

# Unions for Kids Poker Run raises money for sick kids

Are you playing in too many scramble golf tournaments? How about mixing it up a bit by trying a motorcycle poker run.

A poker run is similar to a charity golf tournament: A group of folks get together who share a common interest; in this case, the enjoyment of riding a motorcycle. They trade stories, share laughs at checkpoints, admire each others' motorcycles, and basically have some fun while raising money for a good cause.

The sixth annual Unions for Kids Poker Run and Chili Cookoff will be held Saturday, June 14. The start and finish are at the IBEW Local 48 Union Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland. Registration is from 9 to 11 a.m. and costs \$10 to enter.

The poker run itself consists of a scenic 90-mile ride starting at the Local 48 hall. At each checkpoint, participants receive a playing card. At the end of the ride, the best — and worst — poker hands win cash prizes.

The first stop is the Stagecoach Sa-



loon on Sandy Blvd., in Fairview. Then it's up I-84 into the Columbia Gorge to Bridal Veil. At that point, riders will head to Crown Point and onto the second stop at Springdale

Tavern in Springdale. From there, it's all backroads to the third stop at Gateway Pub in Sandy. The fourth stop is the Carver Hangar in Carver; then over to Pub 181 on 184th and Divi-

sion, Portland. Following that check-in, it's back to the union hall for fun and games.

After the ride, door prizes are handed out and a silent auction is held. One person will win a 2008 Dyna Low Rider FXDL 105th anniversary limited edition Harley-Davidson motorcycle. For several months, members of the Unions for Kids Poker Run committee have been selling motorcycle raffle tickets for \$10 each. Only 3,500 tickets will be sold.

Tickets also can be purchased at any of the aforementioned checkpoint stops, as well as at the IBEW and United Workers Federal Credit Union, 9955 SE Washington St., Portland; or the Teamsters Credit Union, 1866, NE 162nd Ave. (off Glisan), Portland.

Tickets are going fast, and once they are sold, there are no more.

In addition to the raffle, there is a silent auction. This year one of the auction items includes a guitar signed

by Portland area musicians Patrick Lamb, Linda Hornbuckle, Norman Sylvester and Michael Allen Harrison.

Also this year, Hood River WaterPlay will set up two wind-surfing simulators — one for kids and one for adults. And, if the weather cooperates, a radio-controlled race car track will be set up.

The chili cookoff pits chefs from various building trades unions against each other. Participants get to vote on the best chili. Hamburgers, hot dogs and beverages also are available.

The raffle gets under way at 3 p.m. and the drawing for the Harley will take place at 4 p.m.

All of the money raised goes to Doernbecher Children's Hospital. To date, the poker run has donated more than \$71,000 to the hospital.

For more information about the poker run or raffle, call Lee Duncan at 503-260-5905 or Dave Tully at 503-310-2246 or e-mail them at: lee@unionsforkids.org.

## Oregon Alliance keeps retirees attuned to current issues

Union involvement doesn't have to end when pension checks start to arrive. Millions of union members stay connected in union retiree groups, and in the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) — an umbrella group aimed at union retirees.

ARA was started by the AFL-CIO in 2001 as an independent non-profit organization, and as a successor to the National Council of Senior Citizens (a union-allied retirees group that was active from the early 1960s to the late 1990s.)

ARA is an avenue for union retirees to participate in a kind of cross-union political activism focused on core economic justice issues like affordable health care and retiree economic security.

David Blank, the group's spokesperson, said ARA has 3.5 million members. Any individual can join ARA by signing up online at [retiredamericans.org](http://retiredamericans.org). Dues are \$10 a year. Even those who aren't retired or aren't union members can join. But the overwhelming majority of ARA members belong because they are retired members of international unions that are paying sliding scale per capita dues for all their retirees to belong. When members of participating unions retire, they receive a letter welcoming them to ARA signed jointly by their union's president and ARA President George Kourpias, a retired president of the International Association of Machinists.

ARA has a staff of 25 in Washing-

ton, D.C., plus 14 field staff throughout the country that assist the group's 28 state chapters. Some states, like California and New York, have ARA chapters that are active enough to support their own staff. Others have staff who work for the national organization.

To help build the Oregon chapter, the national organization last month hired a part-time organizer, Andrew Gonzalez. Gonzalez was introduced to members April 26 at Oregon ARA's 5th annual convention.

Verna Porter, president of the Oregon chapter, said the organization has also adopted a new donation policy above and beyond the \$10 dues fee. Members who contribute \$100, \$250 or \$500 or more will receive a special certificate of membership. Donor members will be listed in the annual convention program. The Oregon Alliance is a 501 (c) (3) organization, and any donations beyond the \$10 dues are tax deductible.

"The Oregon Alliance exists because retirees still care and want to be informed and involved in the issues of the day," Porter said.

ARA has a more grassroots political orientation than the larger and better-known retiree organization AARP (American Association of Retired Persons). Unlike AARP, ARA doesn't maintain paid lobbyists; its focus is more on the political activism and education of members.

In 2003, ARA was at odds with AARP over the Medicare Moderniza-

tion Act. ARA opposed passage of the law, which accelerated the creeping privatization of Medicare and added a drug benefit for seniors but prohibited the government from trying to get a good price for drugs.

This year ARA plans to speak out against proposals by Republican presidential candidate John McCain to privatize Social Security.

ARA sends out periodic legislative alerts, and rates members of Congress for their votes on legislation important to retirees. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) has voted in agreement with the ARA position 91 percent of the time since the ratings began in 2001. U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) has a 24 percent rating. Washington U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cant-

well each have 97 percent. In the U.S. House, Oregon's four Democrats and Southwest Washington Democrat Brian Baird all have lifetime ratings of 90 percent or higher, while Republican Greg Walden has a 3 percent rating. [For details about the votes ARA chose for the rating, see "Congressional Voting Record" at their Web site, [www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org).]

## Machinists, Boeing open contract talks

SEATTLE — Formal negotiations between the Machinists Union and Boeing Company opened May 9 for more than 26,000 employees in the Seattle area, Portland, Ore., and Wichita, Kan.

The contract opener was held a month earlier than previous negotiations in an attempt to provide both sides more time to resolve several complex issues that they face. The current 36-month labor agreement expires at 12:01 a.m. Sept. 4.

"We are cautiously optimistic as we enter this round of bargaining," said IAM District 751 President Tom Wroblewski. "We are in the strongest bargaining position we have had in years. By any measure, Boeing is one of the most successful companies in the world — sales, profits, backlogs — and our members are a huge part of that."

Wroblewski said it hasn't been easy for members during the last two rounds of contract bargaining. "After the 9/11 attacks, our members had to face a company determined to take away hard-fought benefits and contractual rights," he said.

The Machinists motto this year is: "IT'S OUR TIME THIS TIME!"

Wroblewski said Boeing has rebounded and is experiencing tremendous profits, which have increased 828 per-

cent over the past five years.

In a press release, Boeing outlined the proposal it delivered to the Machinists Union. The list included a performance-based incentive pay plan in lieu of wage increases for top-paid employees; a separate contract for IAM-represented employees in Wichita; a contract longer than three years; establishing a new retirement program and discontinuing early-retiree medical coverage for new hires; and exploring ways to increase health care costs paid by employees.

Boeing said it also proposed to maintain much of the existing contract without changes, including more than 150 articles, sub-sections and letters of understanding.

"Their negotiation strategy of posturing to take away hard-fought benefits is as flawed as their 787 production model," Wroblewski said, noting that Boeing parted out the 787 because they wanted to save a buck, but wound up having to buy out suppliers and pay late delivery penalties that cost them billions.

"Both need a positive direction, which the Machinists Union can provide to secure a positive outcome for all," Wroblewski said. "With Boeing posting profits second only to the gas and oil companies, 'It's Our Time This Time!'"