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Portland, Oregon

UFCW, Smithfield donate food to feed the hungry

Volunteers from United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 and Smithfield Foods delivered and unloaded 150,000 servings of pork products to the Oregon Food Bank on Sept. 21.

The donation is part of Smithfield and UFCW's "Feed the Hungry" national tour, which will donate more than 1.6 million pounds of protein (over 6.4 million servings a year) to food banks coast-to-coast.

Safeway and the Safeway Foundation also participated in the program.

"The Great Recession has resulted in a record number of households seeking help from the Oregon Food Bank Network for the third year in a row," said Food Bank CEO Rachel Bristol. "With so many impacted, we are heartened by the caring response of the food industry, community volunteers, and financial supporters who have allowed us to increase the volume of food distributed by 25 percent in just three years."

According to Oregon Food Bank, more than 240,000 people per month in Oregon eat meals from an emergency food box. That compares to about 200,000 in 2007-08.

A typical emergency food box provides a three- to five-day supply of groceries. Most food pantries serve a specific geographic area and limit the number of times a family can receive help. Most households seek emergency food boxes fewer than four times a year.

Above, UFCW Local 555 staffer Patrick Reed helps load a grocery cart with donated pork products. At right, Local 555 Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Anderson (yellow shirt holding ham) and President Dan Clay (white shirt) join others unloading hams from a truck to the Oregon Food Bank warehouse.



Bashing teachers unions: AFT TALKS BACK

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

Is a coordinated attack on teachers unions under way? In recent months, front-page magazine articles, op-ed pieces, and news stories have portrayed public schools as failing, and teachers unions as the number one obstacle to fixing them. Now a new film, "Waiting for Superman," tries to define the issue, and paints teachers unions as the villain. The film, by the director of the Oscar-winning global warming documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," opens in Portland Oct. 8. But more often than not, teachers union leaders aren't asked for their views. They're bashed, but not given a chance to respond. To make up for that, the Northwest Labor Press contacted American Federation of Teachers (AFT) national headquarters and spoke with Rob Weil, AFT director of field programs.

NW LABOR PRESS: *Are we seeing the ramp-up of a decades-old conservative-tinted movement to reform public schools, with teachers unions as the target?*

WEIL: There's been a so-called reform effort going on. A lot of the reforms aren't necessarily targeted to educational improvement. They seem to have more political ideology than educational soundness.

Can you give some examples?

One of things we see all the time is the assumption that what's wrong with our schools is teachers — so we have to figure a way to overcome the bad teachers. At AFT, we call that the "bad teacher" narrative.

We don't make those same judgments elsewhere in society. Like, we don't say that high-crime areas are the fault of underperforming cops.

No, we don't. The difference is that this "bad teacher" narrative is very well funded. There's a PR effort behind it, funded by foundations. Some of them are well-meaning, but some of them are "bash union" groups — the Walton Family Foundation, owner of WalMart, for example. The American Federation of Teachers is not saying the schools we have today are the schools we ought to have. We have to make sure that every kid gets a high-quality education. What we're saying is there are good ways to address those issues, and there are bad ways. You remember the attempt to fire all the teachers in Central Falls, Rhode Island? Nobody was saying performance was good there, but it was actually improving. Yet all of a sudden, people were calling for the mass firing of the teachers, saying every teacher was to blame.

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In Washington's Third Congressional District

Organized labor in agreement: 'Give Congress Heck!'

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

One of the most closely-watched electoral races in America is taking place in Washington's Third Congressional District. Money is pouring into the contest between Democrat Denny Heck and Republican Jaime Herrera, as the two parties battle over control of Congress. This year in particular, Southwest Washington voters — including more than 10,000 union members and their families — have a say in determining the direction of the country.

For union members, the choice is between a union-endorsed 58-year-old businessman with a reliably pro-labor legislative past, and a 31-year-old one-term state legislator who bragged to The Columbian newspaper about her low union ratings. On economic and tax policy and in life experience, the two candidates have little in common.

Heck grew up in Vancouver's Lake Shore neighborhood. His father worked as a Teamster-represented truck driver; his mother was a union-represented telephone operator. After graduating Co-

lumbia River High School, he attended The Evergreen State College, then worked as staff rep for a public school employees union. From 1977 to 1986, he was elected and served five terms in the Washington House of Representatives for District 17, which covers parts of Clark, Skamania and Klickitat counties. Colleagues elected him House Majority leader. From 1989 to 1993, Heck was chief of staff for Democratic governor Booth Gardner. Then he went into business, founding TVW, a C-SPAN-like cable channel that covers Washing-

ton government. He became an original investor in Real Networks, the software company that pioneered streaming media on the Internet. Real Networks, which created widely-used software programs like RealPlayer, made Heck a wealthy man. He invested in other enterprises, including a company that makes software for storing electronic medical records.

Herrera's background is Republican politics. A graduate of Vancouver's Prairie High School, she interned at the White House Office of Political Affairs

under George W. Bush while earning a bachelors degree in communications from University of Washington. From 2005 to 2007 she worked as a legislative aide to Eastern Washington Republican Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers. She was appointed in 2007 to a vacant spot as state representative representing Washington's 17th legislative district, which covers part of Cowlitz and Clark counties, and was re-elected in 2008.

Heck says his return to politics is mo-

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