

THE POWER SOURCE

Santa Rosa Junior College Classfield Employees Local 707

The Newsletter of the SRJC Unit, SEIU Local 707

November 2003

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS HEALTH BENEFITS SURVEY DISCUSSION

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 12th, 2003

**Santa Rosa Campus
Plover Library, Room 1
12-1pm, 5-6pm**

**Petaluma Campus
Mahoney Library, Room 155
12-1pm**

**Windsor Safety Training Center
TBA**

The CEC is holding some general membership meetings seeking member input in the development of a health benefits survey. The survey will be sent out to the unit in early December, and the results will be shared with the unit through general membership meetings in January.

The CEC would like this meeting to focus on issues that will help to define the unit's position with regard to future negotiations.

NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE SEIU Negotiation Team

Negotiations between the District and SEIU continue to be at impasse. District and SEIU teams

have met twice with a state appointed mediator, but it was obvious from these sessions that the District did not want to negotiate beyond their original position until they get a better handle on the budget. It was agreed by all parties that no new mediation dates be set, but the SEIU team is prepared to head back to the table should there be any change in the bargaining climate that allows for productive discussion.

Forces at play here are beyond the control of the District or either SRJC bargaining group. California's extreme state budget deficit and the political uncertainty of a change in the governorship currently make community college budget planning and labor contract settlement more complex and unpredictable than in any previous period in state history.

A holding pattern in negotiations is not altogether a bad thing – the District continues to honor the provisions of the expired 2000-2003 Contract. When California's economic situation begins to turn around, the result could be more favorable community college funding. A later settlement might allow the District to soften its current position. SEIU will be looking for any District development or state improvement to bring contract negotiation to successful resolution.

As a unit, we should be patient and continue to expect SEIU leadership and the Negotiations Team to explore every opportunity for the very best contract. These are unprecedented tough times; we need the support and help from all unit members to see it through.

IRC 125 PLAN WORKSHOPS Deepa Desai

IRC 125 Plan workshops are scheduled for November 19, 2003 from 10:00-11:00 a.m. and November 20, 2003 from 3:00-4:00 p.m. in the

Button Building Conference Room. All Regular Faculty, Classified Staff, Management/Confidential, and Foundation employees are eligible to participate in the plan.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (522-2751).

STEWARDS' CORNER

Ann Samson

Spring Steward Elections: In spring when we elect officers and some negotiators, we will—for the first time—elect stewards. This change is taking place through all SEIU units so that members can be assured that the people who advocate for their rights are people we've chosen to speak for us.

Under our contract, we are entitled to six stewards. It's pretty obvious that we need one in Petaluma, and we should have one in Windsor; that would leave four for the Santa Rosa campus. If all stewards are in one location, issues that need attention can become very serious before the member raises an alarm.

It is true that we have a field representative who is a paid professional, assigned by the Local, to represent us at the negotiations table and in contract enforcement, but we do not have this representative's exclusive attention. We need workers like ourselves who know the contract and can assist members in interpreting it so that real problems can be averted. When problems are so serious that they cannot be avoided, we do have the professionals at the Local to call upon, both for direct intervention and for advice.

The Local provides training for members interested in learning more about their contracts, about labor law, and about organizing. Anyone interested in investigating whether stewarding would be right for them is invited to participate in as many activities as they like. Regular, monthly meetings of the Stewards' Council are an ongoing feature of this training, where new and experienced stewards from all units gather to discuss current cases and exchange ideas for resolution, as well as participate in workshops on advocacy. Training sessions on investigation techniques, interview techniques, and labor law are offered as well. In addition, a firm of attorneys is associated with the

Local, including an attorney experienced in issues relevant to working in educational institutions. All these experts are available for consultation and advice to members through stewards.

'But I could never do that,' I can hear you saying. 'I could never know all those things....' Yes, you could. Think what you know about your job! You learned some of it by studying but mostly you learned it by doing. You learned it by reading directions and instructions and by applying what you read or heard. You learned it gradually, incrementally. Sometimes you worried that people would discover you were a fraud and just pretending you knew what you were doing, and then you learned it by realizing you could do it. You can learn this contract stuff. It's written in fairly plain English, mostly by people just like you who were on the negotiations team at one time or another.

What you really have to know is that you deserve to sit across the table from management and talk about workers' rights. All you have to do is believe in the value of the work you do. Combine that belief with the laws that support your right to advocate for workers as an equal, and you do deserve to sit there until you can come to agreement. That's what a steward does: Not shout, or storm or threaten but stay with the task until a resolution is accomplished.

Our unit is going to need to elect six people who can do this job. You can be one of them! Call the Stewards' line (x2758), and we'll put you on the track to learning how.

Hours of Employment: The CEC is developing a set of procedures to be followed in implementing the new language in the Hours of Employment article, which was ratified by the membership at its last meeting and by the Board. This language relates to working hours of new or vacant full-time (1 FTE) positions, but it has an impact on all current employees.

Working Out of Class: As a result of the hiring freeze and of the staffing shortages preceding it, a number of employees suspect they are performing tasks clearly assigned to a higher classification. There are several ways to test out this perception

and at least a couple of ways to deal with it. To begin with, employees who believe they are being exploited in this way should:

- Familiarize themselves with their job descriptions and descriptions of those in the same "family" by logging onto www.santarosa.edu/hr/seiu to view approved job descriptions.
- Refer to Article 7.12 of our contract (www.santarosa.edu/seiu).
- Call the stewards' line (x2758) and ask for assistance.

Reclassification is a lengthy process and would not be the first remedy. A steward can help such employees develop a strategy for equitable treatment, but first we have to know what's happening.