

## Cafeteria members eye fairness

### Food service week cooks up platform for pay equity

More than 75 food service workers attended a public hearing in Brockton, on Oct. 17, to spotlight their job concerns — especially the need for more pay and increased dignity and respect for the work they do.

In addition to testimony by food service workers, Local 888 leaders released an [analysis by the UMass Amherst Labor Center](#) of a survey showing that 75 percent of respondents make \$18 an hour or less. Local 888's food service membership is 87 percent female — pointing to significant gender pay



**'SOMETHING MUST BE DONE':** Local 888 organized a public hearing with state officials in which cafeteria workers called attention to their grievances, including chronically low pay.

inequity. The public hearing, at the West Middle School, was part of Food Service Workers' Recognition Week.

"For far too long, the work done by 'lunch ladies' has gone unrecognized," said **Karen**  
*See page 2 for more on food*

## Leaders look ahead, celebrate '19 wins

"Let's make sure we keep on pushing forward — and keep building on our successes," Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues** told members and staff at the union's 2019 Leadership Conference.

"Just two days ago, food service workers had the opportunity to have their voices heard at a public hearing in Brockton," Rodrigues added. The hearing, with state lawmakers, capped Food Service Workers' Recognition Week, which was launched by the local. "They say that 'food is love' — and our members serve it every day."

For a full report on the leadership conference, [click here](#).

For a report on SEIU's Unions For All Summit attended by Rodrigues and several Local 888 Executive Board members, [click here](#).

### Bylaw reforms up for vote

The Local 888 Executive Board encourages a yes vote on the proposed bylaw changes that members will be receiving in the mail. These reforms are designed to make the union more democratic and ensure a safe and fair work environment.

The proposed changes would:

- Allow for electronic voting.
- Create a chapter for Local 888 retirees.
- Call on the local's elected officers to lead and work together collaboratively.
- Welcome associate members into the fold.

For a full description of proposed changes, see: <http://www.seiu888.org/bylaws/>

# Big longevity pay boost in Woburn

"I don't think we've ever had a contract with so many gains," said **Mary Cirone**, chapter chair of the Woburn cafeteria workers. "It's great."

Her Local 888 chapter agreed — and voted unanimously for the new agreement, which includes 2 percent cost-of-living increases every year in the contract.

The biggest improvement in the contract was in longevity pay. The old contract called for \$300 per year to be paid after a worker was there for six years. Now, on the six-year anniversary date, the worker will get 6 percent of her annual pay — as much as \$2,500.

Cirone notes that she's only been there for several years, so won't be able to collect that bonus for a while. "You have to put in your time," she said.

Meanwhile, one woman who has worked there since 1987 will get a bonus of 21 percent.

Another big change: For those who are there four hours a day, they will get a 15-minute break for the first time. Those working six or more hours per day will also get a 15-minute break on top of a lunch break.



While this may seem only reasonable, nonetheless food service managers disputed these union gains. "I had to make a screen shot of that part of the new contract and send it to them," said Cirone.

The problem, she said, is that school enrollment is up and workers "are so busy, they're lucky if they can even take a full lunch break." Her own manager hasn't been taking a lunch break.

Local 888 organizer Larry Higgins was "a huge help" in getting major improvements to the contract, said Cirone, who works at the Joyce Middle School.

## Food Service Recognition Week puts spotlight on pay equity

*Continued from page 1*

**Warren**, president of SEIU Local 888's Brockton cafeteria chapter. "Our work is essential for students to perform well in the classroom, and it is now a career for most of us."

During Food Service Workers' Recognition Week, Local 888 leaders put up banners in their school cafeterias, displayed lawn signs on roads and driveways leading to schools, and gave out "Food Is Love" coffee mugs to participating members who work in food service occupations.

"In terms of pay and benefits, we're going backwards — and something must be done!" said **Celeste Cignarella**, a Brockton food service worker. "I know we're told that life is unfair, but I'm asking our elected officials to take control and bring about some fairness for us."

"We love our jobs," added **Morgan Mathena**, a food service worker at Brockton's Davis Middle School. "But we do need to be fairly compensated for our work."

"All this week, principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians — and most



**'LUNCH LADY SQUAD':** Lisa Mather at Brockton's Angelo Elementary School wears a special T-shirt to celebrate Food Service Workers' Recognition Week.

importantly — students showed appreciation for our work," said Warren. "In many cases people brought us lunch, chocolates, flowers, and school spirit wear. We really do feel better appreciated thanks to our union's program."

*For a full report or for a video on the public hearing, along with Gov. Charlie Baker's proclamation on Food Service Workers' Recognition Week, visit:*

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



**STEPPING UP:** Chelsea Soldiers Home workers at the 2019 Leadership conference include, from left, activist **Helen Farragher**, **Speandilove Nelson**, chapter president; and **Chrissy Wilson**.

## Chelsea Home leaders fight for full staffing, shift assignments

Chelsea Soldiers' Home leaders have made headway with getting management to deal with chronic understaffing. But leaders have also stepped up to make sure that positions are filled fairly – and that Local 888 members have clear opportunities to get the assignments that meet their needs.

“Members were very happy with the results,” said **Speandilove Nelson**, chapter president.

“Members who wanted to work 40 hours a week, rather than part time, were able to do that.”

All told, seven members secured reassignments to the jobs and shifts they wanted. Left to its own devices, management had planned to use a job fair to fill vacant positions, including those with hours or schedules that members wanted.

Union leaders made sure that positions were posted clearly and Local 888 members got a first crack at them. To let workers keep up with these and other developments at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home, leaders put out a newsletter.

Nelson and other Chelsea chapter leaders had the chance to share their experiences at Local 888's 2019 Leadership Conference. **Elmer Arriaza**, chapter vice president, was a facilitator for a workshop on “Effective communications to build unity at work.”

All told, the workshop was broad in scope and looked at the many forms that this can take — one-on-one, group meetings, e-mail, Facebook and newsletters.

## Christmas often 'tis the season for spending chapter funds

When's a good time for a chapter to order out for pizza — and when might it be better to pony up the funds for a party? Those were some of the topics in the workshop on “Using chapter funds to build members' power” at Local 888's 2019 Leadership Conference.

The Boston City Hall clerks and techs chapter has organized a Christmas party at a downtown restaurant the last couple years. “It was a good use of chapter funds, and members had a chance to relax and socialize away from the building,” said **Keturah Trusty**, chapter president of the clerks and techs unit.

Before that, the chapter had tried a lunchtime winter holiday event. However, it did not build up a sense of community and solidarity. “People were worried about getting back to their desks,” Trusty said. They tended to take the lunch, and then go back to their offices.

On the other hand, providing lunch is a good way to encourage attendance at union meetings, said **Anita Christon**, Local 888 recording secretary. Pizza is always popular.

Chapter funds can also be used for such things as bereavement donations (such as flowers or fruit baskets). For more on the use of chapter funds, see <http://www.seiu888.org/chapters/>.



**LEADING LIGHTS:** Participants in the chapter funds workshop show Local 888 pride at the 2019 Leadership Conference.

## Harwich compares pay; members come out ahead

Local 888 chapter leaders in Harwich mobilized members to get prepared for contract negotiations with the town. No. 1 on the list: Conduct salary comparison research. This research paid off at the bargaining table.

“We got members involved, did some legwork leading up to contract talks, and it had a really positive impact,” said **John Rendon**, chapter president and town harbormaster. “Our payment scales needed to be adjusted upward, when we compared our salaries to those in other towns.”

Most of the 18 middle managers in the chapter got their salary scales increased, in particular at the low and high ends of the step scales. On top of that, the three-year contract includes 2 percent raises in each year.

“The town administration was helpful, agreed to the salary survey, — which took place over several years — and worked along with us,” said Rendon. “Every year, our members solicited information from their counterparts in other towns. We then did an analysis, and we presented it to the town.”

The result? “It’s a very positive contract for our members,” said Rendon. In addition, Local 888 members will be able to get compensation time if they have to attend night meetings, such as with the Board of Selectmen. And under certain circumstances, as approved by the town manager, some may be able to work remotely, meaning from home.

Members work as treasurer, assessor and community center director — a post held by Local 888 Executive Board member **Carolyn Carey**.

## Coming Attractions



**UMASS LOWELL HOCKEY GAME NIGHT:** Set for Sat., Dec. 7, 6 to 9 p.m. See the university’s River Hawks play in this popular Local 888 outing. Be on the lookout for more info on the event at the “Member

Portal,” <http://www.seiu888.org/>.



**WELCOMING TEAM:** Longtime Massachusetts State Lottery workers **Stanley Jue**; **Michael Kelly**, now a Local 888 organizer; and **Rick Moran** greet members arriving for the U.S. Senate candidates forum organized by the SEIU State Council and SEIU locals.

## SEIU members seek office

The Local 888 Committee on Political Action has endorsed four SEIU members in their bids for elective office. These endorsements are part of COPA’s activities for the fall election.

“I am running for Waltham City Council because I



**PAZ**

love this city and want to share a new vision for what’s possible,” said Local 888 organizer **Jonathan Paz**, who is running in the city’s Ward 9. Paz said the city is at a turning point, with traffic up and rents rising. “I want to increase our affordable housing options, invest in renewable energy and address the needs of our youth and seniors.”

“The only way to solve difficult problems is to bring people together and build a movement for real change,” said **Marianne Walles**, a longtime social worker and Local 509 leader. She points to affordable housing, quality public schools, government accountability and creating a greener Somerville as top issues.

As a Chelsea city councilor, **Enio Lopez** has supported community members working to improve the city. Lopez is a Local 888 Executive Board member and leader at the Chelsea Soldiers’ Home.

**Fred Simmons**, a Local 888 Executive Board member and Haverhill custodians union leader, is running for one of the hotly-contested City Council seats there. For more on election endorsements, [click here](#).

