

# Carpenters Food Bank logs 25 years helping others

A lot has changed — and a lot has remained the same — since 1983, when Carpenters and Steelworkers union locals established a food bank to help out-of-work and striking union members.

At that time, work at the shipyards was slow, and some 400 Steelworkers were on strike at Oregon Steel Mills in Portland's Rivergate District.

To help weather the storm, the Carpenters and Steelworkers made arrangements to combine the food assistance programs that each was operating out of the same building on North Lombard.

"It got us through some tough times," said Ted Totten, a member of Steelworkers Local 3010 who was on strike at the time. "The Faheys (Mike and Sandy) took it over and it's been going strong since."

Totten has volunteered at the food bank for the past 25 years, alongside Mike and Sandy Fahey. The core group of 10 volunteers are retirees. They are Don Powers, George Socha, Jenny Schmuck, Jerry Schmuck, Jim Berdadin, Ann Totten, Ted Totten, Lee Herman, Don Peters, and Claude McMahon.

Mike Fahey is a former executive secretary-treasurer of the Portland Metal Trades Council and member of Pile Drivers, Divers and Shipwrights Local 2416. He left the trades to start his own mortgage company, but he and Sandy have never given up the food bank.

"I can relate to these people real



Carpenters Food Bank volunteers from left Don Powers, George Socha, Jenny Schmuck, Jerry Schmuck, Jim Berdadin, Lee Herman, Ann Totten, Don Peters (beard), Ted Totten and Mike Fahey (far right) get ready to distribute food boxes. The three men to Fahey's right are volunteers from the nearby Northwest Bible College. The food bank has been operating out of the same location for the past 25 years.

easy," Mike Fahey said as residents lined up outside for food boxes. "I can remember working as a Carpenter and when work was slow it was tough. And there weren't a lot of food banks around. You've got to give back."

The food bank isn't restricted to union members. Anyone in need can utilize it.

"We serve people on strike, out of work, retirees on fixed incomes, young people, families, everybody,"

Fahey said. "Nobody leaves without a food box."

And the consensus is that the Carpenters Food Bank puts together one of the best food boxes in the city. "We have chickens, roasts, ham ... and

turkeys at Thanksgiving," Fahey said.

Food boxes are distributed the third Friday each month from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. (people start lining up as early as 5 a.m.) at the union building on the corner of North Lombard Street and Brandon Avenue. Carpenters Local 247 owns the building and donates the space for storage.

The Food Bank distributes between 450 to 650 boxes a month. Since its inception in 1983 — when they were turning out 850 boxes of food a week — the food bank has provided millions of meals to needy residents.

And though it is an all-volunteer operation and the space is donated, it costs money to buy the food from the Oregon Food Bank. It takes gas to get it, too. [Some food boxes are delivered to those who can't get out, and to schools.]

With the holiday season rapidly approaching, the economy in the tank, workers being laid off, and more than 1,000 Machinists coming off a 57-day strike at Boeing, and another 200 Teamsters still on strike at Oak Harbor Trucking, Fahey is bracing for a very busy November and December. "Even at bulk rate prices, food items are becoming more and more expensive," he said.

Cash donations to help buy food are in desperate need. Contributions can be sent to:

**Food Bank**  
P.O. Box 17358  
Portland, OR 97217

## IN MEMORIAM

**Al Rettmann**, a longtime member of Medford Carpenters Local 2067 and a past president of the former Oregon State District Council of Carpenters, died Oct. 19 following a courageous battle with brain cancer. He was 77.

Allen Wayne Rettmann was born in Winthrop, Arkansas, on Jan. 28, 1931, to Henry Lee and Velva Rettmann.

His parents and three siblings moved often during the Great Depression. They eventually landed in Ashland, Oregon in 1946.

Rettmann graduated from Ashland High School and worked in the timber industry before serving in the Army during the Korean Conflict.

He married Patricia Dean on Nov. 3, 1952. They divorced in 1987. They had two children.

Rettmann married Donna Searles of Klamath Falls on May 4, 1991.

Rettmann was a fourth generation Carpenter, joining the union in 1961. Some of the major projects he worked on were the Rogue Valley Memorial Hospital and the Hawthorne Garden Apartments, the first major apartment complex in Medford.

He was elected financial secre-



RETTMANN

tary/business representative of Local 2067 in June 1963. He held that post until his retirement in January 1993.

During that time he helped establish an apprenticeship training program in the area. He was elected and served for many years as president of the Oregon State District Council of Carpenters. The council later was disbanded and merged into what is today the Pacific Northwest District Council of Carpenters.

Rettmann is survived by his wife, Donna; step-daughter Denise Gunther of Stayton, Ore.; son Michael of Klamath Falls, Ore.; daughter Debbie Wilchek of Central Point, Ore.; sister Elaine Hoadley of Medford; brother Charles Rettmann of Grants Pass, and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

A memorial service was held Oct. 25 at Community Bible Church in Central Point.

## Silverton city employees choose Laborers Local 483

The union that represents road, water and sewer workers at the City of Portland has been expanding to small towns in the Willamette Valley. On Sept. 22, a unit of 15 workers at the City of Silverton Public Works Department voted to join Laborers Local 483.

For decades, the employees had bargained on their own with the city, as part of an independent employee association. But this year they weren't able to get an acceptable offer from management, said Laborers organizer

Tobias Green, so they called Local 483.

The workers are responsible for wastewater treatment, street maintenance and repair, and parks for Silverton, which has a population of about 9,500. Silverton has grown in recent

years, and public works employees want the city to add staff, and give wage increases that at least keep pace with inflation.

Local 483 also represents public works employees at nearby Mt. Angel, and police employees at Gervais.

## CORRECTION

In the Oct. 17 issue, the Northwest Labor Press wrongly reported an election loss for Laborers Local 483 in the "Local Motion" feature, which lists union organizing wins and losses. In fact, Local 483 won the election at the City of Silverton Public Works Department. The vote was 13 for Local 483, 0 for no union, and 1 to keep a stand-alone employee association. All eligible members of the bargaining unit voted.

The NW Labor Press regrets the error.



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