

Labor's Community Service Agency seeks donations for 'Helping Hands'

Housing crisis is forcing more working families into eviction and homelessness

Labor's Community Service Agency, Inc. (LCSA) is making an urgent appeal for donations to benefit its programs, particularly its Helping Hands temporary hardship assistance program.

"We're seeing the Oregon housing crisis force more and more working families into eviction and homelessness even while folks are employed," said LCSA Director Vickie Burns.

Burns said that most rental agreements now allow for no-cause evictions. They also contain prohibitive move-in costs and unsustainable rental increase schedules. As a result, the small, per-family financial assistance offered through LCSA's Helping Hands program falls short of keeping families in their homes, and it fails to make a dent in hefty move-in fees.

The Helping Hands program received five referrals for union families facing eviction and/or complicated re-homing situations in the first two weeks of May. In contrast, only nine local unions have responded to the agency's spring fundraising appeal.

To complicate already difficult matters, affordable local housing is scarce. The U.S. Census Bureau reported a national average rental vacancy rate of 7 percent for the quarter ending March 2016. Meanwhile, Ore-

gon U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley's office reports a 3.5 percent vacancy rate in Oregon, with some areas as low as 2 percent.

Anyone can send donations to Labor's Community Service Agency, Inc. at 9955 SE Washington, Suite 111, Portland, Oregon, 97216. For more information, call 503-231-4962.

Labor's Community Service Agency is a partnership of Labor and United Way of the Columbia-Willamette in cooperation of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

...Striking Verizon workers win gains

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for working families across the country and an affirmation of the power of working people," said CWA President Chris Shelton. "It proves that when we stand together we can raise up working families, improve our communities and advance the interests of America's working people."

The previous contracts between CWA and IBEW expired in August of 2015. Members of the two unions went on strike April 13 to protest demands by the highly profitable company for union workers to make concessions, including more work away from home, increased retiree health-care costs, and a limit on pension service credit.

Striking workers returned to work June 1.



'TEAM PORTLAND' WINS INAUGURAL NORTHWEST CEMENT MASONS APPRENTICESHIP COMPETITION.

Cement Masons Local 555 apprentices Shawn Fredricksen and Dillon Crawford pocketed \$500, a bucket of tools, a trophy, and bragging rights after winning a competition against apprentices from Seattle Local 528. Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian announced the winners at a luncheon held at the Cement Mason's training center in Northeast Portland, where the competition took place held May 25-27. Judging was done by three retirees from the industry. In the photo above, Fredricksen, under the watchful eye of judges and instructors, lays out a 12' x 14' concrete slab, while Crawford (pictured right) checks on his curb and gutter. Apprentices were judged on set up of forms, accuracy, efficiency in placing concrete, and the overall finished look. Second place went to the Seattle team of Logan Miller and Patrick Pola. "The competition helps build camaraderie between the locals and the apprentices," said Portland instructor Jeremy Kendall. "This is our first year, hopefully it will continue to grow." The four-year Portland program has 50 apprentices in training, and is currently interviewing for more. Craig Smith is the apprenticeship coordinator.



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democracy. A new "Take on Wall Street" campaign is aiming to channel the widespread public anger over these rigged rules into concrete and bold legislative gains at the state, local, and

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FREE CLASSIFIED ADS

A message to our readers

Starting with this issue, the Northwest Labor Press is discontinuing the free classified advertising section. Over the past several years we have lost a number of our regular paid advertisers. Fewer advertisers means fewer pages. Fewer pages results in less space for news.

Besides, the classified ad section has shrunk as well. If it wasn't for the half dozen "Wanted" ads that have been running each issue, the classifieds would consist of only a handful of ads from subscribers with something to sell.

Discontinuing the classified ad section will free up space for more labor news.

After announcing this in the May 6 edition, we have received calls from several subscribers who regularly run classified ads, asking us to reconsider.

We will continue to monitor the feedback to the cancellation, and will revisit the decision in a few months. Send emails to editor@nwlaborpress.org.

And thanks for reading the Northwest Labor Press!

—Michael Gutwig,
Editor