TEAMSTER TALK
NEWS FROM MEMBERS OF TEAMSTERS LOCAL 117

VICTORY AT THE ZOO
WOODLAND PARK ED DEPARTMENT VOTE TO UNIONIZE P.5
He’s been especially struck by the number of displaced people – families moving into hotels and living on the streets. “It’s pretty humbling.”

Since arriving in Houston just after Labor Day, he has been at it 10-12 hours a day, hauling away mounds of rubbish from houses, some of which were fully submerged in the floodwaters.

Ben praised the locals for their generosity and indomitable spirit. “People will see you working and they’ll come up and give you a soda. If that’s all they’ve got, then God bless them. To see this city rally together has been pretty uplifting.”

Ben isn’t the only Teamster in town to lend a hand to Houston. He’s met members from Las Vegas, San Jose, and elsewhere. On September 8, a convoy of Teamster tractor trailers rolled off toward Texas from California with truckloads of relief supplies for Houston residents impacted by the storm.

Back home, we passed the hat to support disaster relief at our general membership meeting on September 21. Together with E-Board support we raised $1000 for families affected by the hurricane.

If you were unable to attend the meeting, but would like to donate, please send a check payable to Teamsters Disaster Relief Fund c/o Teamsters Local 117, 14675 Interurban Ave. S. Tukwila, WA 98168.

Your tax-deductible donations will make a difference in the lives of a Teamster family.
Members who work at SuperValu voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new one-year agreement. The contract proposal was fully recommended by our union bargaining committee.

The new contract contains wage and pension increases, health and welfare protections, and for the first time Local 117 members employed at the company will have coverage for domestic partners under their health plan.

“We’ve been able to discuss pay, vacation, sick leave and working conditions. It was a collective effort, and we succeeded in creating a more level playing field between the management and the employees,” concludes Robert Houser who was a member of our union bargaining committee.

Guled Ali, another Teamster who was present at the bargaining table, mentions his excitement for sharing the contract details with his co-workers. “I think ‘exuberant’ is the right word to describe how I feel about the contract. We couldn’t have done it without Local 117.”

In June, SuperValu finalized a $390 million purchase of Unified Grocers. Teamsters who work in the Unified warehouse in south Seattle are now covered by the SuperValu agreement, but uncertainty remains.

“Teamsters who work in the grocery industry perform challenging, backbreaking work,” said John Scearcy. “They deserve better wages and security for their families.”
SISTERS & BROTHERS

It’s been a busy, exciting year for our union. As we move into the last quarter of 2017, I want to give you a recap of what we’ve accomplished so far and a sense of where we are headed in our work to build unity and power for all members of Teamsters 117.

**Contract Negotiations:**
With over 80 contracts expiring in 2017, we have successfully ratified over 50 with another 30 remaining while building solidarity by focusing on member engagement with strategic contract campaigns. Our contracts have increased industry standards. Our DOC contract is the strongest in history for that group. Our contract for our recycle and yard waste drivers achieved groundbreaking wage increases and long fought-for wage equity with the garbage drivers.

**New Organizing:**
We have organized or are in the process of organizing the following new groups:
- *We Drive You (Facebook and Google transportation)*
- *Additional DOC groups*
- *Emerald Services*
- *Woodland Park Zoo-Educators*
- *Renton Printery*
- *TransDev Dispatchers*
- *Caretransit Drivers*

Our recent action at SeaTac Airport exposed the exploitation of Seattle-area taxi drivers, which put in motion major improvements to their working conditions.

**Political Action:**
Working together with Local 117 members, our political team, helped pass Paid Family Leave and other worker benefits in Olympia this year. We also built member participation on our 9-member Political Advisory Committee that meets regularly to interview candidates and make endorsement recommendations to our union’s E-Board.

**Internal Organizing:**
Our Local has committed to member engagement and development through programs like “What A Teamster Looks Like”, “Family Strength Community” and a recent essay contest asking members to express the freedoms they enjoy as union members.

**Member and Staff Training:**
We are developing a general membership training program and a member Leadership Academy focused on diversity, inclusion and development for the future.

Our Local 117 staff has had over a thousand one-on-one conversations with members to identify their co-workers with leadership qualities. Through this program, members have identified over five hundred fellow Sisters and Brothers that they trust as member leaders!

We are on track to begin our Local 117 Member Leadership Academy and general Membership Education Program in early 2018. We are also putting together a development program for staff to ensure that members receive the best possible representation from their union.

Thank you all for the incredible sacrifices and efforts you all put forth each and every day, and thank you for your membership in Teamsters 117.

In Solidarity,

John Scearcy
Secretary-Treasurer
This year’s National Police Week took place May 14 – 20 in Washington, DC. Jennifer Abruzzo and Stephanie Scott, South Sound 911 Dispatchers, were the Teamsters who were union-sponsored to attend the event alongside Michelle Woodrow, Local 117 President and Director of Corrections and Law Enforcement. Scott has been a Teamster at SS911 for almost 10 years and worked as a police officer prior to that. She is also a newly elected Shop Steward at her workplace. Meanwhile, Abruzzo has 20 years at SS911 and 28 years in the industry under her belt.

In June, Abruzzo received the Telecommunicator of the Year for Critical Incidents Award for handling an excruciating call that involved the death of a Tacoma Police Officer in a domestic related incident. Officer Gutierrez was well known at SS911 and was their dear friend.

Both women are exactly who you would hope to find on the other side of your 911 call – calm, attentive and positive. During our interview they sat across from me smiling and upbeat, yet beneath the momentary laughter you can sense the sadness and bereavement that the incident has left. Attending the National Police Week and sharing their difficult and tragic experience with thousands of families and law enforcement professionals who have suffered a similar loss has been consoling, they say. Scott shares the conflicting feelings she felt during the week. “It was overwhelming and bittersweet. It felt amazing to meet people who shared our experience, but poignant at the same time because of our loss.”

Both Teamsters cite the candlelight vigil as the strongest experience that week.

“The candlelight vigil is what touched us the most. It was a sea of people, just thousands and thousands of them. They were somber and silent as names of all fallen officers were read off and the bell rang. It was intense and awe-inspiring.”

Abruzzo’s award ceremony happened in July in Kennewick at the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials Conference. Despite taking thousands of critical calls and making split second decisions daily while monitoring 6 screens at her work station, she is reserved about her award.

“It was a team effort,” she says. “I certainly couldn’t have done it to the degree that I did without the team. It was great after all these years of service and all we’ve seen and done for someone to say: ‘We recognize you. It was hard, but you did a great job.’”
WOODLAND PARK ZOO
SCHOoled By THEIR EDUCATION DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

As children and adults at the zoo flock to educators holding animals and explaining their behavior, did you know about their struggle? The education department at Woodland Park Zoo has been fighting for better wages and respect for a long time with little success.

"Many of us are not compensated enough as educators for the type of work that we do. We feel like we don't have a voice. We've tried to address it year after year but were ignored," shares Celwyn Green, an ambassador animal coordinator who has worked at the zoo for 30 years.

She is one of the majority women team of developers, coordinators and specialists from the education department who finally said enough and began a union organizing campaign. They collected over thirty signatures and petitioned for union representation with Teamsters Local 117 filing with the National Labor Relations Board.

On August 4th, Celwyn and her colleagues marched on the boss to deliver a letter requesting voluntary union recognition signed by 100% of their department. It was an action that Celwyn described as "empowering" after years of inequitable treatment.

What they got in response from the management was an anti-union campaign. Yet that didn’t slow down the group fighting for their rights. They had their backs supported by Teamsters 117 staff and by over 60 members already represented by Teamsters 117 at Woodland Park Zoo.

It all culminated in the final vote in August. The result was 83% in favor of the union. Maria Francisca Torres, a Teamsters 117 organizer and a leader in this fight, sums it up: "We stood strong. We knew that we deserved better for this predominantly women group, so we fought hard and achieved it – equality."
“Justice!”

“Unfair!” Loud voices of taxi drivers resonated across the parking garage at SeaTac Airport for two days at the end of August.

Eastside for Hire management stared in bitter frustration at drivers who exercised their right to collectively voice their issues with their dispatch company and the Port of Seattle who contracts with Eastside by suspending work for an hour. It was their second day demonstrating against inhumane working conditions and unjust retaliation by the company.

Eastside for Hire taxi drivers have no choice but to work extremely long hours just to earn enough to meet their operating expenses.

Drivers have no time left to spend with their families or for adequate rest.

On top of that, at an airport that ranks as the 8th busiest in the country and welcomes over 45 million passengers a year (according to the Port of Seattle), the bathrooms for drivers are unsanitary and display a disgusting state of disrepair. This is not a new issue. The Port and Eastside for Hire have been aware of the bathroom issues for a very long time. Attempts to speak with officials to bring change to the situation have not yielded results. It should be noted however that Port Commissioner Fred Felleman has been working hard to resolve this issue. The Port of Seattle brought in two additional temporary toilets. This is just an interim solution addressing the unacceptable unsanitary condition of the restrooms which the drivers use until new facilities are built. But given all the time that has passed and the continuing deterioration of working conditions their patience has reached its limits.

“I lived in Europe for 5 years and never saw bathrooms like that. Is this America or a third world country?”

— Shakil Ahmad, one of the drivers who was suspended from work after the first strike.

Ali Sugule with wife and 2 month old daughter. He was suspended by Eastside in retaliation for speaking out on a range of injustices at the airport.
On Saturday, August 26, Teamsters gathered outside the Tukwila Hall for a Back-to-School barbecue fundraiser. The event was sponsored by the Teamsters Pacific Northwest Black Caucus.

It took four members to haul more than three large boxes of the gathered supplies. All donations went to White Center Heights, an elementary school that operates at 80% below the poverty line where 75% of students are children of color.

Teamster members took aim to fight hunger this August at the 5th annual Trap Shooting and Archery Tournament sponsored by Tacoma’s Emergency Food Network.

The contest, held at the Gig Harbor Sportsmen’s Club on August 11, raised thousands of dollars to help feed hungry families throughout our region.

“There are a lot of ways to raise money but we were doing what we like to do, having fun, and doing it for a really good cause,” said Tanesha Van Leuven, a member who participated in the event.

Our Local Union’s Executive Board sponsored the team at the $600 level. All proceeds from the event went to benefit the Emergency Food Network.

Thank you to the members from the Teamsters Law Enforcement & Corrections Division and their friends who participated in the tournament.

Back to School BBQ Raises Supplies for Kids in Need

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Haven’t Entered Our Story Challenge?

Only a handful of submissions so far, your winning chances are high!

Just tell your Union story in 300-500 words for a chance to win $1000! Deadline is November 1.

familystrengthcommunity.org/story_challenge

Teamsters 117 Blood Drive

November 18, 2017 at 8am - 2pm at the Teamsters Hall
14675 Interurban Ave S Tukwila, WA 98168

Any donations made between November 8 and November 22 will be rewarded with a $25 Safeway gift card (just mail in the proof of donation to the Union Hall).