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Unions help make spirits bright in Salem

(PHOTO RIGHT) Richard Swyers of AFSCME Local 2067 joins Santa's elves in dancing to Christmas tunes performed by Norman Sylvester and Friends during a holiday party Dec. 1 sponsored by the Marion-Polk-Yamhill Counties Central Labor Council. An estimated 400 kids and parents sang holiday songs, watched a movie, and met Santa Claus at The Elsinore Theatre in Salem. Afterward, everyone received a goody bag. The labor council funds the annual event — now in its 72nd year — through donations from more than 14 union affiliates and unionized businesses in the community. Santa is played by Jack Rusen of Albany Steelworkers Local 6163; Sylvester is a member of Musicians Local 99; and Swyers works for Salem's Public Works Department.

ATU talks at TriMet off to a bumpy start

Bargaining for a new union contract at TriMet reached an impasse before talks even started.

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 757 and TriMet have been wrangling for several weeks over whether or not negotiations should be open to the public and to the media. The union wants them open. TriMet does not.

The dispute stalled talks that were scheduled to begin Nov. 30 — the day the current contract expired. The sides are asking the courts to decide the matter.

"We look forward to quickly resolving this issue and moving forward with negotiations," said ATU President Bruce Hansen. "Once that occurs, negotiations can begin."

However, in a Nov. 30 press release, TriMet said ATU was a "no show" to the first round of bargaining. The agency said it sent its contract proposal to the union "so it could start the 150-day clock for negotiations as required by state statute."

The union was stunned. In a letter to TriMet's director of labor relations, Randy Stedman, Hansen wrote: "It is surprising to learn that the TriMet management team chose to arrive ... for a meeting that the parties knew in advance would not be taking place."

The union said the "bargaining clock has not been triggered" because both parties have not met to exchange proposals, which state law requires.

Some 2,000 bus and light rail operators and mechanics represented by Local 757 are working under the terms of a contract imposed in binding arbitration last July — four-and-a-half months before it expired. State law bars Oregon public transit workers from striking; instead, if contract bargaining reaches impasse, union and management present their final offers to an arbitrator, who picks one side's offer in its entirety. State arbitrator David Gaba picked TriMet's offer. However, when making the announcement, Gaba said some

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UNION LABEL: The ultimate hard-to-find gift

Remember Charles Dickens and the ghost of Christmas future? One hundred sixty-nine years after A Christmas Carol was published, today's Tiny Tims will have a grim future indeed if they wait for a change of heart from today's Ebenezer Scrooges. We need the Bob Cratchetts of the world to unionize and win back health care, paid time off and a living wage. In that spirit, we propose the following early New Year's Resolution — Buy nothing from sweatshops, and look for the union label. Of course the union label can be hard to find these days. So we've done the looking and come up with 10 gift ideas for goods and services brought to you by local union members.

1) BLANKETS. The gift of warmth starts with wool. Beautiful Pendleton Woolen Mills blankets, like the queen-size mineral-umber Yakima camp blanket, \$124, are quality-made by members of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) at mills in Pendleton,



Oregon, and Washougal, Washington. And they last a lifetime. Buy them at Pendleton outlet stores, retailers like Made In Oregon, and online at pendleton-usa.com.

2) BOOTS. Danner hiking and hunting boots — made in Portland by members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555 — are serious business. We won't say they're

indestructible, but let's just say you could go through three \$100 pairs of sweatshop-made boots at other manufacturers or you could buy one \$300 pair of built-to-last Danner boots and support a fellow union member. Get them at Danner's Portland outlet store, 12021 NE Airport Way, or at Al's Shoe's and Boots — a long-time supporter of the NW Labor Press — at 5811 NE 82nd Ave. [Danner does import some boots, so check the label: If it's U.S.-made, it's union-made.]

3) BOOKS. Forget Amazon.com, notorious for its nonunion sweatshop warehouses. At Powell's Books, the nation's largest independent book store, workers are represented by International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 5. Books, gifts, and gift cards are available at six Portland-area locations and online at powells.com.

4) WINE. Year after year, Chateau St. Michelle produces top-ranked wines

as judged by Wine Spectator and Wine & Spirits magazine. And they're made by members of United Farm Workers and Teamsters Local 117 in Washington's Columbia Valley wine region. [Tip: It tastes best and costs least when purchased at unionized retailers like Fred Meyer or Safeway.]

5) CHOCOLATE. See's Candies gift boxes are available in all price-ranges, and are made in California by members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers. A 25-piece assortment runs just \$19.40. We're hoping to receive the egg nog or white mint truffles this year!

6) DINNERWARE. Fiesta dinnerware is colorful, timeless, and proudly U.S.-made in Newell, West Virginia, by members of Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastic and Allied Workers (GMP) Local 419.

7) COOKWARE. There's quality



American steel in All-Clad pots and pans, union-made by members of the United Steelworkers (USW) Local 3403 in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania.

8) MUSIC. Visualize a union member. Do you see the trombone? At most major symphony orchestras, American Federation of Musicians helps ensure a

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