

NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

IN THIS ISSUE

IN MEMORIAM: CHUCK MOFFIT He was a union officer in AFSCME Local 189 and Oregon AFSCME. | Page 3

WHAT WORKING FAMILIES WANT AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka says we need a better labor law. | Page 8

Meeting Notices p.4

Happenings p.4

VOLUME 120, NUMBER 5

PORTLAND, OREGON

MARCH 1, 2019

ON THE JOB with IATSE Local 28

By Don McIntosh

“My passion,” says Joel Gburek, “is hanging heavy objects from buildings.”

Gburek, 47, is an entertainment production rigger. Before Elton John or Justin Timberlake can step onto the stage at Portland’s Moda Center, Gburek heads up a spirited crew of three dozen riggers who hang lights, speakers, and special effects. They’re members of IATSE Local 28, and in six hours, they can turn a basketball court into a concert venue.

“It’s a world that no one ever thinks about,” Gburek says.

It’s true: Fans at an arena concert don’t think twice about the 50 tons of equipment hanging 100 feet above them — spotlights, lasers, speakers, video walls, pyrotechnic gear, fog machines, mirrors, balloons, confetti. But it’s a rigger’s job to make sure it’s all done safely.

It’s Jan. 31, and Gburek’s rigging crew is setting up for KISS: End of the Road World Tour. That means unloading 27 semi trucks and hanging 170,000 pounds from the top of the arena. At sign-in, crew members



IATSE Local 28 riggers Kraig Stanley and Neil Ewing clock in at Moda Center.

greet each other with hugs and handshakes. Gburek explains the day’s set-up. “Upriggers” then take an elevator to the arena’s eighth floor, a floor that’s off-limits to the public, and use a catwalk to access steel beams 105’ above the floor below. Communicating with “down-riggers” below, they’ll use galvanized steel aircraft cables to hang chain motors from the beams. Most of the KISS concert’s equipment will be fas-

tened to a large oval-shaped metal truss system that the riggers will construct on the deck of the arena. Once everything is attached, they’ll lift the structure using the array of 155 electric chain motors they’ve suspended from the beams.

Entertainment riggers are the workers that make the spectacle of show business possible. Thanks to riggers, members of

Turn to Page 6

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Clark College faculty want pay parity with K-12

By Don McIntosh

VANCOUVER — About 45 Clark College instructors put on red union T-shirts and marched through campus Feb. 13 to the familiar call-and-response chant “What do we want?” “Fair contract!” “When do we want it?” “Now!”

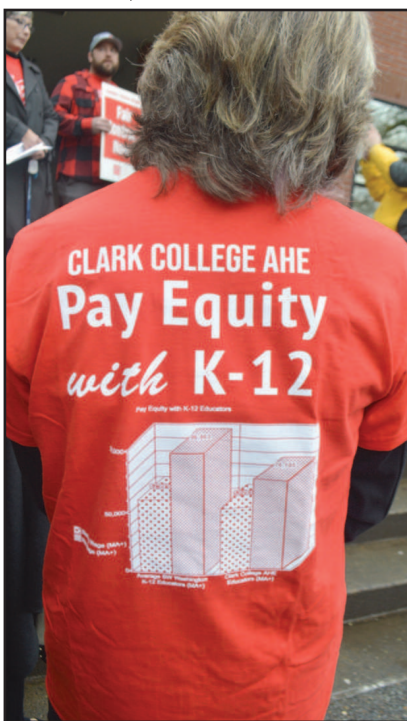
To Clark College faculty union members, a fair contract means long-overdue raises that are more than inflation. About 500 college faculty at Clark College are represented by Clark College Association of Higher Education, an affiliate of the Washington Education Association teachers union. They say they haven’t had more than cost-

of-living increases in decades, and they want salaries comparable to that of K-12 public school teachers.

Clark is a state-funded community college that provides vocational training, associates degrees, and preparation for four-year university degrees. Its non-traditional student population includes many older students, veterans, and parents. The average age is 26, and 72 percent are first-generation college students. Forty-three percent of the student body is classified as low income.

Clark faculty are feeling pretty low income as well.

Turn to Page 2



UNION ORGANIZING



WE DID IT! Pro-union Providence Portland workers and supporters celebrate after the vote count in December.

Workers unionize at Providence Portland hospital – by one vote

In a real-life demonstration that every vote counts, hospital support staff at Providence Portland Medical Center have won a union by a single vote — after an on-again, off-again campaign that goes back 20 years.

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 49 lost the initial tally by 374 to 376 when the vote was held last year on December 12 and 13. But the results couldn’t become official until legal challenges to the ballots of 44 workers were decided by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). In the end, the NLRB decided 15 of the challenged ballots were valid, and opened and counted them. That brought the final tally to 383 to 382.

Providence could still appeal the result. But if it stands, Local 49 will now represent 838 workers in 76 hospital support classifications ranging from housekeeping and food service to certified nurse assistants, imaging techs and phlebotomists. Local 49 represents similar groups of workers at Kaiser Permanente, PeaceHealth, Legacy Health Services, and at Providence Milwaukie Hospital, where workers unionized last June and are still in negotiations over a first collective bargaining agreement.

Registered nurses at Providence Portland, meanwhile, are members of Oregon Nurses As-

sociation.

Local 49 says its most recent Providence union organizing campaign launched over concerns that the non-profit Catholic hospital chain has put too much emphasis on growth and executive pay and devoted too few resources to patient care.

Over the last 10 years, workers at the hospital have seen their wages fail to keep up with cost of living, and they’ve also seen their benefits decline, said Local 49 President Meg Niemi. Providence took away their defined benefit pension, and diminished their health insurance benefits: Emergency room co-pays that were once \$50 are now \$300, and annual deductibles that were once \$500 are now \$3,000.

At the same time, as many as 28 Providence executives make over a \$1 million a year, and CEO Rod Hochman was paid \$10.5 million in 2017. That’s at a non-profit.

Providence has undergone several mergers in recent years and now operates 50 hospitals in seven states — Alaska, California, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas and Washington. Niemi said over 12,000 Providence workers in California and Washington are represented by other SEIU locals. Providence is the largest health system operating in Oregon.

— Don McIntosh