

# President's Corner



Joy'e Willman

## Reflections from our Immediate Past President

It has been 14 months now since we started bargaining our Homecare contract.

In that time, we have welcomed in our newest group of workers - providers for people with developmental disabilities and mental illness - and then educated ourselves and the state as to their needs and our stand to bring them into the fold of Homecare local 99. Welcome one and all.

It's been a long road with a lot of ups and downs at the bargaining table. This is the first time ever that we could not come to an agreement with the state about some key issues, so we are now in what is called Arbitration. That is where the union and the state each give our "Best Final Offer" to the Arbitrator and she listens to the facts presented by each side, then she makes a decision which is final. We feel that we have presented a good case on our side and hopefully she will make the right decision and agree with us on our offer.

I would like to thank everyone who has been with us through it all, making phone calls, writing letters, going to Lobby Days, rallies and coming to the table fighting the fight for thousands of workers. Our bargaining team has really done a great job representing us all, and I appreciate and respect their dedication.

As we go forward I hope every member considers joining CAPE and exercises their right to vote in the upcoming elections to help get the people voted in who will do the best job for us all.

I look forward to seeing many of you at General Council and other upcoming events.

## A Plea from our New President



Rebecca Sandoval

Hello fellow Homecare workers, I am very excited to become the president of such an important and dynamic group of people. I am especially excited because I see what wonderful and amazing things we have already accomplished and even more wonderful and amazing things going forward--together! We fought very hard to save Health Care for Homecare, and we won! No matter what happens in the final stages of our contract negotiations, we held the line on the number of hours needed to qualify for Health Care--the state has agreed to keep it at 80 hours. We were also victorious on keeping our paid time off. These are huge victories, and they are totally due to the diligent, hard-fought campaign that we waged to convince the powers that be--the Governor and the Legislature--that Homecare workers in Oregon are a political force to be reckoned with. The SEIU 503 Board of Directors invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in our campaign; and our excellent SEIU staff provided us with the plans and direction for an incredibly successful campaign. Many of our SEIU 503 brothers and sisters from other sectors joined us over and over again as we took our message to the politicians that had the future of our program in their hands. All of this proves that the statement "stronger together" is way more than just a phrase--it is absolutely true!

I am also very excited to say that this is just the beginning. Our victory is secure, but our future is not. More than anything, I have learned from this fight that we absolutely must step up and band together in even larger numbers to make sure that the future of Homecare is protected. Our program is not just the most cost efficient way to care for seniors and people with disabilities; it is also the most humane. The most fundamental personal freedom is the freedom to choose where one lives. Our program makes it possible for our society's most vulnerable citizens to choose to live in their own homes, and this basic freedom must be protected. It falls to those of us who do this work, those of us who have proven that we can make a real difference in Oregon politics, to lead the fight to preserve the future of public services.

There are forces in this country and this state who want very much to do away with public services, and they have a lot of money on their side. But we have something even better; we have "Truth", compassion, dedication, and the power of our potential to exert political power. Corporate America and the very wealthy may have very deep pockets, and with the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling they can now try to buy our politicians. But we have something even more valuable than all of their money. We have our votes, and the politicians need us to get into office and to stay there. The Homecare sector of SEIU is huge--we number somewhere around 20,000 now. That is a huge number. In fact, Governor Kitzhaber only won by 17,000 votes last time. The path before us is clear: We have to get all homecare workers involved in this fight. It starts with getting all of us registered to vote and educated about what is going on, then continues with us taking our case to our fellow Oregonians. So, even if you are not inclined to become involved in Union activities or politics, WE NEED YOU NOW--WE NEED YOU LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

I believe that we can win this fight. We have a proven track record, but it is going to take all of us. We can save the future of Homecare--the future of the people we care for-- if we pull together. The time is now, and the people are us. As your president, I plan to lead the charge: LET'S SAVE HOMECARE--TOGETHER!!! Thank you.