

Chapter Reports

Holyoke Soldiers Home

Sixty members who work at the Holyoke Soldiers Home attended a special chapter meeting with Local 888 leaders Mark DelloRusso and Brenda Rodrigues on Nov. 26. The meeting gave members an opportunity to air their concerns about workplace issues like access to earned vacation and personal days, and scheduling.

A number of representation issues raised by members were also discussed. Brenda Rodrigues announced that a new Local 888 rep will be assigned to the home. Recognizing that the chapter needs to become stronger, Rodrigues urged members to participate in union training and several immediately volunteered.

The group also discussed issues of common concern regarding upcoming legislation and renewed funding for the home. Along similar lines, forty

members signed postcards to Congress urging their elected representatives to stand up for vital services and quality jobs.

After the meeting, DelloRusso, Rodrigues and Local 888 staff met with Superintendent Paul Barabani, who committed

to holding a labor management meeting in the next two weeks.

Woburn City Hall

Two Woburn City Hall members in the DPW office recently won upgrades. With the assistance of Steward Andrea DiMambro and Chapter President Carol Nagle, Donna Hakemian and Elaine Sutherland were each upgraded one grade retroactive to July 1, 2012. Donna was upgraded from Head Clerk to Secretary and Elaine from Principal Clerk to Head Clerk. They had both taken on the majority of the duties previously performed by the DPW dispatcher. "Elaine did an outstanding job explaining the change in responsibilities in a meeting with the Woburn Mayor and the Director of Human Resources," said Local 888 Rep. Colleen Doherty.



Kwesi Ablordeppey, who works at the Holyoke Soldiers Home and is also a Local 888 Executive Board member, speaks with a coworker.

Local 888 Calendar

SEIU Local 888 / BCYF Holiday Party

When: Saturday, December 22
8:00 PM - 2:00 AM

Where: The Philips House, 818 Morrissey Blvd.,
Dorchester, MA 02124

RSVP by December 8 to Domingos DaRosa
SEIU Local 888 BCYF Chapter Chair
DomingosDaRosa1@gmail.com or 617.892.0175

National Labor College

The National Labor College offers affordable, on-line college degrees to union members. College credit is also available for training and work experience. Online bachelor's degrees are available in construction management, business administration, emergency readiness and response management and labor studies. The National Labor College is tailor-made for full-time working men and women by providing an affordable and flexible option to finish your college degree. The NLC accepts most transfer credits from community colleges, military training, union classes and apprenticeships. Students study online, on their own schedule. NLC is also less expensive than you might think—at \$305/credit, tuition is highly discounted for union members, staff and adult family members. To find out more, call the National Labor College at 1.888.427.8100 or visit www.NLC.edu/Start. Be sure to ask about the Union Plus National Labor College Scholarship. Spring classes start January 7th.



Local 888 members who work at the Holyoke Soldiers Home.

The Spark

December, 2012

Local 888
SEIU
Stronger Together

Jobs, Not Cuts!

Daniel Dessin has a message for SEIU Local 888 members: the fiscal cliff is coming and it's serious. "We're talking about automatic budget cuts that are going to take a huge toll on essential services," says Dessin, a former Local 888 member who is now a political organizer.

The fiscal cliff is short-hand for across-the-board tax increases and deep budget cuts scheduled to go into effect in 2013 unless Congress acts. And while the political outcome may be uncertain, the economic forecast of going "off the cliff" points to a return to recession and job losses. How will the fiscal cliff affect you? The average family will see a tax increase of \$2000, while essential services including Medicaid, Head Start and programs for veterans will see funding slashed.

Dessin and a team of Local 888 member political organizers have been going door to door and chapter to chapter to talk to members about the consequences of the fiscal cliff. "One way or another, this will have a negative impact on you or someone you know. We need to let members of Congress know—they were sent to Washington to do a job." ■

National Day of Action Protect Vital Public Services and Quality Jobs in Our Communities

On Monday, December 10, join friends, neighbors and community leaders as we tell Congress: *it's time to get to work on the issues that really matter*. The decisions our elected leaders make in the coming weeks will have a huge impact on our entire community. Stand up and make your voice heard!

When: Monday, December 10, 1:00 - 2:30 PM

Where: Faneuil Hall, 1 Faneuil Hall Sq, Boston

For more information, visit www.seiu888.org or contact Dan Hoffer at 617.642.3588.

Training to Lead

Local 888 members are ready to lead. That's thanks to a recent training session attended by more than 25 members and facilitated by the UMass Labor Extension Program. The training was intended to assist members in strengthening their chapters by getting coworkers more involved. Participants also had a chance to practice one-on-one organizing and come up with plans for how to implement their new expertise when back at their chapters. For many of



LOCAL LEADERS—Local 888's first leader training session drew members from around the state to learn skills to strengthen and lead their chapters.

the members who participated, the training provided an opportunity to meet and learn from fellow union activists.

Anthony Meeks spends his days trying to connect "hard-to-reach" youth to needed services and resources in Boston. But the training quickly taught him how much he has in common with public servants in more suburban parts of the state. "It really gave me a sense of unity across our chapters," says Meeks. "By talking to other stewards, you learn that we all experience similar challenges. It's exciting to work together and find solutions."

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Profile: Steve D'Amico, Field Representative

When Steve D'Amico decided to run for state representative in 2006, he was still grieving the recent loss of his wife to breast cancer. "I wanted to do something to make her proud," recalls D'Amico, who won office and served two terms representing the 4th Bristol district. D'Amico arrived on Beacon Hill having never held elected



Field Representative Steve D'Amico served two terms on Beacon Hill as a state representative before joining Local 888.

office before, but his commitment to social and economic justice has been lifelong. After college he worked as a community organizer in Providence, where he trained local residents to fight for their rights. "My values were really set early on," says D'Amico,

who lives in Seekonk and has long been active in local politics and community organizations. D'Amico lost his re-election bid in 2010 to a Republican challenger and immediately went in search of what he describes, only half joking, as "more honest work to do." These days, D'Amico is serving as a representative of a different kind. He works for Local 888 assisting municipal workers, who, he says, have been unfairly blamed for the nation's financial woes. "Public servants didn't cause this mess—it was caused by Wall Street," says D'Amico.

His work at Local 888 enables him to advocate for the causes that are near and dear to him, especially building stronger unions in order to protect and strengthen working families. "The reason that working people are under attack is because unions are under attack," says D'Amico. "The challenge for us is to show people that unions make us stronger." ■

Local 888 Collects Toys for Tots

Local 888 is proud to partner with the U.S. Marines and Toys for Tots this holiday season to help brighten the holidays for local children.

Since the program was founded in 1947, Toys for Tots has provided deserving families with the joy of a new gift on Christmas. The mission of the Toys for Tots program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year, and distribute the toys as gifts to needy children in the community.



Toys can be dropped off at the Local 888 union hall in Charlestown, Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The toy collection will run through Saturday, Dec. 15.

For more information, contact Brenda Rodrigues at 617.241.3322.

Training to Lead

Continued from cover

Weymouth van driver Diane Foley says that she arrived at the training believing that the difficulties her unit deals with—lack of member involvement, meetings that aren't as effective as they could be—were specific to Weymouth. "I learned that the issues we face in our chapter aren't unique to us. Everybody is facing similar challenges," says Foley.

For other members the big reward came in meeting other members, all of whom are stepping up to lead their union. "This was the first training for many in attendance," says Beth Rosenblum, the conservation administrator for the town of Southborough and vice-chapter chair of her unit. "Local 888 is incubating a whole new batch of future leaders. Good job!" ■

For information about future trainings, contact your Local 888 representative.

Spotlight on: Scituate



Members of Local 888 who belong to three different units in Scituate have a lot to celebrate these days. All three units—the Scituate Aides and Tutors, the School Secretaries and Clerks and the School Cafeteria Personnel—have negotiated and ratified new contracts with strong member support. All three units saw success at the bargaining table because they engaged members, encouraged member input and spoke up and stood their ground when necessary. Here's a look:

Scituate Aides & Tutors

Don't call them Scituate Aides & Tutors anymore—meet the Scituate Paraprofessionals. The paras say that the new name is more than symbolic; it reflects a demand by the membership to be treated as professionals. That new spirit is also reflected in their recently ratified contract. In addition to raises of 1, 1.5 and 1.5 percent over a three year contract, highlights of the agreement include the creation of an employee sick leave bank, release time for union leaders, and language that ties layoffs and recalls to qualifications and seniority. The paras will also be paid for a full hour of work when they substitute; the previous contract reimbursed them for just 50 minutes. But the paras say that they are most pleased that the new contract recognizes the essential services they provide. "The Superintendent and the Chairman of the School Committee listened to us, investigated our proposals and recognized the need to create a well-deserved wage scale for us," says Joan Pritchard, the Local 888 field representative who assisted the negotiating team.

Negotiating team members: Denise Fairhurst, Maureen Keys and Julie Lavanchy. Not pictured: Paula Higgins.



Negotiating team members: Peggy Duggan, Robin Hunter and Jeanne Mullen.



Scituate School Secretaries and Clerks

Teamwork works. That's the lesson of the successful contract negotiations recently concluded by the Scituate Secretaries. The unit signed off on a three-year contract that includes raises in each year. Other gains include an increase in tuition reimbursement, an increase in sicktime buy back and release time for union meetings. One group of school secretaries works twelve month a year, while others work ten months a year. The year-round group agreed to give up a holiday the day before Thanksgiving so that their ten-month counterparts would receive three additional vacation days to be used any time during the school year. The result: a contract that was overwhelmingly approved by the membership and a stronger unit where all members have a voice.

Scituate School Cafeteria Personnel

Scituate School Cafeteria Personnel approved a new contract by a unanimous vote of 19-0. The three year contract includes a position, the high school kitchen manager, that was removed from the bargaining unit years ago and that current members fought hard to get back. The contract includes raises in each year, increases longevity and extends vacation days to cover half days. Team members also were successful in getting contract language that will help them run their unit more effectively, including extended time to file grievances and release time for officers. ■



Negotiating team members: Susan Hanks, Co-chapter chairs Louise Fitzgerald and Marylou Jacobucci, and Donna DeMello.