

## Breeding Winners, Championing Health

**IUPAT Local 764 member promotes free medical screenings—and breeds race horses**

### WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A CHAMPION RACE HORSE?

All your work goes down the drain if the horse isn't healthy," says Dan Obray, a member of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades Local Union 764. "And if I'm not healthy, then I can't do the work it takes to keep these fine animals in top shape."

Obray has reasons to check out his bill of health. For 28 years, he worked various jobs on new construction projects involving special coatings and sandblasting at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL). The lab, sitting outside the town of Idaho Falls, is a government site that produces nuclear weapons. Although construction work-

ers may breathe toxins and hazards like asbestos, lead, and silica on a normal site, the INL job has even more highly hazardous materials that can cause serious medical problems.

"People think radiation is the worst thing, and it's bad. But there's other hazards out here, like asbestos and beryllium and other chemicals in the dust that you wouldn't know you're being exposed to," explains Obray. "There's not a big sign that says 'Beryllium: Keep Out.' Instead, it can be in the dust that settles on pipes, in tool chests, or just about anywhere in a building where beryllium production has been done."

Obray currently runs the screening program's outreach office for construction workers who have worked at the

INL. However, screenings are also offered at many other sites (listed below). The screening is an easy process that consists of two steps: a work history interview and a medical exam.

In step one, a specially trained building trades worker, such as Dan, or worksite expert conducts a work history interview to determine what exposures to hazardous material the former worker may have had and the types of illnesses that could result.

In step two, former workers receive free medical screening examinations to test for illnesses that may have developed from exposure risks, as well as other health problems. Following the exam, the participant receives a letter indicating any medical findings and indicates which findings could be work-related.



**Dan Obray with six-month-old Chile Bute. Obray worked at Idaho National Laboratory and currently runs the BTMed screening program for construction workers who also worked there.**

"I have an easy time relating to workers on the site because I worked there, too," explains Obray, who has been through the program himself. "I knew all our health was affected by our work, so I definitely wanted a physical to find out if anything was wrong."

Many BTMed participants have discovered illnesses they would not have known were present and then gained access to government-funded benefits to treat those problems relating to their work

at Department of Energy (DOE) sites. The screening program has enabled many workers to file claims with the U.S. Department of Labor under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA). The EEOICPA offers workers medical coverage for the illness from the date the claim was filed and a compensation lump-sum payment.

Contact Dan Obray to learn more:  
[danielobray@yahoo.com](mailto:danielobray@yahoo.com)  
 208-233-4611

**"I knew all our health was affected by our work, so I definitely wanted a physical to find out if anything was wrong."**

**Dan Obray, IUPAT Local 764**

### SCREENING SITES

- Amchitka
- Argonne National Lab
- Battelle Labs  
(King Ave., West Jefferson)
- Brookhaven
- Brush Luckey
- Fernald
- GE Evendale
- Hanford
- Huntington Pilot Plant
- Idaho National Lab (INL)
- Kansas City Plant
- Mallinckrodt
- Mound
- Oak Ridge
- Paducah
- Pinellas
- Piqua
- Portsmouth
- Rocky Flats
- Savannah River
- Weldon Spring
- Yucca Mountain

