



Foster kids' holiday party gets boost from UA Local 290



A \$1,000 donation by Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 to child welfare employees at the Oregon Department of Human Services in East Multnomah County helped foster kids enjoy a holiday party Dec. 18.

"Local 290 is awesome. They treat us so well," said Deborah Bruun, a social service specialist who helps organize the annual event.

The State of Oregon used to fund the party, which includes candy cane fishing poles that catch stuffed animals (pictured above), craftmaking and cookie decorating (pictured below left), pizza, gifts, and a visit from Santa Claus (left) at the festively-decorated Multnomah County office in Southeast Portland. Some 200-plus kids and foster parents attend each year.

But budget cuts in the late '90s dried up the money-source for the party. State employees thought the event was so vital for the children that they began raising money on their own time.

Bruun cold-called Local 290 about seven years ago, and the union has been contributing ever since. "They take such great care of us," Bruun said. "You just can't imagine how thankful we are."

U.S. Senate OKs Peru pact

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — By a 77-18 margin, the Democratic-controlled U.S. Senate on Dec. 4 gave final congressional approval to labor-opposed legislation implementing the so-called "free trade" pact between the United States and Peru.

All of the senators from the Pacific Northwest — Democrats Ron Wyden of Oregon and Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell of Washington, and Republican Gordon Smith of Oregon — supported the trade deal.

Twenty-nine Senate Democrats voted for the trade deal and 17 voted against it.

Last month, the U.S. House passed the Peru Free Trade Agreement 1285-132, with 109 Democrats in favor and

116 opposed. Oregon Democrats Peter DeFazio and David Wu voted against the pact.

Peru's trade agreement, unlike others signed by the Bush Administration, commits the South American nation to enforcing the relatively weak International Labour Organization labor rights standards that Democrats insisted be written into its text.

Bush now wants Congress to approve trade pacts with Colombia, Panama and South Korea. But labor is dead-set against it, due to Colombia's murderous labor record and the Korean pact's harm to U.S. auto workers in particular and Korean workers in general.



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