

Fight saves cafeteria jobs

Stops outsourcing bid by Groton-Dunstable board

The Groton-Dunstable school cafeteria workers, united in Local 888, turned back the school board's bid to cut costs by outsourcing their jobs. This would have meant slashing their benefits and hours, if not simply replacing them.

"I feel relieved that both sides came to an agreement, and that the cafeteria workers can continue to serve the schoolchildren safe, healthy and tasty food," said chapter leader **Dorynda Auth**. "Local 888 staff, other unions and community supporters did a terrific job coming out to support us."

In addition, she said, "the



NOT BACKING DOWN: From left, **Leslie Colt, Angela Gagne, Jane Cutts, Karen Nardone** and **Linda Mavilia** hold signs April 10 in Groton as part of their successful campaign against outsourcing.

community as a whole came to recognize us as trained food service providers, not just lunch ladies."

As the board's decision loomed, the cafeteria workers and Local 888 staff leafleted the public.

This was capped by an

April 10 rally. "I'm pretty angry that, after 15 years of working for the district, my co-workers and I have to fight to keep our jobs and benefits," said **Auth** at the time.

After the rally, cafeteria workers [See page 4 for more on meeting](#)



CONTRACT CELEBRATION: New officers for the Local 888 Brandeis librarians are: **Will Lehman**, chapter co-chair; **Alexis Cooper**; **Aimee Slater**, chapter co-chair; **Esther Brandon** and **Mary Calo**.

New leaders step up after Brandeis victory

Local 888 librarians at Brandeis University celebrated the completion of a successful contract campaign with the swearing in of new chapter leaders.

"Our members are definitely energized," said **Aimee Slater**, chapter chair. Looking ahead, she said, "we want to make connections with other union chapters and be more involved with the rest of Local 888 so we can be active allies."

More than previously, she said, her chapter's members were mobilized during recent contract negotiations. And most members attended a [See page 4 for more on meeting](#)

Dancing, new U.S. rep rock SEIU fest

The SEIU “Spring Fling” was a hopping success as more than 150 SEIU members drawn from around the state got together to promote unity and have some fun. Good food was followed by music and dancing.

“It’s exactly what we wanted to accomplish,” said Harris Gruman, executive director of the SEIU-Massachusetts State Council. The event was sponsored by the council, SEIU Community Action and Locals 888, 1199, 509 and 32BJ. “All the locals were represented,” he added.

The April 27 event put a spotlight on SEIU caucuses – which are a way for union members with similar backgrounds and interests to get together. They include the African-American (AFRAM), Haitian, Latino, Lavender, Asian/Pacific Islander, Women’s and Climate Justice caucuses. For more information on SEIU caucuses, visit: <https://www.seiu.org/members>.

AFRAM Mass. comes together

Local 888 member **Lorna Heron** talked up the SEIU African-American Caucus (AFRAM) while at the statewide SEIU “Spring Fling” in April. Heron, who works at Boston’s Commission on Affairs of the Elderly, is an Eastern Region board member for AFRAM.

“People ask the question: Can anyone join AFRAM?” said Heron. “The answer is: yes. But the caucus is for us, about us and run by us – by and for the members.”



HERON

She praised the Massachusetts State Council for working to support the caucuses. And she urged people to join them.

Heron said the recent AFRAM conference in Baltimore was a great success. A key part of that, she said, came about because “for three years we have been fighting as one to get AFRAM Massachusetts to come together.”

The national AFRAM mission statement says that its members “engage to promote social, economic and political justice.” For more info on SEIU AFRAM Massachusetts, visit www.facebook.com/groups/503070166868170/.



‘SPRING FLING’: On hand for the April 27 event were Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues** and from left, city of Lawrence municipal unit members **Carlos Morel, Pedro Ayala** and **Pablo Garcia**.

‘We can’t afford to be apathetic’



PRESSLEY

“The work of this union is just so important,” said U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley “Yes, it can be tiring to have to organize for basic human rights and dignity — and to have to do it again and again and again. But you have to do it. We can’t afford to be tired and apathetic and cynical.” The new

congresswoman spoke at the statewide SEIU “Spring Fling.” For more on Pressley, see <https://tinyurl.com/888Pressley>.



UNITED TO WIN: Boston University librarians seek a more inclusive contract with important improvements. From left are **Sean Smith, Kara Jackman**, chapter leader **Kate Sifron, Naseem Parveem** and chapter leader **Ann Seskin**, who all went to the first negotiation session with BU management on April 24. Members were backed up by Local 888 organizers **Hersch Rothmel** and **Jonathan Paz**.



PITCHING IN: Local 888 was on the picket line in Medford with then-striking supermarket workers in Medford. From right, the new chapter chair of the MassDefenders, **Rachel Scotch**, **Daniel Werner** and Local 888 organizer **D.J. Cronin**, wearing a Sox cap.

MassDefenders elect leaders

"It feels great," said **Rachel Scotch**, after getting elected as president of the MassDefenders chapter. "The next step is to move things forward so we're officially recognized as a union."

The MassDefenders renewed their campaign for collective bargaining rights starting in December by holding meetings around the state, gathering nominations and then holding the vote that made Scotch president. In addition to her, there are now 16 officers and executive board members for the budding Local 888 chapter. The roughly 750 lawyers, investigators and social service advocates and administrative staff in the state agency want to unite in Local 888 and bargain collectively. But a loophole in state law denies them this basic human right.

This month, representatives of the Mass-Defenders testified at the State House on behalf of a bill that would officially authorize the union.

The workers want to join a union, and the bill has enough support among lawmakers to pass. Last legislative session, a bill to fix this loophole never made it out of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee. In fact, the MassDefenders' campaign has already netted significant raises for employees of the Committee for Public

Counsel Services — the bureaucratic name for the state's public defenders.

Without a labor contract, however, there is no guarantee of any raises looking ahead to the future, said Scotch, who has worked at the agency for nine years. "There's no way that people can plan their lives." One result is high turnover at the agency.

Scotch urges Local 888 and other union members to contact their legislators in support of the legislation. For more information, visit the Local 888 website:

<http://www.seiu888.org/massdefenders/>

Emerson marks anniversary

Local 888 members at Emerson College marked May Day with a rally that celebrated the demonstration last year that jump-started negotiations with the administration and led to the chapter's first contract.



LEVINE

"May Day 2018 is when we held a rally outside the main administrative building at Emerson and got the president of the college, Lee Pelton, to come downstairs and talk to us," said **Dennis Levine**, now chapter chair. Local 888 members, joined by student and community supporters,

presented the college's president with a petition demanding the school give the staff a fair contract.

Pelton agreed to join the negotiations. At that point, talks had dragged on for 21 months.

"With Pelton at the next meeting, we were able to mostly finalize an agreement that we could put before the members to vote on," Levine added.

The four-year pact guarantees across-the-board raises of 14.5 percent over the life of the contract, new commuter benefits, strong "just cause" job protections and a sick bank.

The contract covers about 170 clerical, technical and professional employees at Emerson College who perform a variety of jobs critical to the success of the college. For more on Local 888's upcoming Higher Ed Labor Summit, see www.facebook.com/events/454296101974670/

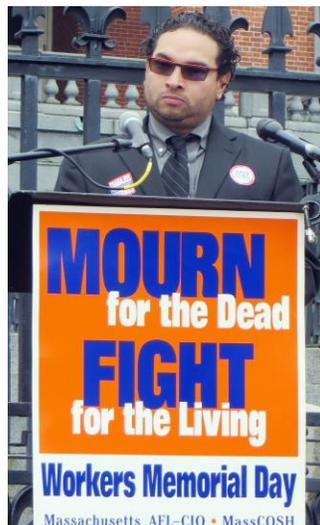
Workplace deaths are memorialized

Local 888 leaders joined a somber crowd at the State House for Workers' Memorial Day. The event honored workers in Massachusetts who have lost their lives while simply doing their jobs — and paid tribute to the families who have lost loved ones.

"We stand with you," said Al Vega from the Massachusetts Coalition for

Occupational Safety and Health, a Local 888 partner organization. "We're going to fight to make sure that the state's workplaces are safe for everyone."

"A key goal for our union is making sure workplaces are safe for our members," said Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues**. She praised a new state law, which took effect this year, that makes federal health and safety regulations the minimum standard for all public employees. For more on workplace deaths, see <https://tinyurl.com/888COSH>.



PAYING RESPECTS: Al Vega of MassCOSH speaks at Workers' Memorial Day in Boston.

SAVE THE DATE

COMING UP

PROMOTING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: Wed., May 15, 1 to 2:30 p.m., Massachusetts State House hearing room, Boston.

'FROM COORS TO

CALIFORNIA: David Sickler and the New Working Class' is the focus of a Local 888-sponsored event featuring Sickler, one of the most successful union organizers in the country. Wed., May 15, 5 to 6:30 p.m., at SEIU Local 32BJ, 26 West St., Boston. For more info, www.facebook.com/events/2913917238651877/.

HIGHER ED LABOR SUMMIT: SEIU Local 888 to host; learn about others' experiences. Sat., June 15, 9 a.m., Local 32BJ offices, 26 West St., Boston. Call 617-241-3317 for more info or email iadelman@seiu888.org.

Librarians elect new leaders

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Dec. 3 lunchtime campus rally where the librarians were joined by more than 50 supporters. In addition, students, alumni and other unions (including the adjunct professors union, [SEIU Local 509](#)) delivered letters of support to the administration.

Negotiations had been stalled. But just days after the rally, the Local 888 librarians hammered out their new agreement.

"I think all of these things demonstrated to members that being in a union is about a whole lot more than paying dues," said Slater. "There's important work for all members to do."

Some members will receive up to 15 percent raises over the life of the three-year pact with "market adjustments." At the swearing-in ceremony, the chapter honored longtime stewards for their service: **Thomas Valicenti**, 10 years; **James Rosenbloom**, 40 years; and **Alexis Scanzani**, four years.

Cafeteria campaign saves jobs

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and their supporters, including parents and students, packed a meeting where the board discussed the outsourcing plan.

Soon after, the board pursued serious negotiations and both sides agreed on a new contract.

Auth, who gets health insurance through her job, said that the cafeteria staff's turnover is low — except for those working less than 4 hours a day. They get no benefits.

The Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee still plans to have Whitsons Culinary Group run the food service operation. But the cafeteria workers get to keep their jobs, benefits and vacation time.

"With community and labor support, the cafeteria workers won a real victory," said Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues**. "Local 888 was glad to rally other unions and the community to fight along with our members — whose jobs were on the line." For more on the cafeteria workers, see <https://tinyurl.com/888cafeteria>.

