

Phipps' "Customer Service" recognized

The Phipps Nursery in Douglas County was selected from among 33 nominations for the Best in Customer Service Award from the State Management Association.

Two years ago, the nursery was in a downward spiral characterized by high costs and rising prices. It was not competing in the marketplace and workers were threatened with contracting out their jobs.

Then, in 1992's harvest season, production costs were reduced by more than \$100,000, grading productivity was increased to 72%, the customer base was doubled, and average seeding costs were lowered by 5%.

What made the difference was the significant involvement of frontline workers and their ideas to save money and avoid contracting out of jobs.

A unique labor-management committee was formed to work on ideas for reducing costs, increasing productivity, and improving communication.

By early in 1993, at the end of the second harvest with the labor-management committee, OPEU Local 629 member **Bonnie Reel** said, "We were able to save our jobs because of the contracting out language the Union won in 1983 and because we put together a campaign that took our message to the public and the politicians. We took the issue to the community, gathered petition signatures from our neighbors, local businesses, and politicians."

The seedling trees produced by the 15-million tree Phipps Nursery are widely recognized as being among the highest quality available, and the nursery has a loyal customer



Lisa Clemo, left, and Bonnie Reel at the 1994 Leadership Conference

base because of that quality.

"The labor-management committee is really a voice for labor," said **Lisa Clemo**, an OPEU Local 629 member at Phipps, who chaired the labor-management committee. "It helps keep the morale up. We feel like we're part of the team; we have more ownership in the work of the nursery."

"It's good to have the boss come in and work with us," said Reel.

Both Reel and Clemo emphasized that it is the shipping department at the nursery near Elkton in Douglas County that is responsible for the award.

"We've seen a vast improvement in efficiency," Reel said recently.

State nonstriables succeed with arbitrator

OPEU/SEIU Local 503's nonstriable bargaining unit, which struck out on its own to break the wage freeze after rejecting the state's final offer last September, won at least partial vindication in an arbitrator's award issued on January 28.

Arbitrator Howell Lankford awarded selective salary increases retroactive to September 1, 1993, as follows:

- 2.5% for Correctional Officers, Corporals, and Sergeants;
- 2.5% for Group Life Coordinators 1, 2, and 3;
- 1% for Mental Health Therapy Shift Coordinators, Mental Health Therapy Coordinators, Correctional Treatment Technicians, and Correctional Treatment Therapists 1 and 2.

Just as important, the arbitrator awarded the same deal negotiated for the striable bargaining unit on health insurance and Union Flex — rejecting the state's attempt to end fully paid benefits by imposing 50-50 cost-sharing for all premium increases.

Also at issue were differential pay (where the arbitrator awarded the same "med-giving differential" for Mental Health classes negotiated for the striable unit) and the second-year wage reopener (which the arbitrator granted over the state's objections).

The award means that fully paid health benefits are guaranteed for two years, and we now have a second-year reopener on raises for the striable and nonstriable units combined.

**CAPE interviews
Governor candidates
Pages 2, 3, & 15**

**District nomination
information, notice
Page 5**

**"Tiernan Tirades"
& the truth
Pages 6 & 7**

**"Bashers' Clubs":
Four Ballot measures
Page 8**

**Oregon Public Employees Union
SEIU Local 503, AFL-CIO, CLC
P.O. Box 12159
Salem, OR 97309-0159**

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 202
Salem, Oregon

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED