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Shane Proper (above left), a member of Operating Engineers Local 701, shows the fundamentals of operating a backhoe at the Women in Trades Fair May 3. The annual event is sponsored by Oregon Tradeswomen Inc. This year, 414 women people attended the Saturday session, which is open to the public. Thursday and Friday were reserved for students, and 69 schools — from as far away as LaPine — brought over 1,000 middle school and high school students. Once there the young women had an opportunity to experience hands-on workshops presented by apprenticeship programs and employers, and taught mostly by tradeswomen like Shaz Lynch, pictured above right helping a youngster bend a metal flower pot. Lynch, a first-term apprentice and member of Sheet

Experiencing
Something New

Metal Workers Local 16, is a 1999 graduate of Rutgers University in New Jersey with a degree in women's studies. She was working as a bartender when she came to Oregon Tradeswomen in February 2007. She wanted a career in the trades, she said, "because it's something I know I can feel really good about for a long time." Lynch started as a Sheet Metal worker in June of 2007, earning \$16.14 an hour, plus health insurance benefits. When she turns out as a journeywoman she will make \$32.27 an hour, plus fringe benefits. Eighty-seven exhibitors were at the 2008 fair to recruit and educate attendees. Quint Rahberger, apprenticeship coordinator for the Operating Engineers, said the fair generates lots of interest from women considering a career in the field of construction.

Initiatives
dogged by
suspicionsBy DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

Oregon labor will start preparing in the months to come for a boatload of initiatives expected to appear on the November ballot.

Get ready for déjà vu. At least 10 initiative campaigns this year are sponsored by the same chief petitioners who have filled ballots in previous years — Bill Sizemore, Kevin Mannix, and Russ Walker. The campaigns have the same millionaire funders, and the same for-profit company is gathering their signatures — Democracy Direct, run by Sizemore associate Tim Trickey. And just like in years past, measures are headed for the ballot despite suspicions that the law was broken to get them there.

Staff members at Our Oregon, a union-funded group that monitors ballot measures, are convinced that laws intended to clean up the initiative process are being routinely broken.

In Oregon, the ballot initiative process is overseen by the secretary of state's Elections Division. Our Oregon complained to that agency in December 2005 that Democracy Direct subcontractors were violating a voter-approved ban on the pay-by-the-signature bounty. Circulators allegedly were being paid in cash out of cars in some cases. In December 2007, the Oregon secretary of state fined two Democracy Direct subcontractors \$10,900 each, and Trickey

(Turn to Page 8)

How time flies: Building trades council turns 100

Three generations of construction workers helped celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Columbia Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council May 10 at the Oregon Convention Center.

Nearly 700 people attended the event. Among them were U.S. Congressman Earl Blumenauer; Portland Mayor Tom Potter, Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian, and Portland City Councilor (and mayoral candidate) Sam Adams.

Four decades of building trades council leadership also was in the room, including Earl Kirkland, Wally Mehrens and John Mohlis.

Kirkland was executive secretary-treasurer from 1966 to his retirement in 1988. He is a 60-year member of Heat and Frost Insu-

lators Local 36. Mehrens, a 36-year member of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, led the council through the 1990s, winning election in 1988 and retiring in 2005. Mohlis, a former business manager of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1, succeeded Mehrens.

Maybe more importantly, however, were the many rank-and-file workers in attendance — the men and women who have had a hand in building the Portland metropolitan area into what it is today. Retirees, journeymen, journeywomen, and apprentices reminisced about the projects they helped build: from dams on the Columbia River to the Astoria-Megler Bridge at the coast, hospitals, nuclear and electronics plants, shopping centers, courthouses,

light-rail, schools and institutions of higher learning, pulp and paper mills and high-rise office buildings. The list is endless.

"All of us in the building trades take great pride in our work," Mohlis said. "Every one of us has driven by a building we worked on and told our spouse or our children, 'I helped build that building.'"

The Portland Building & Construction Trades Council was first chartered with eight organizations representing 800 craft workers on July 27, 1908 — the same year that the National Building Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was established. In the 100 years since, the local council has been

(Turn to Page 5)