

ATU settlement averts school bus driver strike at Portland schools

Two units of school bus drivers at Portland Public Schools have new union contracts — a group of over 230 operators driving students for contractor First Student, and a group of about 70 that work directly for the school district driving special education students. Both units are represented by Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 757.

At First Student, the school bus contracting division of UK multinational First Transit, drivers came close

Labor Roundtable of SW Washington taps Ed Barnes for chair

VANCOUVER — Ed Barnes, a retired business manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48, has been elected chair of the Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington. He succeeds Phil Parker, who died April 2 of a heart attack.

The Labor Roundtable meets twice a month at Hometown Buffet, 7809 NE Vancouver Plaza Dr, Vancouver, starting at 8 a.m. It is open to union officials, politicians and business owners who meet to discuss important issues in Southwest Washington. It holds an annual awards banquet in September, where it honors top union officials, politicians and union locals.

The Labor Roundtable was created in 1983 to fill a void for what at the time was an inactive central labor council.

Anyone can join the Labor Roundtable. Annual dues are \$15 for individuals and \$60 for organizations.

to striking over a company demand that new hires would pay 50 percent of health insurance premiums (more than current employees). Such a “two-tier” provision would have created a permanent division in the workforce.

Nearly 20 months after the expiration of their previous contract, members authorized a strike. The union trained strike leaders, collected food donations, and set a May 1 deadline for the company to accept the union’s final offer, after which the drivers could strike at any time. Late in the day May 1, First Student emailed a proposal without the concessionary two-tier demand.

The new agreement, which members ratified May 7 by a 168-to-5 vote, continues the previous contract’s “stairstep” schedule in which new employees pay 35 percent of health premium first year, and 25, 15, and 5 percent in subsequent years, until the fifth year, when the company pays the whole premium.

Wages for the unit currently start at \$12.90 an hour and top out at \$15.76 after five years. The new agreement expires Aug. 31, 2015 and provides for three annual raises of 2 percent each, retroactive to the Aug. 31, 2012, expiration of the previous contract.

Portland Public Schools’ in-house school bus drivers also ratified a new contract May 7, which rolls over terms of their previous agreement with the district. They will get wages of 1.5 percent in the new three-year deal, which expires June 30, 2017. Wages currently start at \$13.94 and rise to \$17.66 after five years.



Pippa Pizor (shop steward), Anna Tompte (ATU Executive Board officer), ATU Vice President Jonathan Hunt and Alex Smith (liaison officer), pose for a picture following a strike vote.

Teachers union to show film about out-of-control standardized testing

Following up on a pledge to kick off a series of public forums, the Portland Association of Teachers (PAT) is sponsoring a free documentary film showing and panel discussion May 22 entitled “Standardized: Lies, Money and Civil Rights — How Testing is Ruin-

ing Public Education.”

In February, PAT won an important contract concession at Portland Public Schools when the district, as part of a settlement to avert a strike, agreed that student test scores won’t be used in teacher transfer, layoff, salary or discipline decisions. The use of student test scores to grade teachers has become increasingly prevalent in the United States, and is sparking a backlash over

its unfairness.

The documentary traces the history and consequences of high-stakes testing, and looks at the big money that’s involved.

The event takes place 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. May 22 at First Unitarian Church, 1011 SW 12th Ave., Portland. Admission is free, but event sponsors are asking that participants register online at eventbrite.com.

Two local unions to take part in May 31 Starlight Parade

Union members will once again be a part of the Portland Rose Festival’s Starlight Parade this year, with entries from National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) Branch 82 and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48.

Members of Branch 82 have been taking part in the Starlight Parade since 1989. This year, they took inspiration from a U.S. Postal Service stamp commemorating the Wizard of Oz. Their entry is a lit-up float of the Emerald City, complete with Tin Man, Cowardly Lion, and flying monkeys. Dorothy will be played by Reynolds High School senior Savannah Wilson, daughter of Oak Grove letter carrier (and parade float artist) Ken Wilson — and she’ll be singing Over the Rainbow.

Starlight parade coordinator Sue Canfield, a retired letter carrier from the Newberg Post Office, will be the Wicked Witch of the West. President

Jim Falvey will be pulling the float in his vehicle. Most members will be marching behind the float, as members of the Lollipop Guild, the tough-but-cute union confectioners of Munchkinland.

IBEW’s entry, meanwhile, will use electroluminescent tape to highlight the work its members do — lighting up the night. Fifty members of IBEW Local 48 Volunteer Organizing Committee will march in formation in matching hard hats, safety vests, and T-shirts, carrying illuminated signs with messages of solidarity and community. It’s their second year in the parade.

The parade — officially known as PGE/SOLVE Starlight Parade — draws more than 250,000 spectators to downtown Portland. It will take place Saturday May 31 from 8:30 to 11 p.m. preceded by a costumed 5K fun run, and it will be broadcast live on Fox 12 TV.

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