



# COUNTY & CITY

# EMPLOYEE

AFSCME AFL-CIO

Vol. 21 No. 1

  
<http://www.council2.com>

Spring 2006

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Scholarship honors Sunde Chaney

One of Council 2's dependent scholarships has been named for Sunde Chaney.

She worked for Grays Harbor County Planning and Building Department where she served as a shop steward and was Local 275 Scholarship Chairperson for the past three years.

"She enjoyed working closely with the schools and the students," says Kevin James of Local 275. "She always had a smile for everyone."

"Her death was a shock to all who knew and worked with her."

### Scholarship deadlines are March 31

To be eligible, the application forms for Council 2's 2006 scholarships need to be mailed no later than March 31.

The following scholarships are available:

- Four \$2,000 scholarship awards, to children of a local union member of WSCCCE.
- Eight \$1,000 continuing education awards, to members of a local affiliated with the WSCCCE.

Application forms can be downloaded from the Council 2 Web site, [www.council2.com](http://www.council2.com) or can be obtained by calling Council 2's Everett office at 1-800-775-6418.

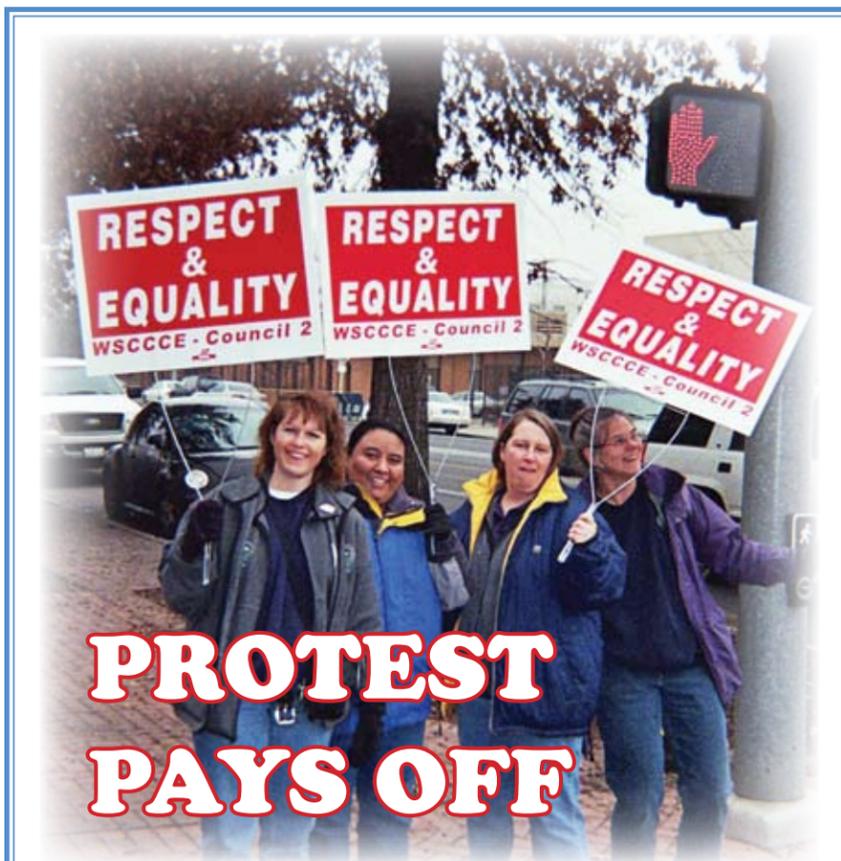
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## PROTEST PAYS OFF

Members of Local 87-P (Juvenile Services) picket in Yakima. They are (from left): Roxanne Johns, Bella Kirby, Doreen Greer and Lynn Davis.

Yakima County employees were angry last year when management told them during contract negotiations that the county was broke and no money was available to pay them increases.

In addition, management said, the employees' average pay of \$30,000 a year already was enough.

The bargaining unit for Yakima Locals 87 (Aging and Long Term Care and County Courthouse), 87-P (Juvenile Services) and 2658 (Appraisers) refused to accept the

County's contentions and the negotiations, begun in August 2004, dragged on.

Already, the 300 employees represented by the bargaining unit had worked for more than a year without a contract.

But their frustration turned to outrage when they discovered that officials in the top positions in the county were receiving increases ranging from 2.5 percent to 25 percent.

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## Dedication scores for Local 2699

Talk about dedication. For 18 months, four members of Local 2699 — employees at Columbia River Mental Health — persisted in a bargaining process that was fraught with frustration.

The negotiations were often contentious and laborious due mostly to the lack of experience of the management team, who were unfamiliar with the bar-

gaining process. Only one had minimal experience in contract negotiations and none had been in negotiations with this Local before.

Not only that, but one of the three managers involved in bargaining was replaced halfway through the negotiations. In contrast, only one member of the union team was new to labor negotiations.

But, in spite of the frustrations, the

## Your help is needed on pension plan

There still may be time to pass the Rule-of-90 pension benefit this session, but your help is needed.

"We are hoping that during the 60-day session — scheduled to end around March 10 — there still is time for legislative leadership to act on the Rule-of-90 proposal," says Council 2 Deputy Direc-

Contact your legislators and ask them to support the bill.

tor Pat Thompson.

The Rule of 90 is beneficial not only because of what it says, but also because it is easy to understand. The measure (HB 2679/SB 6445) would allow anyone whose age plus years of service total 90 to retire with unreduced benefits.

The Select Committee on Pension Policy already has recommended the bill to the full legislature. That committee is a 19-member board made up of legislators, department heads, and representatives of employers and employees.

By mid-February we had not received any commitments to deal with the measure, Thompson says. But there is still time, even though the session is short, he adds.

"We need your help, too," Thompson says. "Please contact your legislators and ask them to support the bill. Also contact the offices of Gov. Christine Gregoire, House Speaker Frank Chopp and Senator Majority Leader Lisa Brown. The number of the Legislative Hotline is 1-800-562-6000."

"Feel free to include a personal message about the hardship created for employees as well as employers under

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team patiently persisted. So dedicated was one member, Tracey Arney, that she bargained during her entire pregnancy. She gave birth on Jan. 17, five days after the contract was signed.

Their dedication eventually led to a final contract that was overwhelmingly accepted by the union in December and

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## Plans offer biggest bang for your insurance benefit dollars

**CHRIS DUGOVICH**

The Washington State Council of County and City Employees, AFSCME, AFL-CIO offers a most cost-effective service to its members, but it seems to be well hidden. The State Council operates a non-profit insurance trust through the trusteeship of its three elected officers – Vice-President Ron Fredin, Secretary-Treasurer Judy



### Letter from the President

Johnson and I. The trust offers, on a group basis, 10 dental plans, two vision plans, two long-term disability plans and five levels of term life insurance.

The trust, created in the late 60s, was, and still is, intended to provide the best benefits to members on a bargaining unit basis at the lowest possible cost. Naturally, more participants in the plan will reduce the cost — giving all participants the greatest benefit for their dollars.

#### Dental

Our 10 dental plans offer benefit options to match your employer's ability to pay. With the exception of Plan 10, our payments per individual procedure are a set amount with frequent upgrades. Plan 10 pays benefits on a usual, reasonable and customary basis rather than a scheduled payment. Our newest plan would pay 100% of your preventative dental care, 80% for basic services, 50% for major services and 50% of orthodontia up to \$2,000. These benefits would be paid no matter the actual cost, up to a \$2,000 calendar-year maximum.

#### Vision

Vision insurance is provided through the Northwest Benefit Network. It covers exams, glasses and an amount toward contacts. The trust offers two plans at \$15.90 and \$18.75 per month. The benefits themselves are provided through an extensive list of optometrists and opticians throughout the state.

#### Disability

Long-term disability insurance is one benefit that really has not yet come to the forefront, although it's extremely important. Generally, this coverage kicks in for an illness or injury that keeps you from the ability to work. It's salary insurance!

Although the State's Labor and Industries Insurance offers you coverage for an on-the-job injury, the trust's disability insurance augments this coverage and will pay in many instances when the state plan will not. It also would cover you for either an illness or injury off the job. The trust offers two plans. Plan I requires a 90-day and Plan II a 180-day waiting period after injury or illness.

The programs are extremely competitively priced at \$32 per member per month (90-day) and \$25 per member per month (180-day).

#### Life/AD&D Insurance

The Trust's newest program is group term life and accidental death and dismemberment insurance. In reviewing our collective bargaining agreements across the state, we noticed many employers offer little in life insurance. We offer five levels of coverage from \$10,000 to \$100,000. The premiums range from \$4.20 to \$42 per member per month.

#### How Does My Local Participate?

Two ways! The first is to make your choice of the coverages as a proposal during your next set of contract negotiations and gain the agreement of the employer to pay the premium. Additionally, by a simple majority vote of your local membership you can participate in the plan. Keep in mind that all members of your local must participate whether or not they voted for the plan, and you will need to gain your employer's agreement to deduct the premium from your pay. If your local is interested in pursuing these coverages or you need additional information, ask your Staff Representative.

## Librarian retires after 34 years with Bellingham Local

Almost from the day Margaret Ziegler began work at the Bellingham Public Library in July 1970, she set a priority on being involved in a union.

"I said we need to be involved in our wages and working conditions," she recalls.

But it was not to be an easy task. She had to start from scratch because the library workers were not organized. Not only was it regarded as unusual in those days for librarians to join unions, but they were also considered exempt employees.

But Ziegler has never been one to let such obstacles stand in her way.

She approached the planners and engineers who worked for the library, asking them if they would also be interested in organizing. "They could not get it together and I got tired of waiting," she says. "Even though there were only seven of us we decided to proceed."

By 1974 the librarians, led by Ziegler, had become members of Council 2. And, again at Ziegler's insistence, they soon had their own local — 114-L.

That was just the start.

Their first contract took two years of negotiations.

At one stage they had to threaten an unfair labor practice to get the library board negotiating team to the table, Ziegler recalls. The board, whose members did not understand that they had to negotiate with them, eventually hired a negotiator and only then could bargaining effectively begin, she explains.

"It took a lot of perseverance to stick to it during that period, but we felt it was really important to be recognized and to participate in talking about our wages and working conditions," she says. (And, she adds, it took 10 years for the other professional library workers to organize.)

Now, after 34 years at the library, Ziegler, who retired at the end of 2005 as head of reference services, looks back on a career marked by



### Words of wisdom

Margaret Ziegler, who retired at the end of 2005 after serving as president for most of Local 114-L's 31-year history, left this list of suggestions, based on a lifetime of union work, for the new Local president.

1. Don't make assumptions about anything; always get it in writing.
2. Date everything.
3. Be prepared for meetings — anticipate management's positions and discuss the issues with your Staff Representative beforehand.
4. Ask questions. Don't be afraid to express strong opinions and don't be afraid to challenge management's positions.
5. Communication is key. Keep a line open with your Staff Representatives and always keep members and management informed. Being open on the issues will make all the difference in the world.

success in both her professional life and in union activities.

After the first contract was signed, the Local developed a good relationship with the library directors and boards, Ziegler adds. Few doubt that it was Ziegler's personality that set the tone for

the subsequent years of negotiations.

During her time at the library, Ziegler set something of a record by being Local president for more than 25 years of the Local's 31-year existence. During that time she was involved in all the negotiations for every contract.

During that time, too, she worked with nine different Staff Representatives.

One of those Staff Representatives was Council 2 President/Executive Director Chris Dugovich, whose first job with the union was in the Bellingham post.

"She was one of the first individuals I remember encountering when I started my job there," he recalls. "We worked together on several bargaining teams."

Ziegler always was assertive in representing her members, but she always presented her argument in a good-natured way, with considerable humor interlaced in her remarks, Dugovich adds.

"I always enjoyed working with her. She will be greatly missed."

Ziegler says librarians are interested in public service. They are highly motivated, educated and care about the community.

"They also care about being treated fairly when it comes to wages and working conditions.

"That's where the union comes in because it is a professional organization and has provided us with professional help at the bargaining table and it has performed important support in grievance matters."

In addition, the union gives a small group like theirs a voice in political advocacy at the state and local levels, she says.

Ziegler adds that union activity must be in her blood as her father was instrumental in organizing workers in Michigan after World War II. "But I never dreamed I would become involved in the union movement," she says.

But today her fellow librarians and Council 2 are extremely pleased she did.

## Local fights back against talk show host

Attacks by a Bellingham radio talk show host on public employees last year became a little too much for many of the 325 members who belong to Local 114.

The members — who work for the City of Bellingham — decided to hit back.

But how?

They believed that calling up and debating the issue with the KGMI host, Brett Bonner, would likely prove to be an exercise in frustration. After all, he had control of the microphone.

Vinnie O'Connor, Council 2 Staff Representative in Bellingham, had an idea.

"I suggested they prepare advertisements on who they are, what they do and how they are proud of their community and their jobs," he says.

The Local members liked the idea.

"They wanted to tell the listeners: We are your neighbors, your friends; we perform a job in the community; we pay taxes; we love our city and our community," adds O'Connor.

The messages, sponsored by Local 114 and Council

2, aired in January. They featured two employees, one a librarian and the other a Public Works official. They were subtle and non-threatening, yet effective. And they were well received.

But the advertisements, which took a few months to prepare, were broadcast right at the time when the Local was in the middle of collective bargaining with the City. The timing was coincidental. But some listeners jumped to the conclusion that the ads were part of a campaign linked to the negotiations.

When a local newspaper reporter questioned him on the timing of the ads, O'Connor explained that they had been planned before the November elections. And Jo Zeimet, the city's human resources director, wrote in an e-mail message to the newspaper, "We do not feel that these pieces are related to contract negotiations."

Meanwhile the Local members and O'Connor are hoping that the ads help get the message across that they are tired of the public-employee bashing on local radio stations and that they are proud of their jobs and love their community.

# Tacoma Local stages informational picketing outside City Hall

More than 60 members of Local 120, who work for the City of Tacoma, staged an informational picket rally on February 7.

They marched around Tacoma City Hall and filled the City Council Chambers to standing-room-only capacity.

Staff Representative Brock Logan, Local 120 President John Ohlson, and Celeste Suliin Burris described the issues to the council members, who listened intently.

The Local members protested unfair bargai-

ning tactics, a lack of cost-of-living increases for 2006 and pay cuts of up to 18 percent for union members. They add that contractors are doing their work for up to \$125 an hour.

Joining the Local members in walking the line were members of IBEW, SEIU, Teamsters and Jobs With Justice as well as longshoremen.

**Local 120 members are led by (from left) Herb Campbell, Bryan Pierce and Donna Wendt.**



## PENSIONS, from Page 1

the current age 65 minimum under PERS II. Working to 65 and beyond 30 years is simply not realistic in many public occupations."

In a related area, the chances look good that the State Legislature will come up with funding for PERS I before the end of the session.

The funding is required to make up for the failure to pay amounts owing on the fund over the past four years. When the plan was ended in 1977 it left a large debt.

The Legislature decided to pay back the debt over 50 years in what could be seen as a 50-year mortgage. This debt is referred to as the Plan I unfunded liability.

But for the last four years the payments on the "mortgage" have not been made and the debt has become even greater as a result.

This year it seems as though the Legislature might accept a proposal to resume the funding for the pension system. The main argument centers on how much of the budget surplus should be devoted to the fund.

The governor has made a proposal in this regard — and the House and Senate are actually talking about increasing the amount.

"We are glad they are taking this action, but it is a self-inflicted wound," Thompson says.

"After all, if you skip four years of paying your mortgage, the bank will be pleased you have started paying it again, but you wouldn't be congratulated."

Inevitably there is a price to pay, Thompson adds.

The longer the Legislature waits to tackle the problem, the farther behind it falls and the worse the problem becomes, Thompson says.

The pension funds also have been unable to benefit over the last four years from the concept of gain-sharing, the name given to the plan that if the State's investments exceeded a return of more than 10 percent a year four years in a row, the State would split half of everything over that figure with the employees and add it to their pension funds.

The idea looked good when it was approved in 1998 as a lure to move people into PERS III. But, since the market crash in 2000 and 2001, such four-year-long gains have not materialized and the state needs to set aside almost \$200 million a year so the money is available when it is needed.

No effective efforts were made to tackle the thorny issue last year.

Council 2 has opposed efforts to repeal gain sharing without an adequate trade-off.

"We have worked with the Select Committee on Pension Policy for more than a year to find a compromise, but we have yet to hear anything positive from the governor's office or House and Senate leadership," Thompson says.

He asked Council 2 members to contact their legislators as well as the offices of Gregoire, Chopp and Brown and tell them they oppose the repeal of gain-sharing and want the issue dealt with this session.

## YAKIMA, from Page 1

The increases were uncovered when the union, at the request of Council 2, conducted an audit on the County's budget. After the county refused to provide the budget details the International used a Freedom of Information request to obtain the information.

"They reported in November that the county is not wealthy, but it is not broke," explains Bill Keenan, Council 2 Director of Organizing, who assisted with the negotiations. "They found, too, that it could afford modest pay increases."

"One of the things we inadvertently discovered was that they had secretly granted enormous pay increases to the top 44 positions in the county. Those positions are all filled by department heads and managers."

Increases averaged 11 percent and some were for as much as \$15,000 a year, Keenan says. "And they decided that some of those people who were earning \$103,000 a year were still not making enough, so they gave them \$6,000 more to make their salary \$109,000 a year."

"Obviously the employees were out-

raged. They said they had been lied to and deceived."

The Local members decided to act.

A special general meeting of members voted unanimously to authorize a strike if necessary.

To inform the broader public what was happening, the union ran advertisements on local radio stations late last year.

Members erected billboards around the town proclaiming: "Respect and equality; that's all employees are asking for."

The union set up well-attended informational picketing at the courthouse.

Their protests were not in vain.

When negotiations resumed in early February the County was more open to discussing budget numbers, says Keenan.

By mid-February the union and the County reached a tentative agreement, which was approved by the Yakima County Commissioners.

The two-year agreement, which runs to the end of this year, is subject to approval by the union's general membership.

The bargaining committee has recommended ratification.

Among the provisions of the settlement is a one-time \$500 signing bonus for all staff, \$65 increases in payments toward employees' medical premiums and bumping rights in case of layoffs.

In addition, the three Locals will have the right to pick from any five classifications that they believe are underpaid for reclassification of salary.

"There was only one reason the settlement occurred," says Keenan. "It was the incredible hard work and solidarity of all the workers who participated in the informational picketing, radio ads and billboards." Keenan adds that the local bargaining committee should be commended for an extraordinary effort. "They went above and beyond what most negotiations entail," he says.

The negotiating committee consisted of: Local 87—Kathy McNulty and Tom Magers; Local 87-P—Ruthanne Cortez, Roxanne Johns and Dan Behler; Local 2658 Tim Kraft and Kathy Lasich.

Assisting them were Staff Representatives Roy Brannam and Tom Barrington as well as Keenan.

<b>COUNCIL 2 EXECUTIVE BOARD</b>		
<b>OFFICERS</b>		
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**COUNTY AND CITY EMPLOYEE**

Official publication of the Washington State Council of County and City Employees,  
**AFSCME, AFL-CIO**  
 Published quarterly




President/Executive Director.....Chris Dugovich  
 Address .....P.O. Box 750, Everett, WA 98206-0750



Photo: Cameron Johnson, Local 113

Council 2 members who attended the Legislative Weekend gather for a picture.

## 150 attend Legislative Weekend

More than 150 Council 2 members, their guests and Council 2 staff attended the Legislative Conference Jan. 19-21.

The weekend started with a reception Thursday evening. Legislators and local politicians were in attendance to meet with their constituents. The legislators' turnout was good, considering our reception was one of several they were attending that evening.

Friday everyone met with their legis-

lators and toured the capital. Unfortunately, both the House and Senate were in caucus meeting with the governor, so we didn't get to meet with as many of them as in past years.

Also on Friday Council 2 hosted a lunch with Governor Gregoire as guest speaker. Following lunch, Rhonda Hilyar of Agreement Dynamics presented an excellent workshop on Success Signals (communication tools). She explained four different communica-

tion styles and gave examples of how to be the most effective in our workplaces, negotiations and personal relationships. Locals 275 and 618 hosted a hospitality room that evening, giving members a chance to get to know one another better and exchange ideas for their workplace issues.

Saturday was a busy day full of meetings: Women's Action Committee, Legislative Committee and Executive Board Committee meeting.



With Gov. Christine Gregoire, center, are Conni Uhinck of Local 1308, left, and her daughter Mackenzie.

## Union workers earn 29% more, official figures show

Union members earn more money than non-union members, according to official figures released in January.

Nationally, full-time wage and salary workers who were union members last year had median weekly earnings of \$801, according to figures released in January by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

That figure is 29 percent higher than the median of \$622 for non-union workers.

The release also shows Washington State is bucking the national trend toward declining union membership. The state added 13,000 new union members last year, bringing the total number of union members in the state to an estimated 523,000, the bureau reported.

Washington continues to rank sixth highest in the

nation in terms of the unionization rate, which now stands at a little more than 19 percent. The rate is only fractionally lower than that in 2004, even though the state added 100,000 new jobs in 2005.

"In a political climate that's hostile to workers' rights, these numbers illustrate the extraordinary will of workers to gain a voice on the job despite enormous obstacles," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said.

### COLUMBIA, from Page 1

was signed on Jan. 12.

Council 2 Staff Representative Trina Young, who led the team, says she was proud to be able to work with a team of this caliber.

The Local represents mental health care professionals who work directly with clients. In addition to Arney, the union team consisted of Local president Sonia Pitterle, Deborah Miller and Michelle Erickson.

After the first 11 sessions, the union was forced to take back an unacceptable offer to the membership to be voted on in August last year, Young explains.

When the proposal was rejected by 99.5 percent of union members who voted, the union requested mediation through the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service.

When the team returned to the table with a federal mediator, the management team said the package that the union had just rejected was their final offer, Young says.

"They told us that we could repackage it any way we wanted, but the total cost of the package would be the same," she explains.

"After two subsequent sessions, the union discovered \$170,000 extra money in the package proposal. When this was brought to the management team's attention, we were told that they had found that error earlier, and revised the package, but forgot to tell us about it."

After the union suggested modified proposals, the management team eventually met the union's needs by offering an acceptable wage and health care package, which included modest COLA and medical insurance increases.

But the management team reneged on the tentative agreement and it took two months of additional bargaining to obtain a document that accurately represented the contents of the tentative agreement, Young says.

**Negotiating team:**  
**Back: Sonia Pitterle, left, Tracy Arney and baby Harry Arney**  
**Front: Michelle Erickson, left, and Deborah Miller.**

