



**History
Of The Pat Greathouse
UAW
Education Center
Ottawa, IL**



A Dream Becomes Reality

After the 1949 UAW Convention, the boundaries of Region 4 were changed. Before this, part of Illinois- only Chicago and Rockford- and Iowa with its members centered mostly in Waterloo, Dubuque and Ottumwa, were in what is now Region 4. Local unions in the Quad Cities, Peoria, Springfield, Danville and Fairfield were in Region 3.

The membership was growing rapidly, with both the Caterpillar local in Peoria and the Allis Chalmers local in Springfield coming into the UAW in 1948. Now the UAW embarked on a campaign to bring all of the agricultural implement industry into the UAW. The locals were widely scattered. The expressways and air travel we know today didn't exist, so members in the foundries and assembly plants in Chicago had no contact with the members in the farm implement and parts plants in Iowa and southern Illinois.

Even if they did, the times were against us. Whites, Blacks and/or Hispanics could not meet in the same meeting halls, eat in the same restaurants, or stay in the same hotels. Society kept us from developing the solidarity we needed to build our union.

We needed a way to bring them together. And so, during the summer of '49, just before the UAW Convention, we started looking for a central location where we could meet on common ground and learn to live together; where we could get to know each other and share experiences outside of more formal settings.

In June, we learned that a private TB Sanitarium in Ottawa was about to close. We contacted the owners and learned that indeed it would be for sale, but only to a buyer who would use it to help people. The price was \$30,000.00 for 14 acres with 1,000 feet of Illinois river frontage, the dining and administration building which still stands, two large housing units and several cottages.

We recognized the opportunity and the challenge, but we had no money. The International Union had no money to spare, and even if they did, they knew every other Region would expect equal treatment.

In July, right after electing Pat Greathouse their Director, Region 4 delegates to the 1949 Convention endorsed the recommendation to secure a Union Center and began raising contributions from Local Unions and members. On August 5, 1949, Regional Director Pat Greathouse signed the agreement to purchase the Ottawa facilities for \$30,000.00. A non-profit organization was set up consisting of the members of Region 4 to own the property.

The first check for \$1,000.00 to make the initial down payment of \$500.00 came from Local 449, the National Lock Local in Rockford.

On Labor Day of 1949, Illinois U.S. Senator Paul H. Douglas dedicated the Ottawa Union Center. It was then-and still is today-the only regional education center in the UAW. Some say that the idea to create Black Lake came from the successes of the Region 4 Center.

The facilities were primitive by today's' standards, but it was ours! Staff members and local union leaders volunteered to clean up the place on weekends, building parking facilities, picnic areas and playground equipment. Conferences were immediately scheduled to utilize our new space, and the responses from delegates were positive.

After President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, the name of the Ottawa Union Center was changed to honor him. It was changed again in 1994 by delegates attending the tri-annual Regional Conference, who voted to change the name to the Pat Greathouse Education Center to honor the man whose vision created this impressive retreat for workers.

Over these past 50 + years, we've seen many changes and enjoyed tremendous progress. The Region grew to have the largest membership within the UAW. During the mid-80's, our Region began to take its lumps along with the entire labor movement. Membership decreased due to plant closings as employers moved work to Mexico and offshore countries. In 1993, Regions 4

and 10 became one again and the attendance at conferences and other programs increased. Today, the Pat Greathouse UAW Education Center is used nearly every week throughout its 9-month open season, and over 2,500 delegates attend conferences, training sessions and programs throughout the year.

Our Education Center continues to be a place where Region 4 members can come together to share ideas and common goals, and to build upon the principles that our union was founded upon. Today, members enjoy a wide variety of educational programs and conferences that continue to strengthen our locals and shape the leaders of tomorrow. Over the years, thousands of Region 4 members have passed through the programs and classes offered at the Center, many of them going on to the International Staff and even the Vice-Presidency of our great union. Our Education Center is truly a place to be proud of!