

Top Rosarian is a longtime member of AFSCME Local 350

In this, the centennial year of the Royal Rosarians, the man overseeing it all as the Rosarians' prime minister is longtime Oregon AFSCME activist Rob Hungerford.

Hungerford, a member of Local 350 at Clackamas County since 1984, was installed Oct. 8 at the Rosarians' Prime Minister's Ball, accompanied by his wife, Roxanne, who holds the title of First Lady.

The Royal Rosarians are a beloved Portland civic institution, the official greeters for the City of Portland as well as the designated ambassadors for the Portland Rose Festival.

Hungerford became a Rosarian in 1993. It was, he says, an opportunity to do something meaningful with his father, who was already a Rosarian. Hungerford's father passed away in 1995, but his mother was on hand to see his coronation, and, he says, "I know Dad would be proud."

So what exactly do the Rosarians do?

"Well, first off, to be clear, we do not put on the Portland Rose Festival," says Hungerford. "We are greeters and ambassadors. We have a long list of functions associated with the Rose Festival, but we also 'work' for the City of Portland as well. We are 'ambassadors of goodwill,' in whatever form that may take. We frequently greet trade delegations or other dignitaries and such at the airport, for example."

Hungerford says things will be especially busy during this 100-year anniversary celebration. The 275 Royal Rosarians (including life members) typically donate some 30,000 hours a



Longtime AFSCME Local 350 member Rob Hungerford (center) was crowned prime minister of the Royal Rosarians Oct. 8. Rosarians serve as official greeters and ambassadors of goodwill for the City of Portland and the Rose Festival. The organization is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

year in service. Hungerford, whose term runs through Sept. 30, 2012, says that number will rise dramatically this centennial year.

"We have a lot of extra rose plantings and extra events going on," said Hungerford, who expects to spend "a massive amount of time" in service over the next 11 months.

"In a normal year we have 50 different Rosarian committees," said Hungerford. "This year, due to the centennial, we've added another 27. As the prime minister, my goal was to attend at least the first meeting of each of those committees. I'm already finding out that's simply not possible with 77 committees, but I'm doing the best I can to get to as many as possible."

The job also requires a lot of travel, both in-state and outside of Oregon's borders. Hungerford recently returned from an event in Honolulu, for example.

"We have a traveling float that we take to as many outside events as possible, hoping those cities will reciprocate and attend our Rose Festival in June," says Hungerford, who must foot his own bill for such junkets. There is, interestingly enough, no official exchange with the annual Jan. 1 Tournament of Roses festival in Pasadena, Calif.

"There is mutual admiration and respect, but we're sort of competitors," Hungerford said.

Hungerford is currently the vice president of Local 350; he has held numerous local union offices, including president, over the past 27 years. As if he's not busy enough, he is also the head wrestling coach at Rex Putnam High School.

Hungerford works for Clackamas County's Water and Environmental Services Department, where he is a technical services specialist. Translated, Hungerford says that means he provides customer services and manages several small projects for the county's WESD.

He and Roxanne live in Gladstone and have three grown children.

Unions fight back against GOP attacks in Midwest

The fightback continues in Midwest states, where earlier this year Republican governors and lawmakers took aim at union collective bargaining rights.

In Wisconsin, epicenter of massive protests in February, union activists will begin collecting signatures Nov. 15 to recall Republican Gov. Scott Walker. Walker led passage of a bill that decimated public employee collective bargaining rights. The recall campaign, backed by the state AFL-CIO and its affiliates, will have 60 days to collect 540,208 valid signatures; the plan is to collect 700,000, in order to provide a cushion in case some signatures are ruled invalid. Organizers do have a kind of head start: As of press time, the coalition United Wisconsin had over 200,000 people pledged in advance to sign the recall petition. If they meet the signature goal, the Walker recall election would likely be in May or June 2012.

Meanwhile, in Ohio, unions and allies collected enough signatures to refer Senate Bill 5 to the voters of Ohio, which is now on the Nov. 8 bal-

lot as Issue 2. Passed earlier this year, the law supersedes collective bargaining agreements and requires all public employees to pay at least 15 percent of their health care premiums and prohibits governments from picking up any portion of employees' 10 percent pension contribution. Most Ohio public employees already paid about 10 percent of their health insurance premiums and more than 90 percent paid the 10 percent pension contribution; but those things were arrived at in collective bargaining. The We are Ohio coalition is urging voters to overturn the law by voting "no" on Issue 2.

CORRECTION

In an article on the Oregon AFL-CIO convention in the Oct. 7 issue of the Northwest Labor Press, David Rives of American Federation of Teachers was inadvertently omitted from the list of newly elected members of the Oregon AFL-CIO Executive Committee. The Northwest Labor Press regrets the oversight.



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