

## White Shirt Day

White Shirt Day was first celebrated on Feb. 11, 1948 as a way to honor the men and women who participated in the 1937 Sit-Down Strike in Flint, Michigan. This Sit-Down Strike changed the UAW from a collection of isolated locals on the fringes of the industry, into a major labor union and led to the unionization of the domestic United States automobile industry. Some of the major issues in the demand for the union to strike were:

1. Recognition of UAW as sole bargaining agency.
2. Abolition of piece work in favor of straight hourly rates.
3. A 30 hour week and 6 hour day, with time and a half for overtime
4. A “minimum rate of pay commensurate with an American standard of living.”
5. Seniority rights based on length of service.
6. Reinstatement of all employees “unjustly discharged.”
7. Mutual agreement on “speed of production.”

During the battles of this strike, women played a key role in the Union’s successes. From the beginning, a large number of non-working women refused to sit on the sidelines while the strike was going on. Instead, they formed the Women’s Auxiliary, which fed the sit-downers, visited the homes of sit-downers to convince their wives that the strike was worth the sacrifice they were experiencing. Later a smaller group formed the Women’s Emergency Brigade, which took the front lines on several occasions against the police and company guards.

In 1948, Bert Christensen, Local #598, suggested the idea to ask workers to wear white shirts traditionally worn by managers to show the company that they were equally important to the business. The shirts represent equal respect and treatment for “blue-collar” workers, unity and strength of UAW members, and to send a message to management that “blue collar” workers had earned the right to the same respect as their management counterparts.

In later years, the date February 11, 2009, was declared White Shirt Day in the state of Michigan by the Senate, to commemorate the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the first United Auto Workers contract with General Motors. The day is a reflection of the extreme sacrifice, commitment, and determination of those first UAW members who paved the way for higher pay and improved benefits that have created a positive atmosphere for **ALL** of America’s working men and women.

Since February 11<sup>th</sup> falls on a Sunday, the Women’s and Education Committees are asking 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Shifts to PLEASE wear their white t-shirts this Friday on Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>, in celebration of the history of our Brothers’ and Sisters’ suffrages and sacrifices throughout those days. Also, bowls of beans and cornbread will be served to members at no charge on 40 aisle, during 1<sup>st</sup> shift on February 9<sup>th</sup> during lunch. Let’s show management we have **UNITY**.

### **LOCAL 31 EDUCATION COMMITTEE:**

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Glen Stinson  
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### **LOCAL 31 WOMEN’S COMMITTEE:**

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