

Jeff Klatke, president of Oregon AFSCME Council 75, gets dirty prepping for paint.



Photo by Eryn Byram



Eric "Sonny" McMahon of Laborers Local 737 cuts notches in a stair stringer. Unsafe stairs were replaced on two decks.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

'Team Labor' answers the call

Union volunteers share their skills at first-ever 'Hats Off To Skilled Labor' work day to repair homes of two low-income Oregonians

By Michael Gutwig
Editor & Manager

Members from half a dozen labor unions volunteered their time and skills Aug. 27 to help two struggling families in Washington County.

"Team Labor" was coordinated by Labor's Community Service Agency, AFL-CIO, in partnership with Rebuilding Together of Washington County and United Way of the Columbia-Willamette. Rebuilding Together is a non-profit organization that brings volunteers and local communities together to improve the homes and lives of low-income homeowners in the area.

Dubbed "Hats Off To Skilled Labor Day of Service," the labor agency plans to make the work day an annual event, if not more often.

"This is what organized labor is all about," said Vickie Burns, executive director of Labor's Community Service Agency. "Union members are a part of the community, and they take pride in their communities, helping out whenever they can. We want to shine a light on that."

One crew of 14 volunteers replaced some rotted skirting, caulked and sealed, and painted a manufactured home in Tigard for an elderly woman and her grandson, a national guardsman. Union volunteers on the project were Jeff Klatke, president of Oregon AFSCME Council 75; Darren Hamann, a business rep for Bakers Local 114; Roben White, a retired member of Painters Local 10, and Sandy Cresap, the daughter of a retired member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757.

A second crew of 10 volunteers performed repairs on a manufactured home in Beaverton owned by an elderly disabled couple. Workers replaced an exterior door, rebuilt unsafe stairs on the front and back porches, and installed a water heater.

The crew consisted of Tyler Kleser, Jacob Cooper, and Ashley Haysom of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 (Cooper, 27, and Haysom, 25, are apprentices); Jon Jensen of IBEW Local 48; and a small crew of union Laborers and Carpenters loaned out by Swinerton Builders.

Power Plumbing Co. provided tools and materials to install the hot water heater.

"What an honor, joy, and privilege it is to pay it forward," said Eryn Byram, program and Outreach Specialist for Labor's Community Service Agency and a member of Office and Professional Employees Local 11. Byram helped coordinate the volunteers, and even lent a hand at one of the homes. "These union members all sharing their time and talents makes a tremendous difference in the lives of these families. Thank you, volunteers, for sharing the heart of the labor movement," she said.

Roben White, a retired member of Painters Local 10, helps direct volunteers, with help from Eryn Byram of Labor's Community Service Agency.



Photo by Eryn Byram

ABOVE: Darren Hamann of Bakers Local 114 caulked around a window. BELOW: UA Local 290 apprentice Ashley Haysom helps install a hot water heater.

