

COVID changes union holiday plans

The Grotto and Elsinore events are canceled, but union ironworkers will hold a drive-up event.

Union holiday traditions have been canceled or modified this year due to the pandemic.

The **Grotto's Festival of Lights** announced it will be dark this holiday season. Volunteer members of **IBEW Local 48** and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) have been involved with the distribution of power for the Festival of Lights since its inception in 1988. Anywhere from 40 to 60 journeymen and apprentice electricians would spend a Saturday in late October or early November wiring the festival, which always began the day after Thanksgiving. The first year the festival ran for just 10 nights with approximately 60,000 lights. Last year, the festival switched to LEDs, boosting the light count to more than 1 million and ran through New Year's Day.

And the **Marion-Polk-Yamhill Counties Labor Chapter** won't get to celebrate its 80th annual **Holiday Party at the Elsinore Theatre** in downtown

Salem. For 79 uninterrupted years, hundreds of children and their families in the three-county area have attended a free party that included a holiday movie, live Christmas music performed by union musicians, goodie bags filled with union-made goods, and a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus.

"The MPYCLC decided to not hold the holiday party this year due to the coronavirus and restrictions in place at this time," said Chapter President Will Music.

Iron Workers Local 29 has hosted a "**Breakfast with Santa**" party annually for the past 32 years. This year there won't be breakfast, but the festivities will carry on. On Dec. 5, the Iron Workers, their Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee, and the Ironworkers Credit Union will host a drive-through event at their union hall in Northeast Portland starting at 5:30 p.m. Volunteers will decorate the parking lot similar to the PIR light show, families will drive through a snow machine, stop by an ornament station, a hot cocoa stand, and at the end, drive by Santa Claus. Every child will get a present.

IN MEMORIAM

Brian Severns

June 8, 1949 - October 25, 2020

Brian Severns, a retired assistant directing business representative for Machinists District Lodge 24 (now District W 24), passed away Oct. 25 at the age of 71. He had been in declining health since undergoing brain surgery for an infection.



Brian Severns

A 42-year member of Local Lodge 63, Severns joined the union in October 1978 after taking what he thought would be a temporary job at the Portland shipyards. He became active in the union, serving as chief steward. In 1988, he was hired as a business representative for District Lodge 24. He served as assistant directing business representative to Dave Plant from 1992 to 2001.

"I gave Brian the toughest assignments because I was confident he could handle them," Plant said. "He was especially skilled in putting on arbitrations

of our members' grievances, with the best record of wins of anyone on our staff."

Severns retired in 2005 after an unsuccessful run for directing business representative.

During his 18 years on staff, Severns served as a trustee on the union-sponsored Western Metal Industry Pension Plan and the IAM Northwest Welfare Fund. He was appointed by General Vice President Justin Ostro to be the spokesperson for the Machinists at the West Coast Metal Trades Council.

Severns also served for many years as president of the Portland Metal Trades Council

BRIAN DOUGLAS SEVERNS was born June 8, 1949, in Camas, Washington. His family, which included two brothers, moved to Sweet Home, Oregon, where they grew up.

He earned a degree in political science from Portland State University in 1974.

In retirement, Severns and his wife Tonja lived in Boise, Idaho. He is survived by his wife.

At this time, no memorial services are scheduled.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

TriMet declares impasse in contract bargaining

An arbitrator will decide if the transit agency can scrap its mechanic apprenticeship program.

TriMet declared impasse Oct. 9 after nearly 12 months of union contract negotiations, beginning the process for the contract to be decided by an arbitrator. Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 757 and TriMet each submitted final offers Oct. 19. They'll have a chance to revise those offers after an arbitrator is selected.

Local 757 represents about 2,700 TriMet employees, including bus and light rail operators, mechanics, cleaners, and customer service representa-

tives. The union's previous three-year contract with TriMet expired Nov. 30, 2019.

ATU is proposing a three-year contract with 3.5% annual raises and a clause barring contracting out bus cleaning and maintenance work.

TriMet is proposing a two year contract—expiring Nov. 30, 2021—with just one 2% raise retroactive to Dec. 1, 2019, and no raise for 2020. TriMet also wants to delete all contract provisions that spell out its bus and light rail mechanic training programs, including requirements that existing low-paid service workers be given opportunities to apprentice as mechanics.

TriMet also wants to replace the term "journey worker" with technician, and says specifically that district employees won't maintain and repair electric or hybrid buses.

After an arbitrator is selected, there's a 30-day cooling off period, after which each party submits a revised final offer 14 days before an arbitration hearing. After the hearing, the arbitrator will pick one side's offer in its entirety.

"In a world where our lives are completely changed and the hazards are even higher, we're not asking for the moon," said ATU Local 757 Vice President Jon Hunt.

UFCW forms PAC to push for COVID-19 workers' comp

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 has put \$190,100 into a new political action committee (PAC) it formed Aug. 31. The funds came from three earlier PACs Local 555 set up last year to support potential ballot meas-

ures to make big corporations pay when their employees must rely on public assistance.

The new PAC is called Oregon Labor Policy Network. Overseen by Local 555 Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Anderson and political director Thomas Mosher, its purpose is to push the Legislature on issues like a

guarantee of workers' comp for workers who become ill from COVID-19 because of workplace exposure.

You can watch the campaign video, get updates, and sign a petition to Oregon lawmakers at oregonlaborpolicy.com and on the page at Facebook.com/ORLaborPolicy.

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