

# SEIU #49 scores Oregon's biggest private-sector win in decades

By **DON McINTOSH**  
Associate Editor

**BEND** — Oregon's biggest private sector union organizing victory in decades came through this month at St. Charles Medical Center in Bend, and it was a close one. In a Jan. 5 election, support workers at the hospital voted 255 to 251 to join Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 49, but that didn't include 34 uncounted ballots cast by workers whose eligibility to join the union was in dispute. After the two sides reached agreement on the challenges, the National Labor Relations Board counted 22 of those ballots Feb. 2, and the final tally was 267 to 261.

Several other unions have campaigned at the hospital over the years. But the tide seemed to turn in the last year or so after changes in management practice.

Ken Daniels, who works at St. Charles sterilizing hospital equipment, was the worker who made the first

phone call to Local 49. Daniels spent many years at a local sawmill as a member of the Woodworkers Union, but the mill closed, and eventually he took a job at the hospital. Daniels said things were different when he began at St. Charles 20 years ago: A nun, Sister Catherine Hellmann, was CEO of the Catholic-owned hospital, until 2000.

"Sister Catherine looked after the little people," Daniels said. "After she left, things deteriorated."

In two of the last three years, workers got no raises even as upper managers got bonuses. A dozen housekeeping jobs were outsourced.

"People were afraid to speak up," Daniels said. "Some housekeepers complained, and management told them if they didn't like it, they had a two-inch-high stack of job applications."

After Daniels called Local 49, the union assigned organizers and helped turn out community support as workers organized themselves and got a cam-

paign rolling.

Joanne Kennedy, inpatient pharmacy technician with 30 years at St. Charles, said job security concerns were a primary factor motivating support for the

union.

"We're the only hospital in the area, so if you're in a medical career and you don't work here, you have to leave the area," Kennedy said. And with no griev-

ance procedure, and conditions worsening in many departments — pay cuts, dozens of layoffs, shortstaffing, workload increases — Kennedy said union-

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## Local Motion

### January 2011

A list of Oregon and Southwest Washington workplaces deciding whether to be union-represented — as reported by the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board.

### Voting in union elections

Date	Workplace (Location)	Union	Yes	No	
1/5	St. Charles Medical Center (Bend)	SEIU Local 49	267	261	👍
1/6	First Student school bus drivers (Grants Pass)	Teamsters 962 <b>DECERT</b>	53	53	👎
1/11	Portland Housing Bureau (Portland)	Oregon AFSCME	23	10	👍
1/19	SI Funeral Services vault division (Clackamas)	Teamsters Local 206	3	0	👍
1/28	Port of Portland airport police (Portland)	PoPPEA (incumbent) AFSCME (incumbent) No Union	33	22	0

### Unionizing by majority sign-up

Date	Workplace (Location)	Union	Number of workers in unit
1/14	Philomath Rural Fire District (Philomath)	Garrettson Goldberg Fenrich Makler	5
1/27	City of Joseph (Joseph)	Laborers Local 121	6
1/24	Tri-City Water & Sanitary Authority (Myrtle Creek)	IBEW Local 659	6

### Requesting a union election

Workplace (Location)	Union	Number of workers in unit
West Valley Fire District (Willamina)	Employees of WVFD	7
Pioneer Memorial Hospital RNs (Prineville)	Oregon Nurses Association <b>DECERT</b>	38
Waste Management (Newberg)	Teamsters Local 324	25
Valley Medical College (Salem)	Teamsters Local 324	21
Morris Glass & Construction glaziers (Astoria)	IUPAT District Council 5	5
AMR EMTs and paramedics (Grants Pass)	Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757	51

#### LEGEND

- 👍 workers will be union-represented
- 👎 workers will be on their own
- DECERT** unionized workers vote whether to go non-union

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