



COMMUNIQUE

LOCAL 1180 CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

By Dan Cunningham

CWA Local 1180 marked its 50th year as a union in New York City with a celebratory dinner on October 30, 2015. The monumental occasion brought together more than 300 friends, guests, Shop Stewards, and supporters of Local 1180 who came to celebrate the Local's golden anniversary.

1180 President Arthur Cheliotis welcomed all attendees with the following: "This is truly a monumental occasion for Local 1180. It was 50 years ago, in 1965, that we started as members of the Municipal Management Society — the predecessor association to CWA Local 1180. Members knew they needed a union with full bargaining rights, and sought out and joined the Communications Workers of America after considering AFSCME and the Teamsters. Back then we had only 1,100 members, but we were CWA's very first public sector local. By the late 1970s, our Local had grown to around 4,000 members, and by the early 1990s, our numbers surpassed 10,000."

Local 1180 today is the largest public worker local in the Communications Workers of America. It is one of the most active in community services, politics, and certainly in innovation. Twenty-five years ago, President Cheliotis is quoted as saying, "In the quarter century since we began, Local 1180 has made great strides for ourselves and for the people of the City of New York. Our work affects all New Yorkers as we guide those who deliver services to this great metropolis."

And those words still ring true today.

"Less than a year after we became the newly formed CWA Local 1180, we signed a contract and achieved 9 percent wage increases, established minimum salaries for the titles we represented, and ensured promotional guarantees. Local 1180 also won full health benefits, an education fund, and impartial arbitration. The agreement included improved vacation time, sick leave, and reduced work hours. The rising tide of unions improved the lives of all workers and our Local was part of it," Cheliotis said.

"Now, 50 years later, we have made great strides, fighting for and winning significant achievements. It's this determination and pride in fighting for our members and all workers, despite the attacks we face today, that will ensure Local 1180 and the entire labor movement continue the fight to achieve dignity, justice, and respect for every worker."

Local 1180 honored four very special and unique individuals who have made a difference in the labor movement and who inspire others to do the same. Cheliotis said that their individual contributions to labor have helped shaped both the Local and the overall labor movement.

The first honoree was CWA President Chris Shelton, who received the Morton Bahr Leadership Award. Since 2005, he has been Vice President of CWA District 1, representing 160,000 members in more than 300 CWA locals in New Jersey, New York, and England. Prior to his election as Vice President, Chris was assistant to the District 1 Vice President, responsible for contract negotiations and the thousands of collective bargaining agreements covering District One members.

Gloria Middleton, Local 1180 Secretary-Treasurer, and NYC Public Advocate Letitia "Tish" James, were both honored with the 1180 Humanitarian Award. Middleton is the current Secretary-Treasurer of Local 1180, a position she has held since January 1, 2003. In her tenure, Local 1180 has become financially more stable than ever before, ensuring dues payments are made timely from the National CWA, auditing procedures and reports to the Department of Labor are accurate and timely, and expenditures are reported and approved every month by the Local's Executive Board.

Letitia James is the second highest ranking elected office in the City, made history in 2014 by becoming the first woman of color to hold city-wide office in New York City. In less than two years, Letitia James has transformed the Office of the Public Advocate to deliver real results and reforms for all New Yorkers.

Greg Mantsios, Director of the Joseph S. Murphy Institute, received the Lifetime Achievement Award for Promoting Labor Education. Mantsios has served as a higher education officer for more than 30 years, establishing college degree programs for non-traditional students, particularly those from poor and working class backgrounds. These programs have provided thousands of students with an opportunity to earn college degrees, mostly in the areas of public service and advocacy work.

Middleton, in receiving her award, spoke about her passion for equal rights: "My passion is to help in the fight for equal rights for everyone. As far as this country appears to have come from the days of the Civil Rights movement of the 50s and 60s, we still have so much further to go. We

need to remember that we cannot stick our heads in the sand and think that equality for all is just going to happen by osmosis. It takes the efforts of all of us to keep this country going in the direction that leads to what the forefathers of this country wrote in the constitution.”

And she practices what she preaches as she is chairperson for the Local’s Committee on Civil Rights & Equity, is currently Chairperson of the CWA National Committee on Civil Rights & Equity, and is also a member of the CWA Minority Caucus.

“Reaching 50 years as a Union is a tremendous milestone,” Cheliotis said. “We have achieved great successes in our first half century and look forward to what we will be able to accomplish in the next 50 years.”

Local 1180 is giving back to the members it represents by using proceeds from the dinner to establish a college scholarship fund. The Union has formed a special committee to work on finalizing specifics of how the scholarship program will work, who can apply, and what the criteria will be. Once finalized, information will be posted on the Union’s website.