

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

# This year's Portland SAG Awards party will raise funds to help family of ailing actor from Grimm

Every year, the union performers in the Portland SAG-AFTRA local gather at the Lake Theater in Lake Oswego to watch their union's televised annual awards event. This year, the event is open to all local union members and supporters, and is doubling as a fundraiser for local SAG-AFTRA president Robert Blanche, who's fighting for his life after a double lung transplant.

Blanche, 56, has been a television actor since 1994, frequently playing law enforcement officers in TV crime dramas, like Sergeant Franco on NBC's Grimm. In 2011, he was diagnosed with hypersensitivity pneumonitis, an inflammation in the lungs. In August, he received a double lung transplant, but he's still struggling to overcome complications from the procedure. Blanche is a father of five, including two small children, and has been unable to work because of his medical condition. Friends and coworkers in SAG-AFTRA have raised over \$35,000 to support his family, but with Blanche having spent over four months in the hospi-



Robert Blanche

tal, the funds are spent and his family is in need of further help. Supporters hope to raise another \$30,000 through this fundraising drive.

They'll raise funds with event tickets (\$25 for union members, hors d'oeuvres and a drink ticket included), a silent auction, and a raffle. The fundraiser will run through Valentine's Day.

Mary McDonald-Lewis, a voice actor and member of SAG-AFTRA's national board, described Blanche as a beloved figure within the local union: "He's always been an ambassador for SAG-AFTRA, and mentored young actors as they became ready to join."

- **Time:** Sunday, Jan. 27, 5 to 8 p.m. (doors open at 4:30 p.m.)
- **Place:** Lake Theater and Cafe, 106 N State St, Lake Oswego, Oregon
- **Cost:** \$25 for union members, \$30 for all others (hors d'oeuvres and a drink ticket included)
- **RSVP:** [shellea.allen@sagaftra.org](mailto:shellea.allen@sagaftra.org)
- **Prizes:** Tickets to Portland Center Stage, Artist Repertory Theater, Portland Playhouse, Third Rail Rep theater, Broadway Rose theater, Portland Trailblazers; Cast-signed script from the original pilot of the TV show Grimm; rare Grimm posters; original artwork; stay at the Hampton Inn and Suites; acting lessons; dialect coaching; professional photo session; gift cards, and much more.

SAG-AFTRA members nominate and select the winners of the Screen Actors Guild Awards, which honor SAG-AFTRA members for outstanding individual, cast and ensemble performances on both film and television. The award ceremony will be broadcast live on TNT and TBS at 5 p.m. Pacific Time Jan. 27.

## Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



### A manufactured crisis

Eight hundred thousand workers. That is the number of government employees and contractors impacted by President Trump's shutdown of the federal government. The average take home pay of impacted workers is around \$500 per week, and any financial uncertainty is sure to cause stress and anxiety over how to make ends meet. Each day of this manufactured crisis, working families lose money for housing, healthcare and groceries — the essentials we need to get by. These 800,000 workers are in all 50 states and include air traffic controllers and transportation security officers from Portland to Medford. Workers at national parks across the west are furloughed. The shutdown's impact goes beyond the actual employees of the government as well: Countless Americans feel the impact of this dangerous stalemate.

Working people and their livelihoods should never be used as political pawns, but that is exactly what the shutdown has become due to President Trump's incessant demand for \$5.7 billion to start building a wall along our nation's southern border. The fact of the matter is that walls and enforcement-only policies such as the workplace raids, cruel family separations, and massive deportations we have seen from the Trump Administration escalate fear. These policies and actions divide us. They inspire campaigns like Ballot Measure 105, which Oregonians squarely defeated last year. They embolden prejudice in communities across the nation. They push people underground, into a shadow economy where unscrupulous employers take advantage of a climate of fear to undermine the rights of migrant workers. It is far too common and is exactly why union members across the country stand united against fear and division, while fighting for a better tomorrow for *all* working people.

The American union movement advocates for an agenda designed to lift workers up and improve our nation instead of pushing people apart. We know that strength and prosperity come from standing together. We have called for comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway to citizenship — an essential step to protecting all workers' freedom to join together in a union without fear. We have stood with our allies in calling for the Administration and the new Congress to work together to pass immigration legislation that keeps families united, protects workers' rights, restricts temporary worker's programs, and gives Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients a pathway to becoming citizens. Finally, instead of focusing on building a wall, the Administration and the new Congress should work together to fund desperately needed infrastructure projects across our country. Investing the \$5.7 billion that President Trump is demanding for his wall in repairing roads, bridges and rail transit would create well-paying jobs in local communities.

The women and men who go to work everyday in service to the United States government want to do their jobs. They believe in working hard for our country and for their fellow Americans. Holding their paychecks hostage over a funding dispute takes advantage of federal workers' commendable work ethic and passion for country and fellow citizen. The partial shutdown of our Government has made it clear that the real crisis is not on the southern border; it's in the Oval Office.

The Oregon AFL-CIO is a 138,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.

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