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Delivering literacy to east Multnomah County

Volunteers from Oregon School Employees Association coordinate with First Book to get 40,000 new books where they're most needed — in the hands of children

Union volunteers handed out more than 40,000 books to area school districts and nonprofits serving children in east Multnomah County. The book giveaway was staged at Centennial Middle School on Saturday, Nov. 22. The event was spearheaded by Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) Centennial Chapter 113 President Vicki Nelson, in partnership with First Book, a national nonprofit dedicated to putting books into the hands of children. Nelson and more than 100 OSEA members in east Multnomah County talked to peers, called classified employees in nearby school districts, and contacted social service agencies to tell them about the program. Their efforts paid off, as they registered 2,000 people to take books to children.

On the evening before the distribution, more than 300 volunteers gathered at the middle school to sort the books by age group. Books are for children as young as preschoolers and as old as 18. Many of the volunteers were OSEA members and staff. But members of other unions, teachers, students, school administrators and school board members also pitched in. Keith Kordenat, ap-

prenticeship coordinator for the Iron Workers Local 29 Apprenticeship Training Program, brought a forklift to unload pallets of books from a tractor-trailer in the parking lot.

Besides the books going to school children, OSEA Chapter 113 donated hundreds of books to the Centennial School District's Teen Parent Program and Closet to Closet, a district program that provides clothing to needy families; to Dornbecher Children's Hospital, Presents for Partners, SnowCap Community Charities, and St. Timothy's Church.



THIS IS WHAT 40,000 BOOKS LOOK LIKE: Hal Meyerdierk, a field rep for OSEA, was one of 300-plus volunteers who helped sort more than 40,000 books into age groups at Centennial Middle School. (Photo by Michael Gutwig)



Centennial OSEA Chapter 113 President Vicki Nelson, right, and Vice President Melinda Wyffels helped lead the effort to bring free books to young people in east Multnomah County. (Photos by Michael Plett)

Three Walmart workers strike in Klamath Falls

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

If there's growing worker unrest at Walmart, Portland got a taste of it on Nov. 29, Black Friday, when two Walmart workers from Klamath Falls made an appearance at a morning protest rally outside the Walmart store on Southeast 82nd Ave.

About 100 demonstrators gathered there to show support for Walmart workers. It was one of 1,600 protests nationwide, according to the group Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart), which is backed by United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW).

"I'm not afraid any more," said Jennifer Sanchez, who went out on strike two days earlier along with her husband Ismael Nuñez and one other co-worker, Brian Garlock. Sanchez, 37, told the Labor Press she struck once before, in June, and showed co-workers that it was possible. "Now I know that we have the right to strike even though we're not in a union."

This time, Sanchez and her husband traveled the state to draw attention to practices at the company, appearing in Klamath Falls Nov. 26, Medford Nov. 27, and Portland Nov. 28. Garlock, the third Klamath Falls Walmart striker, wasn't able to travel the state because of his second job at Pizza Hut.

The immediate cause of this strike is to protest retaliatory discipline against previous strikers, the subject of unfair labor practice charges pending before the National Labor Relations Act. Federal labor law bars employers from disciplining workers who strike to protest

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United Food & Commercial Workers #555 rejoins Oregon AFL-CIO

Affiliation brings an additional 17,000 members to the state labor federation

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555 has rejoined the Oregon AFL-CIO after a nine-year absence.

Local 555, which represents workers in grocery, is Oregon's largest private sector union.

The phased in re-affiliation, when completed, will add as many as 17,000 union members to the state labor federation, bringing its total to about 147,000 (not counting the roughly 130,000 members of Working America, the AFL-CIO's affiliate for non-union workers.)

Local 555 left the Oregon AFL-CIO in 2005, when its parent international union joined a coalition that broke away from the national AFL-CIO to form the Change To Win labor federation.

After the split, some locals of Change to Win unions affiliated with state and central labor councils of the AFL-CIO under specially arranged "solidarity charters." In Oregon, UFCW Local 555 remained in local AFL-CIO central labor councils under solidarity charters, but not the state AFL-CIO.

Change to Win, meanwhile, proved to be more a loose national alliance than a federation with state and local structures, and it never replaced the AFL-CIO as a coordinating body of

organized labor. United Brotherhood of Carpenters left Change to Win in 2009, and UNITE HERE (the union for hotel, restaurant and garment workers) and Laborers left in 2009 and 2010, the latter two re-joining the AFL-CIO. Then UFCW left and re-joined the AFL-CIO at the national level in August 2013. [Three unions remain in Change to Win: Service Employees International Union, Teamsters, and United Farm Workers.]

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