

## Stewards hone bargaining skills at annual seminar

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On Saturday, March 6, 250 Shop Stewards gathered at the Washington State Convention Center for the 22nd annual Teamsters Local 117 Shop Stewards' Seminar and Appreciation Day.

The event kicked off with a welcome from newly-elected King County Executive, Dow Constantine, followed by a look at the history of the Local presented by Director of Organizing and Strategic Initiatives, Leonard Smith.

After looking back, Secretary-Treasurer, Tracey A. Thompson, took the Stewards into the future. "Our number one priority as a Union must be to increase the involvement of the members," Thompson said. "Only by increasing membership involvement will we continue to grow and build strong contracts."

There are two essential ingredients for encouraging member involvement, Thompson noted. Those are: 1) developing leaders and 2) welcoming new members into the Union. Thompson cited the Teamsters for Tomorrow leadership summit held last November and the Steward Advisory Council as examples of building leadership and said that the new member orientation meetings due to start this spring would help welcome new members into their Union.

Other Local 117 priorities include expanding Union visibility, organizing both internally and externally, dues enforcement, staff development, and Teamsters coordination.

Stewards were joined by two International Union Vice Presidents, Al Hobart and Rome Aloise, who told the assembled Stewards that Local 117 is the best Local in the Union in terms of the strength of its leadership, member involvement, and representation.

Teamsters Local 117 Executive Board member and former Secretary-Treasurer, John Williams, was also on hand. Williams recently replaced Al Hobart as the new President of Teamsters Joint Council 28, the parent body of twelve Teamsters Locals representing 56,000 members across Washington and Alaska.

The theme of this year's seminar was collective bargaining. General Counsel and veteran negotiator, Spencer Thal, shared his insight into specific strategies and tactics that can be used at the table to help bargain a stronger agreement.

In the first of two 45-minute break-outs that followed, Organizer, Brenda Wiest, led the Stewards in a session on internal organizing and building power in the workplace.

In the second breakout and to the entertainment of all, Local 117 staff performed two skits, one for members in the public sector and one for members in the private sector. The skits simulated the many challenges that the Union faces in bargaining. Business Representative, John Scarcy, and Staff Attorney, James V. Smith II, moderated the lively debate that broke out during the skits. The event ended with a lunchtime talk from Seattle Times financial journalist, Jon Talton.

Each of the Shop Stewards walked away with a Teamsters Local 117 duffel bag as a thank you for the tremendous work they do in making Local 117 a first-rate Union that is committed to

protecting and expanding the rights of working families.



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