

MassDefenders pick leaders

Seek rights at State House and on the job

Local 888 and the MassDefenders chapter are gearing up for an important rally at the State House on July 18.

For the first time, the MassDefenders elected representatives and board members, in April. In addition, they have testified at the State House on behalf of a bill that would include them in the state's collective bargaining laws.

"Collective bargaining rights would improve the delivery of legal services to the indigent



DEMONSTRATING UNITY: Attorneys and staff of the state's public defenders agency gather outside its annual education conference in support of the right to organize and their newly elected executive board.

people of the commonwealth," said **Rachel Scotch** in a letter to legislative leaders.

Management, however, is intent on throwing up a roadblock to bills that would allow the

employees of the state's public defenders agency the *See page 4 for more on MassDefenders*

888 dental, vision eyed



RIORDAN

Westwood town employees are signing onto the dental and vision plans offered through Local 888. They will join many other Local 888 members who are already on these plans.

"I'm so excited about getting these new benefits," said **Teresa Riordan**, a Local 888 Executive Board member. Her

chapter covers about two dozen of the town's clerical employees. The benefits are so much better than what the town now offers," said

See page 4 for more on benefits



Family Fun Day at Canobie Lake set for July 20

For full details: Login to "Member Portal" at www.seiu888.org.

Cost: \$15 per person.

Members can buy: Up to four tickets.

Tickets cover: Entrance to Canobie Lake along with All-You-Can-Eat 'Good Old Summertime Picnic' food and drink.

Taking the lead in ‘changing times’

In their one year of service, Local 888’s new elected representatives have increased training for chapter leaders, focused on the major job categories of members, turned to members for increased political activity and faced up to anti-union challenges at the federal level. These achievements are highlighted in a new report posted on the website (www.seiu888.org).

“Our members have stayed united, and almost half the chapters with expiring contracts have new agreements,” said **Brenda Rodrigues**. Local 888’s president led the Leadership for Changing Times slate sworn in May 2018.

Soon after, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its anti-union



Janus decision, which reversed decades-old precedents regarding dues.

Nonetheless, under the union’s new leadership, more than 2,300 members have recommitted to their union by signing new membership cards. Fewer than 20 individuals have dropped out of the local.

Local 888’s Executive Board has forged a strategic plan

aimed at strengthening the union to help members win better contracts. This includes recruiting hundreds of rank-and-file leaders, emphasizing a comprehensive orientation for new hires and defining six key industry sectors.

Along those lines, Local 888 is sponsoring a **Higher Ed Labor**

Summit, set for Sat., June 15, 9 a.m., at SEIU Local 32BJ, 26 West St. Boston. *Do you know someone who works in higher education as a clerical technical or professional worker? Call 617-241-3317 for more info or email iadelman@seiu888.org.*

For a copy of the Local 888 report on “First Year Achievements,” email rwilson@seiu888.org.

Billerica sews up new contract with better longevity benefit

Local 888 members in Billerica have inked a one-year contract with the town that includes a 2.8 percent wage increase and improved longevity pay. The agreement for the administrative and professional unit begins in July.

The chapter’s 30 members voted unanimously for the contract, which was then approved by Billerica Town Meeting.

The longevity benefit will help members who stay employed by the town for five years or more, said **David Lenzie**, the chapter leader.

Lenzie praised the chapter’s negotiating team and board along with the Local 888 staff for helping arrive at a good contract. In the run-up to negotiations, new leaders stepped up to fill vacancies. “It’s great to see a couple younger people get involved – members who can

continue our union tradition on into the future,” said Lenzie, a building inspector.

Since taking on Lenzie’s former chapter post of secretary, **Joe D’Angelo** has already taken part in stewards’ training sponsored by Local 888. Lenzie said that the one-year agreement will give management and Local 888 members time to digest a town study that compares Billerica salaries and benefits with those in similar positions in other towns.

One sad note: Longtime chapter leader **Ken Buffum** died recently. His position of vice president will be filled during chapter elections in November. Buffum had been Billerica’s director of veterans services for 41 years.

Email myunion@SEIU888.org for guidelines on chapter leadership.



LEANING IN: Local 888 members attend the Labor Notes Troublemakers School on June 1.

Leaders beef up their skills

Local 888 leaders are getting trained on how to build power in the workplace, increase membership participation and win better contracts.

About 25 Local 888 leaders, members and staff attended the Labor Notes Troublemakers School in Worcester on June 1. Members in attendance included leaders from the Chelsea Soldiers Home, Montachusets Opportunity Council, the town of Westwood, Boston Elderly Commission, Boston Centers for Youth & Families, UMass Lowell and Local 888's new chapter for the state's public defenders agency.

In addition, Local 888 is conducting regional trainings, with leaders from 40 chapters attending so far.

"It's all part of helping our union to get stronger," said **Elmer Arriaza**, vice chapter chair at Chelsea Soldiers Home, who attended a Braintree session and the Troublemakers School. "It's good, too, because you get to meet Local 888 members from different locations."

Arriaza, a cook at the Soldiers Home, wants to help his fellow Local 888 members because "I have a passion for it." Going to training sessions is part of learning new ways to do just that.

For Arriaza, it's also part of building up the labor movement — which includes supporting others' struggles. He recently walked the Stop & Shop picket line in Everett when the grocery workers were on strike. And he joined Uber and Lyft drivers last month when they protested low pay.

Regional leadership trainings have been held in Marlboro and Scituate and at the Local 888 headquarters in Braintree.

For photos of recent sessions, see the SEIU Local 888 Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SEIULocal888/>.

Members win with MGM trip

Local 888's Committee on Political Action took a "gamble" and organized its first social event for members. The day trip went to the MGM Springfield, the new casino that has slot machines, gaming tables and a poker room.

"We had a really great day exploring the MGM," said **Paul Moriarty**, shop steward at the Northern Berkshire Registry of Deeds in Adams, who attended with his wife, Ann.

Another registry employee and Local 888 member, **Maryann Fortier**, brought a friend along as well.

Moriarty and his wife, Ann, are from Holyoke, and had talked about going to the nearby casino on some trip to the area. The union event gave them the perfect incentive.



"And it was great that the union local

had an event out in western Massachusetts," said Moriarty.

He coordinated his visit with **Tom McKeever**, Local 888's political director and the organizer of the MGM social event. So everyone was able to meet up when the bus pulled in and an MGM employee gave them a talk on the casino.

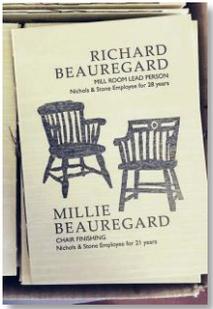
The cost for those coming out from the Boston area was \$40 — which included the bus ride, a breakfast sandwich, \$20 in casino scrip, and a \$10 food credit.

888 celebrates labor legend

Local 888 honored the life of celebrated labor organizer and leader David Sickler at an event marking the release of a new book on his successful, creative union campaigns. For the full story, see <https://tinyurl.com/Coors888>.

‘Chair City’ book’s unveiling

Local 888 member **Jonathan Dudley** has helped produce a new book of interviews of two former furniture workers who worked for decades in the industry that earned Gardner the nickname of “Chair City.” **The Chair City Community Workshop, 306 Central St., downtown Gardner will host a book discussion June 30, Sunday, 2 p.m.**



Dudley, a Head Start teacher at the Montachusett Opportunity Council, has also transcribed furniture workers’ interviews for the Chair City Community Workshop.

“Richard and Millie Beauregard’s oral history is an account by two working people about their experience working in the furniture industry and trying to understand why a 150-year-old company shut its doors,” said Dudley. When their company, Nichols & Stone, closed its Gardner plant in 2008 it blamed the Great Recession “along with a flood of low price/low quality imports.” It was the last major furniture manufacturer in Gardner.

Mount Wachusett Community College instructor Tracie Pouliot runs the community workshop, where volunteers hand print and bind books celebrating the stories of the working people in Gardner. The latest book is the ninth in a series on the furniture industry, which in its heyday earned the city the name “Furniture Capital of New England.” *For more info, call 865-696-6733, or see <https://tinyurl.com/ChairCity>.*

Town eyes dental, vision plans

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Riordan. The Local 888 plan costs less and has more comprehensive dental coverage — and includes Davis Vision coverage, too.

“It really shows, once again, that being in a union brings many benefits,” she said. In fact, the Delta Dental plan offered through Local 888 covers up to \$2,500 per person annually and includes orthodontic work such as braces. The town plan only covers \$1,500 annually and does not cover orthodontics.

Under Local 888’s Davis Vision plan, there are no co-payments for yearly eye exams, regular lenses and contact lenses. The Davis Vision plan also covers standard “progressive” lenses and some coatings.

While Westwood does not contribute to workers’ dental and vision plans, in some Local 888 chapters the employer covers the whole cost. For more info on Local 888 funds, contact Linda DeLuca, director of SEIU Local 888 Affiliated Funds at (617) 241-3367 or email ldeluca.funds@seiu888.org.

MassDefenders ready for battle

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right to unionize. The management of the Committee for Public Counsel Services wrote recently to the Legislature calling for “a comprehensive assessment” of the matter before the bills are OK’d.

MassDefenders representatives’ letter to legislative leaders argues that, with collective bargaining, the staff would be able to work with management “to improve conditions, training, resource allocation and, very importantly, employee retention.”

For their part, Local 888’s leaders have renewed their support for the MassDefenders.

“Currently, the staff does not have any predictability about salary increases — nor do they have a voice in the workplace to address grievances, unfair treatment and discrimination — as other state employees do have,” said **Brenda Rodrigues**, Local 888 president.

For the full story on the MassDefenders’ fight for recognition and their workplace rights, see <https://tinyurl.com/CPCS888>.

Moment of Silence

The officers of Local 888 extend our deepest sympathies to the family of:



Trina “Peanut” Louise Wilkerson, 45, of Chelsea, who died unexpectedly. The Local 888 member was a youth worker at the Hyde Park Community Center, part of the Boston Centers for Youth & Families.

