

Moving Forward

By Kelly Monge, County Chapter President

It is tempting to look back and criticize what has occurred over the past few years with our union and assume that more of the same is what we have to look forward to -- and progress is just not possible. When our union called foul to excessive bonuses for managers and when Term Limits for the Board of Supervisors were proposed by Local 221, victory was very much in doubt. When some leaders were accused of not looking out for the best interests of the membership, it made sense that some of us would not be hopeful for the future. These were the times that tested the courage of our convictions and the strength of our union. But, despite all our divisions and disagreements, our hesitations and our fears, the county membership prevails because we choose to move forward as one people. We now stand as a formal chapter at Local 221.

Again, we are tested. Again, we must stand together.

During our last bargaining session, we decided not to open our contract due to an economy rocked by a severe recession. This recession has compounded the

burdens that county employees have been dealing with for decades. The burden of working harder and longer for less, of being unable to save enough to retire, or to make enough to cover medical insurance.

I know the anxieties that are out there right now. There are no easy answers. We face big and difficult challenges with our upcoming contract negotiations. The aspirations for all are the same: a fair wage, a good work environment, and a chance to get ahead.

However, we cannot be successful if only a few stand and help with the struggle to have the voice of county labor heard. Bargaining begins with you and it will require everyone to do their part and not concede to county management's message that we are lucky to have a job. I am not suggesting this will be easy, but the battle cannot be waged by a few, it will take the strength of all to fight to keep what we have.

There are many ways to help, find what works for you and act.

To contact the County Chapter President, email countychapter@seiu221.org.

Hour of Power

The "Hour of Power" is how the County Chapter hopes to empower employees. The County Chapter is asking every county employee to give one hour of their time to help with the organizing effort.

On October 16, 2010, county members came together for a contract action to support the union's endorsed candidates.

There was a barbecue immediately following

the event.



Local 221 members at the contract action event.

Michael Dobbins, Executive Board Political Chair, was happy with the number of members who attended.

"There was a good turnout," Dobbins said. "It was nice to see people I don't usually see participating in events."

Bargaining Begins

By Julayne Gath, Local 221 Executive Board
Member Organizing Chair

Negotiations are upon us. Our contract expires in June of 2011. The economy hasn't improved and all indications are a very tough negotiation season looms in our future. What can you do to help with your future? Get involved with negotiations at some level! There are still seats open on the Bargaining Team and Contract Action Team (CAT) meetings are being held regularly. Membership makes a difference in negotiations. The Bargaining Team is circulating a survey that asks the membership about priorities. Fill out the survey and return it. Let's be realistic about choices like retirement, healthcare, salaries, and working conditions.

The Bargaining Team is only the smallest piece of this large puzzle called negotiations. Membership matters now more than ever. As the Bargaining Team sits at the table, they alone cannot influence the county to loosen the purse strings. There is huge strength in numbers. A county membership in the high majority could not be ignored by the Board of Supervisors who sit on nearly a billion dollars in reserves. While saving for the emergency is prudent by anyone's standards, the reserves of San Diego County become almost fiscally irresponsible as programs are being dismantled, children put at risk, and unemployment is rising to the highest levels since the Great Depression. The emergency is now! It's not a fire or earthquake but it's an emergency nonetheless.

No one can afford to sit on the sidelines and hope. Hope won't get it done. No one can afford to rely on the people at the table exclusively. No one can afford to let the chips fall where they may. Not this time. The division in our union will not work in our favor. We cannot afford to fight with each other -- our very futures depend on it. We cannot afford to accept status quo -- our jobs depend on it. We cannot afford to let the Board of Supervisors brag about their credit rating while children's programs are slashed. We have to take it to the streets and worksites. We need a strong membership, a well thought-out plan, and you! It's your contract, your family, your future.

Fight or fright -- how will you respond?

County Chapter Meetings

County Chapter meetings have begun and the most recent County Chapter meeting took place Tuesday, November 16, 2010. At that meeting, a variety of concerns were discussed, the largest concern being membership involvement.

Members talked about better ways to engage membership and get people involved in the upcoming county contract.

"The meeting was very informative and it makes me hopeful that the County Chapter is going to take some direction under the new leadership," Debbie O'Keefe, Clerical Bargaining Unit, said.

Several empty County Chapter Officer and Leadership Council seats were filled by appointment. The new officers are: Treasurer – Karen Jasinski and Secretary – Debbie O'Keefe. The new Leadership Council members are: FS – Roberta Grant, PS – Diane Cates, SW – Linda Correa, and MM – Jackie Johnson.

The date for the next County Chapter meeting has not been set, but will take place in January 2011.

CPI Award

On October 6, 2010, San Diego County employees were honored by the Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI) at their annual gala.

The CPI Spirit of Service award honored county safety net workers and the vital services they provide for our community.

County Chapter President Kelly Monge, accepted the award on behalf of county safety net workers.

"It is nice to have the community recognize the hard work of county employees," President Monge said.

The Center on Policy Initiatives is a non-profit research and advocacy organization formed to address issues affecting working people.



County Chapter President Monge accepting the award.