

Custodians eye on-job hazards

Local 888 study raises issues of accidents, chemicals, blood

Local 888 custodians face a wide range of health and safety issues — from the demands of



physical labor, to the hazards of cleaning chemicals, to the dangers of dealing with bodily fluids, such as blood and saliva. For example, cleaning up from blood spills is a regular feature of work at the Chelsea and

Holyoke Soldiers Homes.

Local 888 engaged occupational health and safety interns **Sheba Saji**, a graduate student, and undergrad **Ellie Prickett Morgan** to study the hazards. The pair interviewed Local 888 custodians at 12 different worksites this summer.

Their research resulted in an in-depth report on health and safety problems along with some recommendations for dealing with them. The pair spoke at Local 888's Braintree headquarters.

“Poor practices for storing chemicals” is a common problem at custodians’ workplaces,” said Saji. Touring some facilities, she added, “we’d get hit with intense odors” in chemical



HEALTHY SUPPORT: Local 888 members and staff along with health and safety professionals were there for a report on custodians’ health and safety given by, in front at right, **Sheba Saji** and **Ellie Prickett Morgan**, immediately to her left.

storage areas. She recommended that chemicals no longer in use get disposed of and that facilities adopt safer, “green” chemicals whenever possible.

Another common health and safety issue for custodians is the use of caustic stripping compounds for cleaning floors, which can cause painful chemical burns on exposed skin. See <https://tinyurl.com/health888> for the full story.

On food service menu: A little more R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Make sure your voice is heard

Over 1,000 Local 888 members cook and serve food every day. If you are a food service worker, please fill out the Local 888 survey about you and your workplace. All responses will be kept confidential. A summary of the survey results will be shared during Food Service Workers’ Recognition Week in October. *The survey is at:*

<https://tinyurl.com/888survey>



Local 888 chapters have begun organizing for the Food Service Workers’ Recognition Week, slated for Oct. 14 to 18.

“It’s a great idea — and long overdue,” said **Karen Warren**, president of the Brockton cafeteria workers chapter. “I think this will be a very positive step for food service workers, who have not been getting the recognition they deserve.”

See page 4 for more on food service

Legislators get earful in pension fight

Local 888 members took their case to the Legislature, saying that caregivers at the Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers Homes are entitled to better pension benefits than they currently get.

“Leaders from the Soldiers Homes did a great job testifying at the State House on behalf of our bill,” said Local 888 Secretary Treasurer **Tom McKeever**.

“We take care of patients with dementia, Alzheimer’s and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), some of who may be violent,” said **Kwesi Ablordeppey**, Holyoke Home’s



MAKING THEIR CASE: Theresa King and Kwesi Ablordeppey testify at the State House.

chapter leader. “Some live on locked wards and wear ankle bracelets that can set off an alarm as soon as they try to get out.”

The caregivers are being classified at the Group 1 level

for retirement. Under state rules, Group 1 includes laborers and clerical administrative and technical workers. The state website says that Group 2 includes positions that “provide direct care, custody, instruction or supervision of persons with mental illness or developmental disabilities.”

Local 888 members are urged to contact the Legislature to correct this unjust situation. *To find out who your state representative and senator are and how to contact them, go to <https://malegislature.gov/search/findmylegislator>*

Dracut honors retiring leader after ratifying 3-year contract

The Dracut library and Town Hall clerical staffs have ratified a new three-year contract featuring 3 percent raises each year and an increase in longevity pay. The Local 888 chapter has close to 40 members.

The contract includes an agreement that Town Hall workers will stay till 7 p.m. on Tuesdays, but get to leave on Fridays at 1 p.m.

The chapter is bidding goodbye to its longtime leader, **Sue Noel**, a former Local 888 Executive Board member. Local 888 gave an award to Noel, the administrative assistant for the Dracut Fire Department, who is retiring.

As a leader, she worked with members and the local’s staff to make the chapter stronger. Noel was also active in such Local 888 activities as gathering more than 1,600 signatures in support of putting a Fair Share Amendment on the state ballot. This measure, still up for debate, would institute a millionaires tax — an additional tax of 4 percent on the income greater than \$1 million of state residents. The tax is targeted toward new state investment in education and the crisis-plagued transportation system.



SMILES ALL AROUND: Local 888 members Carol Hamilton, internal organizer Madeline Soto, Sue Noel, Kerry Lee-Noel and Cynthia Alexander celebrate the Dracut chapter’s new contract.

Following in her footsteps, new leadership is stepping up to the plate. **Kerry Lee-Noel** (not related) is the new chapter leader.

For info on the upcoming SEIU Local 888 Leadership Conference, set for Sat., Oct. 19, email rwilson@seiu888.org.



STEP ON UP: The Big E's mascot, above, takes a starring role in the fair's daily parades, which feature marching bands, floats and Clydesdale horses. Local 888 members can get discounted Big E tickets by logging into the 'Member Portal' at www.seiu888.org.

Parading out Big E tickets

Discounted tickets to the Big E are the latest bargain offering to hit the SEIU Local 888 "Member Portal."

"This program is just one part of our effort to increase Local 888's service to the members and work to unite them even more in SEIU," said President **Brenda Rodrigues**.

Local 888 has 300 discounted, one-day tickets — first-come, first-served — available for members. "New England's Great State Fair," set for Sept. 13-29, is held annually in West Springfield. It



features farm exhibits and livestock, carnival rides, an array of tasty treats and history displays, including a life-size replica of the old Massachusetts State House.

The limit on Local 888 tickets is two adults and two youths per member. Discount price is \$8; youths \$4 (half price). See the Member Portal for more details: <http://www.seiu888.org>. Members log in to the portal, seen at the top right of the website, using a user name and password; those who haven't signed on before can request access.

Local 888 leaders event

Local 888's Leadership Conference is set for Sat., Oct. 19, Braintree Hill Office Park, Braintree. Lunch is from noon to 12:30 p.m.

- **General session:** 10 to 11 a.m. to feature Local 888 leaders, a guest speaker and an overview of proposed changes to bylaws.
- **Workshops:** 11 a.m. to noon will address such topics as: Using your rights at work to win grievances and resolve on-the-job problems.
- **Industry Sector Breakouts:** 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., will cover schools, early childhood education, higher education, municipalities, state government, public authorities, and the MassDefenders.

Pre-register for a Door Prize: Members who pre-register for the conference by Oct. 11 will be eligible for a special door prize:

<https://forms.gle/744wHjqZ5KjNsBsh6>

School bell rings for pact

Two Local 888 chapters in the Oxford Public Schools ratified new labor contracts on one of the biggest days of the school year. The staff was preparing for the return of students with the start of school.



"Everything went well," said **Sue Grenier**, summing up the day.

The steward for the clerical chapter said that, "It feels good to have a new contract. We put a lot of work into this, a lot of meetings, to get to this agreement." It includes increases to longevity pay, which kicks in with five years of service and goes up again at 10.

As for the back-to-school preparations, Grenier said: "It's very hectic. There will be new students and new classrooms for others to go to. But we're ready." Both chapters' new contracts include 2 percent raises in each year of the three-year pacts. The other chapter covers instructional assistants, including in school libraries. *For info on Local 888 school chapters:* **Darlene Archibald**, darchibald@seiu888.org.

THUMBS UP! Local 888 literature was on display when Oxford members OK'd their new contract.

Local 888 looks to election as leaders gear up for races

Local 888's Committee on Political Action has endorsed two members of the union's executive board in their bids for elective office. These endorsements are part of COPA's activities for the fall election.



SIMMONS

As a member of the Chelsea City Council, **Enio Lopez** has supported community members working to improve the city. Lopez backed the council's bid to ban single-use plastic bags, noting that they are bad for the environment and an all-too-common ingredient of litter.

Lopez is a Local 888 leader at the Chelsea Soldiers Home.

Fred Simmons, a Haverhill custodians union leader, is running for one of the hotly-contested City Council seats there.

Simmons told a Haverhill cable TV host: "One of my biggest issues is that we need to bring more affordable housing to the city. Time after time I hear from people that they can't afford to live here." He said that his passion for the issue has been fueled in part from serving on the board of the Haverhill Housing Authority.

In other activity, the Local 888 COPA recently had its first social event for members — a day trip to the MGM Springfield. For the full report see <https://tinyurl.com/888pol>. Or contact **Tom McKeever**, tmckeever@seiu888.org.

Coming Attractions

COMING UP

BROCKTON CANDIDATES NIGHT SEPT. 19: At East Branch Library, 54 Kingman St. Meet and greet at 6 p.m., followed by mayoral forum at 6:30. Sponsored with: SEIU Mass. State Council.

For more info, call Pablo at 617-684-5671 or email Pablo.Ruiz@SEIUma.org.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TRAINING: Tues., Oct. 8, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the SEIU Local 509 offices, 293 Boston Post Road West, Marlborough. Call 617-241-3300 for more info.



HONORING LABOR: Local 888 leaders and members attended Labor Day events. Above: **Pedro Ayala**, right, was a Local 888 raffle winner at the Bread & Roses Festival in Lawrence. Other events included the Greater Boston Labor Council's annual Labor Day breakfast and an SEIU 32BJ rally for Immigrant Workers' Rights in Copley Square. *State Attorney General Maura Healey has issued her 'Labor Day Report on Protecting Massachusetts Workers.'* To see the report, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/888Labor>.

On menu: R-E-S-P-E-C-T for workers

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The state, municipal and school food service workers in Massachusetts are dedicated to serving the children in our schools, clients in their homes, and patients and veterans in hospitals and nursing facilities. These workers deliver healthy, high-quality food. They also use their expertise to take care of those with food allergies and special dietary needs.

The goal of the week is to honor food service workers, including through related programs and activities. Warren said she believes that numerous candidates running for mayor and City Council this year will be eager to jump on the bandwagon and support the Food Service Workers' Recognition Week.

The Brockton chapter has 195 members, which includes people who work from 20 hours per week to a full 40 hours per week. Warren works as a cafeteria manager at Brockton High School

Learn more about food service workers' week at www.seiu888.org/cafe and "like" us on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/Cafeteria-Workers-United-in-SEIU-Local-888-2006616322968670/>. If you have any questions, contact Ian Adelman, iadelman@seiu888.org.

