To be posted and made available in all DPL Staff break rooms/non-work areas

DPLWU Year in Review

2020s: The Renaissance of Unions!

But you may ask yourself, "What has *my* union been doing?"

by DPLWU MEMBERS January 2024

What an exciting time in this country (finally, again!) for unions these past few years, amiright? However, you may be wondering, "What has **our** union been doing?" Whether you're a DPL Workers United (DPLWU — affectionately pronounced "dipple-woo" by some) member or not, you might be thinking, "Is the union still a thing? Does it have teeth?" Well, my friend, without laying *all* of our cards on the table, we hope to use this newsletter to inform you of some of the past year's victories and ongoing efforts we've been working on diligently. We hope you'll see good reason or inspiration to join in this work so that it remains sustainable, to build a more equitable, diverse, democratic, and safe workplace for **everyone here** (yes, bosses too!).

- Our Local CWA 7799 was heating things up when it was freezing in February of 2023 by organizing a **Union Ball for Queer Liberation** hosted by the legendary **Kiki House of Flora**. It was absolutely incredible; you should've *been* there! (IYKYK)

(Pictured: The base plaque from one of the many trophies given to winners who walked different categories of the ball.)

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- After a strong showing at the capitol building on May 1 (International Workers' Day), the senate heard testimonies from DPLWU comrade **Lauren Seegmiller** and other **CWA 7799 public workers** about being deprived of our basic rights and protections. The private sector has had such rights for over 88 years. We had a **HUGE WIN** with the **passing of SB23-111**. This Senate Bill, which, try as he might, Governor Polis does not have the ability to gut, grants us all these new rights and protections:
    - Fully engage in the political process
    - Speak out about concerns at work
    - Organize and join a union
    - Engage in protected concerted activity
- We've shown up at **DPL Library Commission meetings** several months this year to express concerns to the Commissioners (who are appointed by the mayor) during the Public Comment period and to exercise our rights to engage in these proceedings. (FYI: The Commission is unable to make decisions about individual staffing issues but it is their **duty to hold our City Librarian accountable** to Denver Public Library's direction and services to the public.)
- Keeping up some of the fun traditions we've made over the last several years, we had two more picnics - one in the summer at Little Cheesman Park and one at Martin Luther King Jr. Park immediately following Staff Day. There you may have seen the beautifully designed DPLWU signature **"Books and Roses"** logo proudly on display on a number of staff members' shirts, as well as others **wearing the color red in solidarity** with the union. We met for "happy hour" most months of 2023 and would sometimes have **multiple large tables packed full of people** - sober and alcohol-sipping alike, from many locations and departments. These social gatherings have offered us a great opportunity to spend some time getting to know new people and sharing experiences and visions for what we might attain through the power of **mutual aid** and **effective organizing**.
- Our local CWA 7799 is made up of **Public Workers for the Public Good** and our employers are the democratically elected officials of Denver, Colorado. So we **engage in the political process** as our right and as a strategic choice. Leading up to the significant mayoral election last year, we didn't just research the candidates; we asked for meetings with them. Ultimately we gave an **endorsement for Mike Johnston**, who met with us and espoused more positive views of labor rights, including **the prospect of introducing collective bargaining rights for City workers**.
- After Johnston's inauguration, we have followed up with him as well as members of City Council and other legislative bodies and community groups. Our longtime DPLWU member **Juan Ramirez Anzures** brought concerns directly to the new mayor on behalf of our union at **Latino United Neighbors Association (LUNA)** meetings. Juan's dedication, along with that of others active in the struggle, has resulted in **ongoing meetings with the mayor's Chief of Staff, veteran Colorado legislator Dominick Moreno**. So far, five DPLWU members have met with Chief of Staff Moreno and talked about **staff safety, customer safety, the issues of being "at-will" employees, and our need for collective bargaining.** Moreno has already crafted collective bargaining legislation for state workers and the public workers of

Commerce City. One DPLWU rep said, "I think the meeting was promising and Dominick was open to hearing from us and will be an ally in the future." He agreed to meet with us again quarterly. FYI: The mayor has the power to put the option to allow Denver City and County employees to collectively bargain to Denver Voters on the ballot to decide.

How did we get here? What's next?

It's been roughly two and a half years since DPLWU built enough momentum and mass to publicly announce our existence to the world. Just like a little katamari ball made up of dozens of Library Land Workers, fed up with inequitable power structures and ready to roll around spreading the word of labor rights in order to grow into a better DPL. For some, this was the culmination of *many years* of feeling disenfranchised in myriad ways. There are so many witness accounts of efforts that have been made over the decades to improve conditions *at* DPL for workers at the bottom rungs of the organization, only to be neutralized by administrators with cowardice confused for well-earned authority. We the unionized people are here to keep supervisors in check from hoarding power or wielding it abusively and to *do* something with the data we collect time and again that indicates how far behind we are as an organization from the mission statement and values we claim, We *need* to be engaged in our union if we don't want to end up burning out in individual battles for survival and begging for table scraps.

Despite the constant turnover rate of employees at DPL, our union has **continued to grow its numbers throughout 2023 into the triple digits**. We've made concerted efforts to hear about the disparities and needs of many **on-call staff** and we're always consciously trying to be self-critical and acknowledge the common problems in liberation-aimed groups. We are by no means invulnerable to the pitfalls of white dominance, elitism, ableism, etc. We can't truly be a good representative union for all library workers if there isn't a diverse range of people engaged in it. Only then can the union be sustainable, democratic, and

liberatory for us, during our time of stewardship and for future generations of library workers, wall-to-wall. If there's something that's held *you* back from being part of the union, we would especially love to hear from you, to know how we can do better.

Growth and engagement are difficult things to ask of people when that means spending time doing work-related projects during one's precious off-work time. We want to make every union meeting and social event count, and to come together in a variety of spaces that accommodate different needs, such as childcare*, sobriety, dietary restrictions, religious observances, geographic proximity, and work schedule. If you're reading this, we're asking you to please consider how you might participate in your union more in '24.

Be on the lookout for a calendar coming your way soon with upcoming events!

Become a member @ dplworkersunited.com

CWA 7799

Public Workers for the Public Good

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