

Bargaining and Political Involvement Highlights

CWA District One Leadership Conference

Having been duly elected to the position of Southern I&R Business Agent and convention delegate, my first assignment was to attend the CWA District One Leadership Conference. **President Barca** and **Vice President Sheil** wasted no time breaking me in by assigning me the responsibility of reporting to the membership, through this article, about the conference as a new delegate to these proceedings.

This year the conference was once again held in Atlantic City, New Jersey because the cost of holding a conference there is the lowest in the tri-state area. President Barca attended a "Presidents Only" meeting with **District One Vice President Chris Shelton** who updated them on Verizon bargaining, mobilization plans, Verizon Health Care, the Employee Free Choice Act and CWA's SIF campaign. It was impossible for the other Executive Board Members to attend all of the scheduled Bargaining Unit and Sector Meetings, so President Barca split us up so every meeting could be attended by at least one of us. They included: Preparation for 2008 Bargaining and Verizon Health Care; AT&T Mobility; a workshop

on Public Worker Issues and one on Health Care.

The next day was an eye opener. Chris Shelton officially welcomed everyone and then gave a report on the state of District One. He acknowledged that he was "preaching to the choir," but he couldn't emphasize strongly enough the need for political involvement – whether giving or increasing COPE donations, or working to get CWA endorsed candidates elected; because as he put it, if the Employee Free Choice Act is not passed in Congress, "the last one out can turn off the



President Joey Barca and Secretary Treasurer Doug Sheahan with District One COPE Achievement Award

lights because the American Labor movement will cease to be."

The second half of the morning and all afternoon were filled with numerous informational workshops on issues germane to CWA and Labor, so once again, President Barca assigned us to different ones to insure that every one of these was attended. These were:

(1) "The Family & Medical leave Act: The DOL's attack on benefits and CWA's new lawsuit against Verizon." District One has fought Verizon's repeated attempts to limit FMLA benefits but the fight goes on. This workshop discussed the basics of the FMLA, our latest fight with Verizon and how President Bush's DOL is trying to weaken the FMLA before they are gone.

(2) "The Attack on Occupational Health and Safety" covered just that and went into depth about that attack

on workers rights over the last 7 years. This coincided with...

(3) "The NLRB's Attack on Workers Rights and Why we need the Employee Free Choice Act."

(4) "Mobilizing for Universal Health Care" addressed CWA's plans to build a political movement to fight for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act and Universal Health Care when a new President is elected.

(5) "Dealing with Social Security Disabilities Issues" was an in depth workshop presented by Fine, Olin & Anderman.

(6) "Mobilizing for the 2008 Elections" and CWA's goal of helping get pro-labor men and women elected.

(7) "Building CWA Retiree Clubs"

(8) "Why Speed Matters" was about building out broadband in the U.S.; and

(9) "The Budget Crises in New York and New Jersey" and how it is adversely affecting workers, both in the private and public sectors. Since these were each given once in the morning and twice in the afternoon, myself and my fellow Executive Board Members were able to attend a few of them.

The day concluded with a reception where The Gerry, an award given in remembrance of Gerry Horgan who died on the picket line in 1989 and represents what trade unionism is all about, was awarded to our own **Bob McCracken** for his decades of dedicated work to the union movement. **Bill Henderson, the President of CWA Local 1298** based in Hamden, Connecticut, received the Union Builders Award for his successful efforts in organizing over 600 workers at the AT&T Passport Information Center in Dover, New Hampshire, the largest union win in that state

since 1963.

The conference ended with Chris Shelton giving his closing remarks. As the new Business Agent, I was quite impressed by a few things. First were the workshops and the information and knowledge CWA makes available to its Local Officers. These were all very insightful and the speakers and panelists were second to none. Second was the activity, concern and participation in the conference. Every workshop, the bargaining unit & sector meetings and the plenary sessions did not have an empty seat. But I guess most impressive was how our Local is viewed and respected within District One. I've always been proud to be a union member; but to see first hand how aggressive CWA is on our behalf and how our Local is a leader in District One made me come away ready to fight even harder for our Members rights. And I know the leadership of our Local and the membership of CWA Local 1103 is ready to fight as well.

ANTHONY PUGLIESE
Business Agent



Vice President Kevin Sheil accepts the Horgan Award on behalf of the Local and retired President Bob McCracken.



District One Vice President Chris Shelton congratulates the 1103 Executive Board for being leaders in mobilization, political activism, Stewards Army training and SMAC.