

# Homecare Workers' Historic Founding Convention

*Over 120 homecare workers and clients from around Oregon came together for the historic Founding Convention of Homecare Workers Union, Local 99 in Salem on January 26 and 27. With over 2,000 members statewide, the new Local is organized as a part of a national campaign with over 200,000 homecare workers within Service Employees International Union.*

**T**he Founding Convention was the first statewide gathering of homecare workers and clients. People from as far away as Eastern Oregon and the South Coast came to participate in the two days of action. We learned about the campaign and the legislative and organizing challenges we face on the path to better wages, decent benefits, and higher quality of care for our clients. We had an opportunity to visit with other homecare workers, and to share our stories and our hopes.

On Friday, homecare workers and clients flooded the Capitol, meeting with legislators, urging them to implement Ballot Measure 99 and support the Homecare Commission.

On Saturday, homecare workers adopted the Constitution and By-Laws that will govern our Local and opened nominations for 15 elected leadership positions that will make up the Homecare Council, Local 99 (see page 7).

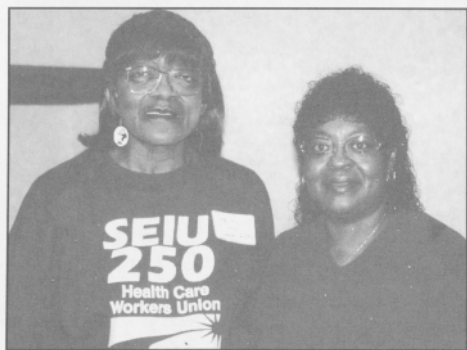
Fellow homecare workers from Local 250 in California came to share the history of their struggle and victories and how they improved wages and benefits under their union

contract (see story, below).

Homecare union members and clients left with renewed commitment to organize other homecare workers in their communities and to continue to press the legislature to implement BM99. We also pledged to stand together in our campaign to ensure respect and dignity for workers **and** our clients.

Truly, our Founding Convention was a big step forward, but there are many challenges ahead in our path to achieve a fair contract. Our union is only as strong as we make it through our membership and participation. **If you are not a union member, join today!** It's one of the most important decisions you will make. Fill out the enclosed membership application and mail it in. **If you are already a member, get involved!** It will take commitment and hard work to build a strong union, but together, we can improve our lives and the lives of our clients. Contact Danica Finley in the Portland area at 800-527-9374 x 114 or email at [finleyd@opeuseiu.org](mailto:finleyd@opeuseiu.org), or Andrew Barnes at 800-521-3446 or email at [barnesa@opeuseiu.org](mailto:barnesa@opeuseiu.org).

## California Homecare Workers Share Struggles and Successes At Founding Convention



**Helen Hall and Rosie Beyer**

Helen Hall from Contra Costa, and Rosie Beyers from San Francisco, homecare workers and union activists from SEIU Local 250, joined us to share their experiences. Rosie, Union Vice President from San Francisco, described how workers in her local went from minimum wage and no benefits to their current union contract which includes \$9.70/hour, plus medical and dental insurance, and a pension plan. "It wasn't easy. It took years of hard work and action," Rosie told the crowd. "When the County realized we were not going to go away, things began to change. Today, because of our efforts, the union has made a real difference in the quality of life for our members and for the clients we serve."

Helen shared a similar story. Contra Costa homecare workers created a homecare commission, won a union election and bargained their first contract about three years ago. Helen explained that not only do they now receive better wages and benefits, but workers in her local get more training and support to provide the quality of care their clients deserve. "It

took a lot of work and perseverance," Helen said. "We sent letters and postcards to politicians. We went to lots of meetings, visited and called lots of homecare workers. And in the end, WE WON!"

Helen and Rosie explained how they recently helped 9,000 homecare workers in Sacramento County join SEIU. "We sent our members and staff in to help them win their union election," Helen remembers. "Over 95% of the Sacramento caregivers voted YES to join the union."

Not only were Helen and Rosie inspirational in sharing their successes in California, but they were inspired by our Founding Convention. As she left for the airport, Rosie said, "I can't wait to share with my union what homecare workers are doing in Oregon. We will definitely be back to help."