

Have A
Happy
Holiday!



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Labor Council throws holiday party in Salem

Santa Claus (above), played by Jack Rusen of Albany Steelworkers Local 6163, checks his “naughty and nice list” to see if Michael “Shoehorn” Conley has been good. Shoehorn joined three other members of Musicians Local 99 to entertain more than 600 kids and parents Dec. 8 at the 67th annual Holiday Party sponsored by the Marion-Polk-Yamhill Counties Labor Council. Shoehorn, a tap-dancing saxophonist, was very good, measured by the crowd’s reaction. At the Holiday Party held at the Elsinore Theatre in Salem, kids sang songs, watched a movie and received a goody bag. The labor council funds the annual event through donations from more than 14 union affiliates and unionized businesses in the community.

Help extended to storm-ravaged union families

Labor liaisons to the American Red Cross have been sent to Oregon to help union members in coastal communities hit hard by wind storms and flooding earlier this month.

Kirk Patrick, president of the Central Alabama Labor Council, and a member of Machinists Lodge 2452, was one of five union members dispatched to Oregon. Patrick attended the Dec. 11 meeting of the Columbia-Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council to ask union leaders to help the Red Cross identify union members who have been impacted. The storm and subsequent flooding was so severe that Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski declared a state of emergency and prompted FEMA to respond.

Labor liaison caseworkers can help union members (or their family members) determine immediate disaster-related emergency needs. Patrick said. To get help, call the Red Cross hotline at 1-866-GET-INFO. For federal disaster assistance, call the FEMA hotline at 1-800-621-3362.

Patrick said it is unknown how many union members have been impacted, which is one of the reasons he was dispatched to the state. He said service centers also have been set up in Vernonia at Cedar Ridge Camp,

18962 Keasey Road; Astoria/Seaside at Camp Rilea, 91204 Rilea Road; Tillamook at the Oregon Department of Forestry, 5005 3rd St.; and at Clatskanie Middle School, 555 SE Bryant St.

Additionally, some building trades unions have made arrangements with the Salvation Army in Tillamook County to coordinate volunteer efforts to help assess and repair damaged homes and buildings. Electricians are of particular need.

Steve Forester is the contact person for the Salvation Army. He can be reached at 503-812-3067.

Cash donations can be made to the Oregon Trail Chapter of the Red Cross and the Portland Chapter of the Salvation Army.

Let them know that you want your money earmarked for Tillamook County and/or Columbia County disaster relief. The addresses are:

Oregon Trail Red Cross, P.O. Box 3200, Portland, OR, 97208; and Salvation Army, C/O Steve Forester, P.O. Box 806, Tillamook, OR, 97141.

Labor’s Community Service Agency, AFL-CIO, also is accepting cash donations to assist union members. Their address is 1125 SE Madison, Suite 103-B, Portland, OR, 97214

Oregon AFL-CIO backs Merkley for U.S. Senate

The Oregon AFL-CIO issued early endorsements Dec. 11 in several political races that won’t be decided until November 2008. The union federation is supporting Jeff Merkley for U.S. Senate and Ben Westlund for Oregon treasurer. Both are Democrats.

Merkley, a Portland state rep who is speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives, is up against political consultant Steve Novick in the race to be the Democratic Senate nominee. Whichever wins the May 20 primary will take on incumbent Republican Gordon Smith in the Nov. 4 general election.

Meanwhile, Westlund, an Oregon state senator who left the Republican

Party in 2006, is so far running unopposed for treasurer. Incumbent Randall Edwards is term-limited and no Republican had entered the race as of press time. The deadline for candidates to file to run is March 11.

The resolution to endorse Merkley came from the Oregon Nurses Association at a morning meeting of the federation’s Committee on Political Education (COPE), which met at the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 8 hall in Northwest Portland just before the state labor federation’s quarterly Executive Committee meeting. Though no delegates spoke against Merkley, several

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AFSCME strike at Multnomah Education Service District ends after two weeks

A two-week strike by classified employees at the Multnomah Education Service District ended shortly after 3 a.m. on Dec. 15, following a 13-hour mediation session.

“It’s an agreement both sides can live with, and our bargaining team is recommending ratification to the members,” said Don Loving, public affairs director for Oregon AFSCME Council 75. Some 380 classified employees are members of AFSCME Local 1995. A ratification vote is scheduled for Dec. 27.

The tentative agreement is for two years and includes a 2 percent wage increase retroactive to July 1, 2007, a 2.5 percent wage increase on July 1, 2008, and a longevity pay increase effective July 1, 2008. Over half of the bargaining unit will qualify for at least the first level of longevity pay (1.5 percent of gross salary for those with 10 years of service).

On health insurance, the union accepted the district’s

proposal for the first year of the contract. However, MESD will raise the amount it pays on the insurance caps in the deal’s second year.

A key issue in the dispute was the level of increase in the district’s contribution to health insurance for those who work 30 hours a week. When calculating benefits, most other education districts consider permanent 30-hour-a-week employees to be full-time. Not Multnomah EDS. The largest single sub-group of union members at MESD — about 175 educational assistants who work six hours a day one-on-one with special needs students in eight Multnomah County school districts — are permanent 30-hour per week employees.

In an effort to ensure an orderly back-to-work transition, the union and the district agreed that all striking employees will return to paid status as of Monday, Dec. 17.

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