

Members Win Improvements to Health Benefits



Congratulations to members at Portland Public Schools who reached a contract settlement last month. Nutrition Service workers organized phone trees to overcome the obstacle of having members off-site during the summer. These workers also leafleted, circulated petitions, picketed and testified at School Board meetings. They met directly with three School Board members, collected numerous postcards for the entire Board and turned out dozens of SEIU members for bargaining. Nutrition Services workers paid more money towards their health care than anyone else in the school district - and had the lowest contribution from the school district towards their health care. The contract they bargained brought their benefits to the same level as classified workers and ended a wage freeze. Pictured in the foreground are Nadejda Plotnikova (left) and Natalya Pavlova (right).

A rewarding and challenging experience

by Kathie Best, President, SEIU Local 503, OPEU

As I prepare to leave my position as SEIU Local 503, OPEU President, I do so with mixed emotions. Turning over the reins will certainly be bittersweet. The last four years as President have been both deeply rewarding, and tremendously challenging. I've learned a great deal from the members and staff of Local 503 and I feel blessed to have had this amazing opportunity and experience.

We've faced many highs and lows together, but ultimately, it was our ability to be united in our principles, in our goals and in our hearts that saw us through. It's also what makes the victories so very sweet. To share those with friends is the greatest reward.

The year ahead will prove to be a challenging one. With contract negotiations beginning for our three largest units, DAS, OUS and Homecare, electing our own local leadership, facing an extremely important national election, waiting for the Supreme Court's decision on PERS and continuing our fight to make health care more affordable and accessible in this country, we surely have our work cut out for us.

I'll remain a part of these fights as Local 503's new Communications Organizer. I'm excited about my new position and pleased to be able to utilize my experience, skills and sincere passion for this local and the labor

movement by serving in this new capacity. I look forward to working with members to build and advance our communications and our goals.

This is my last column as President, so with some paraphrasing of "The Union Worker's Bible," I leave you with the following. It's hard to dispute the fact that history proves that unions have accomplished miracles to improve the lives of workers, the employer and the country. We cannot expect the respect of management, or the public, if we do not deserve the respect of one another. We should not serve our personal needs by sacrificing the welfare of others.

We must remain vigilant, never becoming too satisfied with existing conditions. By seeking better wages and working conditions, more opportunity for individual advancement and personal fulfillment, and increased security in both employment and life itself, working people have not only participated in the American dream; they have, in fact, defined it.

In strength and unity,

Kathie

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Kathie Best
President



Power Tool.

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Important Bargaining Dates:

November 13: Homecare Bargaining Conference

December 4: DAS/OUS Bargaining Conference

December 6 is the first day of bargaining for DAS. Support your Bargaining Team!