

insight

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

Sept/Oct
2021
Vol 26
No. 5



OF PROTEC17



**Keeping
Portland's
water clean
for future
generations**



On the Cover:

PROTEC17 member and Civil Engineering Associate Humberto Piedra-Ruiz is part of a team in the Water Bureau at the City of Portland that works on a very important and unique water filtration project that will keep Portland's drinking water clean for generations to come. Read more on p. 9. ■

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insight

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Karen Estevenin
Executive Director

Teamwork

A

s we move into autumn, with its rhythm of shorter days and preparing for the colder months ahead, there is a pull towards the energy and warmth of others. The last couple of months have felt chaotic for many of us, but weaved throughout this time is another feeling – one of cooperation and lending a hand – teamwork.

We can see the spirit of teamwork reflected throughout this issue of *Insight*. In our Steward Spotlight (p.8), the partnership between King County Steward Kris McArthur and new Steward mentee Sam Guthrie is a shining example of how teamwork – at the heart of our union – creates a better workplace for us all, representing core union values of shared commitment and collective efforts on behalf of fellow workers.

The PROTEC17 Constitutional Committee (p.4) is another prime example of teamwork. Established over two years ago by the Regional Executive Committee (REC) to suggest long overdue improvements to our union's governing structure and mechanisms, the Committee has given countless hours and close attention to an effort that will benefit current and future members of our union.

PROTEC17 members across our union work together for the greater good, too, as you'll read in our feature of the City of Portland team planning water systems for the next generation (p. 9).

For PROTEC17 to function in its best way, more of us will have to step forward to do that one bit more for our union team. For some of you, hopefully that means becoming a Chapter officer or REC Delegate. There are lots of positions up for election this fall – see page 5 for the details, and reach out to your Union Representative if you have questions about what each position entails.

Even in our time-strapped lives, when we're a part of a team, we know that our teammates have our back, just as we will have their back when the time comes. Right now, maybe you're able to become a Steward, a Chapter officer, an REC Delegate, or join a union committee. Or maybe right now you only have time to sign a petition – like the hundreds of City of Seattle members who did, which resulted in a huge win in the extension of the return-to-office timeline (p. 7). I encourage you during this season of change to take the time to think about what teamwork looks like for you in your workplaces and in our union, and to step up to the plate if you're able.

It is teamwork that makes PROTEC17 the strong union it is. Let's continue to get stronger together.

In unity,

Karen

Meet our new Political Director Brandon Hersey



We are excited to announce the addition of Brandon Hersey to the PROTEC17 staff.

He will be serving as our Political Director and a resource for our member-led Political Action Committee.

Hersey first joined the labor movement in the Federal Way Public School District as a member of the Federal Way Education Association. A former second grade teacher, he also currently serves as Vice President of the Seattle School Board.

Born and raised in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Hersey attended the University of Southern Mississippi where he majored in Political Science and Communications. Immediately after college, he accepted a job as a policy analyst with the Department of Health and Human Services under the Obama administration.

In his free time, Hersey enjoys exploring the great outdoors, and mentoring youth in South Seattle as Scoutmaster of Troop 008. He is excited to step into his new role at PROTEC17 and can't wait to meet with members and support their engagement in politics.

"I'm excited to engage with our members to help advance the goals of our union," he said. "Through collective action and solidarity great things are possible." ■

Constitution committee wraps up two-year revision project; final vote forthcoming

The PROTEC17 Constitution Committee is nearing the end of their two-year project to update and modernize our union's governing document. Tasked with the project in 2019, the Committee – comprised of volunteers from the PROTEC17 Executive Board, Regional Executive Committee (REC), and staff, pictured below

– have thus far carefully combed through the constitution and have crafted six significant amendments that were ratified by a vote of the broader membership. The committee will likely present their final two amendments to the REC at their bi-annual meeting on Oct. 23 (after this issue went to print) and, if approved, they will go to the full membership for a vote. ■



The PROTEC17 Constitution Committee includes members: Mark Anderson (now retired!), Rachael Brooks, Ulysses Hillard, Jake Jacobovich, Dan Santon, and Sean Simmons.

Race and Labor Workshop a success; register now for next session on Nov. 17!

On Sat., Oct. 2, PROTEC17 members from across the Pacific Northwest joined our Race and Labor workshop. Presented in partnership with the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), the session explored the manifestations of racism within our workplaces and communities and discussed how to make racial justice central to our union and movement.

We will be offering another session of this workshop on Nov. 17, and will have more dates in the near future. To find out more or to register, visit: protec17.org/racial-justice.

Presented in partnership with the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), AFL-CIO:

Race & Labor

CHERIKA CARTER

APRIL SIMS

Participants of these virtual workshops, presented by WSLC's April Sims and Cherika Carter, will explore the manifestations of racism within our workplaces and communities - grounded in the understanding that race and organized labor are inextricably bound. We will start with a shared history and dive into the collective work of how to make racial justice central to our union and movement.

OCT. 2
9-11 AM

NOV. 17
3-5 PM

More sessions coming soon - check our website!

For more info or to register, visit:
protec17.org/racial-justice

Find more news on our website: www.protec17.org/news

Be a Member Leader! Chapter Elections this fall!

*Your union, your colleagues, and your fellow members – over 9,000 public sector workers throughout Washington and Oregon – need your skills, experience, and enthusiasm to help our organization be the best it can be! To nominate yourself or a fellow member (with their permission) for chapter leadership, send an email to election@protec17.org with the name, chapter, and position for which you are submitting a nomination **by Fri., Nov. 12 at 5 p.m.** Open positions for each chapter are listed below. Terms vary – contact your Union Representative or current chapter leaders for details.*

BELLINGHAM-SKAGIT: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
CHEHALIS: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
CHELAN-DOUGLAS: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
CLARK COUNTY: REC Delegate (1)
DOT-TACOMA: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
EVERETT: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
INLAND EMPIRE: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
KELSO-LONGVIEW: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
KING COUNTY: President | Vice-President | Sec-Treas | Labor Council Del | REC Delegates (17)
KITSAP (WSDOT): President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
MT. BAKER: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
NW REGION DOT: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegates (2)
PENINSULA (KITSAP) HEALTH: President | VP | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
PIERCE COUNTY: President | Vice-President | REC Delegate (1)
PORT ANGELES: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
PORTLAND: President | Vice-President | Secretary | Treasurer | REC Delegates (2)
SEA-VUE: President | Vice-President | Secretary | Treasurer | REC Delegates (2)
SEATTLE: President | VP | Secretary | Treasurer | Labor Council Del | REC Delegates (29)
SNOHOMISH HEALTH: President | Vice-Pres | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
SPOKANE REGIONAL HEALTH DISTRICT: Secretary-Treasurer
SPOKANE COUNTY: Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer
STATEWIDE CO: President | Vice-President | Secretary | Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
STATEWIDE CVEO: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
STATEWIDE DOL-LSR: Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegates (2)
STATEWIDE DOL-PRFTA: Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
TACOMA: Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
THURSTON: REC Delegates (4)
TRI-CITIES: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
VANCOUVER: Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer
WENATCHEE: President | Vice-President | Secretary-Treasurer | REC Delegate (1)
YAKIMA: President | Vice-President

Ensuring workers have a voice on the job: PROTEC17 members negotiate agreements on COVID-19 vaccine mandates, return-to-office, hazard pay, and other policies

Since the start of the pandemic, PROTEC17 members in all of our jurisdictions across the Pacific Northwest have continued to provide quality services to the public, and our union has fought hard to secure the protections needed to keep workers safe in these tenuous times. From securing COVID-19 sick leave benefits and solidifying safety protocols at work, to helping members connect to vaccination sites, to fighting for hazard pay and telecommuting options, our number one

“This continuing public health crisis has created tremendous uncertainty for workers’ health and well-being for over a year and a half. This agreement reflects an understanding of the undue risks that our members take as they continue to provide quality services to Seattle residents, and will help keep our communities safer as we weather what may come next in this pandemic.”

Gretchen Waschke, PROTEC17 member and Counselor,
City of Seattle



priority has remained to keep members safe and healthy.

After many of our employers – including our three largest: the City of Seattle, King County, and the State of Washington – announced in mid-August that they would implement a mandatory COVID-19 vaccine policy that would go into effect on October 18, PROTEC17 members again jumped into action.

Within an incredibly short timeframe, we surveyed thousands of members, and examined our options to ensure that we had a say in these important decisions that affect our lives and livelihoods. While employers have the legal right to implement policy changes in the workplace, as a union, we have the right to be at the table to negotiate and mitigate the impacts of such changes. This is one of the key benefits of being in a union.

Together, we used our collective power to negotiate agreements with nearly all of our employers that provide incentives, flexibility, and protections for our members, far more than what non-represented workers have received. Most importantly, these agreements demonstrate that we can *and should* have a voice in decisions at our workplaces.

State of Washington

At the State of Washington, negotiators and members worked with other State labor unions to secure important benefits and protections related to Governor Inslee’s vaccine mandate, such as: protections for those with qualifying medical and religious exemptions; confidentiality and seniority protections; the ability to get the vaccine on work time; one additional personal leave day for those fully vaccinated by Oct. 18; an expedited retirement process and ability to use applicable leaves between Oct. 18 through the end of the year for those who choose to retire; and additional time for employees partially vaccinated by Oct. 18 to get their remaining shot without jeopardizing their employment status.

King County

At King County, PROTEC17 again worked in coalition with other unions to achieve robust vaccine mandate benefits and protections including: religious and medical exemption protections, paid time to get the vaccine (including travel time), up to 80 hours of additional COVID leave should an employee contract the virus after vaccination; an expedited retirement process and ability to use applicable leave between Oct. 18 and the end of the year should they choose to retire; and reinstatement benefits that would allow employees who separate and subsequently become fully vaccinated to request to be re-employed within two years.

City of Seattle

While simultaneously negotiating the terms of Mayor Durkan’s vaccine mandate, PROTEC17 was also negotiating a delay in

For COVID-19 FAQs and Resources, visit: protec17.org/covid19

FEATURES



The PROTEC17 team for vaccine mandate negotiations with the State of Washington included: Faith Schuler (WSDOT), Karen Estevenin (PROTEC17), Daniel Jones (WSDOT), Christina Belt (WSP), Sarah Lorenzini (PROTEC17), Brent Wagar (PROTEC17), Bonnie Carress (DOL), John Kleinkopf (WSDOT), Chanel Johnson (DOL), Steve Morgans (WSDOT), Suzie Saunders (PROTEC17) and Mindi Mezek (WSP).

“As a union, it’s our job to ensure safe and healthy workplaces and protect our members’ rights to due process and legal protections. I believe we tried our best to work with the system to make a difference for our members. Our agreement represents both of those things; we fought for both public health and due process – and that is a great reason to be a union member!”

Mindi Mezek, PROTEC17 member and Communication Officer, *Washington State Patrol*

the return-to-office date for Seattle members, as well as finalizing the much anticipated hazard pay agreement for frontline workers. Both of these wins were thanks to a petition circulated and signed by over 750 members in just a few days. The agreements pushed the return-to-office date to January 2022, and provides a stipend, with retroactive pay, to those employees who have continued to work with the public throughout the pandemic.

As for the vaccine mandate, PROTEC17, along with the Coalition of City Unions, was able to secure many of the same benefits and protections as King County, plus: an additional floating holiday for those who are fully vaccinated by Oct. 5; restoration of up to 24 hours of leave taken prior to the mandate if used for recovery after getting the vaccine; and notice to vendors and contractors working on City sites of the vaccine requirement.

City of Portland

The PROTEC17 negotiations team at the City of Portland was able to secure a robust policy addressing workers seeking a qualifying exemption; workers choosing not to be vaccinated; workers who are partially vaccinated by Oct. 18; workers who have a temporary medical condition that prohibits them from vaccination; as well as additional leave to get vaccinated, and for workers who contract COVID-19 after getting the vaccine.

Other Employers

Many of our health districts also mandated a vaccination policy after President Biden implemented a federal mandate, and Gov. Inslee expanded the requirement to health care workers. From Chelan-Douglas Health District and Spokane Regional Health District, to Skagit County and Kitsap Health District, PROTEC17 public

health members negotiated agreements that secured additional protections, expanded timeframes, and added benefits for vaccinated employees.

All of the vaccine mandate agreements negotiated by PROTEC17 were ratified by an overwhelming majority of members – and all within a very quick timeframe. You can find the agreements on the member pages of our website: protec17.org/our-members.

“While this has been a stressful time for workers, we are proud that our members challenged our employers to do what’s best for public health while still honoring our rights to a fair, equitable, and consistent process,” said PROTEC17 Executive Director Karen Estevenin. “By standing together, we achieved our goal of protecting the health, safety, and due process that our members – and all workers – deserve.” ■

Steward Spotlight: Sam Guthrie & Kris McArthur



As an Engineer with the Solid Waste Division in the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) at King County, Sam Guthrie helps ensure that our landfills are in compliance with regulations. And, as a new PROTEC17 Steward, she helps ensure that her fellow co-workers voices are heard.

Five years ago, Guthrie began her career with King County as a short-term temporary engineer, quickly transitioning to a full-time position. Now working at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill as an Engineer II, she analyzes data and evaluates the system for constant improvements. She enjoys the fast-paced environment, the mixture of office and field work, and the daily problem-solving challenges that her job brings.

Before working at the County, Guthrie had never been in a union, but when she started in her career at King County, she wanted to learn more about PROTEC17.

"I wanted to understand more about what it means to be in a union, what support they can provide me as an employee, and why people advocate for unions," said Guthrie of her original reason to get more involved.

"It feels good to be a confidant for fellow employees who can safely bring their concerns forward and be addressed in a timely, supportive manner."

Sam Guthrie, PROTEC17 member, Steward, and Engineer,
King County



PROTEC17 King County Stewards Sam Guthrie and Kris McArthur.

She quickly learned that being in a union is important – especially for young members and new hires – because "when we stand together, we can better advocate for the needs and wants of all members, our voices are better heard, and we are more impactful in making change."

About a year or so ago, Guthrie started getting more involved with PROTEC17, and began training to become a Union Steward. It was her own Steward, Kris McArthur, who recognized the leader in Guthrie, and who encouraged her to take on this important role.

"Kris helped me understand what the union is and how I could become more involved," said Guthrie.

She first met McArthur when her office moved to the King Street Center and he worked across the cubicle hallway. But even when their offices changed locations, McArthur made every effort to keep her and her co-workers informed of union news and events, and was the first to step up when members had any issues.

"Seeing the strong leadership skills in Kris, and his passion for union rights and union work, helped solidify our partnership," she continued.

Since then, McArthur and Guthrie have forged a strong mentor/mentee relationship. She has completed several steward trainings, served on the contract negotiations team, and has shadowed McArthur in meetings with management to learn from his wealth of experience.

So far, what Guthrie likes best about being a Steward is that she has the ability to listen to her co-workers concerns, and provide an avenue to help bring those issues forward in a confidential and secure way. She also likes ensuring that members know and understand their rights, and that interactions between her co-workers and management are fair and equitable.

"It feels good to be a confidant for fellow employees who can safely bring their concerns forward and be addressed in a timely, supportive manner," she said. "I look forward to serving as a Union Steward for many years to come."

Outside of work and PROTEC17, Guthrie is very active in volunteer work for diabetes awareness and support. As a person living with Type 1 Diabetes herself, she serves as the Director of a summer camp for children with the disease, where she organizes and plans three-week long sessions, so that kids can enjoy a camp experience with the support and inspiration of their peers. Guthrie also speaks on panels, sharing her own experience with diabetes, and inspiring others to tackle and overcome everyday challenges.

Guthrie is also an enthusiastic scuba diver in the Pacific Northwest and likes exploring local beaches and aquatic life.

"Being underwater is like being in entirely different world and provides me an escape from everyday life," she said. "There are many steps I have to take to be able to dive, but I enjoy sharing my experiences with others and inspiring children to not let diabetes define what they are capable of doing." ■

Interested in becoming a Steward? Contact melissa@protec17.org

Portland members keep water clean for future generations



ROTEC17 members Humberto Piedra-Ruiz and Mac Gifford are part of a team at the City of Portland's Water

Bureau who keep water safe and drinkable for nearly one million Portland residents. In addition, they are part of a historic water filtration project that is setting the stage for the future of clean water.

The Bull Run Filtration Project is unique in that it is using a pilot treatment facility to help design a full-scale facility that will be built from the ground up, as opposed to working around pre-existing constraints. The pilot is a 1:5,000 scale model being used as a prototype to explore what works best for water treatment, and to train staff on cutting-edge equipment and technologies. So far, the pilot facility has collected over 3,000 lab samples and treated over 17 million gallons of water.

"In this facility, we've been able to demonstrate that we can achieve valuable water quality benefits which will directly improve public health," said Mac Gifford, Engineer II and Operations Lead for the Bull Run Pilot Project.

Gifford, who's been with the Water Bureau since 2017, is proud of the work he



PROTEC17 member Humberto Piedra-Ruiz.

and his colleagues are doing to protect this invaluable drinking water resource, and how they use science and engineering to meet today's challenges.

"As stewards of public resources, we have an opportunity to make real changes that affect humankind and benefit our City's residents," he said.

Civil Engineering Associate Piedra-Ruiz is also really proud of his contributions to this important work. He has a hand in every aspect of the project, from serving as the Safety Coordinator,

to supporting each project manager, and ensuring treatment approval from the Oregon Health Authority.

Growing up in rural Mexico, Piedra-Ruiz began to recognize the immense importance of having reliable access to clean water. Later, while deployed in Iraq with the U.S. Army, and when volunteering with Engineers Without Borders, his additional experiences with water – or lack of water – helped shaped his passion for this work.

"Providing access to safe and reliable drinking water for my community is a way that I can directly, and positively, contribute to our society," he said.

Both Piedra-Ruiz and Gifford say they love constantly learning on the job, and appreciate that they're able to use their science and engineering skills for the public good.

"I love being able to use science and engineering to inform important decisions. Even more importantly, what I'm doing will benefit the lives and public health of people for generations to come," said Gifford.

The final Bull Run Filtration Facility is expected to be fully operational by September 2027. ■



PROTEC17 member Mac Gifford in the Bull Run Filtration Pilot Project laboratory.

"I love being able to use science and engineering to inform important decisions. Even more importantly, what I'm doing will benefit the lives and public health of people for generations to come."

Mac Gifford, PROTEC17 member and Engineer II, City of Portland

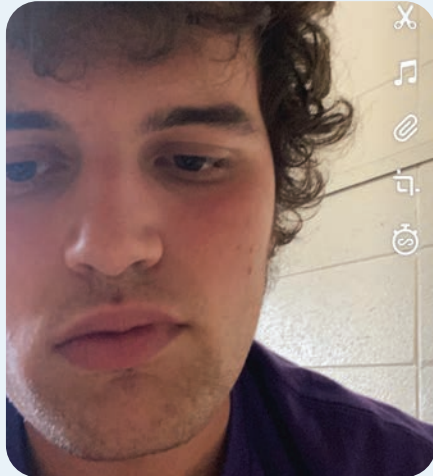
Meet our 2021 PROTEC17 scholarship winners

The PROTEC17 scholarship program – now in its 10th year! – has awarded nearly \$60,000 in scholarships to members’ dependents to help in their pursuit of a higher education. After very careful deliberation, we are proud to announce that our 2021 scholarship winners are Shayleigh Howells and Nathan Wall.

Each year, the PROTEC17 scholarship is open to the children, grandchildren or dependents of members as they enter or continue their studies in college or technical school. There are two \$3,000 awards – one for an incoming freshman, and one for a continuing college student. Scholarship



2021 scholarship winner Shayleigh Howells.



2021 scholarship winner Nathan Wall.

“When working people stand together, they can beat back attempts by their managers, bosses, and industry captains to crush their power. If more people were in unions, the world would be a better place for everyone.”

As stated in the essay of Nathan Wall (above), Lawrence University student, PROTEC17 scholarship winner, and son of Amy Gray, *City of Seattle*

applications were accepted through July 31. In the application, students are asked to demonstrate their academic achievements, educational goals, and extracurricular activities. In addition, applicants submit letters of recommendation, and a labor-related essay that is judged by two external labor educators.

Nathan Wall, son of City of Seattle member Amy Gray, is our graduating high school student winner. He started at Lawrence University in Minnesota in September. While he hasn’t decided on a major just yet, in his scholarship application he indicated that he wants to “pursue a career that directly challenges the powerful.” Throughout his years in high school, he was active in the marching band, as well as on local and national political campaigns. This semester, he is taking U.S. History, Biology and English.

Shayleigh Howells, our first ever grandchild scholarship winner, is the granddaughter of Clark County member Mary Howells. She is in her third year at Washington State University, majoring in Human Resources and minoring in Business. Because of her love of travel, she is hoping to pursue a career in the hotel industry after she graduates. She is excited to be back on campus and learning in person after 18 months of the pandemic.

“Education is very important to me, and this scholarship will help me fulfill my goals in life. It will also help others that have financially supported me. I am very grateful to be back on campus and hope to continue to learn in person.”

Shayleigh Howells (above), WSU student, PROTEC17 scholarship winner, and granddaughter of Mary Howells, *Clark County*

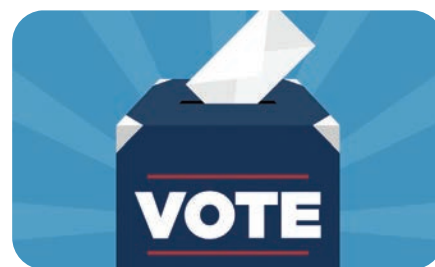
Both Wall and Howells expressed their gratitude to PROTEC17 members for supporting this award and for helping them and their families to ease the financial burden of a college education, especially since COVID-19 has added additional stresses to everyone’s lives.

“This award will make paying for school a bit easier – I won’t have to worry this year,” said Wall.

Thank you to all of our applicants, and best of luck this school year! ■

Your VOTE is your VOICE! VOTE by Nov. 2!

PROTEC17 2021 Endorsements



CITY OF SEATTLE



Mayor
Lorena Gonzalez



City Council, Position 8
Teresa Mosqueda



City Council, Position 9
Nikita Oliver

Port Commissioner, Position 3
Hamdi Mohamed

Port Commissioner, Position 4
Toshiko Hasegawa

CITY OF SPOKANE



**City Council, District 1/
Position 2**
Naghmana Sherazi
(a former PROTEC17 member!)

**City Council, District 3/
Position 2**
Lacrecia Hill

CITY OF MERCER ISLAND



City Council
Kate Akuyz
(a PROTEC17 member!)

KING COUNTY



Executive
Dow Constantine

County Council, District 1
Rod Dembowski

County Council, District 3
Sarah Perry

County Council, District 5
(DUAL ENDORSEMENT)

Shukri Olow (a PROTEC17 member!) AND
Dave Upthegrove

County Council, District 7
Saudia Abdullah

County Council, District 9
Kim Khanh-Van

Superior Court
Judge Andrea Robertson

WHATCOM COUNTY

County Council, District 1
Kaylee Galloway

County Council, District 3
Rebecca Lewis

For more information, visit: www.protec17.org/political-action

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Let us know! 800-783-0017

gallery



Upper left: New PROTEC17 members at the Seattle Office of Emergency Management negotiate their first contract; upper right and above left: PROTEC17 supports the NW Carpenters strike; center: on Labor Day, PROTEC17 honored the memory of Ralph Chaplin, author of the song 'Solidarity Forever', who is buried in Tacoma; right: the Clark County bargaining team begins contract negotiations.