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PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

James Curry, 24, is an organizer for the Burgerville Workers' Union, which recently got its third Portland area Burgerville restaurant to become federally recognized as a union shop allowing workers to bargain collectively for wages and working conditions, making Burgerville the only fast food chain in the nation to have unionized employees.

Power ^{to} the Workers

Fast food employees grow movement for rights and wages

BY DANNY PETERSON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Burgerville employee James Curry is on the front lines of a successful fight for

workers rights and livable wages and he expects more victories in the New Year. Portland made history when workers at three area Burgerville restaurants voted last year for collective bargaining rights, the first fast food restaurant chain in the nation to have unionized employees.

The latest Burgerville Workers Union to gain recognition was for employees at the Burgerville at 1122 S.E. Hawthorne

Blvd., joining workers at the Burgerville on Southeast 92nd and

Powell, and at the Burgerville serving Gladstone and Milwaukie. Many more shops beyond those three have prominent union committees, Curry said.

Curry, 24, works at the Hawthorne shop and has been an employee and organizer for the union for the past two years. He told the Portland Observer that despite some stress due to anti-union pressure he's received from Burgerville management, he feels good overall about the progress made.

"The future's bright, excited about what's coming next. Both for my shop and the union as a whole," Curry said.

Burgerville employees and supporters held their first ever picket at the Hawthorne Burgerville a few days after store employees voted, 13-9, to unionize.

The main issue was a demand for Burgerville corporate offices to pick up the pace of its labor negotiations and of-

fer counter-proposals in response to the union's proposed \$5 hourly raise for all workers, protections for undocumented workers, accessible health care, and 15 minute breaks.

The demonstration came amidst a companywide boycott that the union has held since February, and will remain in effect until corporate signs a fair contract, organizers said.

"It's taken many months to get two mild tentative agreements," Curry exclaimed. "Burgerville is definitely dragging their feet and trying to make this take as long as possible."

The delay won't stop the solidarity of Burgerville employees, Curry said, despite efforts from corporate to pit employees against each other.

An anti-union flier, which claimed "union management" would "enforce dues" on its members spooked some em-

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