

# IN MY OPINION

**Caroline Porter**

## Get it in Galesburg? Try Macomb...

The closing of Maytag Corporation plant here and other locations has caused shockwaves here and internationally. One result of this drastic and destructive change in our local economy is the Chamber of Commerce campaign suggesting we "Get It In Galesburg."

What a good idea, and one those of us living here should have been pursuing for a long time. For years I've heard women, for example, snobbishly complaining they couldn't find clothes in Galesburg. If these same people had shopped here, maybe our local clothing stores wouldn't have disappeared. It's a vicious cycle.

So the concept of keeping our dollars and business in Galesburg is a good one. Even if we have to pay a little more, it's a small price to pay for keeping our community afloat.

Unfortunately, we may think it's a good idea to patronize the local businesses, but not to put our local laborers to work. Mike Tuthill, Business Manager of Laborer's Local 538, ticks off the list of local construction projects our government officials and local businesses regularly assign to out of town companies.

**Here are recent examples  
and project costs:**

<b>Knox County bridge .....</b>	<b>\$93,877</b>
<b>Kiwanis Park project .....</b>	<b>672,113</b>
<b>Cedar Fork Creek .....</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>
<b>Cherry St. Bricks .....</b>	<b>480,000</b>
<b>Lake Storey Trail .....</b>	<b>64,000</b>
<b>Knox County Nursing home ...</b>	<b>605,000</b>
<b>Carl Sandburg College .....</b>	<b>126,000</b>

In addition, the Galesburg Sanitary district is looking at a \$500,000 project at the industrial park near Knoxville.

The construction companies regularly getting these local contracts are Hillyer Construction and Laverdierre Construction, both from Macomb. It is estimated that out of a million dollar construction project, \$600,000 is spent for salaries. It is also estimated that these salaries are compounded six to eight times in a community, with the worker locally buying food and clothing, paying taxes, buying insurance, homes, cars and services. Right now, this money is consistently marching right out of town and into another county's economy. Considering the loss of jobs facing Galesburg, how stupid is this?

So if our governmental bodies think they



are saving us money by always taking the lowest bid, they are sorely mistaken. Next Wednesday, October 15, Laborer's Local Union 538, located in Knox County on Route 150 North, is having an informal reception for business and government leaders to talk about how their decisions effect the local economy and ways they can hire local construction companies and workers.

Officials from the public sector will claim they have to take the lowest bid for a project. Well, that can be done with qualifications. The Knox county jail construction agreement, for example, included a "project labor agreement" where the signatory must be a union contractor and the construction company receiving the bid must hire through local unions and use local laborers. Union representatives will explain local ordinances that can be adopted, including adding requirements to the existing "responsible bidder ordinance," saying that bidders must participate in the registered apprenticeship program - a program run by the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT).

So — with the advent of Maytag workers and many others already trying to find jobs — it's time for all of us to get past business as usual. Laborer's Local 538 and their union partners want to put local laborers, both current and new, to work. And they are showing the initiative in setting up this informational meeting. Everyone will benefit by listening to what they have to say. Because, in fact, "they" are us.