



The Communicator

A Publication for SEIU Local 284 Education Workers Across Minnesota

Included in this issue:

Member Engagement Program

Calendar of Upcoming Events Including the SEIU Picnics

Zoo Day Pictures

Article on aging in the workplace

Why Member Engagement?

Our June Leadership Conference focused on member engagement and looked at why it is important to reach out and connect with more members and why now.

Looking back to when the number of union members was at its highest point in this country, you will find a direct correlation to a strong middle class; to one income supporting a family and living standards improving considerably for workers and their families.

Unfortunately, unions and members, over time, took this for granted and didn't do the work needed to continue to improve standards for working people. Today the number of union members is at an all time low and the quality of life for working families has eroded along with it. Many of our members families not only require 2 full-time wage earners, but many of our members work a 2nd or in some cases a 3rd part-time job to make ends meet. This has almost eliminated quality time with their families. We are committed to achieving the mission of our Local, "to improve the lives of working people and their families...". Therefore, we must get to know our members. Historically, workers have won when they have organized around issues workers care about.

We, and unions in general, have very low participation of their members. There are many reasons for this, but a big reason is the limited roles available for members (i.e. Executive Board Member, Steward, Bargaining Team, Building Rep.). Let's face it, many members are not interested in these roles and so may feel there is no place for them. That is simply not true. Staff and member leaders are currently engaged in 1:1 conversations to get to know our members' interests. Our members have a variety of interests and talents. **What would it look like if members saw their union as the vehicle for using or developing their talents/interests and achieving their goals? Our goal is to create a place for this to happen.**



Member Scott Innes, Custodian in Westonka Mound and David Hoaglund modeling a 1:1 conversation.

SEIU 284 Member Engagement Program

I recently attended a SEIU training that included SEIU staff and members. Our focus was on "Member Engagement." I am seeing interest placed on our greatest asset, the human part of our union. As we move forward into the future we will undertake new challenges and go into new directions. I find that by focusing on member engagement, relationships with our Union Sisters and Brothers will strengthen.

The training focused on engaging and building understanding of who our union members really are. We worked on our interpersonal skills and on strengthening our communication abilities. I was shown how to use the relationships we build to recognize potential future leadership and explore the unique skills of our union members. I have used the training I received to establish a connection with my bargaining unit. This opportunity has allowed people to get to know who I am as well as allowed me to get to know who they are. I believe that by getting to know the members better in my bargaining unit, more members will participate. The member engagement program training has given me the tools necessary to build relationships and better serve all of our union members in a way that will be advantageous to all.

William Dial, Anoka Custodian

Moved? Name change? Go to www.seiu284.org and submit your updates.

SEIU MN State Council

www.seiumn.org

Reductions in Force and Obligations to Aging Employees

Sarah Huntley, SEIU

In 2008, Minnesota began experiencing a thirty percent increase in the number of workers turning age sixty two. Governor Pawlenty's un-allotment added incredible pressure on schools to cut spending. Departmental re-organizations, layoffs, and work reductions have resulted. Sometimes older employees, often the most expensive staff, are caught in the crossfire. This raises questions about the obligations owed to them by their employer.

Both the Age Discrimination in Employment Act ("ADEA") and the Minnesota Human Rights Act ("MHRA") prohibit employers from taking adverse employment actions against employees based on age. All kinds of actions can be adverse employment actions. Layoffs and discharges are clear examples of adverse employment actions. However, other decisions can be adverse employment actions. For instance, providing certain training opportunities for young staff, but not older staff, could constitute adverse actions.

You do not need proof of discriminatory statements to succeed on a claim of age discrimination. You can rely on circumstantial evidence instead. Thoroughly documenting the date, time, location, and individuals present during any questionable interaction will be beneficial to you in the long run. If you feel you are being treated unfairly you should contact your steward as soon as possible.

In addition to prohibiting discrimination, the MHRA prohibits retaliation for engaging in certain protected conduct, such as filing a complaint of discrimination. If you feel you are being discriminated against, it is important to notify a supervisor or department head as soon as possible. If the decision-maker is the person responsible for the unfair treatment, it may be a good idea to report the behavior to his or her supervisors. It is prudent to put the notification in writing and to specify what type(s) of discrimination you feel you're experiencing (ie. age, race, etc).

This does not constitute legal advice.

SEIU Leaders Endorse Dayton and This Is Why

In November, Minnesotans will go to the polls to choose our next governor. As we face some of our greatest challenges in state history, the stakes for this election could not be higher. Tom Emmer has proposed a reduction of 19% to education funding if he is elected. It's no secret that employee costs in school districts are where the majority of the school district's budget is spent. If funding to school districts is reduced by 19% that would roughly equate to 1 in every 5 workers losing their jobs. In many school districts, our members say the cuts have already gone so deep there are no areas left to cut. Other members express concerns about increased class size and/or property tax increases funding education instead of the state.

Public pensions around the country and in Minnesota are under attack. Retirement security is critical for our members and all public employees. The fact is, the working public employees (you) contribute the greatest share of the pension contribution, not the state or public employer. Your PERA pension is a defined benefit plan. This type of plan not only consistently has the greatest return per dollar contributed, but is significantly less costly to the state to administer than any other option some elected officials have proposed. Some options looked at would put your retirement security at risk of market declines. We do not believe this is an option for our hard working members.

Tom Emmer voted against bills to protect PERA pensions (HF3281) and supported an amendment to get rid of pensions for public employees.

"Working middle class families have shouldered the burden of the states budget problems long enough. It's time corporations pay their fair share. Our next Governor must have a strong commitment to reinvest in education, in health care, in home care and the quality services that make Minnesota. That's why I support Mark Dayton. Mark will be the governor who stands with working families of Minnesota."

*Rich Bloodgood, Anoka Custodian
Pictured right with Mark Dayton*



SEIU 284 Happenings...

Zoo Day 2010!

It was HOT, yet 3400 SEIU members and family came out for the annual SEIU Zoo Day at the MN Zoo on Sunday August 8th. As always, it was a fun and free event for SEIU families.



Steve Miltich, Orono custodian, and family.



SEIU Members signing in at the Zoo entrance.



West St Paul members Mark Krey and Val Blaeser.

SEIU Candidates Move on to the General Election

SEIU 284 and SEIU 63, representing custodians and child nutrition employees in Mpls Public Schools, endorsed school board candidates Chanda Smith Baker and Richard Mammen.

In Tuesdays Primary election, both candidates garnered enough votes to move on to the general election in November.

If you are able to help with phone banking or door knocking please contact Matt Toburen at 651 256-9101.

Don't forget – SEIU Picnics!

September 11, 2010, 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Nokomis Park, 2401 East Minnehaha Parkway,
Minneapolis

September 14, 2010, 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Sturges Park, 301 Lake Ave Buffalo MN

September 15, 2010, 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Lions Park, 1st St N & River Ave., Sauk Rapids

What better way to start off the new school year then with a picnic! Bring your family, bring your Frisbee. SEIU provides the food!

JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS

Members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) will have the opportunity to hold elected officials accountable in the 2010 election cycle by working as part-time paid political activists for pro-working family candidates.

These members will **DOORKNOCK, PHONEBANK, REACH OUT TO OTHER UNION MEMBERS, and to VOTERS** to stress the importance of electing candidates that are committed to affordable health care, quality public education, and living wage jobs.

If this sounds appealing to you please contact Matt Toburen at 651 256-9101.



SEIU LOCAL 284

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Bob Cook
Sue Kreft
Mark Krey
Valerie Rolstad
Sergeant at Arms: Mark Bolin
Senior Member: **Open Seat**

The Officers of Local 284 make up the Executive Board. Executive Board meetings are open to all members in good standing. Please contact Union headquarters if you would like to attend.

*Newly appointed—will be sworn in at September 16th General Member Meeting.

Calendar of Events

Sept 16 SEIU 284 Executive Board Mtg 4:00
SEIU Local 284 General Member Mtg 6:30
Edina Community Center

Oct 14 SEIU 284 Executive Board Mtg
SEIU 284 Office 450 Southview Blvd So St Paul

Oct 16 Leadership Assembly and Conference 9:00
Carpenter's Hall 700 Olive St St Paul

Nov 2 Election Day



** PAC/COPE committee meets before each E-Board Meeting