

General Council Times

A publication of CSEA's communications teams

CSEA's 65th GC

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Issue 4 • September 2009



When the host of 'GC Today,' Naj Alikhan, isn't at GC, he's hosting Channel 1000.

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30th Annual Labor Solidarity March

Monday, Sept. 7

Labor: We ARE the economy!

March: Broad & E St.,
Wilmington, Calif.

Assemble at 9 a.m.,

March at 11 a.m.

Rally: Banning Park, 1 p.m.

I don't mind feeling obligated toward home healthcare workers who clean bedpans every day for little more than minimum wage I got into politics to fight for these folks, and I'm glad a union is around to remind me of their struggles.

—Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*

Postscript from the editor

I wanted to acknowledge all the encouragement and support for our little venture at GC. It wasn't so much fun losing sleep, but handing the GC Times out to appreciative customers sure made it all worth it. I want to thank CSEA and the other affiliates for their support; especially the print shop folks (who were awesome), Ray Finnell, Kathryn Plunkett, Steve Sloan, Linda Holderness, Joseph Dobjynski Jr. and the guy who asked for my autograph. See you in three years!

The results are in: incumbents sweep



By Kathryn Plunkett and Claudia Garcia, CSUEU

Congratulations to Dave "The Same" Hart, Donna "It Sucks" Snodgrass, and David "No Furlough" Okumura, re-elected officers of CSEA!

There were no surprises at yesterday's election results, except for maybe the number of votes that the challengers received. Long-shot candidates were passionate in their campaign speeches and gracious in their congratulations



blank. The results: For the position of president, there were 973 votes—Dave Hart (704) and Kevin Menager (269); for the position of vice president, there were 977 votes—Donna Snodgrass (881) and Patrick Swift (96); for the position of

to their opponents. Delegates and candidates alike expressed their appreciation for the civility in this year's elections compared to the contentiousness of prior GC's.

A total of 1,016 ballots were cast; 987 valid, 28 invalid, and 1



Secretary-Treasurer, there were 983 votes—David Okumura (773) and James Graston (210).

All three re-elected incumbents thanked the delegates for their confidence in them and stated they would continue what they have been doing

for the last two years. That is, they will follow the direction that the affiliates have set for the association which came about as a result from the adoption of B&P-8 at the 2007 General Council meeting in San Jose.

Honor labor

Westin Bonaventure's union roots

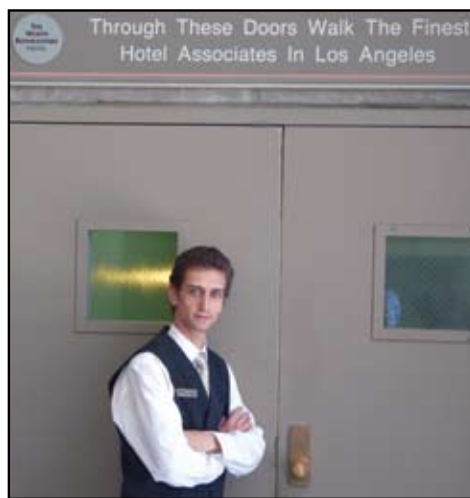
By John Watson, CSUEU

Within just a few months of its opening in 1976, the Westin Bonaventure became a fully unionized hotel and has remained so throughout the years, with UNITE HERE Local 11 currently representing about 95 percent of non-management positions and AFL-CIO Operating Engineers Local 501 representing the remainder.

"The union really works for us," says Bellman Matthew Evans, a Local 11 member. "We have great stewards who we know will go to bat for us on issues impacting employees."

"I'm a proud member of Local 11," adds Concierge Jorge Arriaga, who, like Evans, has been with the hotel for about two years. "This is my first union job, and I can definitely see the difference between being in a union vs. non-union job. We're fortunate to be union-represented, particularly considering that several non-union downtown hotels are laying off workers."

Through the years, UNITE HERE leaders have participated in groundbreaking labor-management partnerships, working together with employers to resolve issues



Bellman Matthew Evans, UNITE HERE Local 11

not only in specific workplaces but also in entire industries as needed, and the Bonaventure is no exception.

"There's a lot of mutual respect," explains Managing Director Michael Czarcinski. His opinion is underscored by the motto emblazoned in bold letters over the employee entrance: "Through these doors walk the finest hotel associates in Los Angeles."

UNITE (formerly the Union of Needletrades, Textiles and Industrial Employees)

See "Union roots" on page 2

CSEA names four Women of the Year

For the first time in General Council history, four women received the honor of Woman of the Year. The winners represented the four affiliates.

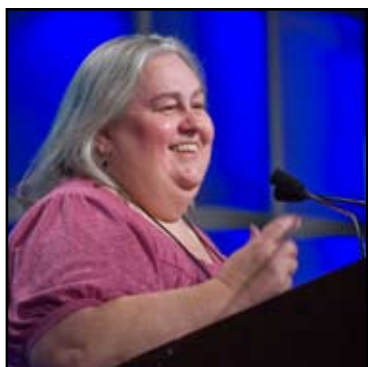


Photo by Steve Sloan

Christine Thomas, CSUEU

The honored women were Christine Thomas of CSUEU, Arlene Espinoza of ACSS, Mary Dennis of CSEA Retirees and Cindie Fonseca of SEIU. "Every woman was very, very worthy and deserved her place as a Woman of the Year," said Sherrie Golden, staff to the committee. The women received engraved sterling silver bracelets as appreciation gifts.

Christine Thomas, a state worker for 27 years, was praised as being a "role model to many CSUEU leaders and activists, but

especially women." Thomas joined CSEA in 1982 and became an activist in 1985. From 2003 to 2007, she was CSUEU vice president of organizing. She was described



Photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

Arlene Espinoza, ACSS

as having "unfailing dedication to staff rights" and being someone who "lends her smile, wealth of knowledge and leadership experience in every area she serves."

Arlene Espinoza, the first woman president of ACSS, has worked for the state for 28 years. Espinoza became an ACSS activist the week she promoted to supervisor and served her chapters in nearly every office. She tirelessly testifies on ACSS' behalf before the Legislature and steadfastly involves

See "Honorees" on page 2

Sound and fury, signifying ... something

B&P steamrolls through Los Angeles

The October Revolution of GC 2007 continued into September 2009 as 24 Budget and Policy measures were dispatched swiftly for the most part. A couple of items caused hiccups and two notables nearly got stuck in delegates' throats, though.

Chair Marilyn Ferrasci ticked off the resolutions, B&P 1/09, 3/09, 4/09, 5/09, 6/09 ... the list of items that slid through is long. Delegates must have found themselves thinking, "I wish state budgets could be passed this easily."

Four items came to GC with the committee's recommendation to refer elsewhere. And refer them, the delegates did, to the destinations committee members had sug-

gested. BP 22/09, 23/09, and 24/09 all will increase the Board of Directors' workload soon; B&P 21/09 was sent to the Retirees, Inc. affiliate.

Fourteen of the remaining resolutions were adopted with no or little debate. If Ferrasci's resolution-processing machine wasn't well-oiled, the delegates wouldn't have known. She led proceedings at a crisp pace, mimicking President Dave Hart's smooth doggedness in wasting little time.

VP Donna Snodgrass raised enough votes to amend B&P 17/09 and allow representation appeals to take place behind closed doors.

See "B&P" on page 2

Free bucks bought GC fun



Photo by Steve Sloan

Harold Fong (center), Tom Considine (right) get their CSEA Bucks validated by CSEA staffperson Pamela Platz

700 prizes won on Wheel of Fortune

By Linda Holderness, ACSS

The big hit of this GC has to be the CSEA Wheel of Fortune Game. No spelling was required, but it did come with a stand-in Vanna White in a sleek gown.

"The delegates loved it," said Ms. White, known in her day job as Chris Fields, assistant to lobbyist Sherrie Golden. "There were long lines. It was amazing."

Instead of solving puzzles, wheel-spinners earned their turn at the wheel with CSEA Affiliate Bucks. A booklet of free bucks was distributed to all delegates in their packets. Looking a little like blown-up Monopoly money, the dollars sported the faces of the affiliate treasurers.

Delegates played the game by visiting the four affiliate tables and 16 of the 25 vendor tables to get their dollars punched. Twenty punches earned a spin. The prizes were worth the wait. Top prize was a new laptop, won on Sunday. Others won lottery

tickets, theme park tickets, travel emergency kits, stuffed animals, See's candy and much more. Nearly 700 prizes were given away during the weekend event.

The vendors were set up in a carnival room, complete with games and free ice cream. On Saturday, business was booming, said Blue Shield of California representative Cathy Rasmussen. "I can't even tell you how many people went through. It was so busy I didn't get much chance to talk to them."

The game was the brainchild of the GC Member Benefits Committee, consisting of CSEA staffers Janis Mickel-Szichak, Dina-Marie McGowan, Paula McClarin, Karen Jensen, Bonnie Morris, Sherrie Golden and Kay Thomas.

The game operators included McGowan, Fields, Thomas, Jamie Long of CSEA and Christie Christensen of CSEA Retirees.

See "Big spin" on page 2

Motion sickness

By Joseph Dobzynski, Jr.



Saturday night was spent attending the CSUEU Dinner with my fellow affiliates. We were visited by the candidates for statewide office and for the CalPERS Board, who gave more targeted speeches to our affiliate. Dinner was great, and more drink tickets even better. Our affiliate finished the oddest trivia game that was a mashup of Trivial Pursuit, Jeopardy, and Where's Waldo? Waldo, you know who you are!

Voting went incredibly smooth on Sunday. Ran into my editor and grabbed a bunch of GC Times for distribution after casting my vote. No line for voting but quite the line for the breakfast buffet. Met some wonderful folks in line and showed some love for CSU Fullerton. Go Titans! Snarfed down breakfast and ran to be sergeant-at-arms. Paper shuffling, placard acquisition, and a futile attempt to keep order while everyone anxiously awaited the election results. Congratulations on the reelection of our statewide officers.

Motion sickness set in after an

hour and a half with the first standing vote. I didn't realize I would have to go on the big board with every vote, otherwise I may have shaved. My head was swimming with a variety of new viewpoints, positions, and concerns. Debating from the floor, a necessary part of our process, stirs up the passions. I can see why previous GCs were sometimes contentious.

The debates also gave me a chance to place the various resolutions in context, since everything was all cryptic for me. I wonder what effect having GC every three years will have on this learning curve, especially as a first-timer. As a chapter president I have eight board meetings per term to learn the ropes, but as a GC delegate I will only have this experience every three years. It makes it very difficult to understand the process and the scope of our affiliate's relationship to CSEA. Reducing the number of delegates would have had the same effect.

Brain fell apart right before lunch. The line ran out of the ballroom, through the hallway, down the escalator, and into the seating area, reminiscent of the books I read with my five year old daughter. The food was all right. I really enjoyed the salad, but the main course tasted like, well, hotel food.

I am usually sluggish after lunch, so it was great to see everyone get fired up to "YMCA," then right back to business. Really enjoyed the Women of the Year awards, which showed me the depth of experience within this organization. May I accomplish even a tenth of what these great women have done with their lives.

Running through the remainder of B&P was pretty easy, although the more inexperienced delegates were learning points of order and points of information on the fly. I could have used an overview of Robert's Rules before arriving, or maybe as part of delegate orientation. The process is good when it works, and difficult when it doesn't, like when you are voting to approve a motion to reject. You put your right hand in ...

I won't get a chance to write about Monday for you, but I hope you've enjoyed reading these columns as much as I have enjoyed writing them. We'll post up more content and stories to the Facebook page, as well as keep the Facebook Group for the 65th CSEA General Council alive as long as we have content. Send us your pictures so we can collect all the memories from this GC.

See you in three years!

—Joseph, GC Times Reporter

Union roots ...

Continued from page 1
and HERE (Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union) merged in 2004, forming UNITE HERE. In the 1960s, UNITE organized the JP Stevens campaign, which resulted in victory in 1980 after a 17-year struggle and was depicted in "Norma Rae." Today, UNITE HERE represents more than 440,000 active members and more than 400,000 retirees throughout North America.

Local 501 was formed in 1953 by the merger of several regional locals. Since its humble beginnings, it's grown to one of the largest stationary engineer locals in the U.S. Its skilled trade members perform plumbing, welding, painting, carpentry, boiler operation, and maintenance and repair of all HVAC equipment, lighting, and related facilities.

The Westin Bonaventure is the largest hotel in Los Angeles. Construction began in 1974 and was completed in 1976. It was originally owned by investors, including a subsidiary of Japanese conglomerate Mitsubishi Corporation and Portman Cos. in Atlanta. Today, it's managed by Interstate Hotels & Resorts (IHR), the nation's largest independent hotel management company, operating 224 hotels with approximately 45,700 rooms in 37 states, the District of Columbia, Belgium, Canada, Ireland, Mexico and Russia.

Honorees ...

Continued from page 1
the members in the organization's mission. She was lauded for being "always there to listen to the concerns of the members" and for representing ACSS "with grace and intelligence."



Photo by Steve Sloan
Cindie Fonseca, Local 1000

Cindie Fonseca started her involvement in union activities at the age of 12 walking the strike line with her mother. She went to work for CDCR in 1994 and quickly became active as a steward and chief steward. She became involved with the union statewide after layoffs were threatened in 2003, and her efforts helped mitigate them. Fonseca is a member of the CDCR Task Force, working on behalf of the members of all the bargaining

units. She also helped negotiate the 2009 contract. Fonseca is chair of Bargaining Unit 3 and was lauded as being "one of the hardest-working women in Local 1000 and a champion for the rights of all people."



Photo by Steve Sloan
Mary Dennis, Retirees, Inc.

Mary Dennis retired in 1987 after 31 years as a state employee. She was active in CSEA beginning in 1968 as membership chair for Chapter 64. As a Retiree, she served her chapter as secretary for 22 years until she was elected this year as vice president. Dennis also is involved in Democratic campaigns, efforts that were praised as having "benefitted all of us in CSEA." She was singled out as an activist "who works mostly unsung and behind the scenes but whose impact is immeasurable."

The honored women were chosen by the CSEA Women's Committee with input from the affiliate members.

B&P ...

Continued from page 1

Another item, B&P 14/09, didn't fare quite so well. Snodgrass wanted the proposed \$50,000 limit on the General Manager's spending limit without Board approval raised to \$150,000. The popular VP explained her amendment by saying outreach programs might need ready spending credit to succeed. Not enough delegates agreed, but they did agree to the original proposal.

And four went down: B&P 20/09, B&P 11/09, and B&P 2/09 elicited debate, but the heat of the day came from B&P 10, the latest in a series of attempts to downsize GC delegations. Lengthy dispute resulted in tumultuous approval from the floor following the proposal's defeat.

Many of the measures were house-keeping items, intended to bring the Association's Bylaws into compliance with 2007's B&P 8 and to reflect affiliate autonomy, or mere grammar corrections. The intent of all seemed to be, in one way or another, to roll CSEA forward on the wheels we greased two years ago.

The 2009 delegates laid another plank in CSEA history, this one smooth and relatively knothole-free. While not all were pleased with the outcome, one take-away is pride in having taken part of an exceptionally respectful and co-operative General Council. Hart and company carried out the intent of the Committee on the Future handily and earned a three-year reward (see "The results are in," on page 1).

Big spin ...

Continued from page 1

Several CSEA benefits vendors helped sponsor the event, including major donors Anthem Life Insurance Co., CSEA Endorsed Insurance Plan, Legal Center of America, T-Mobile and Unitrin Direct Preferred Insurance.

You can get more information on CSEA benefits from our four employee benefit representatives: Mattie Mackerl, Anita Muntz, Athena Summers and Bob Wright. Contact them at 916-326-4603

Where's the line?



Photo by Steve Sloan

Alex Velasco of CSEA stands outside the election booths early Sunday morning, after about a third of the delegates voted in the first 20 minutes of voting.

CSEA members were pleasantly surprised with the voting for CSEA officers on Sunday. According to Phillip Rojas, a CSUEU delegate, "It was smooth, it was rapid, the scanning, the number of stations; it was the smoothest it has ever been."

Sid Rameriz, the chair of the credentials committee, was not available for comment. According to teller committee member Christy Christensen, "I think the scanners we used re-

ally helped expedite the process. We didn't have to wait for people to sign their name and for some people that could take five minutes. The staff was fantastic that worked the election," Christensen said.

CSUEU General Council Delegate Vera Acevedo said, "I got up at 5:45 a.m. to get in line by 6:45 a.m. The doors opened up and everything went so smoothly that I couldn't believe it," she said.

Many thanks

- Many CSEA Member Benefits providers are generously supporting the Member Benefits Fair at the CSEA 65th General Council activities.
- Platinum Level (\$500) sponsors are the Anthem Life Insurance Company, the CSEA Endorsed Insurance Program, Legal Club of America, T-Mobile and Unitrin Direct preferred insurance.
- Gold Level (\$350) sponsor: Palm Springs Aerial Tramway
- Silver Level (\$200) sponsor: Blue Shield of California
- Bronze Level (\$100) sponsors: Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo and Kaplan University
- Products, services and giveaways for the Fair are provided by:
- Anthem Life Insurance Company; Apple, Inc.; Blue Shield of California; California Academy of Science

- California State Lottery; CalPERS; CSEA Endorsed Insurance Program; Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo; Disneyland; Images on Chocolate; Kaplan University; La Quinta Inn & Suites; Legal Club of America; Legoland California Resort; Los Angeles County Fair; Medieval Times Dinner & Tournament; Palm Springs Aerial Tramway; CSEA Printing Services; Purchasing Power; San Diego Zoo; Savings Plus Program; SeaWorld; See's Candies; Sprint; T-Mobile; Unitrin Direct preferred insurance
- The Labor Day Picnic at GC is sponsored by Anthem Life Insurance Company
- Finally, the CSEA-Endorsed Insurance Program, Legal Club of America and Unitrin Direct preferred insurance are supporting GC as a whole. Warm thanks to all of our providers and sponsors for their assistance. For more information on your Member Benefits, log onto www.calcsea.org/benefits today!

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GC Times editor Russell "no-doze" Kilday-Hicks