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Burns retires from Labor's Community Service Agency

Vickie Burns has retired as executive director of Labor's Community Service Agency (LCSA). Burns has served in the post since May 2010. Prior to that she was the agency's office manager. Her last day in the office was Jan. 20.

LCSA is a non-profit organization that operates under the auspices of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and a 16-person board of directors. The agency works with an array of community-based and governmental organizations throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington to provide education, information, social service programs, and referral services. More than half of the agency's funding comes from United Way of the Columbia-Willamette. Other funding is through state and federal dislocated worker contracts, and from donations from unions and others.

Burns, 62, is the fourth person — and first woman — to serve as director since the agency was founded July 5, 1974.

Under Burns' leadership, LCSA extensively promoted United Way's annual fundraising campaign. She served for many years on United Way's Cam-



Vickie Burns

paign Cabinet.

As executive director, Burns also served as labor's voice on workforce investment boards and dislocated worker programs for several regions. She was the "go to" person for statewide rapid response teams called to assist laid off workers transition into new jobs.

Under her tenure, Burns revamped LCSA's Helping Hands temporary hardship assistance program to make it easier for union officials to refer members in need; she launched the Team Labor! program to help union members and labor advocates

volunteer for neighborhood and public service projects throughout the Portland metropolitan area. Unionists have helped repair homes, knit items for newborn babies, and more; and she grew the annual Presents from Partners toy drive and distribution program.

"We have buy in," Burns said. "We have a huge volunteer base from labor. It's not just 'what can LCSA do for me and my members' — unions and their members are a part of it. They've embraced it, made it their own. To remain successful, that's what it will continue to take."

There is no better example than the Presents from Partners toy drive. The annual event makes sure no child in need goes without gifts during the holidays. The program has grown by 20 percent or more each year since Burns took over the agency. In December it impacted 500 families, with 120 volunteers from union ranks helping out.

An Oregon native, Burns grew up in a union family. Her father was a member of Teamsters Local 162 at Cascade Construction and her mother was a member of Bakers Local 114 at Sunshine Bakery. After graduat-

ing from Jackson High School she earned associate degrees in technical/professional writing and computers and office management from Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) and Portland Community College.

She held several office jobs before leaving the workforce to raise her three children. A divorce forced her back into the workforce.

She was working as an administrative aide at MHCC's Dislocated Workers Project in 1993 when newly-hired LCSA Executive Director Glenn Shuck recruited her to be his office manager. In that job she became a member of Office and Professional Employees Local 11.

Burns said the job opportunity couldn't have come at a better time. Her 10 year old son had recently been diagnosed with Type I diabetes. The LCSA job was part-time, which allowed her to spend more time with her children. It also paid more than MHCC and provided much better health insurance.

"I felt like I hit the lottery," she said. "Right then and there, I was a labor person for life."

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