Allstate Agent Group Votes to Affiliate with OPEIU

The members of the National Association of Professional Allstate Agents (NAPAA) voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with OPEIU as of September 1, 2011. The 1,200 new members are now known as NAPAA/OPEIU Guild 17.

The vote was administered by the American Arbitration Association (AAA). Secret ballots were mailed to all 1,200 members of NAPAA and when the ballots were tallied, more than 94 percent had voted in favor of affiliation with OPEIU. Given the mandate of its members, the NAPAA Board of Directors approved the affiliation via conference call immediately following the count.

“Our affiliation with OPEIU is the first step toward ensuring that Allstate agents (Continued on page 4)

Local 212 Members Ratify Agreement Ending 12-Week Lockout at the Blues!


Since the beginning of the lockout, which began on April 26, 2011, Local 212 members maintained a highly visible community presence that put constant pressure on BCBS of WNY to end the lockout and return them to work. As a result, members returned to work on August 1 following a negotiated company-paid two-week vacation and a contract that included wage increases and (Continued on page 12)

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The President Comes Out Fighting

By Michael Goodwin, International President

A fter many months of difficult and unproductive discussions, President Obama has come out fighting against the intransigence of the Republicans and hard-line Tea Party members in Congress by taking his message directly to the American public.

As we all witnessed, the president’s address to Congress on September 8, 2011 was one of the best addresses he has made while in office. He laid out his plans to jump-start the economy with the “American Jobs Act” legislation and urged Congress to pass it right away. Within moments of his address, opposition leaders announced they were opposed to any legislation that includes revenue increases. This is a totally unrealistic position, since most economic observers have stated that it will be necessary to have both revenue increases and spending cuts in order to solve the long-term federal budget deficit.

As you know, the resolution of the “default crisis” in August included the establishment of a twelve-member Congressional committee with a mandate to come up with recommendations for a long-term solution to the deficit problem. In the event the committee is unable to do so, then automatic spending cuts totaling $1.2 trillion would occur. More than $4 trillion is needed over 10 years, however, to stabilize the federal budget. This work is critically important, not only to the United States, but throughout the world because the instability of the federal budget is causing economic downturns everywhere. Following the resolution of the “default crisis” in August, Standard & Poor’s lowered the credit rating of the United States causing harmful psychological effects on world markets. Failure to reach a long-term solution on the deficit would be even more harmful to the stability of these markets.

The public believes that representatives in Congress are not doing the job they were elected to do, but that they seem to care more about the 2012 elections than anything else. Their do-nothing, stonewalling positions may be good politics for them, but bad for the economy and the American worker. Let’s not forget that they are playing with the lives and wellbeing of real people suffering with a more than nine percent unemployment rate. And when you count workers who have given up looking for a job or who have exhausted unemployment benefits, the employment rate jumps to 17 percent. We are in the throes of the worst depression since the 1930s and, unfortunately, those “who have” are caring very little about those that “don’t have.”

There was once a time when Democrats and Republicans came together as Americans in times of crisis by working together to find solutions. That is not true today when you think about people applauding over a statement that there were 234 executions in Texas or booing a question from a gay man submitted electronically during a Republican Party debate. And, in neither case did any of the participants running for president of the United States raise one word of objection to this abhorrent behavior. In addition, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY), minority leader in the Senate, has stated over and over again that his main goal is to see to it that President Obama is a one-term president. One would only hope that he would rearrange his priorities to help unemployed workers find jobs. President Obama has given him the opportunity with the “American Jobs Act,” but there is little hope that Senator McConnell will reorganize his agenda.

Therefore, President Obama’s recent tough stance is necessary and his pledge to take the issue to the American public is the only course open to him. He believes that the issue can only be resolved in the ballot box in 2012, while continuously reminding Congress that unemployed workers can’t wait 14 months to find a job.

The “new” President Obama is a refreshing personality change to the base voters who worked so hard to get him elected in the first place. Some of those supporters are members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council who attended a meeting with the president on August 2, 2011 at the White House. At the meeting, labor leaders urged him to take a tougher stance with Congress, which he did in his September address. The labor leaders believe that they played a huge role in moving the president to the position of clearly stating what he believes in and stands for. The labor leaders were pleased with President Obama’s statement in his address in support of collective bargaining. To my knowledge, this was the first time in history that a U.S. president specifically expressed such support. Thank you, Mr. President! Keep on fighting – we are with you!
A Credit Union for Members?

OPEIU is considering whether an OPEIU credit union is a good idea for our union. If one were to be established, it would provide banking services to all OPEIU members.

We are advised that the first step in the process is a requirement for OPEIU to survey its members and to provide the results of that survey to credit union regulators.

We, therefore, ask all OPEIU members to take a few moments and fill out the brief seven question survey below and return it by mail, email it to frontdesk@opeiu.org or fax to 212-727-3466. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

- Would you be interested in joining a credit union serving OPEIU members?  
  Yes_____ No______

- If so, would you be interested in joining a newly chartered credit union offering savings accounts, personal loans, and other limited services in the beginning?  
  Yes_____ No______

- What type of future services would you want the proposed credit union to offer?  

- Would you be willing to pledge an initial deposit in the credit union?  
  Yes_____ No______
  If yes, how much would you be willing to deposit? $________

- Would you be interested in making regular deposits (such as payroll deduction) in the credit union?  
  Yes_____ No______
  If yes, how much would you deposit monthly? $______

- Would you be interested in borrowing money from the proposed credit union?  
  Yes_____ No______
  If yes, how much would you borrow? $__________

- Would you be interested in becoming a volunteer at the credit union?  
  Yes_____ No______

Please return this survey to:
Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU)  
Credit Union Survey  
80 Eighth Avenue  
20th Floor  
New York, NY 10011

Or email to frontdesk@opeiu.org; or fax to 212-727-3466. You can also take this survey by visiting www.opeiu.org.
are treated as true independent contractors. This practice has to stop!

“And there is no doubt about it, the 94.4 percent vote by our members is a bellwether and should serve as a wake-up call to all captive carriers throughout the insurance industry,” Fish continued. “Agents are saying they’ve had enough of the excessive controls, threats of termination and wage cuts. We look forward to working closely with OPEIU to develop strategies that will both help our members prosper and ensure they are treated fairly.”

“This is a matter of defending the interests of ill-treated small business owners,” said International President Michael Goodwin. “NAPAA members recognized that OPEIU is the right organization to help them achieve the benefits and protections they deserve. With the insurance industry being highly regulated at the state level, NAPAA/OPEIU Guild 17 will be able to offer legislative access and legal support to questionable compliance issues, faced by both agents and customers alike.”

NAPAA is a non-profit organization whose members are predominantly insurance agents under contract with Allstate. In addition to offering a variety of benefits and services, NAPAA further serves its members by acting on their behalf and speaking with a distinct and unfettered voice on a wide range of issues.

Professional employees in the areas of health care, education, aviation and sports umpiring have been attracted to OPEIU and sought representation in recent years.
North Central-Erie/Northeast Area Educational Conference Stresses Building a Stronger Union

The 2011 North Central-Erie/Northeast Area Educational Conference brought together more than 100 local leaders and shop stewards to learn ways to help “Build A Stronger Union,” and to hear details of OPEIU’s Rising Stars youth initiative.

The conference included a presentation on grievance handling by Bill Barry, director of labor studies at the Community College of Baltimore County, as well as the role and function of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) by former OPEIU Vice President and current FMCS Commissioner Cindy Jeffries. Jeffries is one of four OPEIU members currently serving as an FMCS commissioner.

Participants also were given an update on major organizing and strike situations within the union, including a report on the HealthNow New York, Inc. lockout by Local 212 officers and members on the negotiating committee. A report was also given on the American Red Cross national strike by OPEIU International Vice President for Region VII and Local 459 Senior Service Representative Joseph Marutiak, and Health Professionals and Allied Employees (HPAE), AFT/AFL-CIO President Ann Twomey. After the report, conference participants boarded buses and went to the American Red Cross Philadelphia headquarters and joined striking sister and brother HPAE members on the picket line.

The conference also included a presentation by OPEIU Local 153 Organizing Consultant Patricia Hoffman about “Organizing Utilizing Technology.” Hoffman shared a video that includes short testimonials from OPEIU members and encourages viewers to “Come Join Us!” that has been instrumental in organizing campaigns on university campuses in the Northeast. “This use of media technologies is an excellent way to reach out to the unorganized and to have them hear directly from our members about the benefits of being part of a union,” Hoffman told conference participants. Similar organizing videos are being produced by other Local Unions throughout the United States.

OPEIU Rising Stars Make Huge Impact at AFL-CIO Next Up Summit!

In a standing room only event, more than 800 young workers gathered on Thursday, September 28, 2011 in Minneapolis, Minnesota to attend the AFL-CIO Next Up Summit. OPEIU had one of the largest consortiums at the summit with close to 100 members in attendance, and with the official OPEIU “Rising Stars” youth initiative bus on hand, we were clearly a huge presence!

“This is what the future looks like,” AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler said during her opening remarks. “This summit in itself is an accomplishment. But the biggest accomplishment will be what you do while you are here and what you do when you leave.”

The summit, which was held September 28-October 2 and discussed topics such as the future of the union movement as well as the very uncertain economic situation facing young union workers, is another step in the AFL-CIO’s efforts to involve young union members in the movement and encourage them to take a more active role at both a local and national level.

OPEIU members were extremely active participants at the summit, being chosen to lead two “UnConference” sessions – breakout sessions led by conference participants on topics of their choosing. “UnConferences” were led by OPEIU Local 8 member Kamaria Hightower, who discussed Implementing Young Labor, and Local 2’s Caniesha Washington who discussed The Young — Young and the Old—Young. Both sessions were heavily attended. A caucus led by OPEIU Rising Stars leaders Tim Sullivan, Jessica Ingerick and Nick Galipeau discussed the OPEIU Rising Stars program.

(Continued on page 7)
Why It’s Important to Support OPEIU’s Political Action Fund
Submitted by Walter Allen Jr., OPEIU Region V International Vice President and Local 30 Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer

The headlines tell the stories, but which one do we get to apply to ourselves? For example, you choose the ones that apply to you.

“Cheaper Gasoline, Thanks to the Middle Class” or “Regular Gasoline, Thanks to the Middle Class”?

The answer is the middle class.

I say, “The middle class is good at buying things, but not at giving things.”

They say, “Social Security is not sustainable.”

I say, “Maybe not, but the vast majority of Americans rely on it when they cannot work anymore so make it sustainable. Last I checked, the ‘majority rules’ concept was still in effect in this country.”

Let’s face it, there are far more of us than there are of them. The richest one percent of Americans have gotten wealthier over the past three years (just ask Mitt Romney, for one) and for profit health insurance companies and oil companies are setting all-time profit records. At the same time, records are also being set by the rest of us — record number of people looking for jobs, record number of foreclosures, record number of school closings, record low car sales, appliance sales, home sales, and on, and on.

We are not powerless. We can change this. We just have to work together and make those in charge put us first — the majority of Americans, not the select few at the top. We will never match them dollar for dollar so we must simply outnumber them. We must speak with a single, loud and clear voice. We must make our demands known and then make sure that those we elect stand up for working class Americans, no exceptions.

Our agenda is pretty simple. We want to have access to good jobs, a good education for our kids, a chance to retire with dignity, and decent health care that we can all afford. Not a long list. And not an unreasonable one either. If we stand together, we can do it.

Finally, we have to be able to afford to make our case in Washington and the state-houses across this country. That, unfortunately, takes money. If every member of this union alone donated $1, one single dollar from their paychecks every month, OPEIU would have that voice. Our union could have that voice and make our case with that small personal investment from each of us. Do not wait any longer. We have a lot to do and not much time to do it. Join us now, show your support, and be a part of the changes you want to see in our country.

Sign up for the OPEIU J.B. Moss Vote Fund today. Just $1 per month, $12 a year and we will be heard!

Wisconsin Governor Recall Effort Begins!

An effort in August resulted in the recall of two Republican State Senate seats that were then filled with Democrats, but fell short of the three or more needed to take control of the Senate. Wisconsin law dictates that the governor must be in office at least a year before recall petitions can be submitted. Walker took office on January 3, 2010.

“When Walker decided to break unions by taking away collective bargaining rights from public workers, he ensured he would eventually be kicked out of office,” said International President Michael Goodwin. “And that time has come. The labor movement and all working families won’t rest until Walker is out of office.”

OPEIU Rising Stars Make Huge Impact at AFL-CIO Next Up Summit!

This year’s Next Up conference provided no shortage of enthusiastic and determined young workers. “When I left [for the Summit], I joked with a friend that sometimes we think of young union members as just as unusual as unicorns, but after spending a weekend with 800 of my peers who are just as dedicated to the labor movement’s survival, I realized we’re not unusual or rare,” said OPEIU Local 334 member Julie Hunter. “The week-end was a great opportunity to meet, brainstorm, and learn with activists my age. I look forward to taking the energy and ideas from the weekend and applying it in Virginia.”

As a result of the conference, OPEIU’s Rising Stars youth initiative committee has been charged to return to their respective Local Unions and reinforce the ideas and activities presented at the Next Up Summit. Our goal at OPEIU reflect the desire not only to continue the conversations begun in Minneapolis, but more importantly, to establish a model to develop and cultivate young leaders within OPEIU.
Why It’s Important to Support OPEIU’s Political Action Fund
Submitted by Walter Allen Jr., OPEIU Region V International Vice President and Local 30 Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer

The headlines tell the stories, but which stories do we need to know as working Americans? Here are some examples; you choose the ones that apply to you.

“Chevron Profits Up 43 Percent in Second Quarter” or “Republicans Just Say ‘No’ to Taxes on the Rich in Debt Deal.”

“Sales of Luxury Cars, Yachts Soar As Recovery Arrives, for Some;” or “Jobless Rate Stays As Recovery Slow To Advance.”

Local 30 Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer

Submitted by Walter Allen Jr., OPEIU Region V International Vice President and Local 30 Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer

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Approximately 100 OPEIU members aged 35 and under attended the AFL-CIO’s Next Up Summit in Minneapolis, Minnesota on September 28-October 2, 2011. They are pictured with OPEIU’s Rising Stars youth initiative bus.

They say, “Corporations should get the breaks because they create the jobs in the first place.”

I say, “Yeah, in other countries. Why shouldn’t every one of us, and every company in the country, pay their fair share? Why are the middle class always picking up the tab for the rest?”

They say, “The American people do not want the government to be involved in their health care.”

I say, “For one thing, Americans who have lost their jobs, have children, have sick children, need care and cannot afford it, have been rejected by an insurance company, gotten hurt, had an accident, or are not trust fund babies. And two, those who do not want the government to be involved in their health care should give back their Medicare right away. (Maybe they think Medicare is provided by the corporations.)”

They say, “The Supreme Court should not allow the government to make people have health insurance. The mandate should be illegal.”

I say, “How will the auto insurance companies take the news when they find out that they cannot make people buy that coverage anymore? And besides, will that mean that hospitals can then send sick people away from the emergency rooms without care because they have chosen not to have coverage? If not, why not?”

They say, “There is far too much abuse that goes on in the entitlement programs and money could be saved if it was ended.”

I say, “I agree. First, close the tax loopholes for private jets, offshore accounts hidden from taxes, earned income tax discounts and so on to the middle class. Second, collect the necessary $40,208 signatures to force a recall election. The recall election could be held as early as Spring 2012.

The recall effort against anti-worker Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has begun, as November 15 begins the official circulation of petitions, giving supporters until February 17 to collect the necessary $540,208 signatures to force a recall election. The recall election could be held as early as Spring 2012.

In addition, attendees were afforded the opportunity to speak candidly about their ideas for a new Labor Party, activating young leaders and creating young worker groups at their Local Unions. More importantly, those participators learned the requirements for union activism on the successes and failures in building coalitions of young workers.

This year’s Next Up conference provided no shortage of enthusiasm and determined young workers. “When I left [for the Summit], I joked with a friend that sometimes we think of young union members as just as unusual as unicorns, but after spending a weekend with 800 of my peers who are just as dedicated to the labor movement’s survival, I realized we’re not unusual or rare,” said OPEIU Local 334 member Julie Hunter. “The weekend was a great opportunity to meet, brainstorm, and learn with activists my age. I look forward to taking the energy and ideas from the weekend and applying it in Virginia.”

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Congratulations to 2011 Scholarship Winners!

OPEIU congratulates the winners of the 2011 Howard Coughlin Memorial and John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Funds.

Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship Fund

Full-Time Winners

Darpan Kayastha
Local Union 153
Region II

Ashutosh Ailani
Local Union 32
Region II

Hannah Strickland
Local Union 109
Region V

Catherine Erdelyi
Local Union 153
Region II

Merima Hadzimuratovic
Local Union 8
Region VI

Devin Schott
Local Union 459
Region VII

Gail Jennings
Local Union 537
Region V

Jessi Mendoza
ITPE/Local Union 4873
Region III

Hanan Saafir
Local Union 277
Region IV

Judith A. Cummings
Local Union 9
Region VII

[NO PHOTOS AVAILABLE]

Part-Time Winners

Jaclyn Magee
Local Union 95
Region VII

Viad Ciooci
Local Union 153
Region II

Natalie Ball
Local Union 109
Region V

Chanel Collymore
Local Union 153
Region II

Shaun Francis
AMLU/Guild 322
Region II

Gail Jennings
Local Union 537
Region V

Judith A. Cummings
Local Union 9
Region VII

[NO PHOTO AVAILABLE]
Local Union News

Local 3 Celebrates 100th Anniversary!

Local 3 in San Francisco, California celebrated its 100th anniversary on Saturday, August 27, 2011 with a membership picnic and awards ceremony that recognized members with 25 years or more of service. With a charter signed by Samuel Gompers on April 3, 1911, the group began as the Stenographers, Typewriters, Bookkeepers and Assistants Association Lodge 13188. On February 1, 1945, Office Employees International Union, Local 3 was established under the signature of OEIU’s first president, Paul Hutchings.

Pictured with Local 3 President Hang Le To (front row, fourth from left) are Local 3 members with more than 25 years of service. Pictured left to right are (front row) Ellen Baughman, Virginia Woods (with 50 years of service!), Diana Kane, President To, (back row) Lorna Blanchard, Diane Krause, Lindy (Caroline) Chris, Jorge Corrales, Joe Goglio, Edith Laroux, Amelia Pete, OPEIU Secretary-Treasurer Emerita and Local 3 member Nancy Wohlforth, Sheila Ratcliffe and Secretary Treasurer Conny Ford.

Local 376 President Potts Dies

Local 376 in Bristol, Connecticut, is mourning the death of Edna Potts, who served as president for many years. She was 63.

Born in Italy, Potts was employed by the Connecticut American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in Rocky Hill, and loved to cook for her large family, spending time with her grandchildren at the beach and on camping trips. She leaves behind her husband, David, her three children and twelve grandchildren, as well as several nieces and nephews. She will be deeply missed by everyone who knew her.

Local 376 Vice President Nancy Swanson served with Potts for many years, and after a recent election, now serves as president. She is the labor relations specialist at the Hartford Federation of Teachers. Jim Howe was elected vice president.

FCT Has New Contract!

As this issue went to press, the editors of *White Collar* have been informed that the Federation of Catholic Teachers (FCT)/OPEIU Local 153 have reached a three-year contract agreement with the Association of Catholic Schools (ACS).

Members of the Federation of Catholic Teachers (FCT) demonstrate at the Archdiocese of New York’s headquarters in midtown Manhattan. Pictured are FCT Executive Council Member and teacher at St. Jean Baptiste High School Daniel Linehan, FCT President Patricia Gabriel, Vice President Eileen Sweeney and Organizer Julia Pignataro.
Local Union News

Local 109 Mourns Loss of Pilot

On October 17, 2011, a helicopter crash claimed the lives of Air Methods Corporation pilot and Local 109 member Captain James Freudenberg, his crew and a patient. Following is a statement from Captain Dan McDade, president of Local 109:

“The recent accident claiming the lives of our union brother, Captain James Freudenberg, his crew and patient was tragic and our deepest sympathies go out to the families, flight teams, friends and communities of those who lost their lives. This is truly tragic on many levels. Tragic in the lives of their families, coworkers and friends. Tragic as failure of our industry in the eyes of the public. Tragic in the loss of confidence of a vital service to our nation’s medical care. Tragic in the perception of how effective our efforts are for improving safety. Tragic in highlighting the lack of urgency for effective government regulation in our industry.

As a union representing the interests of the largest Local Union of emergency medical service pilots, our working conditions are at the very heart of why we organized in the first place: our ultimate safety while performing our jobs. At Air Methods, the union and management have joined together in many collaborative efforts to improve our safety that mirror successful programs in the airline industry.

There is an alphabet soup of acronyms describing our joint efforts to date. SMS, ASAP/MSAP, LOSA and FOQA are designed to provide tools and systemize the way in which we approach making our working environment safer. As a Local Union of union pilots, we are partnering with management and regulators in these efforts to improve our working environment. We encourage confidential self reporting, confidential flight data recording and confidential observations of flight performance. As we identify mistakes, incorporate the best practices, prioritize corrective actions, adjust our perceptions and ultimately change our culture, we do so knowing that there will be setbacks along the way, but that will not deter or discourage our collaborative efforts for a better and safer industry tomorrow. Speaking on behalf of all our pilots who fly the line daily in a safe and proficient manner, we thank the American public for their continued trust in our ability to transport their loved ones in a safe and medically superior manner.”

HNA Logo Contest Winner Visits International Offices

The winner of the Hawaií Nurses Association/OPEIU Local 50 Logo Contest, Arlene Santos, RN included a visit at the OPEIU International Offices in New York during her prize trip to the Big Apple on September 8, 2011. Santos, a registered nurse at the Kaiser facilities in Honolulu, and her husband, Nelson Nicacio Yanos, won an all-expenses-paid trip to New York sponsored by the International for her winning logo design.

“Thank you again for providing and facilitating a wonderful New York experience,” said Santos in an email to the International. “I wanted to let you all know how grateful I was for the trip and how much I appreciated all that you did for my husband and me during our exciting stay in your fair city. Your generosity was overwhelming. Not only did our first trip to the Big Apple turn out to be one of the best holidays we’ve had, we had the added pleasure of meeting you and the OPEIU team. And what a unique experience in learning more about OPEIU! I appreciated you taking the time out of your busy schedule to visit with us. Thank you for your warm hospitality.”

HNA Logo Contest winner Arlene Santos, RN (third from right) and her husband Nelson Nicacio Yanos (second from right) visit OPEIU International Offices on September 8, 2011. Also pictured from left to right are OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler, Director of Communication, Education and Research Nicole Korkolis and International President Michael Goodwin.

For more information about OPEIU, visit our website at www.opeiu.org.
The National Guild of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine/OPEIU Guild 62 has rejoined OPEIU and was officially chartered on March 1, 2011. Pictured with the charter are (left to right) International President Michael Goodwin, International Secretary-Treasurer Mary Mahoney, Guild 62 President Steve Paine, OMD, L.Ac. and Vice President of Guild 62’s New Jersey Chapter Andy Rosenfarb, ND.

“No other association of acupuncturists can come remotely close to this level of power to make our profession a major political force and to help drive patients and revenues to our field,” said Paine about the affiliation with OPEIU.

Local 381 member Shanna England (right), in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, has been reinstated to her position as benefits specialist at Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 344, and made whole for all lost wages and benefits that she would have been entitled as a result of her wrongful termination. In addition to the Arbitrator’s ruling that the employer did not have just cause to terminate her employment, he also ordered that any record of the discharge must be expunged from her personnel file.

England returned to work on Monday, August 15, 2011 escorted by Local 381 President Debra Grauman (left). OPEIU Senior International Representative Paul Bohelski presented this case before Arbitrator A. Henry Hempe on April 12, 2011, who rendered his decision on July 29. “After full review of all the evidence, facts and circumstances related to this very intense case, the arbitrator got it exactly right,” said Bohelski.

Members of Local 29 and Local 3, Alameda and San Francisco, California, led by Local 29 President Tamara Rubyn, came out in force to support the United Farm Workers (UFW) by joining a demonstration in Sacramento, California calling for passage of SB 104, a bill that would allow farm workers to organize via card check. The measure was eventually vetoed by California Governor Jerry Brown, who sided with big business over the farm workers.

At the demonstration, with UFW President Arturo Rodriguez (center, black shirt) are (left to right) Harriet Scott, International Project Organizer Josue Montijo, Esmeralda Gomez, International Representative Iram Ramirez, Rodriguez, Local 29 President Tamara Rubyn, International Organizers Cesar Mendia and David Flores, and Local 3 President Conny Ford.
Local 212 Members Ratify Agreement Ending 12-Week Lockout at the Blues!

(Continued from page 1)

a job security provision.

“Local 212 was greatly assisted by the International, which pro-
vided staff, financial support, and a grassroots community organ-
izing campaign,” said Local 212 President Caroline Muszynski.

“With the assistance of the New York State AFL-CIO, the Buffalo
area labor community and a local coalition of the clergy, Local 212
members maintained a strong picket line, held public demonstra-
tions, prayer vigils, gathered petitions and letters of support from
the local Buffalo community at public venues and events.

“On behalf of Local 212 members, I would like to thank every-
one in the labor movement, the clergy and the community for
all the support and encouragement they gave us during this dif-
ficult struggle. As you go through such a protracted experience,
it is uplifting to know that the community in which you live,
work and worship really cares about you,” Muszynski said.

A major point of contention was BCBS of WNY’s demand
to remove job security protection provisions resulting from sub-
contracting from the contract. The new agreement provides that
such protection will continue for all 390 locked-out workers.
Local 212 also achieved wage increases of 5 percent over the
life of the agreement, a $2,500 lump sum bonus, and made no con-
cessions to the benefit package and working conditions current-
ly provided to Local 212 bargaining unit employees.

“We are very pleased that the parties were able to reach an
agreement through the process of collective bargaining, demon-
strating that mutual agreement trumps unilateral action,” said
International President Michael Goodwin. “The message that
these brave workers have sent to all of our shop stewards and
members is the need to be absolutely unified on union proposals
and in the face of adverse employer demands. They have demon-
strated that solidarity and worker resistance prevails!”

A number of people made this victory possible, including
Local 212’s Union Action Committee Team (uACT), which
included one member of the Negotiating Team and Executive
Board member, Lynn Brooks, and seven volunteer members,
Luis Rodriguez, Dana Delano, Janice Siegel, Denise Beyer, Carol
Gambino, Charlene Brown, John Caligiuri as well as OPEIU
International Representative Patt Gibbs, and was overseen by
President Muszynski. OPEIU International Organizer David
Flores and International Representative Gary Nuber were also
on the ground in Buffalo and integral to the success of the com-

munity outreach activities. Local 212 Business Representative
Deana Fox and OPEIU Director of Organization and Field
Services Kevin Kistler steered the negotiations and helped reach
the contract.

Local 212 family members got involved and helped
with community outreach activities. Tara Segiel, daugh-
ter of Local 212 member Janice Segiel, and David
Muszynski, son of President Caroline Muszynski, cel-
ebrate the victory by distributing flowers that welcome
locked-out workers back to the job on August 1, 2011.
The flowers had a note attached that read: Please
accept this rose today — symbol of higher pay, symbol
of a job secure, symbol of a future sure! Welcome Back!
From the OPEIU Team.