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NEWS IN BRIEF

Memorial fund established for children

Members of Local 618-CD have set up a memorial fund for the children left behind after a tragic murder-suicide involving a Thurston County corrections officer.

Local president Corrections Officer Paul Minker says any financial help will aid the children, aged 11 and 17, as they face life without their parents.

Karen and Marvin Henry died December 4, 2001. Their aunt and uncle of Lacey are caring for the children.

Anyone can contribute to the fund by contacting any branch of First Community Bank and asking to donate to the Henry Children Memorial Fund.

Legislative Weekend set for March

The annual Legislative Weekend will be held in Olympia's WestCoast Hotel from March 7 through 9.

The deadline to receive room reservations is February 11.

Attendees will have an opportunity to meet with their legislators and tour the Capitol.

Members can access periodic updates of the Legislative Report on the Council 2 Web site, www.council2.com.

AFSCME Convention slated for Las Vegas

The AFSCME International Convention will be held in Las Vegas from June 23 through 28.

INSIDE

2

Scholarship honorees

3

Democrats gain control

4

Contracts ratified



Members of Local 1191-CC split firewood to help a colleague who underwent open-heart surgery

Pleasant surprise awaited Local member

When John Eaton was flown from Columbia County to Spokane for open-heart surgery late last year, his fellow employees in Local 1191-CC wasted no time in looking for a way to provide him with a helping hand.

His colleagues — who work with him at the Columbia County Road Department — found the opportunity when Eaton, after undergoing the operation, visited his son in Oregon on November 12.

They knew that when he returned

home, his wood supply would need to be restocked. Although Eaton had made it through the surgery just fine, they realized it would be a while before he was able to chop and split wood again.

So, while Eaton was away, they set to work. Not only would they help out, they figured, but they would make it a surprise as well.

Together they cut up and split five cord of wood and hauled



See SURPRISE, Page 4 →

Local helps to organize fund-raiser

After the September 11 tragedies hit, Local 113 sought a way to help.

So they joined with the Everett Elks Lodge and sponsored a dance on November 24. Proceeds from the raffling of donated prizes went to the American Red Cross. Food barrels were filled for men's and women's

shelters.

The band, Mikey Likes It, played dance rock and roll and R&B music. The disco lights were flashing, the kids were spinning, the music was pumping, and everyone had a great time.

"To see the generosity of our Local 113 and surrounding community was very inspiring," said one attendee.

Contracts approved at rapid pace

Council 2 bargaining units ratified more than 100 contracts during 2001, making the year one of the busiest ever for Council 2 contract negotiations.

One contract was approved about every 2½ working days during the year.

"This number reflects the uncertainty of the times in public agencies, rising medical insurance costs, and the hard work of the Council 2 staff



representatives to complete negotiations in a timely manner," notes Chris Dugovich, President/Executive Director of Council 2.

Locals renewed bargaining contracts, settled some that had been pending for

See CONTRACTS, Page 4 →

Workers rush to join Council 2

The number of unaffiliated workers seeking to join Council 2 has jumped sharply in the wake of voter approval of Initiative 747.

They are concerned about job security and about wages and benefits, particularly medical benefits, being cut in the wake of the initiative.

The initiative, approved in the November election, limits increases in property taxes to 1 percent a year without special voter approval. It is expected to have a strong impact on the income of counties and cities, particularly as the limit is less than the rate of inflation, now running at around 3 percent.



See RUSH, Page 4 →

I-747 supporters failed to see the link

In the wake of the voter approval of Initiative 747 in the November elections, Council 2 has a new task.

It is to make clear to everyone that there is a connection between the property taxes the public pays and the available services that public employees provide. "In spite of everybody's efforts, the public didn't see the connection," says Pat Thompson, Council 2's Legislation/Political Action Director.

I-747 limits property tax increases to 1 percent a year without special voter approval.

"Local governments are going to be under more strain than they ever have been," Thompson says. "For a lot of jurisdictions, particularly the smaller ones, the cumulative effects of Initiatives 601, 695, and 747 combined with the economic downturn will mean death by a thousand cuts.

"And professional sponsor Tim Eyman, who personally gained \$90,000 from I-747, is at it again with Initiative 776." (See Letter from the President, Page 2.) I-776 seeks to roll back the licensing fees that were approved by the voters in Snohomish, Pierce and King counties, as well as any fees local agencies and counties charge for processing license tabs.

See I-747, Page 3 →

Eyman clearly is not concerned with quality and efficiency of government

Chris Dugovich

Before the final ballots were counted, before the real impacts of Initiative 747 were apparent to citizens across Washington, Tim Eyman had filed his next initiative.

Eyman, the watch salesman turned initiative professional, is apparently not concerned with the quality and efficiency of government. If he were interested in finding balance in taxation and services, he wouldn't file new initiatives before measuring the impacts of his previous offering.

Take the new initiative, I-776. How does he know that license fees for yachts need to be lowered before we know if I-747 has successfully reduced the property tax burden on yacht owners?

So why the rush to keep his name in the paper and a new initiative on file? It's simple: he's making money off the process. His own campaign disclosure reports show a \$90,000 income from I-747.

While the populist appeal of tax cutting initiatives is impossible to deny, the burden should be on the sponsor of the initiative to propose sound policy,



Letter from the president

not sound bites. The goal should be initiatives motivated by improving our state, not turning a profit.

Washington experienced unparalleled growth in the 1990s not because we had the lowest taxes (we rank 17th in the nation, according to the 2000 U.S. Census), but because we offered businesses and residents excellent services like good libraries, safe roadways and first-class police and fire protection.

Those services are integral to our quality of life — and the strength of our economy. Boeing, which fought I-695 and I-747, noted that their decision to leave Washington wasn't taxes, but traffic. I-695 devastated the state transportation budget. I-747 will have the same impacts on local road funds. Eyman's new initiative aims to strip even more from transportation.

Cities and counties are already announcing I-747 related cuts: jail and court cutbacks in Pierce County; library shutdowns in Seattle; millions in road funds lost in Snohomish County. It is quickly becoming clear that I-747 will have an immediate negative impact on our state.

As one of the leaders of the business, labor, environmental, and citizen coalition that set out to defeat I-747, I am proud of the firefighters, librarians, nurses and public employees across the state who led the volunteer effort to defeat I-747.

Among our strongest supporters — and the people Eyman conveniently forgets when railing against "big government" — are the hundreds of volunteer public servants in our communities.

Parks, library, hospital and fire commissioners, small town city council members and part-time mayors are not only our neighbors, but they understand the challenges of providing services on a

shoestring budget.

Unlike Tim Eyman, our local leaders have the courage to be held accountable. The tough job is making service cuts and explaining them to voters. Eyman can simply offer feel-good tax cuts and laugh all the way to the bank.

While we were not surprised to see I-747 pass, we do believe that initiatives such as 747 will lose favor once the tradeoffs between services and tax revenues become apparent — almost certain to happen now that the state lacks the funds to bail out cash-strapped local governments. The \$23 an average homeowner will save next year under I-747 would go a long way to keeping libraries open and roads maintained.

Having worked with local governments from King County to the city of Omak for over 20 years, through good times and bad, I know that elected leaders and public employees across the state will continue to do the best job possible to serve our communities.

We cannot, however, sit back and watch our quality of life threatened by irresistible, yet short-sighted initiatives like I-747. We cannot let the initiative process become simply a money making tool to undermine our transportation system, libraries and emergency response.

There have been a series of suggested reforms that would lead to objective review of an initiative before it is placed in the ballot. Certainly, voters deserve more analysis than is currently offered by legalistic ballot titles and voter guide statements written by advocates, not experts.

We wouldn't accept a medical diagnosis from a used car dealer, so why continue buying tax policy from a watch salesman?

Scholarships named in honor of past members

The 2002 Council 2 scholarships have been named in honor of past members of the union.

Scholarship awards

Four scholarship awards of \$2,000 each have been named in honor of **Forrest Johnson**, past member of North Thurston School District, Local 618, and in memory of **Dave Morgan**, past member of Issaquah School District Transportation Local 21-I.

Forrest Johnson worked for the North Thurston School District as a Day Custodian for about 16 years. He was forced to retire for health reasons and has moved to Bremerton to be with his family. He is an avid Union activist and was the Chapter Chair for Local 618, North Thurston School District for several years. He led the fight for fairness for everyone, especially for the underdog, Council 2 members say.

After retiring from Honeywell, **Dave Morgan** went to work as a school bus driver for the Issaquah School District in 1987. He was a dedicated employee and was always willing to help his co-workers whenever needed. He worked at the school district until February 1999 when he died in his sleep. "Dave was a compassionate bus driver and the children he drove to school each day loved him dearly," says Bob Lontz, president of Local 21-I.

Continuing Education Awards

Eight Continuing Education Awards of \$500 each have been named in memory of **Troy Boyd**, past member of City of Wenatchee Local 846-W; **John Holmes**, past member of Spokane County Jail & Pierce County Corrections Locals 492 and 120-CD; **Sue Einarson**, past member of Columbia River Mental Health, Local 2699; and **Larry Oser**, past member of Columbia River Mental Health, Local 2699.

Troy Boyd worked for the City of Wenatchee Engineering Department where he was a member of Local 846-W. He died on August 8, 2000 while on duty as the project inspector for the City of Wenatchee utility project being constructed by a private contractor. "He was an exceptional individual," says Margie Y. Wilson, Associate Engineer for the City of Wenatchee. "It would be an honor and tribute to his memory to lend his name to a means by which others may be provided the opportunity for a better future."

Scholarship winners

Aaron York (left) and Tawnya Shuman each won a \$1,000 scholarship from Council 2 in 2001.




John Holmes was a retired Air Force Master Sergeant who worked for 10 years as a corrections officer at the Spokane County Jail, where he served as the Local 492's Secretary-Treasurer. He then followed his wife Luby's career to Tacoma, where he became a corrections officer at the Pierce County Jail, Local 120-CD. He had a great sense of humor and was highly respected in his field, says Ken Thomas, President of Local 492.

Sue Einarson held a position as Transportation Coordinator in the Adult Day Health Center of Columbia River Mental Health. She was an active member of the newly organized Local 2699 until her recent death from cancer.

Larry Oser served as Kitchen Coordinator at the residential program, called Elahan Place, at Columbia River Mental Health. He was an excellent chef, steward and the father of a teenage daughter.

Summer School for Trade Union Women

The Labor Center's Summer School for Trade Union Women Award has been named in memory of Catherine Foreman, City of Yakima Local 1122.

Applications for the 2002 scholarships must be received by March 15. Application forms are available on the Council 2 Web site, www.council2.com.



Calendar

June 23-28: International Convention Las Vegas

Please check out our Web site, www.council2.com, for updated information on Secretary-Treasurer training, steward training, and so on.

CONTRACTS, from Page 1

years, and negotiated new ones in a flurry of activity.

Employees made meaningful gains. In all, there were stories to tell of hard work, dedication and determination.

Among the toughest fought negotiations was that with Laidlaw Transportation Company. (See report on this page). The other contracts were a mixture of dedication, determination and drive.

The examples that follow show something of the year's achievements.

- **Spokane County prosecutors**, who are members of **Local 1553-PA**, achieved a huge victory early in the year when, after a battle that lasted nine years, they secured an agreement providing about 20 percent wage increases over three years.

- **Local 1308 in Kitsap County** resolved a deadlock over a contract through use of the Inter-Local Conflict Resolution Group. Negotiations had been conducted for more than a year after the previous contract expired, but the contract was ratified after meeting with the group's mediators.

- **Local 618-L** ratified a three-year agreement with the City of Lacey in November — over a month before the previous contract expired.

- **Local 270-C**, representing City of Cheney employees, settled a contract providing 3.1 percent increases in 2002 and 100 percent of the consumer price index in each of the next two years. Among the victories in the negotiations was the union's ability to remove what they saw as "very bad medical plan cost sharing language" proposed by the City.

- **The Snohomish County Master Contract** was settled. The settlement was significant as it encompasses 1,464 employees. (See report on this page.)

- An agreement was ratified between **Local 120** and the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department following more than a year of negotiations. A major issue was a return to a normal grievance procedure following a failed attempt at involving a peer review board to settle disputes.

- A settlement by **Local 1135** provides about 19 percent wage increases over three years.



Master contract negotiated for 1,464 Snohomish County workers

It took about 10 months. And the negotiations were tough. But Council 2 last year successfully negotiated a new master contract for about 1,464 Snohomish County employees.

The new contract was ratified on October 30 after negotiations began on December 22, 2000. Workers voted two-to-one to accept it.

The master contract covers 28 different bargaining groups and includes all County employees except those in District and Superior Courts.

Those who work in the District Courts and in Superior Court are covered under separate contracts, but wages and benefits are negotiated through the master agreement.

The master contract covers working conditions, benefits and some of the gen-

eral aspects of work that cover all the groups. Each work group has a separate addendum stipulating terms of the contract that apply specifically to it.

ing, the contract ensures that a committee will be appointed to advise and work with the employer," Wentworth says. The committee will help to mitigate and contain costs, she adds.

The master contract also includes a 3.5 percent COLA (cost of living adjustment) for 2001, 3.5 percent for 2002, as well as 70 percent of the Consumer Price Index (a measure of inflation) in 2003 and 90 percent in 2004.

Beginning in 2003, the County will initiate a 50 percent deferred compensation match up to 2 percent of an employee's monthly salary. "This is a significant leap forward for improving our members' retirement benefits," adds Wentworth.



A major issue in the negotiations was medical coverage

A major issue in the negotiations was medical coverage, says Laura Wentworth, Staff Representative. She and Pat Thompson, Director of Legislation/Political Action for Council 2, were the lead negotiators for Council 2.

"At a time when medical costs are ris-

After five years of struggle, Laidlaw workers gain contract

Finally. After an uphill battle stretching over five years, Laidlaw paratransit van drivers in Spokane, members of Local 780, have a contract with the company. The contract, negotiated by Council 2, was unanimously ratified on Dec. 8.

The contract was no mean achievement. After all, Laidlaw, a private company, has significant financial forces that it can use to back its efforts. A multinational corporation based in Canada, it owns Greyhound Bus Services, Mayflower and Armor Meats in addition to the Laidlaw transportation company itself.

The saga began in 1996 when Laidlaw bus drivers and paratransit van drivers in Spokane voted to join Council 2.

Laidlaw, which handles the bus driv-

ing for School District 81 in Spokane, contracts with Spokane Transit Authority for the paratransit van services.

Laidlaw opposed the initial organizing drive undertaken by Council 2 with all of its available resources. Once Council 2 succeeded in organizing the drivers in the company, they fought the union's attempts to reach a first-time contract.

After more than five years, and two unsuccessful decertification attempts, an agreement was reached between the bus drivers, the paratransit drivers, Council 2 and Laidlaw that the bus drivers should withdraw their representation from Council 2. But the paratransit division, consisting of about 50 drivers, would continue to be represented and a contract would be negotiated.

Those negotiations resulted in a tentative agreement on the contract on October 3 and ratification in December.

Members applaud the efforts of Roy Degenstein, president of Local 780, throughout the negotiations. A retired carpenter, Degenstein was a member of the Carpenters Union until he retired and went to work for Laidlaw. Members say he held them together when times were rough and kept them informed of the status of negotiations. "Roy also took some heat from management, but he kept on going," one member says. "Greg Ludy, and Jim Skog of the Local's executive board also stood firm during the negotiations."

RUSH, from Page 1

The jump in workers seeking to organize followed an initial slowdown in organizing in the wake of the economic downturn and the events of September 11.

Then suddenly, in November, the number of inquiries took off.

"We have eight elections pending in

different agencies across the state," says Council 2 Organizer Bill Keenan.

"I think a lot of people are very concerned. They realize that there could be some budget problems in the public sector.

"Already, they have noticed that the state is not coming to the rescue of the cities and counties.

"Many of the public agencies themselves are looking at layoffs and budget cuts.

"Without a doubt, there is a huge groundswell of concern that they want a voice in considering how money is going to be spent in both serving the public and the impact on their work.

"Suddenly people are seeing the ben-

efits of belonging to a union."

Most of the organizing leads are coming from recommendations from existing Locals or contacts that were handled by the Staff Representatives, Keenan says.

"We thank all of those individuals and encourage them to seek new organizing leads to help our union grow," he adds.

SURPRISE, from Page 1

it to Eaton's home.

When Eaton arrived back, he was delighted to find his firewood was stacked and ready for his use.



Workshop seen as educational and worthwhile

About 85 Local presidents, treasurers and trustees of the Washington State Council and County and City Employees and the Washington Federation of State Employees attended a Secretary-Treasurer workshop co-hosted by Council 2 and Council 28 at WestCoast SeaTac in October.

Conducted by Cathy German of the AFSCME auditing department, the workshop focused on financial responsibility to the Local and reporting requirements.

The overwhelming comment by those who attended was that the workshop was extremely educational and worthwhile.

The workshop will be held again this year. The tentative location is Spokane.

