

Convention 2012: Your Union, Your Voice

Will you be there?

The SEIU Local 888 Membership convention is on Saturday, October 13—and you're invited. This every-other-year meeting is your opportunity to speak up and help build a strong union that works for all of us.

"This is chance for our members to come together, meet their union brothers and sisters and make their voices heard," says Mark DelloRusso, president of Local 888.

"The power of a union comes from strength in numbers. You can see it where you work. I know I have."

**—Lorna Pleas, health advocate,
City of Boston**

This year's convention is particularly important, notes DelloRusso, because the issue of dues equality is on the agenda. Local 888 was formed nearly a decade ago when nearly 9,000 public sector workers across hundreds of work sites came together. One consequence of this massive reorganization was that it left our local with 87 different dues structures and many chapters paying widely different rates. In some cases, members working side-by-side on the same job are paying different dues rates. The result is that while all Local 888 members share the same benefits of collective bargaining and union representation, not all members pay the same fair share of union dues.

At the convention, members will have an opportunity to discuss, debate and vote (by secret ballot) on a proposal to create a fair and equitable dues structure. (For more on the Dues Equality proposal, see page 2.)

Lorna Pleas, a health service advocate for elderly residents of the city of Boston, the chapter chair of her unit and an Executive Board member, says that adopting a fairer dues structure is key to building a stronger union. "It's about paying our fair share. Now our union

Convention Guide

When: Saturday, October 13, 1:30-6:00 PM,
Registration opens at 12:30 PM

Where: 1199-SEIU union hall,
150 Mount Vernon Street, Dorchester

Who: Convention is open to all members

Convention followed by reception, dinner and celebration (members may bring 1 guest)

Prizes include: flat screen TV, tickets to Patriots vs. Jets on October 21. (Note: members must be present to win)

is stepping up to fight for all of us, so we need to make sure that we're all contributing equally."

Pleas says that she's especially hoping to see new members at the convention this year, as well as individuals who've never been active in their union before. "This is an opportunity for you to come and see who your brothers and sisters are and learn about your rights," says Pleas. "The power of a union comes from strength in numbers. You can see it where you work. I know I have." ■

Please register by October 1st to be eligible for a prize. Visit our website: www.seiu888.org/registration.

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LABOR DAY—Local 888 members marched with Boston area janitors on Labor Day. The janitors are fighting for stable, full-time jobs. See story at www.seiu888.org.

President's Message



**SEIU Local 888
President Mark
DelloRusso**

As the new president of Local 888 I'm often asked about how I got involved in the union in the first place. I bet my story will sound familiar to many of you.

I saw a job posted at my work site that I was interested in, only to learn later that management had already hand-picked someone. What was supposed to be a merit-based selection process turned out to be nothing of the sort. It wasn't fair and I decided to do something about it.

I got involved in my union.

I ran for shop steward, was eventually appointed to the local's executive board, and now I'm privileged to be able to serve as president of Local 888.

Along the way I learned an important lesson: the strength of a union—and each of our chapters—lies in its members. That's why I hope that you'll join me for the SEIU Local 888 Membership Convention on Saturday, October 13. This is your opportunity to meet other members, your newly elected leadership team and to speak up about the issues you care about.

This convention is particularly important because we'll be addressing an issue that's of concern to all of us: Dues Equality. As president of Local 888 I am committed to building a strong union that works well, and works for all of our members. That's why it is essential that we adopt a dues structure that is fair to everyone in our union. See you on the 13th! ■

Dues Equality: What's it All About?

Almost 10 Years ago Local 888 was formed out of an effort to unite public service and not-for-profit employees who do similar kinds of work. Today our local represents nearly 9,000 workers in more than 200 chapters across the state.

Unfortunately the legacy of our restructuring is that chapters pay widely different dues rates. This means that while all members enjoy the benefits of collective bargaining and union representation, not everyone pays the same fair share of union dues. In order to continue to build a strong and effective union we need a dues structure that is fair to every member.

Here's a breakdown of the proposal that was endorsed by the Local 888 Executive Board on August 29 by a vote of 20-1.

- Effective January 1, 2013, the same dues structure will apply to all Local 888 members.
- Effective January 1, 2013, members paying a percentage rate will pay dues of 1.6% of weekly base pay. The maximum dues (or weekly cap) will remain at \$16 (based on 52 weeks of employment per year).
- Effective January 1, 2013, members paying "flat fee" dues, the rate will be converted to 1.6% of weekly base pay, not to exceed a \$5.00 per week increase from the current flat-fee or more than the \$16 per week cap (based on 52 weeks of employment per year).
- Effective January 1, 2013, all members will pay 1.6% dues with the maximum rate of \$16 per week (based on 52 weeks of employment per year).
- For all chapters where members are not on 26 or 52 yearly payroll periods, dues will be prorated at a 26 or 52 week rate.

Local Spotlight: Daniel Dessin, Member Political Organizer



SPREADING THE WORD— Daniel Dessin, an employee at the Community Action Agency of Somerville and Local 888 member, spent six weeks this summer as an SEIU Member Political Organizer.

Daniel Dessin has something to say. The Local 888 member, who works as an advocate at the Community Action Agency of Somerville, spent six weeks this summer talking to people all over Dorchester, Mattapan and Roxbury about the significance of the 2012 election. Dessin was part of an SEIU program that recruits members across the country to work as community organizers.

While he jumped at the opportunity to join the Member Political Organizer program, Dessin notes that he wasn't quite prepared for just how challenging the work would prove to be.

"I loved the work but I won't lie—it was difficult," says Dessin. "You see a lot of people who are really struggling, and I felt the social worker in me coming out. I just wanted to fix things." Before long though, he was hooked.

A typical day involved going door-to-door, neighborhood-to-neighborhood, speaking with people about their rights and how they might be affected by cuts to Medicare and Medicaid.

Dessin says he particularly enjoyed talking to people about unions. "They hear all of these anti-union commercials but they have no idea what it means to actually be in a union."

These days, that's a subject Dessin feels passionate about. He notes that not long ago he wasn't very involved in his own union. But when management wanted to hike insurance contributions for CAAS workers earning little more than minimum wage, he stepped up.

"That got me upset. I got involved, started going to meetings, started a sticker campaign." The workers ultimately won, notes Dessin, even receiving their first pay raise in many years. Today Dessin is the shop steward for his unit. "I saw how important it is to be involved." ■



ONE VOICE— Custodians who are part of the newly formed Monomoy Regional School District on Cape Cod recently cast a unanimous vote to join Local 888.

Cape Custodians Vote for Voice at Work

It's unanimous! Chatham and Harwich custodians recently voted 18-0 to unite in SEIU Local 888 for a voice at work. The maintenance and custodial staff, who are part of the newly formed Monomoy Regional School District, were formerly in two separate units. They say that their decision to join forces in Local 888 was inspired by the desire for a stronger say on the job and at the bargaining table.

"Now we have a stronger and more viable voice in negotiations and we can fight for a living wage here on the Cape."

**—Kevin Oakley, custodian,
Harwich High School**

"This vote brought Chatham and Harwich school custodial and maintenance workers together," said Kevin Oakley, who has worked as a custodian at Harwich High School for 18 years. "Now we have a stronger and more viable voice in negotiations and we can fight for a living wage here on the Cape."

"The unanimous vote sends a strong message to management that the custodians are united for a good contract," said Mark DelloRusso, president of Local 888.

Similar school maintenance and custodial workers already belong to Local 888 in more than 25 communities across Massachusetts, including other Cape schools in Brewster, Dennis, Eastham, Mashpee and Yarmouth.

Congratulations to our brothers and sisters in the Monomoy Regional School District Union! ■

Update on Boston's Attendance Policy

There is good news to report on a new attendance policy that the City of Boston has been preparing to implement. The Office of Labor Relations confirmed recently that the city will not apply the so-called "look back provision" retroactively to January 2012. Instead, the policy will go into effect starting October 1, 2012. "Our negotiating team really fought against something we thought was unfair," says Local 888 attorney Jen Springer. "This is a good victory."

The city has also committed to holding a training session on the new policy for SEIU stewards, chapter chairs and bargaining team members by the end of October. Springer notes that while the new attendance policy is far from perfect, the fact that union members have given significant input is important. "The city used to have a very restrictive policy that our unions had no role in shaping." ■



Got Patriots Tickets?

This year's Local 888 convention door prizes include 2 tickets to the Patriots v. Jets contest on 10/21. (Note: must be present to win.) Register today at www.seiu888.org/registration

Chapter Updates

Brewster Ladies Library

Congratulations to the Brewster Ladies Library Negotiating Team, **Nina Gregson** and **Kathleen Remillard**, who stood strong during negotiations! Thanks also to the members who supported them. Along with COLAs of 1.5% in FYs 2013 and 2014, and 2% in FY 2015, members will receive a 2% merit increase each year. All part-time members will also receive a permanent additional week of vacation. Finally, all members now have the option of joining the newly created sick bank. Great job team, and thanks to SEIU Local 888 field representative **Joan Pritchard** for her help.

Chelsea Soldiers Home

The Chelsea Soldiers Home recently held elections for its Leadership Council. The following members were elected or approved by members after the election via petition. Congratulations to all!

Richard Moffatt: Chapter Chair
Cheryl Smith, Vice Chapter Chair
Peter Lanceleve: Secretary-Treasurer/Steward Liaison
Stacey Maynard: Recording Secretary
Susan Papagni: Steward
Speandilove Nelson: Steward
Rose Matias: Steward
Paula Reveliotis: Steward
Dan Blais: Steward
Marianna Parga: Steward
Jeanne Leslie: Steward

Coming up in the Oct. Spark:

- **Election 2012: A Preview**
- **Bourne and Westfield Military Guards Join Local 888**
- **After Tragedy, Crossing Guards Take Safety Concerns Public**