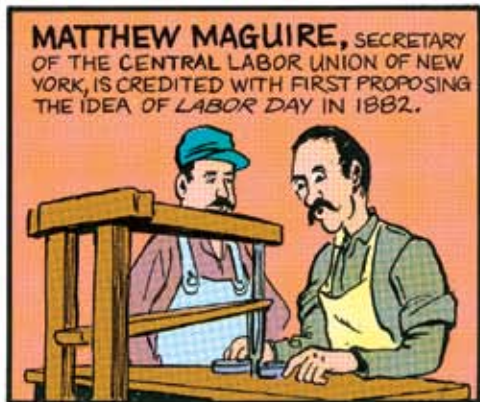
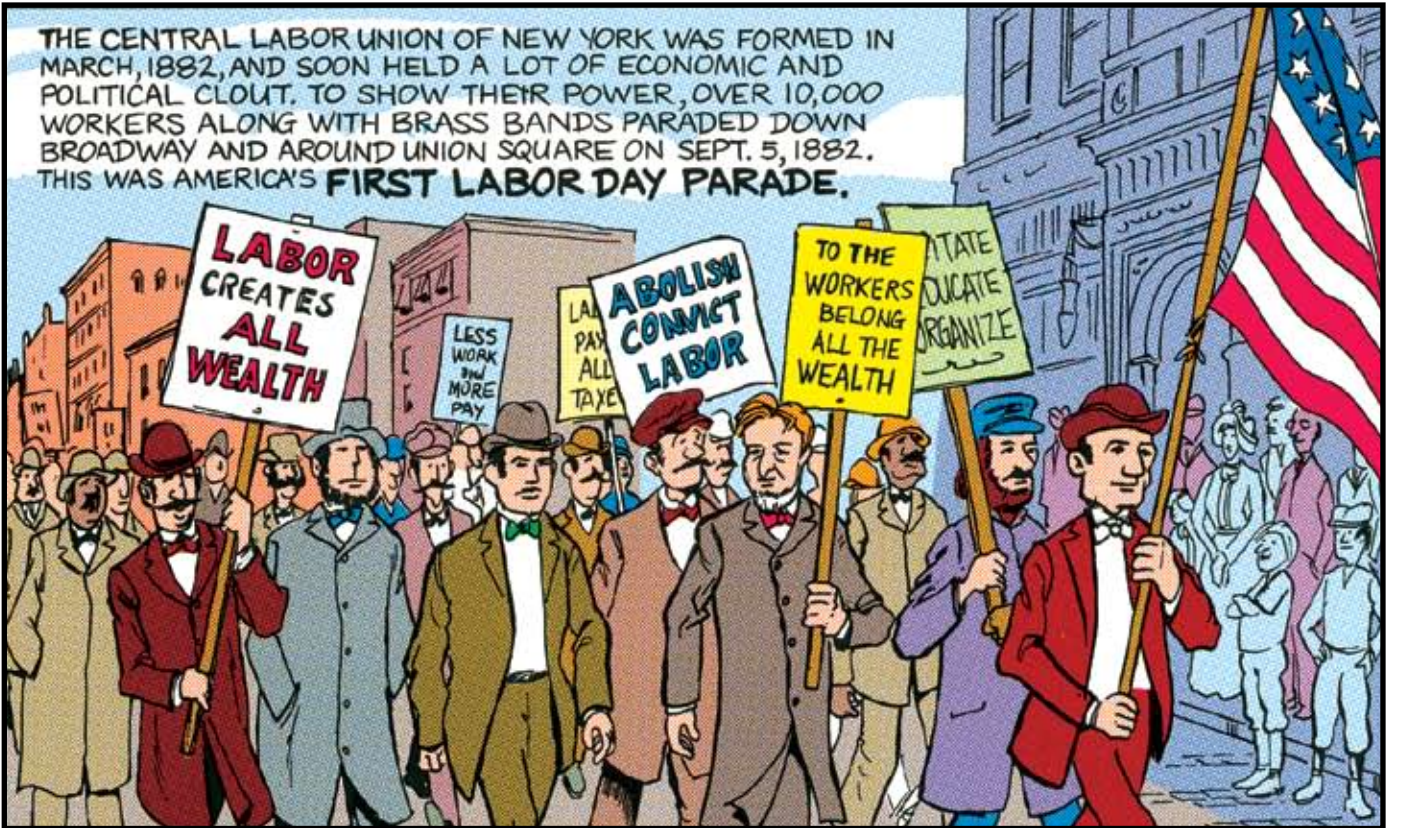
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Bits & Bytes
Newsletter of Local 2627
Editor: Gary Goff
BitsandBytes@Local2627.org

Thanks for help with this issue:
Robert Ajaye, Alyce G. Archer, Molly Charboneau, EJ Dobson, Peter Jablin, Cynthia Perkins, Clarence Elie-Rivera, Susie Yuen

THE ORIGIN OF LABOR DAY



Following New York's lead, the first nationwide observance of Labor Day occurred on September 7, 1885 when demonstrations and parades took place in several cities. The first state in the union to make Labor Day official was Oregon, in 1887.

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Local 2627 Celebrates Black History

Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the son of former slaves, started Negro History Week in 1926. Back then history books rarely dealt with blacks and when they did they usually reinforced negative stereotypes. One of Dr. Carter's goals was to use scholarship to popularize the idea that blacks had made significant contributions to history. He chose a week in February because it included the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. By the time Dr. Carter died in 1950 observances of Negro History Week had spread all over the country.

In 1976 the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, which Dr. Woodson founded, expanded the celebration to include all of February and renamed it Black History Month.

Recently the local's celebrations of



Alice Tan Ridely sang at the last two Local 2627 African American History Celebrations.

Black History Month have emphasized the important links between black history and labor. Once we focused on the 1968 strike by black sanitation workers in Memphis in which Martin Luther King was participating when he was killed. Another time Monique Singletary, editor of *African Burial Ground News*, spoke about the lives of black working people in early New York City. Delicious soul food has rounded out these celebrations.

The Local 2627 Black History Committee looks forward to building on these successes in future celebrations of Black History Month. We welcome your feedback. You can email us at BlackHistory@local2627.org.

—Robert Ajaye
1st Vice President & Chair,
Black History Committee

Members in Action



National antiwar protest. Local 2627 members went to Washington, D.C., as part of the labor contingent protesting the war in Iraq, January 2007.



Olga Bautina's play performed. The play *Somebody Like You* by Olga Bautina (DYCD) was performed at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center as part of DC 37's Theatre Works program, May 2007.

Make the Connection

Some ways for Local 2627 members to stay informed

GOOD communication is essential to every labor union. Members want answers to their questions: Am I being paid correctly? What should I do if I'm injured on the job? What if I'm the subject of a disciplinary action? And leadership needs to tell members about contract votes, changes in benefits, upcoming labor legislation, and hundreds of other issues.

In the old days much of this necessary communication on labor issues went on in union halls. Those days are past, at least for a local as large and dispersed as ours, but members still have several opportunities for direct involvement with the union.

Attend union meetings and events

- Local 2627 holds six **general membership meetings** a year: on the third Tuesday of September, November, January, March, May, and June. The next general membership meeting will take place on September 18, 2007.

- Local 2627 also holds **site visits** when scheduling allows, as well as regular meetings for elected shop stewards and activists. (If you are interested in becoming a shop steward, or would like to find out how to organize for a shop steward election at your location, contact the local office.)

- Members also have plenty of opportunities to get together at **union events** for some good old-fashioned fun. In February our local celebrates Black History Month with an evening

of dinner and entertainment. And thanks to the organizational skills and creativity of committee chairs Susie Yuen and Cynthia Perkins and their crews of amazing volunteers, we have now held two new festivals—for Asian Heritage Month and International Women's Day. Our local also holds forums and film showings on labor matters, and our members actively participate in antiwar and union solidarity events.

Plug in electronically

So, how can you find out about all these events? How can you get involved? By plugging into the local's **electronic communication network**.

- Check out the **information line**, which is updated every week. Call 212-341-4949 for a schedule of upcoming meetings and events.

- Go to the local's **website** at www.local2627.org. If you haven't visited the site for a while, check it out. It's updated frequently—even daily—and is now averaging 1,500 to 2,000 hits every month. There you can find information about civil service exams, salaries, education reimbursement, grievance procedures, and retirement benefits. You can also learn about workplace safety, read the minutes from membership meetings, get details about upcoming events, get up to speed on current labor issues, and link to other union websites.

(Continue on back page)

E-mail Puts You in Touch



EVERYONE talks about e-mail these days, but not everyone has it. If you don't own a computer you may think, "Why bother?" The answer: "To stay informed."

Local 2627 is encouraging all our members to "get online" and sign up for e-alerts. We send out a couple of e-alerts every month about upcoming classes, meetings, and labor events: "The meeting is on Friday." "Here's the latest civil service list." "Sign up for the class by Thursday." "There's legislation pending about pensions." It's a fast, cheap, effective way to put information into members' hands. Plus you have the information right there on your screen, ready to print out if you need to.

E-mail is also often the best way to get information to us: "I want to file an out-of-title grievance. Here's my name, job title, and work number. Here's a brief description of my situation. Call me at this number so we can talk." It can really save time if we have some of the facts in hand when we call you back.

E-mail Is Free

It's easy to use e-mail even if you don't own a computer. You can sign up for free e-mail from any personal computer—a family member's, a friend's—or the computers in public libraries throughout the city. (Warning, **do not use your computer at work** to do this. We'll go into this in more detail in a later issue of the newsletter.)

Several Internet Service Providers (ISPs) offer free e-mail accounts: Gmail, Yahoo!, Inbox, etc. To set up an e-mail account on the Web, go to the ISP, find the appropriate Set Up Account form, type in the required personal information, create your own user name and password, and you're set. Your e-mail address will be made up of your user name, the @ symbol, and the ISP's name.

For example, go to <http://mail.google.com/mail/help/open.html> to set up a free Gmail account. Click on Start Now. Fill in the required information on the form provided. Create a user name and a password. You can

keep your user name simple (johndoe) or you can be creative (musiclover). The final result will be your e-mail address: johndoe@gmail.com or musiclover@gmail.com, etc.

To access your e-mail from any personal computer, go to your ISP's website and sign in with your e-mail address (user name) and password.

Sign Up for Local 2627 E-alerts

When you have your new e-mail account, we hope you will sign up for the Local 2627 e-alerts. It's easy to do. Just go to the local's website: www.local2627.org. Click on the News and Alerts box in the left column and fill in the form that pops up. Once you have signed up, you will receive three or four e-alerts a month, along with your other regular e-mail

You can also e-mail us about union matters at LocalOffice@Local2627.org and we'll get back to you as quickly as possible. Hope to see you online!

Our First International Women's Day Celebration

ONE-THIRD of Local 2627's members are women. In recognition of that fact, the newly formed Local 2627 Women's Committee organized our first ever International Women's Day celebration on March 9, 2007, at DC 37 headquarters.

Our guest speaker was M. Patricia Smith, the newly appointed labor commissioner for New York State. Noting that DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts had also served as labor commissioner in the 1980s, Commissioner Smith talked about the critical impact of progressive legislation on women's wages and working conditions and the influential role played by women throughout labor's history. Smith vowed to follow the example of New York State's first female labor commissioner, the legendary Frances Perkins, and promised to work tirelessly to protect every worker and strictly enforce every labor law in the state.

In addition to our guest speaker, we had great singers and dancers. Helen Flowers inspired us all with "Still I Rise." Gabriela Cabezas, age 14, the talented daughter of local member William Cabezas, filled the hall with "Hero" and "Wind Beneath My Wings." And just to remind us that we're never too old to be young, Mae and the Jive Walkers—an amazing group of women ranging in age from 57 to 91—got us all rocking and clapping to the beat with their high-energy step-dancing. Wow! It sure

pays to stay active!

In our retro fashion show, members strutted down the runway decked out in CeCe Falls' unique hand-knitted hats. There were slide presentations and book displays highlighting women in the labor movement, as well as an information table on health and social service programs for women and gift items from the Wine Cellar and the Body Shop. Local 2627 member Murdock Haskins videotaped the proceedings (we're hoping to have some of this up on our website at a later date) and Susie Yuen took photographs. The food—from Harlem's Uptown Juice Bar—was simply fabulous!

We would like to get your ideas for ways to involve our members in women's labor issues and future women's programs. We'd love to hear from you, so get involved and send your suggestions to Womens Committee@Local2627.org.

—Cynthia Perkins
Chair, Women's Committee



Local 2627 celebrates International Women's Day. Above: Gabriela Cabezas, daughter of William Cabezas (NYCHA), sings at Local 2627's International Women's Day Celebration, March 2007. Below: NYS Commissioner of Labor M. Patricia Smith, shown here with members of the Local 2627 Women's Committee, was the keynote speaker at Local 2627's International Women's Day Celebration, March 2007.

Workplace Safety

Do you have questions about safety & health language in your contract? Workers' Compensation? Ergonomics? Health issues related to 9/11? City-wide air conditioning policy? Find out about these and other workplace safety issues at the Local 2627 website: www.local2627.org.

Local 2627 Celebrates Asian Heritage

MAY is Asian Heritage Month, a time when we celebrate the many achievements and wonderful diversity of Asian Americans.

For the last two years the Local 2627 Asian Heritage Committee has organized a gala at DC 37 headquarters attended by over 100 union members, their friends and families.

Thanks to fantastic contributions by our members, we have put on colorful displays of clothing and decorations, and featured books by and about Asian Americans in the labor movement. We have seen many amazing Asian cultural performances, some by our own talented Local 2627 members: graceful dances from Thailand, traditional Chinese dances, classical Indian dances, and modern hip-hop from Japan. Musicians have played melodies on instruments ranging from the Chinese zither to the harmonica. The refreshments—appetizers to des-

sert—reflected the cuisines of Japan, China, India, and Korea.

We have had excellent keynote speakers at our two events. Jean Kim, director of the NYC Central Labor Council's Commission on the Dignity of Immigrants, spoke about the contributions Asian immigrants have made to the labor movement through the decades. May Chen, manager of UNITE HERE Local 2325, listed the many achievements of Asian Americans in the labor workforce.

The Asian Heritage Committee would like to hear your ideas and suggestions for an even more exciting program in 2008. Committee members work hard, but we have a lot of fun, too. If you are interested in working on the committee and/or the event, please send us a message at AsianHeritage@Local2627.org

—Susie Yuen
Chair, Asian Heritage Committee



Honoring Asian Heritage. Sadia Ismat (HRA) performs a traditional Indian dance at the Local 2627 Asian Heritage Celebration, May 2006.

Contest

Win \$100 J&R Gift Certificate

To celebrate the re-launching of Bits & Bytes we're holding a contest for members of Local 2627.

*You can mail in this form (or a photostat of it) to Local 2627, 125 Barclay St., New York NY 10007.

*You can go to the Local 2627 website, www.local2627.org and fill out the contest form.

Below are three acronyms (sets of initials); circle the answer that correctly identifies each.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| (1) AFL-CIO | (2) FLSA | (3) FMLA |
| A. Largest labor organization in the US | A. Frisbee League of Southern Antarctica | A. Free Manhattan Liberation Army |
| B. Mythical capital of Atlantis | B. Fair Labor Standards Act | B. Cult that believes the Earth is cone-shaped |
| C. Government agency that tracks Elvis sightings | C. Highly regarded brand of over-the-counter placebos | C. Family Medical Leave Act |

Name: _____ Agency: _____

Job title: _____ Work phone: _____ Home e-mail _____

Rules: This contest is only open to members of Local 2627, Electronic Data Processing Personnel union. Only one entry per member will be considered. Entries must be received at the local office no later than 5:00 pm, Sept. 14, 2007. Local 2627 officers, Executive Board members, trustees, DC 37 Delegates, CLC delegates, and committee chairs are not eligible to win. At the General Membership Meeting on Sept. 18, the winner will be drawn randomly from the entries with correct answers. The winner will have to sign a Local 2627 membership card before receiving the prize if there is no membership card on file for him or her.