

...Outside In staff vote overwhelmingly to join AFSCME

From Page 1

health issues. Services include health care, drug treatment, transitional housing assistance, job training, even tattoo removal. Today, the organization has grown to about 170 employees, and an annual budget of nearly \$12 million.

The effort to unionize picked up momentum in January, after workers formed an organizing committee and began working with Oregon AFSCME. The organizing committee decided Oregon AFSCME was a good fit because it represents workers at similar nonprofits, including Transition Projects and Central City Concern.

In February, committee members laid out what they're seeking in a mission statement: "As workers at Outside In, we care deeply about our clients," the statement says. "To that end, we are coming together to form a union and harness the power of collective bargaining to raise standards for the workers of Outside In and across the industry so that social service jobs can be good jobs with less turnover



Last November, a violent attack at Portland homeless teen nonprofit Outside In laid bare the gulf between top management and front-line employees.

and more stability for our clients. ... We ask that our co-workers come together and stand with us in solidarity to fight for an open, compassionate and democratic workplace that values every individual that comes in contact with our programs."

That client-focused message resonated with staff, says clinic operations assistant Eddie Charlton.

"How you treat your care workers is a direct reflection of the value of the care you pro-

vide," Charlton said. "And turnover has become a hindrance to the mission of our organization."

"Below a supervisory level, there's only a handful of people that were there when I started [two years ago]," Charlton told the Labor Press. "We're losing time, money and resources constantly training new staff. And we have trouble hiring for positions because they aren't being listed at a market rate."

With the union campaign un-

der way, Outside In executive director Kathy Oliver announced plans to retire in June after 38 years. And she began sending emails to staff arguing against unionization.

"Outside In's leadership does not believe a union would ultimately benefit Outside In, its employees, and its clients," Oliver wrote in a mid-March email to staff that was shared with the Labor Press.

But a majority of the workers disagreed, and signed cards saying they wanted to join AFSCME. Workers asked Oliver to voluntarily recognize their union; she declined.

So on April 27, AFSCME asked the National Labor Relations Board to schedule a union election.

Though Oliver expressed her opinion in multiple emails to staff, Outside In didn't hire union-busting consultants or wage a full-fledged anti-union campaign like many employers do.

"I appreciated that they were pretty straightforward and did not spend client resources on consultants or attorneys," said

Oregon AFSCME organizer Doug Lantz.

The union election took place May 15-16, and the result was an overwhelming 88 to 18 vote in favor of unionizing.

The newly unionized unit will consist of about 125 workers in about 50 separate classifications — from physicians and psychiatrists to bookkeepers and interpreters. Alongside the vote to unionize, Outside In employees who hold advanced degrees also voted 21 to 7 to be in the same bargaining unit as their non-professional co-workers.

Now the two sides will meet to negotiate a union contract.

What do workers want to see in such an agreement? For starters, concrete emergency procedures, to allow people to react quickly. Better trainings for de-escalation, maybe even self defense courses. And better wages and regular wage increases — to curb staff turnover.

"We'd like to create a contract with Outside In that allows us to retain our highly qualified workers," Charlton says, "in order to more sustainably serve our clients."

INDEPENDENT RETIREMENT LIVING

Westmoreland's Union Manor

6404 SE 23rd Ave.
Portland 97202

503-233-5671

Kirkland Union Plaza

1414 Kauffman Ave.
Vancouver 98660

360-694-4314

Manors Make the Difference

- Studio and One-Bedroom Apartments
- Affordable Rent includes Utilities (EXCEPT PHONE AND CABLE)
- Planned Events, Clubs, and Activities
- Ideal Locations offer easy access to Bus Lines, Shopping, and Entertainment
- No Costly Buy-In or Application Fees
- Federal Rent Subsidies Available (MUST QUALIFY)



KIRKLAND UNION PLAZA
Opened in March of 2002



LABOR LEADERS IN THE PORTLAND BUILDING TRADE MOVEMENT ORGANIZED THE UNION LABOR RETIREMENT

ASSOCIATION IN 1962, WITH THE SOLE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY.

"We believe that everyone earns the right to retire, free from pressures of earlier years."



Kirkland Union Manors

3530 SE 84th Ave.
Portland 97266

503-777-8101

Marshall Union Manor

2020 NW Northrup
Portland 97209

503-225-0677

WWW.THEUNIONMANORS.ORG

... Uber driver standards

From Page 4

so at a moment's notice we could be earning even less." Drivers also have no recourse in the event of an unfair deactivation or other grievance, Christofferson said. "The TNCs have unilateral authority to determine our ability to work, and us as drivers have no ability to hold them accountable for their actions."

The commissioners then heard an hour of public testimony from taxi drivers feeling squeezed by the TNCs, from TNC drivers in Transportation Fairness Portland who support the resolution, and from TNC drivers wearing Lyft T-shirts who oppose it.

Opponents said things are fine the way they are. Drivers can speak for themselves in dealing with Uber and Lyft and don't need a city board or a union to speak for them, several said.

Full-time TNC driver Douglas Wright, who's driven for Uber and Lyft for six months, said he saw no need for an oversight body, even though he at times earned less than minimum wage when he started. Wright said he had no sympathy for any TNC driver complaining — if they

don't like it they should do something else. That drew an animated reaction from Commissioner Fish.

"When I hear, and you're not alone, people come before this body, and essentially say that the claims of other drivers are invalid, and that they don't need to have a forum to have those issues addressed, it almost sounds to me like the taxpayer who says 'I'm never going to have a fire, so why do we have a fire bureau?' ... or maybe even Zsa Zsa Gabor's first husband saying, 'We love each other; I don't need a pre-nup.'"

"I'm persuaded that TNC drivers do not have a meaningful voice in the workplace," Fish said later, explaining his vote in favor of the resolution.

"Corporations do a great job looking out for their own interests," added Commissioner Eudaly. "Workers, whether they are employees or independent contractors, have a right to organize and advocate for their rights, and it's our duty as elected representatives to look out for their rights."

—Don McIntosh