



# WHITE COLLAR

OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION, AFL-CIO AND CLC

No. 491



Issue 3, Summer 2005

## Massachusetts Trial Court Employees Persevere and Sign New Contract

**L**ocal 6 has won a new contract for the more than 3,300 clerical and professional employees of the Trial Courts of Massachusetts. The protracted negotiation process began in January 2003 and ended when a tentative agreement was reached in November 2004.

“The negotiations with the Trial Court took nearly two years, but our dedicated and hardworking committee of almost twenty members were determined to negotiate the best contract for our membership,” Local 6 President and Business Manager Mary Mahoney said. “We are confident that we achieved our goal.”

The Negotiating Committee was led by Mahoney and General Counsel and chief

negotiator Robert Manning. The rest of the hardworking committee members were Peter Anderegg, Donna Barrette, Gloria Comerford, Tom Gavaghan, Frank Harrington, Sandy Lindheimer, Ann Marie Lyons, Nancy McCann, Peggy McDonough, Carol Meehan, Roger Michel, Jonathan Paleologos, Tricia SantaMaria, Domenic Sarnelli, Wally Skinner and Julie Toner.

The ratification process took approximately two months to complete. During that time, five ratification meetings were held in various locations around the state to allow the Trial Court employees to read the tentative agreement and hear presentations from the Negotiating Committee

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**Signing the new contract agreement are Local 6 President/Business Manager and Region II Vice President Mary Mahoney; the Honorable Robert Mulligan, Trial Court Chief Justice for Administration and Management; and the Trial Court's Wendy Wilton.**

## Local 378 Elects Officers



**Andy Ross, President**

**A**ndy Ross has been elected President of Local 378 in Vancouver, British Columbia, defeating incumbent Jerri New by 121 votes. The election results were posted on the Local 378

website on May 3, 2005. Lori Mayhew was returned to office as Secretary-Treasurer. Fourteen other officers were also elected along with eight Executive Councilors from BC Hydro, Combined Units, Transit Group, and ICBC.

Local 378 is a progressive and professional union with members who work for large and small employers in the public and private sectors with more than 10,500 members working in the utility, tourism and travel, edu-

cation, information technology, call centers, research, manufacturing, insurance, and transit industries.

Local 378 is a diverse and socially responsible union and a major union in Canada.



**Jerri New, Former President**

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## Editorial



### Supreme Court Decision Protects Older Workers

By Michael Goodwin, International President

The U.S. Supreme Court struck a major blow for age equality in the workplace when it declared last month that a bulwark of civil rights laws against race and sex discrimination should also protect employees who bring suits in federal court under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). Plaintiffs can now bypass what is often the hardest-to-prove aspect of their cases — showing that their employer’s discrimination was deliberate — by arguing instead that they were victims of a policy that caused harm to older workers and went beyond “reasonable” business considerations.

Just as important as the practical benefits of the result is the long-term effect that the decision, *Smith v. City of Jackson, Miss.*, will have in elevating age discrimination legally closer to the level of race or gender bias. After years of standing on the sidelines, says Washington lawyer Richard Seymour, a former chair of the Employment Rights Division at the American Trial Lawyers Association, the Supreme Court has finally sent a message that age discrimination is a serious problem that must be attacked when it is unintentional as well as when it is intentional. Seymour goes so far as to call the decision “the Emancipation Proclamation for older workers.”

The justices’ reasoning for the Smith decision is steeped in references to a race discrimination case from 1971 that represents a high watermark in employment discrimination law. In *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* the Supreme Court found that even a seemingly neutral job requirement (the case was about making employment conditional on having a high school diploma) counted as discrimination, since its effect was to keep a disproportionate number of qualified black applicants from getting hired, a so-called disparate impact.

The scope of discrimination based on age will be narrower because the ADEA, while generally modeled on race and sex discrimination laws, allows employers to treat older workers differently as long as they do so based on “reasonable factors other than age.”

The effect of this provision is apparent in the result in Smith itself, a case about whether the city of Jackson could restructure its salaries for police officers in a way that gave the bulk of a new raise package to more junior officers. The plaintiffs — older officers — contended that this kind of pay-raise system, even if devised in good faith amounted to illegal age discrimination because it worked mostly to the benefit of officers who

tended to be younger.

Reversing two lower courts, the Supreme Court agreed that, in theory, a case could go forward even if the city did not intend to discriminate against older officers. (This step is what opens the door to a new standard in future cases.) However, the court went on to say that the city’s justification for its policy — that it wanted to make its entry-level salaries competitive with those offered in neighboring towns — was “reasonable” and justified the discrepancy. Even applying the new standard, the court found that the Smith case should be dismissed.

Because Smith and similar age discrimination cases focus on broad policies affecting large numbers of workers, they mostly involve big businesses and other employers (like governments) that make employment decisions using objective formulas. That means the Supreme Court’s latest decision gives victims of age discrimination a powerful new weapon. If they can tell a story with statistics, they no longer need to have a “smoking gun,” such as a memo showing hostility to older workers, to persuade a judge to move their case forward to the evidence-gathering phase.

Merely getting to that point is often tantamount to victory. It is during this pretrial phase that a plaintiff’s lawyer can force the other side to produce additional evidence — and gain additional leverage to settle — by subpoenaing documents, taking depositions and preparing witnesses.

With most defendants limited to large employers, the number of lawsuits filed may never be overwhelming. But it’s likely that soon there will be at least one major suit against a nationwide employer. That would jibe with what’s going on in Minnesota, Michigan and Ohio, which already have disparate impact standards in place at the state level. In Michigan, for example, a suit recently alleged bias against older workers in Ford Motor Company’s employee ranking system.

Ford has implemented an A-B-C- letter system for ranking its 18,000 employees that it used to justify terminations and salary increases. The statistics were staggering; if you were over 40, the chances of getting a C ranking and not getting a raise were much higher. It was impossible for Ford to defend their case given those numbers, and Ford ended up paying \$10.6 million in a settlement with older workers who brought the suit.

With the matter of proving intent settled, many experts agree the latest decision fails to give lower courts sufficient guidance about what is “reasonable” and “unreasonable” when it comes

to issues like salary and experience, factors that are often correlated with age and can figure prominently in employer calculations. That will be the focus in the next wave of litigation.

Paul Mollica, a partner in a Chicago-based firm that specializes in discrimination cases, believes that in the near term the latest decision will allow lawyers to go after “capricious, arbitrary” policies. It remains to be seen, however, what effect the decision will have on employers that have carefully considered their policies and the alternatives, as we don’t yet know what it means for an employer to have made a “reasonable” business decision.

Part of the tangle is trying to reconcile Smith with the court’s previous rulings in discrimination cases. In 1993 a unanimous Supreme Court rejected the age discrimination claim of a 62-year-old worker who alleged he had been fired by his employer because he was about to become eligible for a pension. Intentional discrimination, the court stated, “captures the essence of what Congress sought to prohibit in the ADEA.” Although March’s opinion seems to push back against that kind of reasoning, the court notably did not go so far as to overrule it — and in fact

took pains to stress that “age, unlike race or [sex] classification ... not uncommonly has relevance to an individual’s capacity to engage in certain types of employment.”

In Smith, Justice Antonin Scalia cast the deciding vote. While emphasizing that he didn’t agree with all of the reasoning of the concurring justices, Scalia said he could reach the same result because the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency that has the job of enforcing the ADEA, has already endorsed the position. “This is an absolutely classic case for deference to agency interpretation,” Scalia wrote.

When it comes to age, Scalia has given himself room to break away from the other four justices in future cases that ask the court to say more about what kind of discrimination is “reasonable.” Scalia’s thinking also indicates that he might be willing to shift his position if the EEOC were to shift its interpretation of the statute.

The EEOC is already under fire for a controversial regulation it issued in the age discrimination context. Undermining this Supreme Court decision would be a foolish move.

## New Jersey BlueCross/BlueShield Workers Win Contract

**L**ocal 32 has signed a contract at Horizon BlueCross/BlueShield in New Jersey that will mean a 16 percent wage increase for the more than 1,400 employees.

The new five-year contract was ratified on May 10, weeks after the old contract had expired and the membership had rejected the company’s first offer and approved a strike vote.

The new contract provides for a 3 percent wage increase in each of the first three years, and 3.5 percent for each of the last two years. A benefit package was also negotiated for retirees, wherein each will receive a lump sum payment to cover their health-care co-payment once they retire. For example, a member with more than 25 years of service will receive a guaranteed \$100,000 payment to cover co-payments.

“Improvements were also made to the grievance procedure, but most importantly we now have the stability that a five-year agreement brings,” Local 32 Business Manager Steve Tully said.

Tully served as chief negotiator for the union, and was assisted by Robin Banks, principal shop steward, Christine Cox, shop steward, and Lateefah Burkes, shop steward and Executive Board member of Local 32.

## Massachusetts Trial Court Employees Persevere and Sign New Contract

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members and the leadership. Thanks to the educational nature of these updates, the agreement was ratified on January 12, 2005.

The three-year contract, which is retroactive to July 1, 2004, expires June 30, 2007. The contract, which covers the employees who work in 115 courts statewide, includes 3 percent pay raises each year the contract remains in effect, and the addition of a bereavement day if a sibling’s spouse passes away. The Office of Community Correction employees won a regular work-

***We are confident that we  
achieved our goal.***

***— Mary Mahoney***

week, and the option to take off from work for Labor Day and Memorial Day. In addition, a committee was created to specifically address outstanding issues affecting official court reporters.

The contract is currently being reviewed by the Massachusetts legislature where the funding approval process still needs to be completed. It is expected to pass in the relatively near future.



**Pictured left to right are: Trial Court’s Paul Edgar, Darryl Smith, and Jean Driscoll; Local 6’s Roger Michel; Trial Court’s Wendy Wilton and Pam Casey-O’Brien; Local 6’s Mary Mahoney and Robert Manning; Trial Court’s General Counsel & Chief Negotiator Mark Conlon; Local 6’s Wally Skinner; The Honorable Robert A. Mulligan, Trial Court’s Chief Justice for Administration & Management; Local 6’s Julie Toner; Trial Court’s Judy Collins; Local 6’s Ann Marie Lyons, Tom Gavaghan, Sandy Lindheimer, Gloria Comerford, Nancy McCann, Frank Harrington, and Peter Anderegg.**

# Letters to the Editor

## Dear President Goodwin:

At last! Enclosed are three copies of our new contract with Air Logistics, Inc.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the incredible support you provided us. I sincerely believe the helicopter pilots of this country are very fortunate to have the OPEIU in our corner. I, for one, will leave no stone unturned to bring that message to every one of them.

Thanks again, Mike.

**Kenneth E. Bruner**  
President  
Local 107

## Dear Editor:

I can hardly contain my excitement. I am so very pleased to report that the Loss/Ratio legislation has passed the NJ Senate Health Committee today! This legislation makes managed care companies accountable to the public for the amount of monies they spend on direct care, versus the amount they spend on profit, administration and debt reduction ... it will now be harder to increase premiums or lower fees to LCSW's by managed care companies when they are mandated to be financially transparent.

The NJ State AFL-CIO, Jim Wrich and I gave testimony and, again, the vote was unanimous! We have one more vote before the governor signs the Loss/Ratio bill into law.

To add to our excitement, mental health parity legislation came up for a vote as well! The NJ Mental Health Association, the NJ Psychological Association, the Communication Workers of America and a psychiatrist all testified in support of parity. Business associations were testifying in opposition.

OPEIU presented the data that not only proves that parity doesn't cost more, but shows that it actually costs less for those corporations that have instituted parity in their medical plans. Parity legislation passed the Senate Health Committee!

Thank you Guild 49 and OPEIU for your help!

What a day!

**Luba Shagawat**  
Guild 49



**Again, we reprint letters from our members on various issues. We invite our readers to continue to share their opinions with us, whether in support of or in opposition to our own. Debate is healthy and welcomed in this union. Letters are edited for length only, not content. Remember: anonymous letters will not be printed.**

You can also reach us on the Web: <http://www.opei.org>

## *A message from Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth*

You asked for more. And we're saying yes.

You asked us to use the power of 13 million AFL-CIO union members to provide consumer benefits for working families. This we've done – through the Union Plus program.

This program leverages our buying power so that union members can get top quality goods and services at competitive prices. It helps put dollars in your wallet, and stretches those dollars further. Benefits include help with college, legal assistance, insurance protection and discounts on everything from travel and entertainment to eye care and prescription drugs, all tailored to meet the needs and interests of working families.

I want to take this opportunity to inform

you of several changes to the Union Plus Credit Card program, which offers features including:

- No annual fee
- 100 percent protection against fraud and extended warranties giving cardholders up to one year extra coverage over an original warranty
- All customer service calls continue to be answered by customer care representatives in the United States
- A safety net that includes the Lifetime Trust, Disaster Relief Fund and Layoff Helpline to help union cardholders facing extreme financial hardship.

I also want to remind you that, for families that need legal help, Union Plus Legal Services, with more than 10,000 law offices nationwide offers:

- A free initial consultation of up to 30 minutes
- Free follow-up to minor problems
- 30 percent off UPLS lawyers' hourly fees.

Union Plus has also helped create educational opportunities for families. Since 1992, the **Union Plus Scholarship Program** has given more than \$2 million to union members, their spouses and dependents for college, trade or professional school educations.

And, **Union Plus Education Services** help students with:

- Education loans and loan consolidation
- Textbook discounts
- A College Planning Center with advice on going to college.

In addition, the Union Plus programs offer discounts on a wide-range of everyday services including:

- Prescriptions
- Cingular Wireless
- Oil changes and car repair
- Movie tickets and rentals
- Health clubs
- And more.

Helping our union members save time and money is a top priority for OPEIU. For more information on these and other Union Plus benefits visit [www.unionplus.org](http://www.unionplus.org). To apply for the Union Plus Credit Card, call 1-800-522-4000. To speak to a lawyer, call 1-888-993-8886. For prescription discounts call 1-800-228-3523. To speak to an education loan specialist call 1-877-881-1022.

## Rutland Regional Health Services Employees Win New Contract

Local 6 also succeeded in winning a new contract for the 350 registered nurses they represent at Rutland Regional Medical Center in Rutland, Vermont. The process was fast, efficient, and avoided the usual pitfalls that befall most efforts to agree upon and ratify new contracts, reports Local 6 President and Business Manager Mary Mahoney.

"Negotiations spanned four sessions over four weeks, and we believe that was due to our Negotiating Committee's months of preparations and meetings," Local 6 Executive Assistant Dina Tedeschi said.

The Negotiating Committee met periodically throughout 2004 to prepare for negotiating sessions with the Medical Center. The committee was comprised of General Counsel and chief negotiator Robert Manning, Tedeschi, Mona Blanchard, Dawn Brown McGuinness, Jim

Callan, Hershel Collins, Kim Cotto-Shea, Tisa Farrow, Bill Hammond, Chandra Kerber, Mary Lynn Lemmo, Ramona Mayhew, Dave McGee, Thelecia Molaski, Fran Moorby, Connie Morgan, Lauren Oberg, Thelma Satayavinit, and Christi Sulik.

The year-end holidays were not an impediment as committee members used their own paid time off to maintain the momentum. They met throughout December and on the 30th a tentative agreement was reached.

"Our Committee was an excellent representation from the different departments within the hospital, and was steadfast that our proposals were both necessary and fair," Tedeschi said. "Management ultimately was in agreement."

The registered nurses ratified the contract in mid-January, and both parties signed

the Agreement on March 4. The three-year contract commenced February 28, 2005 and continues through January 31, 2008.

Local 6 was able to get some significant concessions from management, resulting in considerable improvements over the previous contract.

Of note was a \$2.25 per hour pay raise for every registered nurse immediately upon ratification of the contract, and at the beginning of each year there will be an additional 3.5 percent pay raise. The third shift differential is increased to \$2.50 per hour. The contribution rate for health insurance remains at 15 percent for the first year, and increases to 20 percent in the final two years. Finally, the members' chances for career advancement are helped thanks to a provision allowing them to apply for any open position through e-mail and posting notification.

## MAGE-OPEIU Local 2002 Celebrates 25-Year Anniversary

MAGE-OPEIU Local 2002 celebrated its 25th anniversary during the annual General Council Meeting, and there to celebrate with them was OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin. "I always enjoy visiting the MAGE group," Goodwin said. "They are a dedicated bunch of professionals and a terrific part of the OPEIU family. Congratulations on 25 years of representing workers."

MAGE was also celebrating the securing of a \$1.50 per hour special wage increase for RN Supervisors and 10 percent general base wage increases over the next three years. "Ten-percent over three years may not seem like much, until you consider that our state is currently facing a nearly \$1 billion budget deficit and one of the highest unemployment rates in the country," MAGE President Dale Threehouse said.

Jane Wallin, who has served as the MAGE Treasurer for 14 terms, also had reason to celebrate. Wallin was the recipient of the distinguished Norma Schroeder Award, reserved for MAGE members who have dedicated themselves to serving the membership of MAGE at a very high level. The award is only presented to those who have shown great dedication and given unselfishly, much like Norma Schroeder did when she and a few other dedicated volunteers worked tirelessly to form MAGE in 1980.



**MAGE President Dale Threehouse presents Secretary-Treasurer Jane Wallin with the Norma Schroeder Award.**

## OPEIU Continues to Negotiate with CUNA Mutual Group



OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler, Local 39 President Shirley Noles, International President Michael Goodwin, Local 39 Chief Steward Katherine Bartlett-Mulvihill, Local 39 Business Manager John Peterson meet in Washington, D.C. to assist in achieving a settlement with CUNA Mutual Group. Mediation sessions were held at AFL-CIO headquarters under the auspices of AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka. As this issue of *White Collar* went to press, substantial progress was made in negotiations. It is anticipated that a settlement will be reached shortly to be reported in the next edition of *White Collar*.

## Union Campaign Saves Hundreds of Jobs at New York's Plaza Hotel



(Photo left) OPEIU President Michael Goodwin joins other labor leaders in welcoming New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg at rally at Radio City Music Hall to Save the Plaza hotel. (Photo right) Thousands of hotel workers, including OPEIU Local 153 members, march up Sixth Avenue to a huge protest in front of the Plaza hotel. OPEIU represents 2,000 members in the hotel industry, including more than 100 at the Plaza. The hotel's plan to fully convert to condominiums was beat back by union activism and a settlement was reached to save union jobs.

## Local 393 President Receives Prestigious Award

From among nine nominees, Susan K. Carey was selected to be the recipient of the prestigious Athena award, which is given to women who have achieved success through a lifetime of dedication to their community or through volunteerism and service. Carey was the 2005 recipient of the award given at the annual dinner sponsored by the Grand Blanc Chamber of Commerce.

As the youngest employee of UAW Local 499, Carey recalled how there was no union for young women working in the UAW local unions in Flint. She voluntarily went to Brooklyn, New York, where she petitioned the United Office and Professional Workers of America (UOPWA), the predecessor to OPEIU, to grant her small group

a charter, after which she drafted a one-page agreement that the employers of members in those local unions signed as a "recognition agreement." In 1957, UOPWA Local 1719 became OPEIU Local 393, and a new charter was granted.

Carey then encouraged women in the local union offices to take active rolls in the Labor Council, herself being elected to the position of secretary to the council.

In 1990 she was elected president of Local 393. "I'm proud of the many members of the local union who are active in their communities, who have been involved in various civic organizations, have been integral to the election process in their communities and have ever run for public office," Carey said.

Carey was commended for her many years of volunteerism in her community, which included the Community Chest, United Way, and Special Olympics, as well as her work on the committee that initiated blood donor drives, which led directly to the first blood bank at Hurley Hospital.

An article in the Flint Journal noted her accomplishments. "Lawmakers have recognized Susan for her outstanding community achievements," Flint Journal said. Governor John Engler appointed her to the Michigan Employment Security Commission, making her the first and only woman in the state to have that position. She is responsible for the passage of the Wage and Record Bill (No. 1140) in the State Senate, which made it possible for large employers such as GM to submit information required for laid off employees to receive benefits via computer, thus eliminating long waiting lines. She also dispelled the state effort to reestablish a waiting week.

Carey has served on the Board of Directors for the International Institute, which serves as a nucleus for the foreign born to learn English, study for citizenship and assimilate into the American culture. She also serves on an Advisory Committee (Mott College Multicultural Minorities Committee) by appointment of the college president.

As recipient of the Athena Award, Carey stated she is most proud to have been recognized for her dedication to the union as well as her community endeavors.



Local 393 President Susan K. Carey (center), pictured with her daughters Suzanne Jarboe (left) and Diane Carey.

## Local 277 Members Honored for Labor Activism

**L**ocal 277 members Mark Gagliardi and Larry Lozano have made their love of labor into a “labor of love.” Both work as public relations representatives for the Jatoft-Foti Agency of American Income Life Insurance Company (AIL).

“We are proud to call Mark Gagliardi and Larry Lozano Local 277 members; and we honor them for their ongoing dedication to the labor movement,” Local 277 President Becky Turner said.

Gagliardi was honored on September 17, 2004, as Labor Activist of the Year for Contra Costa County in California at the AFL-CIO’s Labor-2-Labor Annual Dinner. He also serves as the Chief Steward for Local 277 at the American Income Life Agencies in the Western United States. Lozano was recognized in October 2004 as Unionist of the Year by the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council in California.

“These men are activists of the highest caliber, as well as mentors and trainers for other Local 277 members who work as public relations representatives,” AIL Vice President of Public Relations and Local 277 associate member Denise Bowyer said.

Their contributions are numerous and broad, exhibiting an extraordinary depth of commitment. They are active through their central labor councils dealing directly with unions in distress. Their participation is reflected in delivering food to laid-off members, spearheading picket lines, knocking on members’ doors

during precinct walks, phone-banking for local and state issues, and creating and sponsoring the very successful OPEIU 277/AIL Clays Shoot benefiting the UFCW Leukemia/Lymphoma Fund.

“Mark and Larry have proven they not only talk the talk of commitment to labor and working men and women, but they also walk the walk,” Turner said.



**Pictured left to right are Local 277 member Chuck Hill, Secretary-Treasurer Margo Peel, President Becky Turner, and members Mark Gagliardi and Larry Lozano.**

## Putting Americans First!

*By Region III Vice President and ITPE Local 4873 President John F. Conley*

**I**t is springtime once again and summer is just around the corner. Although the weather has changed, the political climate in our nation’s capital has not. The agenda of the Bush administration remains the same as was the prior four and a half years. Bipartisan politics is alive and well. Compromise is the essence of politics in a diverse democracy and was long the coin of realm in Congress. With this administration, there is no compromise. It’s “my way or no way.” Republican spending is out of control. In January of 2001 when the Bush administration took office, they inherited a comfortable surplus. Four and a half years later, we are trillions in debt. Even more alarming, 43 percent of America’s debt is owned by foreign countries — Japan holding approximately \$680 billion — followed by China holding approximately \$230 billion. Then comes the United Kingdom, Taiwan, Germany, Hong Kong, and Switzerland. We should be asking ourselves — “Is America up for sale?”

The number of Americans without health insurance continues to increase — 45 million to date. Medical inflation continues to rise, reported to be 19 percent this year. Many employers that provide a health plan for their employees are now reducing benefits. Many union/employer plans are requiring employees to pay a greater share. Those of us covered by the ITPE Health and Welfare Plan have much to be thankful for. The Trustees are to be congratulated for their ability to hold the line.

Not as fortunate are those who have had their jobs outsourced. The unemployment rate is still 5.2 percent — well above the 4.0 percent levels experienced in the late 1990s. Moreover, the 5.2 percent is a gross understatement in light of the fact that many workers who left the labor force after 2001 have yet to return and are no longer counted as unemployed. The majority of those jobs that were outsourced are unlikely to ever come back.

If this isn’t enough, the war in Iraq continues to be a heavy burden on the United States economy. Every day we learn more of America’s young men and women are

killed — more than 1,600 to date — thousands more permanently injured. Along with the Americans, there are thousands of innocent Iraqi women and children who have also become victims. Although President Bush announced many months ago — “mission accomplished,” this war is far from over. One has to wonder if that part of the world is ready for a democracy. After all this time, the leader of Al Qaida (Osama Bin Laden) — responsible for the 9/11 attacks in 2001 — remains at large.

We need a government that is all about putting America and all Americans first — not just corporate America. As concerned citizens, it is up to you to write your legislators, get involved in your community, your union, school programs and other areas that will support a change for the better — not only on a local level but the national level as well.



## Local 35 Reaches Agreement with Northwestern Mutual Life

After four months of intense negotiations, OPEIU Local 35 reached an agreement with the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The agreement, ratified on March 1, 2005, includes wage increases of 6.8 percent in the first year of the contract and 7 percent in the second year for the more than 1,700 bargaining unit employees protected by the agreement. The wage increases include merit and variable pay.

As with many other negotiations, the cost of health care was a contentious bargaining issue. Employees in the bargaining unit witnessed the implementation of radical changes in the plan and premium structures for the management group of 2,500 employees and fully understood that Northwestern Mutual management intended to pass along similar changes to the bargaining unit.

Since the onset of negotiations, the Local 35 bargaining committee acknowledged that the employer was experiencing rising health care costs and that they would likely have to implement some plan design changes. The bargaining committee, however, was also aware that the employer had recently experienced their best year financially with total surplus exceeding \$10.5 billion and total dividend payout to policyholders exceed-

ing \$3.9 billion. Armed with this knowledge, the bargaining committee, with the help of the rank and file members and the assistance of the International Union, was able to push back the health care changes until January 2006 and obtain "safety nets" that will protect lower paid employees against the potentially disastrous rise in prescription drug costs and premium rates.

The dedication of the bargaining committee, combined with the pressure from local media and an unfair labor practice charge, was instrumental in obtaining this new contract. "With an open shop contract like we have at Northwestern, the mem-

bers' ability to organize their non-member co-workers during the course of negotiations sent a strong message to Northwestern Mutual that employees were very concerned with the rising health care costs and they were not going to roll over and accept these changes without a fight," said Judy Burnick, Local 35 business manager.

Looking to the future and the next round of contract negotiations, Local 35 members at Northwestern Mutual are approaching their organizing efforts with renewed vigor. "Next time we bargain, we will be in an even stronger position across the table," said Northwestern Mutual Local 35 Steward Mary Rothe.



Local 35 members ratify agreement with Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company of Milwaukee.

## Local 11 Holds Special Election

A special election has been scheduled among the members of Local 11 in Portland, Oregon following the resignations of John Sanks and Debby Sluyter, Executive Secretary-Treasurer (EST).

Elections are held every three years in accordance with the constitution. The results from the election held earlier this year indicated that Sanks had been elected as EST in a close race with Sluyter finishing second. However, shortly after the ballots were counted Sanks informed the union that he was not interested in the position since he left his union position at Northwest Natural Gas Company in the interim.

Following Sanks' announcement, the question arose as to the next step. The Local 11 elections committee evaluated

the situation and ruled that a special election should be held to fill the position. However, the Executive Board overruled the decision of the election committee, leaving Sluyter to serve as EST. That decision was itself overruled by the membership at the following general membership meeting.

Following the general membership meeting, Sluyter resigned and set the stage for the special election.

A June general membership meeting was held for nominations of candidates to run for Executive Secretary-Treasurer. As this issue of *White Collar* went to press, more than one candidate was nominated and a special election will be held shortly. The results of the election will be announced in July with the installation of the newly elect-

ed EST and other officers on July 19. The next edition of *White Collar* will report the full results of the election.

### WHITE COLLAR

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## Local 32 Shop Steward Conference



**Local 32 President Ed Andryszczyk opens General Session at Stewards Conference.**



**International President Michael Goodwin swears in the newly elected officers of Local 32 at its annual Stewards Conference on April 14, 2005 in Atlantic City, New Jersey.**



**Members attend steward training classes to develop representational skills.**



**Vice President Mary Short delivers a message to conferees.**

## Local 95 Advocates Legislation for Women's Wage Equity

**T**oday women earn 76 cents to every dollar earned by men. Instead of waiting for the federal government to pass more aggressive legislation to close the wage gap, Local 95 in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin is advocating for remedies at the state level.

In September 2004, Local 95 held a legislative report card forum to discuss the issue and discover ways to help achieve wage parity. State Senator Julie Lassa and State Representatives Marlin Schneider, Amy Sue Vruwink and Louis Molepske Jr. were invited to speak and discuss potential steps with the union members. The legislators were chosen because of their strong relationship with Local 95.

By December, Rep. Schneider had not found a satisfactory solution and suggested that Local 95 create a task force to study the issue and offer legislative recommendations. The task forces' eight union members were Stacie Clark from Stora Enso; Jo Anne Grandkowski from Domtar; Mary Newberry from the Wood County Telephone Company; Terry Ruchinski from the Wisconsin Rapids School District; Rose Siegler from the Wisconsin Rapids School

District; Becky Taylor from the Port Edwards School District; Mary Weaver from the Wisconsin School District; and OPEIU Business Agent Wayne Pankratz.

"We believed women in predominantly female positions are rarely compensated appropriately for their work, but we needed to support our theory with facts," Pankratz said. "The basic premise that needed to be maintained was that men's wages should not be adversely impacted by our solution."

By January 19, the task force finished their work and presented Rep. Schneider with a report called: Gender Equity Proposal for Legislation (Raising Female Employee Wages in Wisconsin). The report found a fundamental problem: In the public and private sector, the salaries for male-dominated jobs based on physical demands are higher than those paid for female-dominated jobs based on mental demands that require more qualifications.

"We proposed a state mandated plan be developed by every employer," Pankratz said. "Each employer's plan would have to specify how they would resolve the wage

disparity within ten years. But we included the stipulation that if a male worker received a 3 percent yearly raise, the employer's plan should provide an additional 3 percent per year to female workers."

To make this revenue neutral for the employers, the plan created two mechanisms that made the mandate more palatable. All private sector employers would qualify for a tax credit equal to the amount of additional money that would be spent on the salaries of their female employees. All public sector employers would get a waiver for any additional money spent on the salaries of female employees that exceeded their revenue caps or spending limits.

Numerous drafts were written in the ensuing back and forth deliberative process between the Local 95 task force and Rep. Schneider's office. The final proposal was given to the bill drafters in the legislature on April 2. It does not currently have a bill number, and will not be introduced until after the budget process is completed. If successful, however, the attractive provisions contained in the bill could serve as a model for other states to finally eradicate the wage gap between men and women.

## Unions Begin National Bargaining with Kaiser

**T**hirty-three labor unions and management representatives of Kaiser Permanente regions across the United States have begun the process of negotiating a second national agreement for more than 80,000 union members; OPEIU represents more than 9,600 members. The first agreement was negotiated in 2000.

“The Kaiser Partnership has been nationally recognized as an outstanding example of labor-management teamwork that has raised Kaiser Permanente’s previous reputation from a low-end health care organization to being recognized as the health care provider and employer of choice in California and other major geographic markets,” said committee member and Local 29 President and Region V Vice President Tamara Rubyn.

The groundbreaking agreement was facilitated by the Federal Mediation and Facilitation Service (FMCS) and Restructuring Associates (RAI), a consulting firm that specializes in assisting unionized companies to work through change models using the principles of Interest Based Problem Solving (IBPS) and labor-management partnership. In addition to the National Agreement, each individual union bargains at a local table over issues specific to their membership that are not covered under the national agreement.

The Common Issues Committee (CIC), comprised of 33 labor unions and Kaiser management members, is the body responsible for overseeing and approving the recommendations of the approximately 400 members of the Bargaining Task Groups (BTGs). The majority of the effort to create a new national agreement, which covers the topics of Benefits, Work-Life Balance, Performance Improvement, Workforce Development, Service Quality and Performance Based Pay, will be assigned to six BTGs.

Recognizing the outstanding work done by the BTGs in 2000, the CIC hopes to build on the work already done that has yet to be fully implemented, in addition to working on new issues that have emerged in the last five years as a result of economic, political and technological change. The national bargaining effort began in February when the CIC was convened, and will continue through August with the work of the BTG’s and the local bargaining committees.

Tamara Rubyn, Local 2 Secretary-Treasurer Michael Cowan, and Local 30 Executive Director/CFO and Region V Vice President Walter Allen will serve on the Common Issues Committee representing their Locals as well as OPEIU Locals 17 and 277. OPEIU delegates, comprising the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions (CKPU), attended a delegate conference to kick off national bargaining, including: From Local 2 — Sandra

Brevitt, Julie Buckley, Audrey King, Rose Meushaw, Evelyn Ross, Sandy Smith. From Local 17 — President John Kolodny, Mary Szeliga and Tammara Snider. From Local 28 — Secretary-Treasurer Patricia Sanchez, Seth Calder, Takeia Crane, Andrea Johnson, Deanna Andry, Linda Gilmore, Sheila Wiltz, Vice President/Business Representative Geoffrey Gamble, Business Representative Terry Keller, Business Representative Kelly Gschwend, and Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions Staff Representative Alice Robinson. From Local 30 — Marianne Tegio, Mary Ellen Farrell, Catherine Engler, Cathy Young, Katie Doyle, Carmen Corral, Larry Petrea, Annette Baxter and Sue Smith.



**OPEIU delegates to the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions (CKPU). Pictured are Common Issues Committee (CIC) members Tamara Rubyn, Local 29 President and Region V Vice President (front row, second from left), Walter Allen, Local 30 Executive Director/CFO and Region V Vice President (front row, far right) and Michael Cowan, Local 2 Secretary-Treasurer (behind Allen).**

## Lobbyist Corner

# We Need Your Help Now

**Submitted by OPEIU Lobbyist Robert McGlotten of McGlotten & Jarvis**

**P**resident George Bush and the Republican leadership in the House and Senate have begun to unravel many of the social legislative achievements that assist working families. The budget resolution passed by both houses of Congress continues to restructure the tax code that favors many wealthy individuals while increasing the federal deficit. That deficit increase of \$167 billion over five years would require cuts in many entitlement programs, including Medicaid, veterans' health, housing and education.

The administration's latest Social Security proposal on progressive indexing as currently outlined by President Bush would be paid by middle income earners — those with incomes of \$35,000 to \$60,000 a year. These same workers may also face cuts of 20 to 30 percent in the benefits promised under the current program.

**OPEIU will continue to fight those inequities.  
Now is the time to make that call on the following agenda:**

- Continue to protect Social Security from being dismantled.
- Try to restore budget cuts in Medicaid and other entitlement programs.
- Support the employees "Free Choice Act," which would allow individuals to form unions under a more efficient system. S.842 is the Senate bill with 35 cosponsors. The House bill, H.R.1696, has 148 cosponsors. Is your senator or representative a cosponsor? Call them now.
- Continue to seek an increase in minimum wage.
- Fight for specific legislation important to our local unions and guilds.
- OPEIU also supports S.440 and H.R.699, bills to include podiatrists under the Medicaid program.

**Take Action — Your Involvement is More Important Than Ever!**

Many people ask—how can I make a difference? Can one voice alone make the president stop his assault on working families, or make Congress protect our rights? It's true that one voice alone is easy to dismiss. But the sound of our voices strongly united cannot be silenced. We must take action together to defeat these measures. Your involvement is more important than ever! Here's how you can take action today:

Contact your local representatives. Every letter counts. Every phone call can make a difference. If you prefer to make written contact, OPEIU advises you to either mail or e-mail all correspondence.

If you don't know who your House representative is, the Clerk of the House maintains addresses and phone numbers of all Members and Committees: Clerk of the House, US Capitol, Room H154, Washington, DC 20515; phone (202) 225-7000; hours 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Please direct your questions about communication with your Senators to the specific office(s) in question, using the following format: Office of Senator (Name), United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510.

You may also phone the U.S. Capitol's switchboard at (202) 224-3121. An operator will connect you directly with the House or Senate office you request.

If you are not sure who your representative is, the following websites contain links to congressional directories: <http://www.house.gov/writerep> and <http://www.senate.gov>. You can also access this information at your local library, or call the International Union at 212-675-3210 for a booklet listing of congressional representatives.

**Your action is needed. Do your part to help yourself and your family!**



# WASHINGTON WINDOW

## What It's Like at Wal-Mart

**W**hat's it really like at Wal-Mart? Brenda Boyle can tell you. The northeastern Pennsylvania resident worked at its Hazleton store for years — but not any more.

Boyle is one of the women leading a massive 1.6-million-person sexual discrimination suit filed against the notorious anti-union, anti-worker retail giant in federal appellate court in San Francisco.

Evidence shows Wal-Mart discriminated against its present and former female workers in pay and promotions. Each female earned thousands of dollars less than her male counterparts. Some 70 percent of Wal-Mart's workers are women.

Thus Boyle came to D.C. for "Equal Pay Day," April 19 — the date each year when an average female worker's pay for the whole previous year plus an extra 3-1/2 months or so equals the average male worker's pay in the same job for the previous year alone.

But the conditions at Wal-Mart are a lot worse than just low pay and sexual discrimination. Listen to Boyle:

"I was a front-end manager and a price verifier, and the workers there talk and everyone knows that men in virtually identical jobs make more than we do," she says. The gap? Two dollars or more per worker per hour — several thousand per year.

So what could workers do? Well, they could try to unionize. But that's "the magic word" at Wal-Mart, known as not only the most notoriously low-paying bad-benefits monster retailer in the U.S.,

but as a company renowned for its constant labor law-breaking to keep unions — specifically the United Food and Commercial Workers — away from its 1 million "associates."

How do unions help? Federal data show a much narrower pay gap between men and women in union shops than there is overall. And unions insist, at the bargaining table, on pay equity.

"If you say the word 'union,' you're quickly on the outside looking in," Boyle says. "When someone makes an attempt, sirens go off and lights flash. They tried at Hazleton a few times and management went absolutely ballistic."

Of course, at Wal-Mart, you could always consult the company handbook, which proclaims it has "an open door policy," about issues such as pay discrimination by sex. There's just one thing wrong with that, Boyle says: "It doesn't work."

"It depends on who you are, and who you know. You still have discrimination against females — and you still have underpaid workers overall," she adds.

Then there's the company's inculcation of its values: The every-morning Wal-Mart cheer and rallies. "That's such a cult," Boyle comments. "Once you get inside the store, they get inside your head. The company propaganda is very invasive."

It got too much for one of her (male) colleagues, aged 58, in the lawn and garden department. "He shot himself."

There's other sex discrimination at Wal-Mart besides the obvious one of lower pay, Boyle adds.

There — as in many other workplaces

— Wal-Mart's women workers "have to prove themselves over and over and over" to get ahead "while a man doesn't do anything above average." Boyle watched men — far less qualified — get promoted over her head.

Of course, there was another way Boyle could have gotten ahead. One manager said he would sponsor her for a special training program for higher-level positions, if ... need we say it?

Wal-Mart's district manager knew about the quid pro quo, she added, and did nothing. But when Boyle resigned and the lawsuit revealed the story, the manager who propositioned her was fired.

"But there are a lot of women" at Wal-Mart "who feel they have to do that," she adds sadly.

Boyle's tale is only the tip of the iceberg of the vicious treatment of workers by Wal-Mart. And not just its own workers.

UFCW added another story by filing labor law-breaking charges against Wal-Mart for what was a \$500,000 anti-union "slush fund" in the hands of its former #2 executive. He was canned, the company says, for dipping into that till.

Now add Boyle's story to the sex discrimination suit, Wal-Mart's labor law-breaking, high-cost low-availability health insurance — which forces its workers to use taxpayer-paid health care — demands that suppliers low-ball their workers or move to China, and locking workers into stores after hours, unpaid. You have a company that is a menace to all workers and a blight upon the U.S. Maybe we should forget organizing Wal-Mart — and campaign to put it out of business.

## Work and Health

# Does Eating Fruits and Vegetables Really Protect Against Cancer?

**Submitted by Jeffrey S. Freed, M.D.**

**Associate Professor of Surgery, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, NYC  
OPEIU Local 153 Health Fund Medical Director**

For many years the National Institutes of Health has promoted the idea that eating fruits and vegetables, at least five portions per day, has a protective value in preventing cancer, heart disease and stroke. A recent study questioned this concept, being able to identify the beneficial effects of fruits and vegetables against heart disease and stroke, but not cancer. Other experts from the American Cancer Society, the National Cancer Institute and other organizations, however, restated the soundness of recommending fruit and vegetable consumption for cancer prevention.

When you eat fruits and vegetables, you are meeting your calorie requirements with healthy food, as opposed to meeting them with sugar, fat or low-nutrient foods. Making good food choices is going to directly protect you from heart disease, but it is also going to protect you from weight gain, and that's going to protect you from cancer according to the American Cancer Society.

It is most probable that there are components of fruits and vegetables that may modestly reduce the risk of certain cancers. This can specifically be seen with the apparent reduction of the risk of prostate cancer in men who have an increased intake of tomato-based products. Also, Harvard researchers have found a protective effect of cruciferous vegetables (i.e. cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli, and even mustard and collard greens) against cancer, though unfortunately only in men. Why men benefit more in the decrease of some cancers is not as yet understood.

Many studies are in progress to see which fruits and vegetables actually reduce the incidence of specific cancers. The

answers to the question are obviously very complex and will take a considerable amount of time to unravel. Until such time as an absolute description of what in a certain vegetable or fruit is decreasing the incidence of which specific cancer, the most prudent course of action is to eat a diversified group of fruits and vegetables at the

recommended intake of five portions per day. Following this recommendation should lead to a decrease in the incidence of heart disease, stroke and cancer.

*Jeffrey S. Freed, M.D., P.C. specializes in general surgery/proctology. He can be reached at (212) 396-0050.*

## SAVE THE DATES!

**Make plans now to attend the following educational conferences:**

**SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST AREA  
EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE  
(REGIONS III & IV)**

**September 9-11, 2005  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

**WEST/NORTHWEST AREA  
EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE  
(REGIONS V & VI)**

**November 18-20, 2005  
Southern California  
(location to be announced)**

# April 2005 PHPA Council Meeting



The Professional Helicopter Pilots Association held its Council Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, April 22-23, 2005. Seated from left to right are: four guest pilots; Jeff Stackpole, Local 109, Air Methods Corp.; Troy Montanez, Local 109, Air Methods Corp.; Mike Dorsett, Local 108; Jack Bower, Local 108 and PHPA Secretary-Treasurer; Steve Ragin, Local 108, Petroleum Helicopters, Inc.; Robert Jesinger, OPEIU Project Attorney; Kevin Kistler, OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services; Steve Rush, Local 102 President; Jeff Smith, Local 102; Ron Arsenault, Local 102; Chris Bingham; Ken Bruner, Local 107 President; Bill Blume, Local 107; and Bill Sykes, Local 107 (PHPA President Butch Grafton and OPEIU President Michael Goodwin not shown).



George Bueno, Local 153 Health and Pension Fund Director (standing) makes presentation regarding Local 153 Pension Fund. Also shown are Jeff Rusich, OPEIU Senior Representative; Paul Bohelski, OPEIU Representative; and Richard Lanigan, Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer and Region II Vice President.



PHPA President Butch Grafton (left) congratulates Robert Whittaker, a student pilot, as the 2005 recipient of the annual PHPA \$1,000 Scholarship Award.

# Union Member Rights and Officer Responsibilities Under the LMRDA

**T**he Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) guarantees certain rights to union members and imposes certain responsibilities on union officers. The Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS) enforces many LMRDA provisions while other provisions, such as the bill of rights, may only be enforced by union members through private suit in Federal court.

## Union Member Rights

**Bill of Rights** — Union members have:

- equal rights to participate in union activities
- freedom of speech and assembly
- voice in setting rates of dues, fees, and assessments
- protection of the right to sue
- safeguards against improper discipline

**Copies of Collective Bargaining Agreements** — Union members and nonunion employees have the right to receive or inspect copies of collective bargaining agreements.

**Reports** — Unions are required to file an initial information report (Form LM-1), copies of constitutions and bylaws, and an annual financial report (Form LM-2/3/4) with OLMS. Unions must make the reports available to members and permit members to examine supporting records for just cause. The reports are public information and copies are available from OLMS.

**Officer Elections** — Union members have the right to:

- nominate candidates for office
- run for office
- cast a secret ballot
- protest the conduct of an election

**Officer Removal** — Local union members have the right to an adequate procedure for the removal of an elected officer guilty of serious misconduct.

**Trusteeships** — Unions may only be placed in trusteeship by a parent body for the reasons specified in the LMRDA.

**Prohibition Against Certain Discipline** — A union or any of its officials may not fine, expel, or otherwise discipline a member for exercising any LMRDA right.

**Prohibition Against Violence** — No one may use or threaten to use force or violence to interfere with a union member in the exercise of LMRDA rights.

## Union Officer Responsibilities

**Financial Safeguards** — Union officers have a duty to manage the funds and property of the union solely for the benefit of the union and its members in accordance with the union's constitution and bylaws. Union officers or employees who embezzle or steal union funds or other assets commit a Federal crime punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment.

**Bonding** — Union officers or employees who handle union funds or property must be bonded to provide protection against losses if their union has property and annual financial receipts which exceed \$5,000.

**Labor Organization Reports** — Union officers must:

- File an initial information report (Form LM-1) and annual financial reports (Forms LM-2/3/4) with OLMS.
- Retain the records necessary to verify the reports for at least five years.

**Officer Reports** — Union officers and employees must file reports concerning any loans and benefits received from, or certain financial interests in, employers whose employees their unions represent and businesses that deal with their unions.

**Officer Elections** — Unions must:

- hold elections of officers of local unions by secret ballot at least every three years.
- conduct regular elections in accordance with their constitution and bylaws and preserve all records for one year.
- mail a notice of election to every member at least 15 days prior to the election.
- comply with a candidate's request to distribute campaign material.
- not use union funds or resources to promote any candidate (nor may employer funds or resources be used).
- permit candidates to have election observers.
- allow candidates to inspect the union's membership list once within 30 days prior to the election.

**Restrictions on Holding Office** — A person convicted of certain crimes may not serve as a union officer, employee, or other representative of a union for up to 13 years.

**Loans** — A union may not have outstanding loans to any one officer or employee that in total exceed \$2,000 at any time.

**Fines** — A union may not pay the fine of any officer or employee convicted of any willful violation of the LMRDA.

The above is only a summary of the LMRDA. The full text of the Act, which comprises Sections 401-531 of Title 29 of the United States Code, may be found in many public libraries, or by writing the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor-Management Standards, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Room N-5616, Washington, D.C., 20210, or on the Internet at [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov).

**For more information  
about the OPEIU,  
visit our website at  
[www.opeiu.org](http://www.opeiu.org)**

## The Union Saved Her Life!

**R**enee Cardone, president of OPEIU Clinical Social Work Guild 49, says that the information on a union-produced laminated shower hanger may have saved her life. One day, Cardone noticed a dimple on her breast and quickly referred to an AFSCME shower hanger advocating the proper way to conduct breast self-examination. "I remembered reading on that card that a dimple could be a sign of cancer," Cardone said. "It said that you should be aware of any puckering or dimpling. Those words saved my life."

Cardone went to see her doctor and both his exam and a mammogram couldn't find anything. But additional testing brought a diagnosis of ductal carcinoma — the most common form of breast cancer. "I'd had a mammogram within the past year, but it didn't catch this. It shows how important self-examination is to early detection and treatment and that not only lumps can be a problem."

Cardone's cancer was in the early stages, and a lumpectomy was performed to remove the tumor and affected sentinel nodes. "My recovery was extraordinary," she said. "The doctors did a terrific job and my body looks exactly as it did before the surgery. I'm now going to begin some radiation and perhaps chemotherapy to prevent the chances of recurrence. I'm very thankful that things worked out so well for me, and hope that other OPEIU members will learn from my experience. I'm also very thankful for the unions' commitment to health information and education."

In 2005, an estimated 211,240 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed in American women, and one in eight women will be diagnosed in her lifetime. "I'm now having similar shower hangers made for Guild 49 members," Cardone said. "It's important that all women understand that regular mammography and self-breast examination is the key to early detection, and that early detection means increased survival rates."

## OPEIU Daughter Wins 2005 Texas State AFL-CIO Scholarship

**B**reonika Strickland, 18, daughter of Larry and Sharon Strickland, is one of the proud recipients of this year's 2005 Texas State AFL-CIO scholarship. Sharon Strickland is a 28-year member of Local 277 in Fort Worth, Texas, and Breonika's aunts, Helen Ervin and Sandra Wright, are also long-time Local 277 members.



**Breonika Strickland**

"I have been a Local 277 member for 28 years and my husband has been a union member all of his working life," Sharon said. "We consider ourselves a union family and we are truly blessed to receive this Texas State AFL-CIO scholarship for Breonika. That is especially true with Breonika's father recently being diagnosed with Glomerulonephritis, which causes kidney failure and has made him unable to work at this time."

Breonika is a senior at Eastern Hills High School in Fort Worth. She has been recognized as a magna cum laude, with a GPA of 3.9. Breonika is a member of the National Honor Society, president of the Eastern Hills Ladies Step Team, and first place trophy winner for vocals at Eastern Hills High School in Fort Worth. Breonika is also an active member of many other organizations in her community.

The \$1,000 scholarship can be used at the beginning of the college semester for books, tuition, or room and board. Breonika will also be eligible for the award again next year. In the fall, she will attend the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas where she will pursue a medical career, and dreams of fulfilling her goal of becoming a gynecologist.

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