

Drake Construction and Excavation increases reward to \$25,000 for information leading to conviction of vandals

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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BETHALTO - On April 14-15, 2017, equipment from Drake Excavation and Construction was vandalized at the site of where the Holly Brook Assisted Living and Memory Care building will be erected.

Drake Excavation and Construction - a non-union company - had its site picketed by pro-union workers who lost the contract Drake Excavation and Construction owner Dennis Drake said Thursday afternoon. Following that picket, Drake said his workers organized a counter picket against union labor. After that picket, many of Drake Excavation and Construction's pieces of heavy machinery were vandalized. Equipment was spray painted with pro-union and anti-Trump slogans, windows were broken, and controls and lines were severed.

"It's our freedom of speech, we are very American," Drake said. "We don't have to be in a union, it's a private job. After we left, someone vandalized the equipment. They busted windows, broke controls and spray painted union stuff all over the equipment. They painted things like 'rat,' 'scab' and 'union strong.'"

While neither Drake nor the Bethalto Police Department have any definitive suspects, Drake believes the culprits were among the union picketers. He said the Bethalto Police Department agrees. To "flush somebody out," Drake has raised the original reward of \$5,000 for information leading to the conviction of the culprit or culprits to a whopping \$25,000.

"It's principle at this point," Drake said.

Deputy Bethalto Police Chief Craig Welch previously told RiverBender.com no suspects were named, adding surveillance footage from nearby businesses was collected to assist in the case.

Drake said his business is not "anti-union," but said he chose to be non-union.

"We're not anti-union," he said. "Everybody can choose who they want to be. We compete with union contractors, and we win some jobs and lose some jobs. When we miss out on a job, we don't cry and whine and protest. We just try to get another job. Unions cry and whine and picket."

Picketing against his company has become commonplace, Drake said, but vandalism is an entirely new experience.

Anyone with information on the case is invited to call the Bethalto Police Department at (618) 377-5266.