



Following a daylong organizing workshop in Portland, more than 100 members from seven Change to Win labor federation unions rallied in front of a Wal-Mart store on busy 82nd Ave. in Southeast Portland. (Photo courtesy of Dan Clay)

...Change to Win unions

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power until one day SEIU came and knocked on my front door.”

Little-Reese said she hopes her message will resonate with the delegates at the Change to Win organizing workshop and beyond. “I’ll talk to one hundred of you, you’ll talk to a million others — and (together) we can make the world a better place. It is a life-changing event.”

UNITE HERE Local 9 leader Jim Grogan said his union will embark on a “Hotel Workers Rising” campaign this summer as contracts expire at major hotels in downtown Portland. Hotel Workers Rising is a national strategy that allies with community activists and elected officials to help improve working conditions and wages of hotel employees. In Seattle, UNITE HERE Local 8 recently ratified a five-year “standard-setting” contract at the Westin Hotel that includes employer-paid health insurance, no subcontracting of work, a 50 percent increase in pension contributions, and wage increases that will bring housekeeper pay to \$14 an hour.

In San Francisco, housekeepers will make \$19 an hour as the result of a new pact ratified there.

The Carpenters Union is bracing for contract talks with general contractors and dry-

wall hanging contractors. The union is planning a “Taking Care of Business” rally at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland on April 15. Everyone is invited to participate.

Laborers Union locals said they have campaigns under way targeting asbestos abatement contractors and soft demolition workers. Municipal Laborers Local 483 is going after about 800 non-represented workers at the City of Portland. Business Manager Richard Beetle said non-profit corporations also are on their radar.

Change to Win’s ultimate goal is to “cross-fertilize” union organizing campaigns whereby each of the seven unions can share resources, ideas and staff to attract workers from several jurisdictions.

“Victory creates victories,” said Steve Witte of the United Farm Workers Union. He said it took five years to organize and get a first contract for farmworkers at Threemile Canyon Farms in Eastern Oregon. “The next group took five months.”

“We have more in common than we do differences,” UFCW’s Luty said. “Our members grow, transport and sell the food America eats. They clean the hotels and take care of the elderly.”

The goal, Change to Win said, is to help make this sector of the the workforce America’s middle class.

National Guard teams up with apprenticeship to train soldiers

SALEM —In an effort to help Oregon soldiers returning from the war in the Middle East find gainful employment, the Oregon State Apprenticeship and Training Council and the Oregon National Guard signed a memorandum of understanding March 7 that will ease entry into apprenticeship training programs.

Flanked by a half-dozen apprenticeship coordinators and union officials, Major General Raymond Rees, adjutant general of the Oregon National Guard, and Dan Gardner, commissioner of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, signed the memorandum in the governor’s ceremonial office.

The memorandum gives apprenticeship committees the ability to amend their selection methods so that soldiers who meet certain qualifications have preference for admittance.

It also lets training programs recognize “credit for previous experience” so that soldiers can more rapidly advance to journey-level status.

For its part, the Oregon National Guard will organize Soldier Enhancement Days and other outreach events to give apprenticeship training programs access to soldiers interested in construction and other skilled trades.

“This will help open doors for Oregonians returning from Iraq and Afghanistan,” said Glenn Shuck, executive director of Labor’s Community Service Agency. Shuck helped coordinate the process that resulted in the signed memorandum. LCSA is a contract partner with the Veterans Workforce Investment Program, which assists veterans with training, job placement and other services when they return from active duty.

Labor Arts Festival planned for Portland

Planning for a Labor Arts Festival in Portland is under way by the Labor History Committee of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council.

Scheduled for Veterans Day weekend, the music and arts festival would open for two days of performances and workshops at Bonneville Hot Springs in North Bonneville, Wash., and culminate in Portland Nov. 11 with a Pacific Northwest Labor Arts Festival from 1 to 9 p.m.

According to festival coordinator Jim Cook, a member of the Letter Carriers Branch 82, if enough money is raised the festival will be held at the Oregon Convention Center. If not, other venues, including Portland area union halls, will be considered.

By proclamation of the governor, November is Labor History Month in Oregon.

“We’re building on programs that

have already occurred,” said Cook, pointing to an art show last year at Portland City Hall, and several labor art festivals that take place annually in other parts of the country.

NOLC’s labor history fund has provided \$500 in seed money to get festival planning started. Cook is now contacting union locals, vendors, attorneys and labor supporters for donations to the festival.

“We would like to raise enough money so that the art festival is free to the public at the Oregon Convention Center,” Cook said.

His goal is to raise \$10,000 to \$15,000.

In addition to the cost of renting the venue, Cook would like to bring in a couple of well-known performers, such as Billy Bragg, Utah Phillips or Anne Feeney.

“I know how powerful and inspira-

tional the arts can be,” Cook said. “This is something I’ve been thinking about for years.”

Donations can be made payable to the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, Labor Arts Festival.

Cook also is looking for volunteers to serve on the planning committee.

For more information, call Cook at 503-703-1693.

UFCW organizes Fred Meyer crew

At a Hillsboro Fred Meyer store, 84 workers in non-food departments joined United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 March 4 — without a union election.

Thanks to a provision in UFCW’s contract with Fred Meyer, non-food workers at new stores can unionize when a majority sign union authorization cards, a process known as “card-check.”

Grocery workers were already union at the 6495 SE Tualatin Valley Highway Fred Meyer, which opened in the mid 1990s. But non-grocery workers had balked at joining. The neutrality agreement also allowed union staff to talk to workers on break.

In other retail news, UFCW Local 555 added a new category of employees to represent, when three Playland workers at a Fred Meyer store in Longview, Wash., voted March 1 to unionize. If Local 555 is able to bargain workplace improvements, the union could be in a position to add Playland workers at other locations.



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