



COMMUNIQUE

2019 SHOP STEWARD CONFERENCE

Nearly 75 of the Local 1180's Shop Stewards came together for a two-day conference in September to further enhance their skills as liaisons between the members and the Union. Local 1180 Secretary-Treasurer Robin Blair-Batte and Assistant Supervisor of Staff Representatives Teesha Foreman spearheaded the program that included speakers, workshops, events, and meetings.

"The duties of a Shop Steward are part of the balancing act between the wishes of management and the needs of organized labor," Blair-Batte said. "Their main responsibilities, though, are to the union and the members of the collective bargaining unit. As the representative of a labor organization to both management and the union members in the workplace, a Shop Steward works as a facilitator and a mediator. That's why there is always so much for them to know and so many new skills for them to keep on top of."

This year's theme was POWER: People Operating With Exceptional Resiliency, and included workshops on Emotional Intelligence, Leadership by Walking Around through Internal Organizing, and Being Your Authentic Self: Leadership Uncorked. Blair-Batte said the conference leaders are some of the sector's best presenters — Evelyne and Arthur Matthews, Dr. Anthony Andrews, Dr. Rufus Sadler, Linda Somers, Judge Ray Kramer, and 1180's own organizer, Leslie Fine.

Guest speakers included CWA District 1 Vice President Dennis Trainor; Riccardo Iaccarino, Managing Partner of Barnes Iaccarino & Shepherd; and surprise guest New York State Attorney General Letitia "Tish" James, who brought the room to their feet with a rousing round of applause when she entered the room.

HRA Shop Steward Stephanie Sorillo was a first-time participant and said the conference was a great opportunity for her to better learn how to do her job representing members.

"It was a tremendous amount of information all at once but I appreciated all of it because I walked away with something from each session," Sorillo said. "I learned new and different ways of handling and diffusing situations at work, different techniques, and how to more effectively listen. I learned how to deal with certain situations and how to mediate. A few of the sessions also made me reflect on myself and how to be more assertive without undermining or disrespecting anyone and not sounding angry."

Ramzi Babouder-Matta, Shop Steward at Open Society Foundation, one of the private sector shops Local 1180 represents, said the conference also gave him insight on different ways to handle work matters as they arise.

"The conference workshops really provoked me to reflect on challenges and wins in my last year as a Steward, what assets I bring to this work, and things I can improve

on to better serve our members. Overall, it brought me closer to the 1180 family. I had a lot of fun getting to know so many fellow Stewards and 1180 staff members. Huge thanks to the organizers and everyone who made it happen," he said.

The conference goal this year was to enhance the Shop Stewards' knowledge of the true changes brought about from the Supreme Court *Janus* case.

"Even though the *Janus* case's aim was to get rid of unions and disband unity, it did the exact opposite. We united even more! So to keep this united front, we brought our Stewards together this year to enhance their leadership skills, build on their organizing skills, and to reflect on their own self-image. From the feedback I received, we accomplished our goal," Blair-Batte said.

President Gloria Middleton echoed that sentiment. "We are here to become more powerful, more resilient in our capacities as

Stewards and as leaders. The workshops will help you look at yourselves and who you are as leaders and see how others view you. We will talk about organizing within the workplace, how we get people to move, and what it takes to be a great leader, because that's what all of you in this room are."

H+H-Woodhull Medical Center Shop Steward Sandra Fulgencio-Delmonte, who was attending her second Steward conference, said being able to interact with Stewards from other facilities, "many with volumes of experience in managing and interacting with our members," makes a huge difference in how she is able to do her job.

"The Emotional Intelligence Workshop was awesome. It was based mostly on listening and communication. We had an exercise where everyone had to line up according to our birthdays without speaking. It was truly great to see how everyone paid attention and got their thoughts across without saying a word. From this exercise I learned the value of communication, leadership, awareness, team work, and initiative skills," Fulgencio-Delmonte said. "Leadership by Walking Around was another excellent workshop where I learned that by being visible to our members, they understand that we are always there for them. They know that we are actively listening, that we hear their concerns, that we have strong leadership in order to serve them because we care about them. And, maybe some will even become inspired to lead themselves.

"And, Leadership Uncorked was based on how we can gain power through leadership — the more powerful we are, the more powerful our union becomes. We need to be authentic and really care about what we do as Shop Stewards. In essence, we need to have passion and share our knowledge and skills," Fulgencio-Delmonte said.

Quoting one of the workshop leaders: CWA Shop Stewards are Continuous Walking Ambassadors.