

HAPPENINGS

Firefighters to hold camp for women 16 to 20

Portland Metro Fire Camp for young women ages 16 to 20 will be held in July and August in Portland and Sherwood. The three-day camp is an opportunity for the young women to experience the unique aspects of being a firefighter.

The camp is taught by female firefighters from Portland, Albany, Bend, Camas/Washougal, Clackamas County, Columbia County, Gresham, Medford, Newberg, Salem, Tualatin Valley, and Vancouver fire departments.

Work stations include: Search and rescue, Jaws of Life operation, climbing an aerial ladder, fire hose operation, and forcing doors. Young women will also learn about nutrition, physical fitness, interview



Photo by Danika Klein

skills, and emergency medical service (EMS).

Participants are selected through an application process. “We try to accommodate as many campers as possible,

which is why we are hosting two camps this year,” said Portland firefighter Terra Vandewiele.

The first camp is July 13-15 at Portland Fire & Rescue’s training center, 4800 NE 122nd Ave. Portland.

The second camp is Aug. 10-12 at Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue’s training center, 12400 SW Tonquin Rd, Sherwood.

Applications will become available soon (they’re shooting for the end of February, beginning of March) and can be found at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/fire/firecamp>.

For more information, call Tammy Willet at 503-823-3892, or email tammy.willet@portlandoregon.gov.

TRADE

America’s trade deficit soars in Trump’s first year

China deficit hits new record

The U.S. trade deficit surged to its highest level since 2008 during President Trump’s first year in office — despite his vow to lower the gap and crack down on unfair competition.

The nation’s trade gap in

goods and services jumped 12.1 percent to \$566 billion in 2017, an increase of \$61.2 billion from 2016. The 2017 trade deficit was the highest since 2008, when the deficit hit \$708.7 billion, the Commerce Department reported Feb. 6.

Over the course of the year,

imports surged to \$2.9 trillion, easily eclipsing the \$2.3 trillion in U.S. exports.

Notably, the U.S. deficit in goods soared to a record-high \$375.2 billion with China, a nation that Trump has both demonized and praised on trade during his tenure.

Who’s on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



The lessons of 1968 still matter today

On Feb. 1, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee, black sanitation workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker were killed by a malfunctioning garbage truck during a heavy rain storm. That same day, 22 black sewer workers were sent home without pay while their white supervisors worked with pay. Twelve days later, growing frustrated with city officials’ inaction following a long history of neglect and abuse of black city employees, 1,300 black sanitation workers walked off the job and began one of the most historic strikes of the 20th century.

Memphis sanitation workers organized with AFSCME in 1964. Working conditions worsened after Mayor Henry Loeb took office in January 1968. Loeb refused to stop using dilapidated trucks or pay overtime when workers were forced to work late. The workers earned wages so low many were on welfare or relied on food stamps.

AFSCME President Jerry Wurf demanded union recognition, better working conditions and increased wages. The strike lasted for months. Strikers and supporters were clubbed and tear-gassed on numerous occasions. Loeb refused to recognize the actions of his City Council, who recognized the union and recommended a wage increase. Loeb called for martial law and deployment of 4,000 National Guard troops. The following day, over 200 striking workers continued marching, carrying signs saying: “I Am a Man.”

Dr. Martin Luther King is viewed today by the establishment as a hero. Streets and schools are named after him. But in 1968, Dr. King was viewed as a dangerous radical. He led non-violent activism throughout the South, pushing back against the American caste system. The struggle for civil rights radicalized him into a fighter for broader economic and social justice. He once stated: “what good was winning the right to eat at a dime-store lunch counter if you couldn’t afford a hamburger and a Coke?” The Poor People’s Campaign resulted from the development of Dr. King’s economic view: The movement must include black people, Native Americans, Latinos, and poor whites. In other words, America cannot achieve racial justice without economic justice. The Poor People’s Campaign brought Dr. King to Memphis on March 18, 1968, leading a massive protest, which uncharacteristically turned violent. Discouraged, Dr. King left Memphis planning to return for another march in support of the striking sanitation workers. Within days, Memphis received an injunction prohibiting marches. Dr. King immediately returned to Memphis to encourage the workers to continue their protest.

On April 3, 1968, Dr. King gave the inspiring “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech to the strikers and supporters. The speech eerily foreshadowed his murder, which happened 24 hours later.

“Like anybody, I would like to live a long life—longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now—I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land.”

Responding to Dr. King’s murder and the anger it generated, King’s longtime Memphis ally Rev. James Lawson recorded a radio message urging calm and non-violence. Mayor Loeb’s response was to deploy police and the National Guard and establish a curfew. Finally, President Johnson charged the Undersecretary of Labor to find a solution and ended the strike.

On April 8, Dr. King’s widow, Coretta Scott King, and union leaders led 42,000 silently through Memphis in peaceful protest. On the steps of City Hall, AFSCME pledged support of the striking workers until “we have justice.”

On April 16, a deal was reached, ending the strike. It included increased wages and recognition of the union. The mayor didn’t implement the proposal until the sanitation workers threatened another strike.

The lessons of 1968 matter today. We can learn much from the persistence and solidarity seen in Memphis 50 years ago. Dr. King’s vision of unifying economic and racial justice cannot be forgotten.

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