2016 Member of the Year: Stella Sola

by Keith Niemi, President

Last year, our union established an annual Member of the Year Award to recognize members who have exemplified the values of Local 284 and live the life that our Mission Statement has set forth.

At our February Leadership Assembly, Stella Sola was named the SEIU Local 284 Member of the Year for 2016.

Stella is a proud member of our union who works as a Spanish Interpreter / Family Liaison in ISD 286, the Brooklyn Center School District. Stella is well known throughout her district, where she greets everyone with a big smile. Stella is passionate in her work with students, many of whom come from low-income immigrant families.

Stella works to provide students and their families with the support they need to be successful. For example Stella has done everything from interpreting parent teacher conferences for the parents of students to providing shoes to students who can’t afford them. She happily does last-minute translations for both students and parents. There is never a job that is too small for her to do for her students. Stella will sharpen their pencils and has sewn buttons on shirts while they talk. When students are hungry, there are snacks available at the Family Resource Room where Stella is stationed.

Please join me in honoring Stella Sola for her outstanding contribution to the education of students in Brooklyn Center and her exemplary example of the contribution that all School Employees make in the education of our students.

A committee to establish this Member of the Year Award Program was chaired by Member at Large Dan Long. Also serving on the Member of the Year Committee was Member at Large Sue McNertney and Member Cheryl Dullum. The committee reviewed all nominations and conducted face to face interviews with the finalists.

St. Francis Custodians Giving Back

St. Francis Custodians gave back to their community by making sure local children had a great Easter. Custodians put together 110 Easter baskets and brought them to Social Workers in the St. Francis Elementary Schools for needy students in the District.

Dan Long, Executive Board member and Steward for the group said, “It was very cool to know we made a difference.” Some supplies were donated by Elementary School Principals, the Superintendent, Target and the Custodians.

Thank you, St. Francis Custodians, for going the extra mile!
In the ongoing 2016 legislative session, lawmakers are deciding what to do with the state’s $900 million budget surplus: invest it in the future of Minnesota, or waste it on huge tax cut giveaways to wealthy special interests.

Minnesota can do much more to invest in public education and give all students the opportunity to learn and succeed as part of Local 284’s Cradle-to-Career initiative. Together with our coalition partners, we are fighting to make sure that legislators invest some of Minnesota’s $900 million budget surplus to put us on the path to do the following:

- Ensure every Minnesota family has access to high quality pre-kindergarten programs.
- Give every child the same opportunity to learn, regardless of their background or ZIP code.
- Make higher education at colleges and universities more affordable and help Minnesota’s college students with their fifth-highest-in-the-nation student debt.

Every day, we hear another story of a school that is struggling to provide sufficient support to students who are struggling to succeed. If we want to change outcomes and truly believe that every child can succeed academically and thrive emotionally, we need to demonstrate that belief by investing in our children today.

Members have been mobilizing to effectively push our legislative agenda by meeting with our legislators – Amanda Reineck, an Executive Board member and Pre-Kindergarten teacher, spoke at Lobby Day and testified at a legislative committee hearing: “Shouldn’t access to a quality Pre-K program that includes a properly trained, licensed teacher who will provide students with academic and social tools for a seamless transition to Kindergarten be a goal for all Minnesota children regardless of family income or zipcode?”

To continue to move our nation and our state forward, we must win the enormously important election on November 8, 2016. Local 284 needs Member Political Organizers (MPOs) to help lead that work. Starting in June, MPOs will work with other SEIU members to build electoral and political power for our union and for all working people in Minnesota.

MPOs are members who want to take the next step and run an electoral campaign – or maybe run for office themselves one day. If you are interested and can make a commitment of at least 20 hours per week for at least 11 weeks, please contact Jim Niland, Political Director, at JimN@Local284.com.

**Custodial Member Invents Low Cost Device for School Safety**

The unimaginable happens: a shooting in a school. This is something we’ve experienced here in Minnesota and in too many other cities around the country. Mark Glende, an 18-year Burnsville custodian, took it upon himself after the Sandy Hook shooting to create a low-cost device that can very quickly and without a key lock doors and save lives.

After the horrific school shooting in Newtown, Mark went to his basement workshop and developed the Watch-Dawg. After some 20 or 30 tries, he got it right, and now some suburban schools are using it.

The Watch-Dawg is a stretchy black elastic device with two bands that can be fastened to both the inside and outside door handles. To use it, teachers lock their doors in the morning and hook the elastic piece over the latch so the door pulls open and closed without locking.

In a lockdown, the teacher or other school staff removes it, door closes, latch goes in and the door locks. It’s an easy way to lock a door without having to step outside the classroom, giving the school staff in the room enough time to move students in the room to a safe area.

At the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting a substitute teacher didn’t have a key to lock her door and this substitute teacher along with 14 students were killed.

In a March 27 Star Tribune article, “Burnsville custodian invents Watch-Dawg for school safety,” Burnsville Police Sgt. Matt Smith said the device eliminates the need to use keys in stressful situations. “I think that’s the idea with this product, is take the keys and a lock out of the equation and just be able to pull one simple thing off and shut the door, and that’s it,” Smith said.

Thanks Mark for going above and beyond!
2016 Scholarship Winners
Three names were drawn for a $500 scholarship at the April Executive Board Meeting and the winners are:
- Anne Walberg, daughter of Barbara Walberg of Moundview
- Jessica Svac, daughter of Joann Svac of Shakopee
- Daniel Mattice, son of Julie Mattice of White Bear Lake

2016 Member Contest Drawings
- Food Service 4/22-5/16/2016, Drawing 5/17/16
- Before/After School-Early Learning-Home Base Workers 5/17-6/13/16, Drawing 6/16/16
- Paraprofessional, 7/6-7/29/16, Drawing at Para Training in August (Date TBD)
- Administrative Professionals 8/23-9/19/16, Drawing 9/24/16
- Bus Drivers, 9/8-10/3/16, Drawing 10/27/16
- Custodians, 9/28-10/24/16, Drawing 10/27/16
- Multiple Units, 11/16-12/12/16, Drawing 12/15/16

INTERESTED IN MAINTENANCE WORK AT OUR UNION OFFICE?
We are looking for a skilled tradesperson who can do light electrical, plumbing, painting, and other maintenance work that occasionally arises around our office in South Saint Paul. This would be on casual basis with no guarantee of hours. Please contact Keith Niemi at 651-256-9108 or check our website for more information at www.seiu284.org

UPCOMING EVENTS
SEIU MN State Council invites you to a day at the

MINNESOTA ZOO

Sunday, August 14, 2016, 4:00—8:00 PM
Tickets are just $2 per person, children under 3 can enter free, and parking is free! Pre-purchase tickets to avoid lines -- go to our website for more information.

SEIU Zoo Day is open to full SEIU members & our immediate families only, up to 10 tickets. Please bring school supply items to donate for students in need.

Share pictures of you and your family at the zoo on our Facebook page “SEIU MN State Council” or on Twitter @ seiumn using #SEIUZooDay.

Save the Dates & Register Now!

2016 Steward Conference & Leadership Assembly:
Stronger Together, We Win!

Friday, September 23:
Steward Conference & Training
Saturday, September 24:
Leadership Assembly & Political Action

Ramada Plaza Hotel
1330 Industrial Blvd.
Minneapolis, MN 55413

Hotel Rooms available for members living 40 or more miles away. Register ASAP to reserve your room.

Contact your CO/IO with any questions; please register by September 9 online at www.seiu284.org
LOCAL 284 OFFICERS

Executive Director: Carol Nieters
President: Keith Niemi
Vice Presidents: Mark Hanson, Anna Angeles-Farris
Trustees: Amanda Reineck, Steve Miltich, Sue McNertney
Members at Large: Carol Borreson, Michael Sylvester, Valerie Rolstad, Anne Bipes, Dan Long
Senior Member: Ginia Klamecki
Sergeant at Arms: Cynthia Gross

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.

LOCAL 284 MEETINGS

May 17 – Exec. Board Mtg: 3PM; Gen. Member Mtg: 6PM
The Gillespie Center, 2590 Commerce Blvd, Mound

SEIU Local 284 office, 450 Southview Blvd, South St. Paul

Summer Events!

June 14 – SEIU Saints Game, CHS Field, St. Paul
August 14 – SEIU Zoo Day, Minnesota Zoo, Apple Valley

September 23, 9:00 A.M. – Steward Assembly & Training
September 24, 9:00 A.M. – Leadership Assembly & General Membership Meeting
Ramada Hotel, 1330 Industrial Blvd, Minneapolis

Change of Address or Phone Number?

Please let us know by contacting our office at 651-256-9100 or TerriB@local284.com