

Higher ed summit inspires

Members resolve to reach for higher standards

On June 15, members from BU, Brandeis, Emerson and UMass Lowell gathered to talk about their common workplace problems and share creative solutions.

"The higher-ed summit was a great chance to meet with our counterparts at other schools and find that we relate on so many issues," said **Robin Chace**, an information-design and support specialist at Emerson College. "I was energized and motivated by the camaraderie and exchange of ideas that came from this meetup. I'm looking forward to the next one!"

"I absolutely loved the opportunity to meet union members from other universities!" said **Esther Brandon**, a digital literacy



LOOKING UP: Staff at area colleges and universities shared workplace issues and strategies at Local 888's recent Higher Education Summit in Boston. A followup meeting is in the works.

specialist at Brandeis University. "We were able to compare challenges and develop relationships that will strengthen our union."

In talking about their own contracts, members found that,

while one might have better language on promotions or just-cause protections, another had superior pay or more vacation time.

Now higher ed chapter leaders [See page 4 for more on ed](#)

MassDefenders: There oughta be a law



EVANS

Public defenders from across Massachusetts and their supporters rallied on the steps of the Grand Staircase at the State House to demand the same collective bargaining rights that all other state employees have.

About 750 Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS) attorneys, social service

advocates, investigators, secretaries and other professionals work on behalf of poor people in criminal cases, juvenile cases, child and family cases, and mental health and other civil commitment cases.

"We do really important work, and we deserve a fair deal," said **Daniel Werner**, an attorney. "We deserve the right to legally organize and bargain collectively. Last year, we came closer than ever [See page 3 for more on MassDefenders](#)

Custodians dust off health, safety issues

Local 888 is taking a closer look into health and safety issues that affect the many members who work as custodians. Two summer interns are talking with Local 888 custodians and will be producing a health and safety fact sheet.

“The labor movement is crucial in the fight to protect workers from illnesses and injuries that occur at the workplace,” said **Sheba Saji**, a graduate student in toxicology and risk assessment. After her mother experienced a workplace injury, she received an outpouring of welcome support from the union, Saji said. “This inspired me to work toward making the workplace a safe haven for workers and employers,” she added.

Undergrad **Ellie Prickett Morgan** has pitched in to organize student rallies and publicize union negotiations at the University of California Santa Cruz. As a member of the Worker Student Solidarity Coalition, she has supported the fight against “short staffing, benefit cuts, unfair wages, and the outsourcing of labor on the UCSC campus.

The two interns’ work will focus on the 18 contracts covering Local 888 custodians that are currently open or will open up next year. The goal is to have the interns’ work inform Local 888’s bargaining efforts moving forward.

To get more involved with Local 888’s focus on custodians and health and safety, contact an organizer or email Rand Wilson at rwilson@seiu888.org.



UNITED BY ... FUN TIMES: Members from the Brockton Library, UMass Lowell, Woburn cafeteria and at least 10 other chapters went to the Canobie Lake amusement park for an outing organized by Local 888. About 200 people participated!

Boston chapter lands contract despite dispute

Boston Public Schools planning and engineering professionals have reached a new labor agreement with the city after several years of stalled negotiations.

The sticking point, said chapter chair **Bob Ridlon**, was that the school department insisted on getting contract language that would allow it to bring in volunteers to do some of the members’ work. “We feel that would be pushing the department in the wrong direction,” said Ridlon.

The Department of Planning and Engineering, with about 35 Local 888 members, oversees school construction work. The upshot of negotiations is both a one-year contract running into 2020 along with a 3-year contract that started Sept. 1, 2016. This involves fully retroactive pay. *See full story, <https://tinyurl.com/BostonPE>.*

Cape chapter sees progress in pay, sick-time rules

Monomoy school custodians have a new contract that cuts the 15-step salary schedule to 10 steps. Doing so front-loads the money — meaning that cost-of-living increases will have a larger impact. In addition, the night shift differential goes up \$.85 per hour (from \$.75). And two new holidays: Christmas Eve day and New Year’s Eve day.

The maximum number of sick days that can be carried over from year-to-year increased from 138 days to 180 days. And reimbursement of sick leave between five and 10 years of service increased from 35 percent to 50 percent of the maximum 180 days.

Contract language regarding uniforms was also adjusted to include T-shirts, monogrammed clothing and rain gear. The Cape Cod chapter covers about 15 members.

Seven employers sign up for Local 888 dental, vision plans

Interest in Local 888's affiliated dental and vision insurance plans has surged. Woburn, for example, has agreed to administer the payroll deductions under the city employees' new labor contract.

The city had offered a dental plan previously. However, administrative and clerical worker chapter chair **Gail Swymer** said that she hadn't bothered to sign up for that one, because the benefits were poor. (For more on the Woburn contract, see <https://tinyurl.com/WoburnDV>.)

Under the Local 888 plan, she said, her husband has already gone to get a teeth cleaning. And there was no charge for that preventive care — and no deductible either. The new plan kicked in on July 1.

"So far so good!" added Swymer, regarding the new plan. Other Local 888 chapters that have signed onto the union's dental and vision plans recently are:

- Blue Hills Regional Vocational School cafeteria workers.
- Lowell Day Nursery
- Town of Arlington
- Town of Norwell
- Town of Westwood
- Woburn cafeteria workers

"The majority of these Local 888 members didn't have a vision plan — so it was huge for them to get a dental plan that included that," said **Linda DeLuca**, director of SEIU Local 888 Affiliated Funds.

"In addition, even though they were signing up in July, they were still entitled to the maximum benefit of \$2,500 for the calendar year," DeLuca added.

The Delta Dental plan offered through Local 888 covers up to \$2,500 per person annually. "It's a very comprehensive plan," said DeLuca.

Under Local 888's Davis Vision plan, there are no co-payments for yearly eye exams, regular lenses and contact lenses. It also covers standard "progressive" lenses.

For more info, contact **Linda DeLuca**, at (617) 241-3367 or email ldeluca.funds@seiu888.org.



STANDING TALL: MassDefenders and supporters rally at the State House, pressing the Legislature to amend the state's collective bargaining law.

Rally: There oughta be a law

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before to getting this legislation passed. I think we can do it this year."

"The time has come for this legislation, which is about two fundamental human rights" said **Jason Lewis**, chief sponsor of the bill in the state Senate. "Everyone has the right to a legal defense, whether rich or poor. It's a core element of our judicial system and our democracy."

"The second fundamental human right, he added, "is the right for workers to organize -- whether in the private sector or the public sector. They have a right to negotiate over wages and working conditions."

"Fighting for our collective bargaining rights is really a team effort," said Fall River public defender **Ben Evans**, who was the MC for the event. "We're lawyers, social workers, administrative staffers and investigators," said Evans. "And we've started forming our union right now, regardless of whether this legislation passes - though obviously we need that, too."

"Yes, we are a union," added **Rachel Scotch**, who was recently elected president of the MassDefenders, a Local 888 chapter. "And we are stronger together with Local 888 and all the other unions across the state that are supporting our cause."

For the full story on the CPCS workers' fight, see <http://www.seiu888.org/2019/07/24/massdefenders-there-oughta-be-a-law/>

Higher Ed summit inspires

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are inspired to aim for the higher standards in future contract negotiations.

Members also shared tips and strategies on contract enforcement, bargaining, research and getting members involved. In addition, students who have been active supporters of their campus unions talked up their own experiences. Building a strong alliance with students, faculty, other campus unions and the alumni community can strengthen workers' on-campus power.

At the conclusion of the summit, attendees vowed to bring more higher ed members together for another meeting in September and to share the lessons learned with their co-workers.

"As a union steward, the summit encouraged me to develop my leadership abilities," continued Brandon. "It inspired me to get more involved in the larger workers' movement. The summit helped me realize the larger perspective of unionized workers in solidarity with each other. Instead of focusing on specific universities or one union, we can enact lasting change that will benefit future higher education workers."

For more information about the next higher education meeting, contact Local 888 organizer by email at rwilson@seiu888.org or call (617) 241-3368.

Athol contract improves benefits

Athol town employees unanimously approved a new contract that includes 2.5 percent raises for each of the three years. Also, members won an additional step increase in the second year of the contract.

Benefits that improved include an increased clothing allowance, night-shift differential, longevity payments, and cellphone reimbursements.

Members won a commitment from management to further develop policies against bullying and harassment during the life of the contract. Respect and dignity language was also added to the agreement.



Lexington custodians in new pact

The custodian and maintenance workers in the Lexington school system have inked a new contract that includes raises and retroactive pay. The contract, which covers 53 members, runs to July 2021.

Across-the-board wage increases for all positions came in at 2 percent annually — kicking in on July 1, 2018, 2019 and 2020. There are also increases of \$100 to longevity pay, effective this July. *For more on the Lexington custodians, see <https://tinyurl.com/LexCustodians>.*

Big progress for Norwell members

The Norwell town employees have ratified a new contract, covering about 35 members, that included improvements regarding seniority, overtime and longevity pay. Local 888 dental and vision plans will now be available as well.

Cost-of-living raises will be 2 percent for each year of three-year contract that expires in 2022. Also, Steps 3, 5 and 7 of the June 30, 2020 salary schedule will be increased by 1 percent. There were significant increases in longevity pay, including for part-timers. *For the full story on Norwell, see <https://tinyurl.com/19Norwell>.*

Coming Attractions



LABOR DAY BREAKFAST:

Western Mass. Area Labor Federation hosts at 8:30 a.m., Fri., Sept. 6, Castle of Knights, 1599 Memorial Dr., Chicopee. \$25 per person; no tickets sold at the door. More info:

<https://www.massflcio.org/calendar/western-ma-area-labor-federations-labor-day-breakfast>.

FOOD SERVICE WORKERS RECOGNITION

WEEK: Oct. 14-18. Local 888 will honor Massachusetts food service workers for their dedication to the health and well-being of the people they serve.

