

Joint DAS/Higher Ed Bargaining Conference



SEIU Local 503, OPEU leaders from the state system of higher education campuses have already met twice to prepare for bargaining that won't start until 2003. FROM THE TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT:

Bargaining team chair Bart Lewis, from UofO Local 085, and SEIU Local 503, OPEU President Kathie Best, a member of OIT Local 090, led the meetings. Both meetings generated a wealth of ideas from a give-and-take of what worked and what didn't including ideas from; Jim Brobisky, of SOU Local 084; Betty Lucht, of OIT Local 090; Melody Williamson, of WOU Local 082; SEIU Local 503, OPEU Executive Director Leslie Frane, who spoke at the first leadership meeting; Ellen Klaastad, of UofO Local 085, and Zoe Birkle, of PSU Local 089.

As the "dog days" of summer approach, it's not too soon to start thinking about the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements that will affect nearly 20,000 state employees and higher education employees.

Consequently, a joint DAS and Higher Ed bargaining conference is underway in Salem as this issue of *The Oregon Public Employee* is going in the mail. Higher Ed bargaining leaders have already had two bargaining-related leadership conferences.

A number of SEIU Local 503, OPEU's local government and nonprofit contracts expire every year and in several different months. They prepare for bargaining as needed. (See story this page.) The members of Homecare Workers Local 099 have been at the table hammering out a historical first contract for some months now. (See story page 2.)

The joint DAS/Higher Ed bargaining conference is electing coalition chairs and members of the central bargaining teams; planning a strategy for winning a contract; setting the calendar and prioritizing issues to be included in the bargaining survey.

In conferences in May and June, Higher Ed leaders voiced concerns about healthcare, parity, layoffs and contracting out that have been problems at each campus over the past year and a half.

As they look forward to sitting down at the table for their first bargaining session, bargaining delegates and team members — whether from Higher Ed, DAS, local government, homecare or private nonprofit — are aware that:

- Our work with candidates running for the

Legislature, Governor, city councils, county commissions and other elected offices will have a tremendous influence on what we can achieve in negotiations. All members should be active politically from now until November for a better contract, for a better Oregon.

- Many of the measures put on the ballot either by initiative or referral will also affect our ability to negotiate a fair contract and to meet the needs of the students and faculty, our clients and the public generally.

- Our best bargaining proposals will be those that reflect the needs of the members. Volunteer to circulate bargaining surveys. Fill out your bargaining survey, help others with theirs and see that they are returned.

- Our ability to support our position at the bargaining table will be a reflection of solidarity in the workplace. Become a contract action team (CAT) member.

- Even after we go to the table, there will be several occasions when we will have to rally at the Legislature, at a state Higher Ed board meeting, at a council or commission meeting. Become an activist.

- Become a bargaining delegate. Your ideas are too important to go unheard. Attend a bargaining session to show support for the team and take back what you learn to the workplace.

At SEIU Local 503, OPEU, we organize for successful bargaining. The strength of our bargaining teams is related to the level of information and activism of our membership.

SEIU 503 Locals to Hold Joint Bargaining Conference

Bargaining team members, local officers and contract action team (CAT) members from the cities of Tualatin, Wilsonville, Tigard and Beaverton will come together July 27 to prepare for upcoming contract negotiations and hold a joint Bargaining Conference.

The conference will provide a forum to coordinate contract campaign and political strategies with locals from neighboring cities.

Speakers will include SEIU Local 503, OPEU Executive Director Leslie Frane and SEIU Local Government Political Organizer Abby Solomon.

Local leaders and SEIU Local 503 organizers Kathy Davis and Lane Toensmeier are already meeting to begin preparation for the upcoming negotiations. They will develop a timeline for membership meetings, electing a bargaining team, surveying members and organizing a contract action team (CAT).