



Local

OPEIU Journal

www.opeiu8.org

Vol. 20, No. 7

SEPTEMBER 2005

Vancouver & Bellingham Home Care Workers Join Local 8



CDM Caregivers Julie Vergara, Marie Scott and Lynne Johnson react to winning their election on August 22.

On August 22, 150 Caregivers at CDM In-Home Services in Vancouver, Washington voted overwhelmingly to join OPEIU Local 8. Home Care Workers provide essential tasks to enable frail older adults and disabled people to remain in their own homes.

Local 8 represents about 1,000 Caregivers at eight non-profit home care agencies. In June, over 200 workers at Visiting Nurse Personal Services (VNPS) in the Bellingham area joined with Local 8 through a card check process. They are in the process of negotiating their first union contract.

The next step for the Caregivers at CDM is to negotiate a fair contract. Long time Caregiver **Ruth Tubbs** says, "Now we're looking forward to sitting down with our employer to work together for a contract that meets all concerns...and we do this now with

one voice. We're also going to start planning for going to Olympia this year to make sure workers at small non-profit agencies get recognition." **Roger Hutchens**, a Caregivers at VNPS says, "This will be great for all of us. Now it's time to put together our first contract."

CALENDAR

Wed., Sept. 28

- MEMBERSHIP MEETING, 6:15 p.m., Hall 6. *Spaghetti Feed: only \$5.*
- POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE, 5:30 p.m., Hall 6.
- NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION, 5:30 p.m., Rm. 238.

Sat., Oct. 28

- SHOP STEWARD TRAINING, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Everett.

Historic Bylaws Changes Voted at the June Membership Meeting

At the June 2005 General Membership Meeting, Local 8 members voted unanimously to adopt proposed changes to our Bylaws which will add four new Regional Executive Board positions. Assuming that the OPEIU International Union approves the changes, expect to have a special election in January 2006 for the new Executive Board positions (see State of the Union inside).

Executive Board

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Guy Brook

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MEMBERS IN ACTION

Washington Women in Trades *by Carol O'Neill, Local 8 Member*

Traversing up and down the Rainier Valley corridor in southeast Seattle this spring, I've coordinated three high school outreach events for Sound Transit as a volunteer member of Washington Women in Trades (WA WIT).

Our first stop was at Franklin High School, where they combined all three construction classes for a Sound Transit, Trades and WA WIT Presentation. Then at Cleveland High School we developed a Sound Transit Construction Site Tour for students on May 20th, which started at the Obayashi Corporation (tunnel boring contractor) operations and maintenance facility. There we had a conference room briefing on the mechanics of the Beacon Hill Tunnel boring and Beacon Hill Station (180 feet below grade) shaft drilling. We then had an in-depth tour at the Beacon Hill Station site, with hardhats provided by Sprinkler Fitters and Cement Masons. To complete the valley tour for Sound Transit, we finished at the Rainier Beach High School Opportunity Fair on May 27th.

I've been volunteering for WA WIT since 1999 as an event planner and community outreach specialist — helping host the Trade Fair each year, now in its 26th year. Our mission is to improve women's economic equity through access to high-wage, high-skilled careers in the construction, mechanical and transportation sectors.



Cleveland High School students on a tour of the Sound Transit Construction Site coordinated by Local 8 member Carol O'Neill, also author of this article.

OPEIU Members at Group Health Vote Overwhelmingly For New Contract

With a show of support of 96%, OPEIU members at GHC approved a three year contract with 3%-15% market adjustments, annual cost of living increases, increases to shift differentials, lead pay, and the temporary premium. Weekend differential pay was added for the first time.

Another first for OPEIU members is that starting in January 2006, they will pay a share of the medical benefit premium and a higher co-pay, like the members of other unions at GHC. Also, for the first time, they will be converting to a Paid Time Off plan instead of traditional sick leave and vacation leave banks.

OPEIU members fought off changes to Family Medical Leave until June of 2008 at which time 1,250 hours will be required to be worked before FMLA can be accessed. While this is in keeping with Federal Law, GHC has always had more generous guidelines.

Local 8's Financial and Retirement Seminars

by Alan Wolfson, OPEIU Local 8 Member

In May, our union held a seminar called Planning for a Secure Economic Future. I attended and couldn't get enough of the quality information provided to us by experts in various areas of finance.

We got an overview of how to start saving for retirement, with a slide show on some sound approaches for a variety of financial situations and rules of thumb.

A selection of workshops was offered next. Two were for union employees that covered supplemental pensions and retirement plans. I sat in on the third one, Money Management Made Simple, given by an OPEIU member who works at the Fremont Public Association. She taught us things I'd never thought of about credit and gave us sound advice and a nice, thick book full of worksheets and phone numbers that relate to good financial management.



At lunch, we heard about the facts and fiction of social security and the current attempts to overhaul it from **Maureen Bo**, former Business Manager, and **Will Parry** of Puget Sound Association of Retired Activists.

Long-term insurance rounded out the day of interesting and informational topics we need to know no matter what our age.

When this type of seminar is offered in the future (tweaked and fine tuned with what we learned at the first one, and with new topics), I recommend you try to fit it into your schedule. The advice was very comprehensive from

knowledgeable people who are experts in their fields, the type of seminar that usually costs a lot of money but which our union gave us for free (not to mention a free lunch). The long term value is incalculable for those who take advantage of the information offered.

I can't wait until the next one!

Washington State Ferries Workers Finally Win

The tide appears to be finally turning for our sisters and brothers at the Washington State Ferries (WSF), thanks to our Bargaining Team: **Becky Mowry**, **Bob Estes** and Union Representative **Shannon Halme**.

After over four years of bargaining and mediation, the Union took the 2001-03 contract to interest arbitration. Across-the-board wage increases were barred because they "would be inconsistent with the statutory limitation on the department of transportation's funds, spending or budget," but the arbitrator was not barred from enhancing existing contract provisions. We proposed adding additional steps to the antiquated salary step schedule, and they were awarded!

However, in the world of WSF, winning an interest arbitration award against them does not necessarily mean that they comply. They sought the Attorney General's opinion on the legality of our award, and our award was upheld.

This was a major victory for OPEIU Local 8 members, who are the first of seven unions at WSF to have their contract implemented. We are leading the way.

While the whole bargaining process has taken five years, the extra hard work in the past six months has paid off. Last month, all OPEIU Local 8 employees were given step upgrades retroactive to January 2001 which totaled about \$250,000.

Don't forget to vote in the Sept. 20th Primaries!

Check out the Voters' Guide from the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), which will include County by County Central Labor Council's candidate endorsements and WSLC Special election state endorsements and Initiative positions. Go to www.wslc.org Political Education Page Labor Voter Guide.

State of the Union

by Suzanne Mode, Business Manager, and Cindy Schu, Organizing Director

This summer marked the 50th anniversary of the AFL-CIO. The 25th Constitutional Convention was held July 25–28 in Chicago, where delegates took major steps to build a stronger labor movement through organizing, political action, building state and local power, and bringing more diversity to the labor movement's political ranks. Nearly 1,000 union delegates from 56 unions also elected the top leaders for the next four years, including President John Sweeney, Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka and Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin and Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth were elected to the AFL-CIO Executive Board.

Several unions boycotted the convention to demonstrate their frustration that the AFL-CIO is not changing fast enough to meet the needs of today's workers in order to revitalize the American labor movement. The *Change to Win Coalition* includes six unions that represent over five million workers: Teamsters, Laborers' International, UNITE HERE, SEIU, UFCW, Carpenters and the United Farm Workers. Four of these unions have disaffiliated from the AFL-CIO.

At the grass roots level, it appears that both sides of the debate share a commitment to the same basic principles:

- Maximize our strength by uniting and merging unions that represent workers in the same industry
- Shift huge resources to organizing
- Leadership should reflect the diversity of today's workforce
- Build up the political voice of working people
- Modernize the strategies, structure, and priorities of the AFL-CIO to make these changes possible.

President Sweeney, now a member of the OPEIU, is confident that "we will not lose sight of our goal of building power to demand that employers, politicians and policy-

makers heed our call to reward work and respect workers." Local 8 continues to lead the way.

Organizing Victories

Since June 2005, over 350 additional workers are now represented by Local 8. Caregivers at **Visiting Nurse Personal Services** in the Bellingham area and **CDM In-Home Services** in Vancouver, Washington indisputably chose OPEIU Local 8 as their union—despite extensive efforts by a disaffiliated union to undermine our efforts. Another group of 450 workers at **Senior Life Resources** in Eastern Washington will hold a runoff election later this month after a simple majority of voters already selected Local 8.

It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.
—Charles Darwin

Expanding Union Democracy

In March 2005, over 50 Local 8 members from all over the state met in Tokeland, Washington to decide how best to structure our organization to ensure statewide representation, increase membership involvement and protect our commitment to remaining a democratic union.

This group of dedicated leaders agreed that to ensure diversity, the Local 8 Executive Board be expanded by adding four Regional Executive Board Members:

- **North:** 2 from Snohomish County north and 2 Alternates
- **South and West:** 1 from Pierce County over to the South and West
- **East:** 1 Alternate and 1 from the east side of the Mountains and 1 Alternate.

Members who live in a particular region will nominate and vote for their own Regional E-Board representatives. Local 8 members formally adopted this recommendation at the June Membership Meeting and once approved by the OPEIU International, a special mail ballot election

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State of the Union

continued



will be held in February 2006. All Local 8 officers will then be up for election in 2007.

To improve communication and visibility within the Union in order to promote greater membership involvement, an ongoing work group of activists is implementing ideas generated at Tokeland and subsequent meetings that include ways to strengthen our Shop Steward network, outreach to new members, organize events that tap our members' concerns, help fundraise for our issues and recruit membership support

for our organizing campaigns. Our day-long training on retirement and related issues (see review by Alan Wolfson, this issue), along with our recent organizing victories, are examples of Local 8's success!

Collective Bargaining Wins

Each year employers get more sophisticated in combating the needs of working people. High priced attorneys now speak for employers who use any way possible to delay negotiations, thwart employee progress in the workplace and erode benefits and standards. Despite all the obstacles, Local 8 members continue to stand together and win fair contracts.

After years of stalling, the **Washington State Ferries** was ordered to pay out nearly \$250,000 in back wages as a result of Local 8's actions. We demanded interest arbitration to break deadlocked negotiations, hired a lobbyist to ensure our interests were addressed by the State Legislature, and worked in solidarity with the other maritime unions.

Trade Section members kept maintenance of benefits for two more years as health care costs continue to outpace raises.

Union members at **Group Health Cooperative** (our largest bargaining unit of over 1,400 employees), overwhelmingly ratified a new contract that includes job preservation language, up to 10 additional days off each year and sizable upgrades in pay.

What Lies Ahead

OPEIU Local 8 faces many challenges going forward. Several initiatives by **Group Health Cooperative** will result in the automation and drastic reorganization of our work. Scores of members will face either losing their jobs or accept changing the nature of their work and moving to a centralized work location. **Sea Mar Community Health Center** members prepare for negotiations as their contract expires in Spring 2006. Not far behind, Local 8 members at **Providence Everett Medical Center** will begin contract negotiations after the first of the new year. Our 200 new members at **La Clinica Community Health Center** have the challenge of winning their first contract.

Automation, spiraling healthcare costs, weak public leaders and the scrambling for public dollars remain the biggest threat to working people, their families and their communities. The members of OPEIU Local 8 stand out as model citizens. Our members continue to fight for a better workplace and a better world. In this time of change—in the Labor Movement, in U.S. politics, in the environment and in social norms, OPEIU Local 8 intends to embrace change and act on ways to improve and protect our members' interests and needs. Together we succeed.

Don't Shop at Wal-Mart

Educate Wal-Mart:

Pledge to Buy

Back-to-School Supplies

Somewhere Else



Wal-Mart is the world's largest retailer, setting the standard for America's workplaces—and it's a standard of low wages, poor benefits and worker abuse that working families cannot accept. Together, we have to stop the *Wal-Marting* of America's jobs.

Let's educate Wal-Mart about how a rich company should treat its workers by pledging to buy back-to-school supplies at other stores this year. Please sign the online pledge at www.aflcio.org and make sure Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott hears you.



Tommy McLean

Remembering a Long-time Local 8 Activist

Tommy McLean, a long-time Local 8 activist and Executive Board Member, suffered a massive stroke and passed away the morning of July 5. He leaves behind his wife Sandra and many friends and fellow activists.

Tommy was the primary force in bringing OPEIU Local 8 to the King County Department of Assessments in the early nineties. He helped organize his co-workers and worked hard to secure their first contract. Over the years Tommy served as Shop Steward, Executive Board Member, Delegate to the King County Labor Council and Delegate to the Washington State Labor Council. At one time or another, he served on every committee of Local 8. His passion was politics and he worked tirelessly for our Political Action Committee and pro-labor candidates.

Tommy's activism came of age in San Francisco during the sixties. He never lost his idealism and determination to make this a better world. Tommy will never be forgotten, his spirit lives on as we continue the fight for social justice and workers' rights. He will, however, be greatly missed.

At the family's request, there will be no service or flowers. Instead, donations may be made to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, 120 Wall Street, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10005.



OPEIU Local 8, 2800 First Ave., Rm. 304, Seattle, WA 98121-1114

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International Union Local 8's
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