

Local 888 Members Plan for Future

Hundreds of SEIU Local 888 members and guests came together for last month's membership convention—the largest gathering since Local 888 was formed in 2003. Members attended from across the state, representing chapters large and small. "The convention was a testament to the members of Local 888," says President Mark DelloRusso. "The commitment to building our union was truly an inspiration for us all."

Key note speaker Tom Woodruff, SEIU Executive

and resources to be stronger. Dues Equality is the critical step we have to take to reach that goal," said Rodrigues.

Members took to the floor to speak and ask questions about the proposed dues measure for more than an hour. Mashpee Department of Public Works employee Jim Corcoran spoke to the issue of fairness. "Unions are about treating everyone fairly. Treat everyone fairly and we can be a stronger union."



STRONGER TOGETHER—SEIU Local 888 President Mark DelloRusso with union members and leaders at the bi-annual membership convention.

Vice President, spoke about the attacks on public sector employees, and urged delegates to get involved in order to fight for a better future. "The one percent has one clear goal: keeping working people from standing up and fighting back collectively," Woodruff warned the crowd. "We need to change the debate. We have to get more of our members involved than ever before."

In a presentation to delegates on the proposed Dues Equality measure, which places all members on the same 1.6 percent dues structure, Secretary-Treasurer Brenda Rodrigues explained that adequate resources are key to building a stronger, more effective union. In recent months, Rodrigues, DelloRusso and other Local 888 leaders visited dozens of chapters across the state and heard a common refrain. "We heard that chapters need more help

Others talked about their hopes for a better union and said that they are encouraged by Local 888's new direction. "A lot of things are changing for the better," said Lori Moran of the Watertown Town Hall Associates. "I like the idea that as a small chapter we can be stronger."

The resolution for Dues Equality passed by more than a 3 to 1 margin in a secret ballot vote. The new dues structure will be phased in beginning in January 2013.

In addition to the Dues Equality measure, members also passed a resolution urging resistance to employer efforts to shift insurance costs to workers and strongly supporting reforms that build on the national Medicare program as a model to contain health care costs and the best way to achieve a single high standard of health care for everyone in America.

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CHANGE AGENT— Lisa Field (left) with friend Jody Boudreault at their 25th reunion at Taunton's Coyle-Cassidy High School. Field, who joined the staff of Local 888 in August, is also an advocate for public higher education in Massachusetts.

Staff Profile: Regional Representative Lisa Field

Lisa Field, who became the regional representative for Local 888 back in August, knows a thing or two about a rebuilding a union. Field was working in the library at Fitchburg State University when the school announced the coming layoffs of twenty employees. Concerned that FSU management was ignoring the contract and were likely to pick and choose who they wanted to lay off, Field decided to step up and get involved. She became the steward, a position she held for four years, before running for president of her AFSCME local that represents 3,000 state and community college employees across Massachusetts. "Our goal was to get as many people involved as we could and really revitalize the local," says Field.

Field would go on to work for AFSCME Council 93 as a staff representative for three years, working with 2,800 members in public education and in 22 cities and towns. These days Field spends most of her time assisting Local 888 members, primarily in Worcester County. Field says that she's particularly excited by the opportunity to help rebuild and reinvigorate a union. "The way SEIU is organized, the members have a lot of say. The leadership is held accountable by the members—that's significant," says Field.

While Field's days as a campus library worker may be in the past, she continues to advocate for public higher education and sits on the board of PHENOM, the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts. Says Field: "As a child of an immigrant, affordable public higher education has enabled me to live the American dream. I want those same opportunities not only for my kids but for all kids in Massachusetts." ■

Brockton Unions Join Forces on Health Care

A coalition of public service unions in Brockton, including SEIU Local 888, has reached an agreement that will ultimately save the city an estimated \$28 million in employee and retiree health insurance costs. The agreement preserves the right of service workers in Brockton to negotiate over their benefits while generating significant savings that will be split between the city and its health plan subscribers.

Until recently, every public employee union in Brockton negotiated over health insurance benefits individually, either with the City or the School Committee. Last summer, local unions, including Local 888, which represents city department

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heads, library personnel, school cafeteria workers and administrative personnel, began working together in an effort to find a solution to soaring city health insurance costs.

"By coalition bargaining with employees from different unions and retirees as equal partners, Brockton has demonstrated historic leadership for the people who provide services in that city and showing that unions will work to protect the health care of their members," said Brenda Rodrigues, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 888. "By agreeing to uphold the right of unions to bargain over health insurance, the city council put their differences aside and the unions proved that a lot can be accomplished when people sit down and work through problems like this together." ■

If you are interested in forming a coalition of unions in your city or town, contact Jen Springer at jspringer@seiu888.org

Local 888 Latino Caucus is on the Move



ONE COMMUNITY—Members of Local 888's new Latino caucus. The group seeks to get Latino and Haitian union members more involved.

Villafranca notes that the group's model for a forceful Latino Caucus comes from Local 721 in California, which has a caucus hundreds strong. The Local 888 group, which has been meeting regularly, also hopes to join forces with the SEIU International Latino Caucus. In the meantime, caucus members are reaching out to Latino and Haitian workers. "We want workers to come to us with workplace issues and work together to find a solution." Caucus members are also creating a fund that will help members who need emergency assistance, including help with rent or food. ■

For more information about the Latino caucus, contact Christina Villafranca at cvillafranca@seiu888.org. Meetings are on the first Wednesday of every month at the SEIU Local 888 union hall in Charlestown.

New Leader Training

Attention chapter chairs, presidents and new leaders. SEIU Local 888 is holding a Leadership Training Initiative that will focus on:

- Fundamentals of chapter administration
- Strategies and tips to build a more effective organization
- Enlisting more member activists
- Tactics for gaining strength in collective bargaining
- Running effective and productive meetings

When: Sat, December 1, 8:30am – 5:00pm

Where: SEIU Local 888 Union Hall - 52 Roland Street, Charlestown

For more information, call 617.241.3300 or email rsvp@seiu888.org.

Local 888 Caucus Update

In addition to the new Latino Caucus, Local 888 members are also invited to be part of the Lavender Caucus and the African American Caucus, or AFRAM.

AFRAM Caucus

AFRAM Caucus members kicked off the school year by donating new school supplies to hundreds of local students at a fundraiser hosted by the MW Hiram Grand Lodge and Baystate Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M., Inc. Members are now gearing up for 2013 AFRAM National Conference in Los Angeles in April. For more information contact Lorna Pleas at 617.792.8853 or Anita Christian at 617.513.9684.

Lavender Caucus

The Lavender Caucus is composed of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender individuals and their friends/supporters who are members in good standing of SEIU. For more information contact Tony Fernandez at 617.924.8509.



AWARD WINNING Local 888 member Beth Rosenblum was recently honored for her work as the conservation administrator for the town of Southborough and for her dedication to her local community.

Local 888's Rosenblum Wins "Green" Prize

When Beth Rosenblum got the call that she'd been selected to receive this year's Sudbury Valley Trustees' Distinguished Public Service Award, she could hardly believe it. "My first thought was 'why am I being recognized?' I've always worked as part of a team."

Rosenblum, who works as the conservation administrator for the town of Southborough, was recognized for the 12 years she has served on the Ashland Open Space committee. Rosenblum also helps to coordinate Green Up Ashland, the town's annual Earth Day celebration that features a town-wide clean up. The Distinguished Public Service award honors an individual who has demonstrated exceptional leadership in local, state or national government service.

In addition to her environmental activism, Rosenblum is also an active union member. She has been a member of the Local 888 Executive Board for the past year and a half, and serves as vice-chapter chair of her unit in Southborough. Rosenblum says that a belief in the power of collective action inspires her. "Whatever the issue, we have so much more strength when we're unified," says Rosenblum. ■

Coming up in the Dec. Spark:

- **Meet the AFRAM caucus**
- **Member political organizer Carla Elder**
- **Local spotlight: a dispatcher goes above and beyond the call of duty**

Members Plan for Future

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LISTEN UP—Local 888 members listen to a speaker at last month's convention. The gathering was the largest since Local 888 was formed in 2003.

A third resolution—passed unanimously—supported uniting more workers in Local 888 to win good jobs and a stronger voice to improve public services by identifying new opportunities resulting from the restructuring of government and public services to unite more workers in the private sector.

A resolution on a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) failed to win support from the Local 888 executive board, but nevertheless was adopted by the membership after an impassioned presentation by Greg King on the floor of the convention. The FTT would place a half a percent federal tax on financial transactions, yielding as much as \$350 billion a year in new revenues for much needed services and other social benefits. *Copies of the four resolutions adopted at the convention are posted on the Local 888 website at www.seiu888.org/convention/*

Special guest, Boston City Councillor Charles Yancey, summed up the spirit of the convention when he praised members for fighting for all working people. "[I]f we fail to protect the rights of all workers, then we fail to protect our future and we fail to live up to the beliefs on which we have been raised." ■

Got the Card?

Your Local 888 membership card gives you access to special discounts and benefits as well as entry into all meetings and special events. If you haven't received yours, contact Local 888 at admin@seiu888.org or call 617.241.3300.

