

Wright retires at Bricklayers Local 1; Eleazer new business manager

Keith Wright has retired as business manager of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1. He has held the post since December 2005. His last day was Aug. 31.



KEITH WRIGHT

Local 1 represents some 600 brick, tile, and marble workers, and caulkers, pointers, and cleaners in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Wright, 59, worked as a bricklayer for 16 years, starting as an apprentice at Eugene-based Local 6. He grew up in a union household in Flint, Michigan, where his late-father worked at General Motors and retired as a member of the United Auto Workers. An older brother also retired from GM and is a member of the UAW.

Wright performed odd jobs in Michigan, including work as a hod carrier. With no career plan in mind, he decided to move to Oregon in 1978 (he had visited Eugene several years earlier and liked it). After arriving to the state he got on the phone and started dialing for a job. He found one in the brick trade, and at age 26 he got plugged into an apprenticeship training program and joined Bricklayers Local 6.

In 1984 he moved to Portland, transferring his union card to Local 1. There,

he served on the union's brick arbitration board and as sergeant-at-arms before being hired as a business agent and organizer in July 1994 by then-business manager John Mohlis.

Local 6 merged into Local 1 in 1993.

Wright was appointed interim business manager in 2005 after Mohlis was elected executive secretary-treasurer of the

Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council. Wright was elected outright a few months later, and has served two 3-year terms. During his tenure, he has seen the highs and lows of the construction industry. The local took a hit following the Great Recession of 2008, experiencing 30 percent unemployment for close to two years.

"Work is returning," Wright said. Unemployment at the local is currently at less than 10 percent, with two large jobs — a new high school in Sandy, Oregon, and a hospital in Salem just about completed.

Wright said he is most proud of a disability benefit he helped bargain into the Bricklayers' collective bargaining agreement, in addition to a labor-management cooperation compliance committee that

was established in a collective bargaining agreement ratified earlier this year.

"We'll do our own compliance; BOLI [Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries] won't have to do it," he said.

Wright said increases in contributions to the local's market recovery program also will help signatory contractors bid jobs and increase market share.

Wright is a strong proponent of apprenticeship training, and was chair of the Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee. As business manager, he also served on all the union trusts, on the Construction Industry Drugfree Workplace Program, and was a vice president on the Oregon, Washington, Idaho State Conference.

Wright said he will continue serving as a trustee to the health and welfare trust, and the pension trusts.

In keeping with the tradition of Local 1, Wright helped spearhead many volunteer community projects, including tiling work for Homes For Our Troops, building baseball dugouts for local high schools, and expansion projects



MATT ELEAZER

at several children's centers.

In retirement, Wright plans to reacquaint himself to steelhead fishing and hunting. He's already booked a deer and elk hunting trip in Montana this month.

Local 1's Executive Board appointed Matt Eleazer to complete the remainder of Wright's term as business manager. The term expires in June 2012.

Eleazer, 32, is a 14-year member of Local 1 and likely the youngest business manager of that trade in the country. He was serving his second term as president of the local and was working full-time as a business agent and organizer when Wright announced his plans to retire.

A native of Vancouver, Wash., Eleazer joined the Bricklayers apprenticeship program after graduating from Hudson's Bay High School. A neighbor and Local 1 member helped get him his first job at Bratton Masonry, where he worked until 2005, when Mohlis hired him to work for the union.

"I wanted to be a game warden, but I saw what kind of money they were making in the trades and decided to go in that direction," Eleazer said.

Eleazer's father, Ed, is a recently-retired member of Floor Coverers Local

1236. A cousin, Dave Winkler, is the business agent for Local 1236.

Mike Titus was appointed by the Executive Board to complete the unexpired term as president of Local 1. Titus also was hired to succeed Eleazer as a business agent and organizer.

"We have a good team," Eleazer said. "Mike, Shawn (apprenticeship coordinator Shawn Lenczowski) and I work really well together. I'm also very thankful that Keith left no secrets. He's involved me in every step of the process."

Eleazer is a newlywed and lives in Battle Ground, Washington. He is an avid outdoorsman who likes to hunt and fish whenever the opportunity arises. He also owns a horse and competes in team roping.

Baska Memorial Fund set

Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1 has set up the "Scott M. Baska Memorial Fund" to help the children of Baska, who died in his sleep Sept. 20 of a brain aneurysm. He was 36.

A single father of three young daughters, Baska joined the union in 2004 and was an active member. Last November he completed the Bricklayer apprenticeship program.

Donations can be made at IBEW United Workers Federal Credit Union, 9955 SE Washington St., Portland.



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