



# Teamsters South Sound



Members of Teamsters Local 117

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## Pierce County Forensic Investigator a proud Teamster



Teamsters Local 117 Forensic Investigator, Skip Mason, of the Pierce County Sheriff's Department

**T**eamsters Local 117 member, Skip Mason, has been around the block.

In a career spanning several decades now, Mason has spent stints as a Locomotive Engineer for the Union Pacific Railroad and an Auxiliary Commander for the Coast Guard.

He has worked at county Police Departments in both Maui and in Forks.

Years ago, Mason even bought and operated a small fishing resort for a spell, in Sekiu on the Olympic Peninsula.

Mason has moved around so much he can hardly believe that his current gig – a Forensic Investigator at the Pierce County Sheriff's Department – has lasted eighteen years.

"It's been a great career and I've gained some valuable insights along the way," he says. One of the things Mason says he's learned is the need for a strong Union.

"I've always recognized the need for representation," he said. "Maybe it's because I've had so many different kinds of jobs. There is always something to bargain for – overtime, on-call pay, call outs, comp time, vacation, health care – you name it."

### PIERCE COUNTY ORGANIZING

As a strong Union supporter, it should come as no surprise that Mason was one of the leaders in helping six Investigators and eight Property Room Officers in the Forensics Department of the Pierce County Sheriff's Department gain representation with Teamsters Local 117.

The group's effort to join the Teamsters started with several meetings that Mason helped organize with now retired Local 117 Business Representative, Mary Ann Brennan.

"It was pretty unanimous," Mason said of his group's desire to form a Union. "In our line of work, there are a lot of safety issues and we wanted to make sure those are addressed in bargaining."

As forensic specialists, Mason and his co-

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## Transitions strengthen Union in South Sound

**I**t is a time of exciting transitions for Local 117 in the South Sound region as we bid farewell to Business Representative and Public Sector Coordinator, Mary Ann Brennan, and welcome aboard new Local 117 Business Representative, Jeff Clark.

Mary Ann started her Teamsters career when she joined the office staff at Teamsters Local 313 over 25 years ago.

In 1992, she moved to Local 599, where she worked for many years as a Business Representative. In 2003, Mary Ann joined Local 117, where she was a Business Representative and Public Sector Coordinator for seven years.

On July 1, 2010, Mary Ann retired, saying goodbye to the countless members she represented over her remarkable career as a Teamster.

With Mary Ann's impending retirement,



New Local 117 Business Representative, Jeff Clark



Retiring Business Representative, Mary Ann Brennan

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## Forensics

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workers take blood samples, collect shell casings and fingerprints, take photographs and reconstruct crime scenes. They also test weapons confiscated during a crime.

During ballistics testing, they discharge firearms into small, metal box padded with Kevlar vests (see photo on page 1). Testing takes place in the secured basement of the Sheriff's Office in downtown Tacoma.

"This is one of the most dangerous parts of our job," Mason said. "If something goes awry down there, you could lie on the floor for hours and nobody would find you."

In bargaining with the County, Mason and his group insisted that two individuals be present during ballistics testing. "With two individuals present, one person can call for help," he said.

"This is exactly the reason that having representation with the Teamsters is important."

### *Help elect supporters of working families!*

With over 16,000 members statewide, your Local Union's ability to impact the electoral landscape is huge. Your knowledge and experience are the most powerful tools to hold policymakers accountable to the critical issues impacting our communities.

Please join Teamsters Local 117 Political Action Coordinator, Lily Wilson-Codega, and other Local 117 activists at one of our upcoming Legislative and Political Action Committee meetings to find out how.

For more information, contact Lily at 206-441-4860 ext. 1262.



Chris Winters (l) and Local 117 retiree Bob Francis (r) pose in front of the bell destined for PC Workers' Memorial.

## Commemorating fallen workers

It is a project that is decades in the making – a memorial in Pierce County for workers who die on the job.

Now, with the unwavering support of the Pierce County Central Labor Council, and the help of committed unionists like retired Local 117 member, Bob Francis, and IUPAT Local 1964 Business Representative, Chris Winters, it might just come to fruition.

"We've partnered with the City of Tacoma and Tacoma Metro Parks to identify a location for the memorial," said Francis. "We're hoping to begin construction on April 28, 2011."

April 28 has a special significance for fallen workers. It is the day that Labor and Industries has designated as Workers' Memorial Day. Francis says they hope to complete the project in 2012.

"No one deserves to be killed on the job," says Winters. "We all expect to go to work, do our job, and then go home to our families. This memorial is a reminder that there are real dangers on the job and that workplace safety needs to be taken seriously."

Winters, a journeyman painter by trade, helped restore the bell that the architects of the project say will toll once for every

worker killed on the job in a ceremony on April 28 of each year.

In 2009, 73 workers died in the State of Washington from job-related injuries or illnesses, 13 of them in Pierce County.

### **MEMBERS RALLY TO SUPPORT FALLEN BROTHER**

For Teamsters Local 117, this issue strikes close to home. Last year, our Union lost Luis Rodriguez in an industrial accident at Simon Metals, LLC, in Tacoma. Rodriguez was an active member in Local 117's Latino Caucus.

In the wake of his death, Union members donated several thousands of dollars to his wife and three young children.

Winters and Francis point out that, though police and fire fighters have memorials for their fallen brothers and sisters, there is no site in Pierce County that commemorates other workers in the public and private sectors.

"This project is long overdue," said Francis. "But now it looks like there is real momentum."

If you want to donate to this project, please contact the Pierce County Central Labor Council at 253-473-3810.

## The Pierce County Workers' Memorial

The Pierce County Worker's Memorial is dedicated to all workers in Pierce County who have died on the job or from a job-related illness.

Those workers who have died in the previous year will be honored on April 28th of each year. Their names will be read, and the bell will ring for each name. (The bell has a crack in it to signify the broken families left behind.)

The bell was manufactured in the late 1800s or early 1900s in Akron, Ohio, and was used as a school bell for many years. It then found its way to the Columbia River basin and traveled up and down the Columbia on a freighter. The bell was purchased from an antique store in the Columbia basin by William and Pamela Edge of Tacoma. (Bill is a retiree from the City of Tacoma and Teamsters Local 117; Pamela is a Washington State employee with the ferry service and a member of the Inland Boatman's Union.) Bill and Pamela donated the bell to the Pierce County Central Labor Council for the Workers' Memorial.

The bricks and cobblestones to be used in the Memorial came to Tacoma from Europe on sailing ships used as ballast weight and were off-loaded at the Port of Tacoma. The ships were then loaded with logs and returned to Europe. The bricks and cobblestones were used to build the streets in Tacoma and now are being donated by the City of Tacoma for the Workers' Memorial.

The apprentices from BAC Local #1 will be building the Memorial as a project along with the other apprentices within the building trades.

BOB FRANCIS  
TEAMSTERS LOCAL 117 RETIREE  
VP PCCLC

## Upgrade to Teamsters medical is a win for members, Pierce County

Teamsters Local 117 members at Pierce County have voted overwhelmingly to switch to the Teamsters Health and Welfare plan, a move that provides members with better medical coverage in the form of comparable care with lower deductibles and co-payments at a reduced cost to the County.

"I'm thankful that the Union was able to negotiate with Pierce County and make the change to the Washington Teamsters Welfare Trust," said County employee Becky Little. "Our medical coverage is better than ever and our members saved a minimum of \$600 per year, and I was able to save \$2,000 on medical premiums for 2010."

### BIG SAVINGS FOR MEMBERS, COUNTY

All told, the switchover will save Teamster members over \$430,000 in 2010. If other represented employees switch to the Teamsters medical plan, it will save nearly all represented employees an estimated \$1.9 million on their health care premiums.

This move also saves the County money. The change is expected to save the County over \$90,000 on Teamster represented employees and over \$400,000 if other represented employees switch to the Teamsters medical plan. Coverage under the new plan took effect on January 1, 2010 for approximately 333 Pierce County employees represented by the Teamsters.

The change comes after months of tough negotiations between the Union and County representatives. The County came to the table having budgeted zero percent (0%) for health insurance premium increases in 2010 and took the position that its employees should be responsible for shouldering nearly the entire increase – \$3.6 million – in the

form of monthly premium sharing.

County officials invited the Union to find a plan that would help cut costs and moderate the effects of the financial crisis. The Local 117 bargaining committee responded by proposing a switch to the Teamsters plan, which benefits both Pierce County employees and the County's bottom line.

"We presented them with a detailed comparison between the Regence Medical plan and the Teamsters plan, which plainly shows that the Teamsters plan is more cost-effective, while at the same time, providing better care for our members and other eligible represented employees," said Teamsters Local 117 Public Sector Coordinator, Mary Ann Brennan.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR PLAN?

If you are a Teamsters Local 117 member and have specific questions about medical claims, benefits, or the eligibility of coverage under the new plan, contact Northwest Administrators at 206-726-3277 or 800-458-3053. For questions about vision claims, call 206-726-3278 or 800-732-1123. You can also print your temporary medical card, get copies of the plan booklet, and track medical claims by logging onto Northwest Administrator's website at [www.nwadmin.com](http://www.nwadmin.com).

For other questions, contact your Business Representative or visit the Teamsters Local 117 website at [www.teamsters117.org](http://www.teamsters117.org).

If you know someone at the County who may be interested in obtaining coverage under the new plan as well as other Teamster benefits, please refer them to the Teamsters Local 117 Organizing Department at 206-441-4860.

## Local 117's summer of community involvement

**T**eamsters and their families have donated time, spirit, ingenuity, and labor to a number of community involvement activities in and around Pierce County this summer.

On July 24, Teamsters celebrated Tacoma's diverse cultural heritage at the annual Ethnic Fest at Wright Park.

A week later, on August 1, Local 117 members turned out in force for the Tacoma Rainier's baseball game at the labor community's annual Solidarity Day celebration at Cheney Stadium.

In early August, Local 117 members embarked on a project to revitalize Tacoma neighborhoods and later this year we will participate in a massive effort to feed hungry residents in Pierce County.

### PAINT TACOMA BEAUTIFUL

Last year, Teamster volunteers painted the house of 80-year-old Lorraine Gregg as a part of the Paint Tacoma/Pierce Beautiful program.

Local 117 members spent five days prepping and painting, trimming the hedges, repairing the lighting, caulking the windows, cleaning the walkway, and hauling out junk from the back yard. In all, 27 Teamsters and their family members took part in the project.

This summer the Local 117 crew is painting the home of another Tacoma resident - Jan O'Brien. The group plans to complete the project by mid-August.

"I think this work shows that the Union really supports families in need. It makes me feel like I'm doing something important for the community," said Gwen Crittendon, a Local 117 member at Birds-Eye Foods.



Local 117's Paint Tacoma-Pierce Beautiful crew - 2009

If you would like to sign up to join the Local 117 Paint Tacoma Beautiful crew next year, please contact Local 117 Organizer, Brenda Wiest, at 206-441-4860 ext. 1256.

### SOUTH SOUND WORKERS' FOOD DRIVE

In 2009, members of Teamsters Local 117 helped organize donations of 90,000 lbs of food for Tacoma's Emergency Food Network.

As a result of last year's efforts, Local 117 was recognized with the Silver Spoon Award and the City of Destiny Award, for our Union's commitment to feeding hungry families and for outstanding volunteerism in Pierce County.

*Let's help surpass that number in 2010!*

For more information about how you can get involved, contact Local 117 Organizer Brenda Wiest at 206-441-4860 ext. 1256.

## Transitions

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spent the last ten years directly involved with the bargaining process both as a Business Agent and as a Shop Steward.

### CLARK BRINGS BROAD EXPERIENCE

Jeff is a certified human resource generalist and is trained in federal and state labor laws, compensation and benefits, and labor relations. He has developed communication plans, provided customer service, supervised the grievance process, negotiated grievance settlements and has performed as lead negotiator for collective bargaining, in both the public and private sectors.

As a Teamster, Jeff has served as a trustee for the executive board at Teamsters Local 763 and as a trustee to the Transportation/Circulations Executive Committee of the Newspaper, Magazine and Electronic Media Workers Conference.

Jeff will be responsible for providing representation to Local 117 members in Pierce County, the City of Tacoma, and several smaller units in the South Sound region.

As his first order of Business, Jeff has made a point to meet every member in his jurisdiction. He says that he will work hard to "make improvements to wages, benefits, and working conditions, of every member in his jurisdiction."

Welcome, Jeff, in your new role as South Sound Business Representative for Teamsters Local 117 and thank you, MaryAnn, for your tremendous career with the Teamsters!

**WANTED!** Your Local Union is looking for Teamsters in the South Sound who are interested in contributing to this newsletter.

For more information, contact Local 117 Communications Coordinator, Paul Zilly at 206.441.4860 ext. 1269.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**Aug. 13-14** – Paint Tacoma Beautiful

**Oct.** - South Sound Workers' Food Drive

**Nov. 20** – Local 117 Blood Drive

For more Teamsters news, visit the Local 117 website at [www.teamsters117.org](http://www.teamsters117.org). Connect with other Local 117 members on Facebook or follow us on Twitter.