

'Unite for the Knight' helps raise \$508 million

Labor and management coalition part of OHSU effort to raise \$1 billion for cancer research

By Michael Gutwig
Editor & Manager

Last September, seven labor and business groups held a press conference at Oregon Health & Science University's (OHSU) Collaborative Life Sciences Building in Southwest Portland to announce formation of the "Unite for the Knight" coalition. Together, the leaders from organized labor and management pledged to reach out to their memberships, contractors, and vendors to give a boost to the Knight Cancer Challenge.

A year earlier, Nike co-founder Phil Knight and his wife Penny had challenged OHSU to raise half a billion dollars for cancer research. They promised

OSEA to help build labor movement in the Deep South

This August, two team of Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) members, led by staff organizer Elissa Edge, will spend two weeks in Alabama helping school employees there unionize. The state of Alabama doesn't legally recognize the right of public employees to bargain collectively, but that doesn't mean workers can't get organized and push for improvements.

It's all part of the Back-to-School Organizing Campaign, an annual effort by OSEA's parent organization, the American Federation of Teachers, to help build the union movement among school employees in the South. Besides Alabama, union member volunteers will campaign in Louisiana, New Mexico and Texas.

AFT pays the cost of transportation and housing, reimburses members up to \$65 per day for meals and incidentals, and provides pre-training and on-site training.

It's the 5th year OSEA has taken part in the program. Twenty members will be heading out July 25 and Aug. 1 to Mobile, Birmingham, and Central Alabama.

to match it with \$500 million of their own if OHSU reached the goal by February 2016.

On June 25, the Knight Challenge surpassed its goal, and then some—raising \$508 million.

"This is the single largest, successful, mass campaign in the history of U.S. philanthropy, and done in record time," said Keith Todd, president of the OHSU Foundation. More than 10,000 donors responded, and 50 gifts were for one million dollars or more. \$200 million is in state bond funding approved by the Oregon Legislature in Senate Bill 5703.

The labor-management Unite for the Knight coalition contributed nearly \$1 million.

The coalition was comprised of the Oregon AFL-CIO, Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council, Oregon AFSCME Council 75, Oregon State Fire Fighters Council, Associated Oregon Industries, the Portland Business Alliance, and Oregon Business Council.

John Mohlis, executive secretary of the Oregon State Build-



The United for the Knight coalition got a \$21,000 boost from the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council in March. In the photo above, Kelly Bach, president of the Fire Fighters Council, presents a check to Lisa Coussens, associate director of basic research at the Knight Cancer Institute. The Knight Cancer Challenge hits close to home for firefighters, as they have a significantly higher incidence of some cancers due to on-the-job exposure to harmful substances. The contribution was the largest from labor unions participating in the United for the Knight coalition.

ing and Construction Trades Council, was co-chair of the coalition. The other co-chair was Brian Gard, president of Gard

Communications.

Ken Allen, executive director of Oregon AFSCME, serves on the OHSU Board of Directors

and was instrumental in putting the coalition together.

"In the fight against cancer, we're all on the same side," said OHSU President Joe Robertson.

The billion dollars will allow the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute to create the first large-scale program dedicated to early detection of lethal cancers. OHSU will build a new, state-of-the-art cancer research facility, and a clinical trial center. Ground breaking is tentatively scheduled for March 2016, with construction expected to be complete in 2018.

OHSU already is fast tracking recruitment of 250 to 300 scientists and physicians to work there.

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