

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

# Union 'super heroes' turn out for MDA bowl



Two "Super Hero" teams from NALC Salem Branch 347 bowled in full costume. Team members included Branch 347 President Valerie Castillo, David and Felicia Covey, Michael Moore, Yania, Yahaira and Yuliana Valazquez, Matti Wiengard, and Pietro Forgia. Wiengard and Forgia are German exchange students living with Castillo.

At the 30th annual Labor Bowl for the Muscular Dystrophy Association, a record 139 bowlers representing nine union-sponsored teams raised \$8,441 March 31 at KingPins Family Entertainment Center in Beaverton. That brought the local labor community's total contribution to MDA to \$400,560. Money is collected through a silent auction and pledges to bowlers.

The money raised buys wheelchairs and braces for children with muscular dys-

trophy, helps them attend a summer camp, and pays for research. Muscular dystrophy is a hereditary condition marked by a progressive weakening and wasting of the muscles over time.

National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) Branch 82 sponsors the event, with promotional help from the Northwest Oregon Labor Council.

This year's top fundraiser was Mike O'Conner, a member of NALC Branch 82. He raised \$1,075.

Unions represented at this year's event were NALC Branch 82, NALC Salem Branch 347, Oregon School Employees Association Beaverton Chapter 48 and Chapter 6732, IATSE Local 28, Machinists Lodges 63 and 1005, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, IBEW Local 89, and NW Priority Credit Union.

The top bowlers of the day were Kevin Bonnin of NALC Branch 82 and Jennifer Genter of Machinists Lodge 63.

## ...Asbestos

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suffocate."

Grimberg had been an active 28-year member of Plumbers Local 51 (which later merged into today's Local 290). He'd joined the union after serving in the army in Korea. At work he often made a fire retardant paste containing asbestos to put on boiler pipes. He would come home covered in the white dust.

"I remember my mom brushing him off in the driveway," Samuelson says.

The federal government first began restricting the use of asbestos in 1973. Leaders of the asbestos industry had known for many years that their products were dangerous, but hid those dangers from the workers who handled them. Asbestos-related diseases take decades to develop. In 2005, at the suggestion of a lawyer, Samuelson and a busload of union members from Local 290 went to Salem to try to change Oregon's statute of limitations to make it easier for survivors to sue the makers of asbestos products. Their bill failed.

But soon thereafter, Samuelson heard about the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization — an all-volunteer group founded by an asbestos widow, Linda Reinstein. Samuelson decided to increase her own awareness, and attended its annual conference in 2009.

"There were other people like me. Other daughters. Spouses. It

was a huge awakening," Samuelson said. "I used to think this was just something I couldn't pronounce that my dad died of, and I didn't know anybody else that died of it. Then I saw that it was really a huge problem."

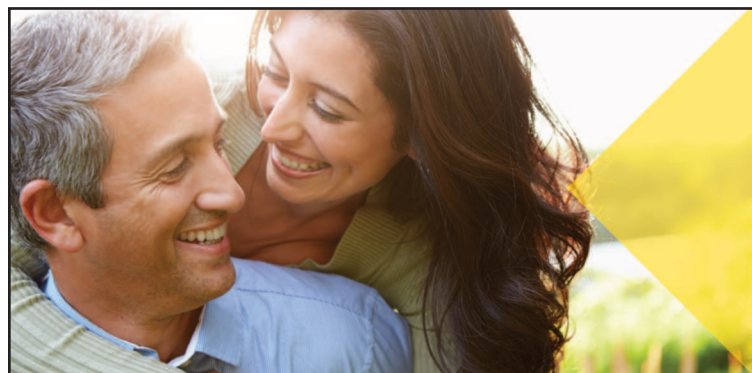
Samuelson started volunteering with the group, telling her family's story to civic organizations, and visiting her elected representatives to push them to do more to protect workers and their families from asbestos.

Most asbestos-related products and materials have been banned in the United States since the 1970s. Yet the rate of asbestos-related deaths is continuing to rise, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control — from 2,479 in 1999 to 2,579 in 2015. Part of the problem is that asbestos sticks around; it's in insulation and other products in homes built before the 1980s.

And the use of asbestos still hasn't been banned entirely in the United States.

Oregon's U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici have introduced a bill to ban use of asbestos entirely. Passing it is a top priority for the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization. For Samuelson and the group's other volunteers, it's personal.

"If we don't speak up and do something, if we don't collectively get people's attention, if we don't ban a substance that we know kills people, more people are going to die like my dad," Samuelson said.



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