

PRIVATE SECTOR SHOPS



NEW PRIVATE SECTOR STAFF REP CHRISTOPHER THOMAS

Christopher (Chris) Thomas joined CWA Local 1180 in Aug. 2021 as a Staff Representative for the private sector organizations. Chris comes with a decade of experience in the non-profit field and has worked with non-profits since he was a teenager.

Chris previously worked at the international grant-making and advocacy organization, the Open Society Foundations, within their General Counsel's office and Public Health Program bringing a legal, data, grant making, and operations background. While there, he also operated as a Shop Steward for their staff union, negotiated their collective bargaining agreement, and managed a range of HR issues. He spent time working on the second Obama campaign for President, interned with New York State Senator Liz Krueger, and worked on local campaigns for Andrew Cuomo and Anthony Cannataro.

Chris has experience in data management, and almost 10 years of legal experience writing and interpreting legal agreements, creating and implementing robust training and onboarding programs. Aside from his work duties, he harbors a strong commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness as evident by his participation in various affinity groups and committee memberships, and his DEI certificate from Cornell University.

Chris holds a Bachelor of Library Arts in Political Science and Sociology from Hampshire College. In his free time, you can find Chris bouldering around various climbing gyms in New York City or engaging with anything geeky. ■

EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD NYC RATIFIES CONTRACT EXTENSION

Members at Edible Schoolyard NYC ratified a new, one-year extension of their contract on Sept. 1, 2021, after a quick bargaining period that started in July and finished in Aug. 2021.

Edible Schoolyard NYC Bargaining team members — Program Manager Dan Feder, Garden Teacher Cecilia Galarraga, and PS/MS 7 Program Manager Rosa Marruffo — said the short duration was due to the union and management being on the same page as far as the length of the contract and the priorities.

Local 1180's John O'Malley, who spearheaded the negotiations on behalf of the union, said this trio carried through the interests of the last bargaining by way of member contact and bargaining surveys, and conveyed those at the bargaining table in a clear and precise way. "They were all thoughtful and considerate when deliberations were needed, and fierce when someone needed to show a little canine teeth in order to make a point," he said.

Edible Schoolyard NYC first joined with Local 1180 in Jan. 2020, who now represents their seven members, with two vacancies in union positions currently being filled. Their mission is to support edible education for every child in New York City by partnering with public schools to cultivate healthy students and communities through hands-on cooking and gardening education, transforming children's relationship with food.

The negotiation process began with a goal of bringing up the lowest paid workers to a minimum level and equalizing existing workers into appropriate levels. In the wake of adjustments made during the pandemic, there was a need for long-term improvement in areas of flexible work time, working remotely, and compensatory time.

Galarraga and her bargaining teammates agreed that it made sense to push new contract negotiations to next year since the financial uncertainty that the organization experienced during the pandemic made it seem unlikely that management would be willing or able to commit to any big changes beyond the next fiscal year.

Also, with a new Executive Director starting in Sept. 2020, it made sense for the outgoing Executive Director to not make any long-term commitments without the new ED's input — something that would have postponed an agreement indefinitely.

"The current contract extension allows us to put in place some greater supports for current staff, such as pay increases and more formalized comp time, flex time, and work-from-home policies, while also leaving room for larger conversations with the new ED for the next contract in 2022," Galarraga said.



From left, the Edible Schoolyard NYC bargaining team: Dan Feder, Cecilia Galarraga, and former PS/MS 7 Program Manager who has since left for another position.

"Though the organization was not in the financial position to increase compensation as much as we would have liked, I am really proud that we were able to boost the pay for our lowest paid members by 12.5%. I am also really pleased that we were able to formalize policies like comp time, which had been applied unevenly in the past and were not clearly written out in our employee handbook. I think we made major progress in creating equity in our organization. I look forward to seeing how much farther we can go in our next contract," Galarraga said.

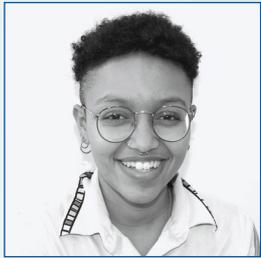
The contract includes raises ranging from 6.8% to 12.5% depending on a workers' prior level; new hires will have a minimum salary; existing employees' salaries will always be higher than new hires; and secured release time for union representatives to attend union trainings. Some of the other issues were achieved by contract while others were negotiated into the manual. O'Malley said a few remaining issues could not be resolved and will be subject to ongoing Labor-Management Committee negotiations.

"I am proud to report that we achieved all of our goals so far," O'Malley said. "Overall, the bargaining was a great success considering the backdrop of the pandemic and lack of funding stability. We were able to keep things going in the short run, and once the economy picks up, we will be able to negotiate a full-length contract in 2022."

New Private Sector Staff Rep Chris Thomas, hired by Local 1180 in the midst of the negotiations, said he was able to hit the ground running just one week after beginning his new position. "Thankfully John had this all under control long before I got here so I could join the bargaining sessions that were in progress and know that Local 1180 and the ESYNYC team had already made significant progress." ■

THE CENTURY FOUNDATION RATIFIES FOUR-YEAR CONTRACT

Local 1180 members at The Century Foundation (TCF) ratified a four-year contract on Sept. 13, 2021, that runs from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2025.



Bargaining Team Member
Jonnea Herman

Bargaining began in June with a three-person committee comprised of Jonnea Herman, Taela Dudley, who has since left to pursue a master's degree, and Dara Rivera, who all joined Local 1180's John O'Malley in spearheading the negotiations. In addition to the regular stress of contract negotiations, the team also had to contend with a new executive director, Lisa Sahulka, who began on Feb. 16 of this year, just four months prior to negotiations.

"This group knew what they were looking for right from the start," O'Malley said. "We began the process with a goal to bring up the lowest paid workers to a realistic minimum level, and to equalize people who were already here into appropriate pay levels. In the wake of adjustments made during the pandemic, there was a need for long-term improvement in the areas of flexible time, working remotely, and compensatory time. We are proud to report that we achieved all of those goals."

Minimum salaries will be \$58,500, an increase from the previous \$51,500. The minimum salary will be pegged to the percentage raise negotiated for each year. All salaries will go up by 2.5% for each of the four years of the contract. The first increase was retroactive to July 1, 2021. In addition, all eight Local 1180 TCF members who were employed at the time of ratification should have received their annual bonus of \$650 on July 1, 2021. That annual bonus will increase by the same yearly percentage as salaries.

The Century Foundation is a progressive, independent think tank that conducts research, develops solutions, and drives policy change to make people's lives better. They pursue economic, racial, and gender equity in education, health care, and work, and promote U.S. foreign policy that fosters international cooperation, peace, and security. TCF is one of the oldest public policy research institutes in the country.

O'Malley said that in addition to the financial aspects of the negotiations, the team also was able to resolve issues regarding access to personnel files, job descriptions and the ability to confer over any changes, improve workflow systems, clarify hours of work for non-exempt employees and the vacation accrual system, add Juneteenth as a holiday, and grant union reps release time for union training. ■

OSF RESTRUCTURING IMPACTS STAFF & LEADS TO LOW MORALE

As part of Open Society Foundations major restructuring, the grant maker is offering a voluntary buyout package with wide-ranging benefits to most staff, and plans to follow up with layoffs if necessary, according to an FAQ provided to staff members and two staff sources.

Local 1180, which represents 257 members at OSF, said they have been told that morale is very low amid the changes. With several hundred staff members already having left the nonprofit, remaining staff are concerned for their job security and the potential shifts in workload following the departures.

"Our impression so far is that very few within the organization, including our members, managers, and senior staff, are happy with the process," said Local 1180 President Gloria Middleton. "We are concerned on multiple fronts with the restructuring process, which seems well intentioned, but poorly executed."

OSF staffers shared concerns that the departures could reduce diversity at the Foundation and contribute to long-standing equity issues since the majority of the people leaving are women or people of color. The Open Society Foundations, founded by George Soros, are the world's largest private funder of independent groups working for justice, democratic governance, and human rights. They provide thousands of grants every year through a network of national and regional foundations and offices, funding a vast array of projects.

Local 1180 has represented OSF since 2016 and ratified its first contract in 2018. The union is now working with remaining staffers to protect the jobs of its members, secure packages for those who aren't interested in OSF's new direction, and maintain the integrity of the organization's mission. ■

PRIVATE SECTOR SHOP STEWARDS

ALIGN

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Daphne Eviatar

Philippe Nasif

Christina Saenz

BOOKS & RATTLES

Cesar Collado

EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD NYC

Daniel Feder

Cecilia Galarraga

HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST

Katie Czapanskiy

Kaitlin Locascio

Rebecca Soroka

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Tess Hill

Greg Hughes

Ashley Pria Persaud

Jessica Story

JAVITS CENTER

Jose Martinez

Philip Slattery

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

Ramzi Babouder-Matta

Willamae Malachi Boling

Katy Caldwell

Michael Camlin

Samantha Costello

Ian Crooker

Jessica Greenspan

Nina Ippolito

Tenzin Lama

Stacey-Leigh Manuel

Ashrakat Mohammed

Joshua Russell

Nia Tyler-Reid

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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY WORKERS VOTE TO JOIN CWA LOCAL 1180

National Audubon Society's headquarters staff voted overwhelmingly in favor of forming a union, the latest milestone for the environmental labor movement, and now 132 workers will become part of the CWA Local 1180 family.

On Sept. 23, workers at Audubon's national headquarters voted in an official National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election, capping the workers' year-long effort to secure stronger health care, job security, and a voice at the table for all workers regardless of race, gender, or background. Audubon workers in New York, Washington, D.C., and remote offices will join Local 1180, which will represent them in upcoming contract negotiations. Audubon workers add to the growing number of conservationists and climate activists paving the way for a stronger alliance between labor and environmentalism.

Audubon employees began organizing to form a union after facing two rounds of layoffs last year, including one on Earth Day, and having the cost of their health care increased during the pandemic. Workers also pointed out that all major decisions at Audubon have been made behind closed doors by those at the top, and that the direction of the organization has veered toward chasing expedient grant money.

The election follows Audubon workers' previous attempts to have management voluntarily recognize their union. Last May, in a card check led by U.S. Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA), a majority of Audubon's 400-person national staff voted in favor of forming a union. However, Audubon management, led by President and interim CEO Dr. Elizabeth Gray, refused voluntary recognition. Workers again tried to negotiate in good faith by offering to hold an expedited election through a third-party arbiter so long as Audubon committed to a neutrality agreement, but management declined, forcing workers to file for an election with the NLRB.

"This union isn't just a win for workers, it's a win for the birds as well," said Shyamlee Patel, a Finance Associate at Audubon. "The protections provided by a union will give us the peace of mind in our personal and work lives so that we can focus on the original mission of Audubon that we are all passionate about: protecting birds and their ecosystems."

Local 1180 Organizer Leslie Fine and former Open Society Foundations Shop Steward Renata Peralta, along with other CWA staff, worked to help Audubon employees build the power to win their union.

"Despite every obstacle thrown in our path, we prevailed because we knew what we were fighting for was just and critical to advancing Audubon's mission," said Maddox Wolfe, a Campaign Manager at Audubon. "We overcame geographical distance and brought together workers from all corners of the country. When management hired a union-busting law firm, we were undeterred. Today's victory is a clear-cut example of how powerful workers can be when they are united and stand firm in their beliefs."

Further fueling the drive to organize was Audubon's toxic culture that created countless barriers in the workplace, primarily for women and employees of color, and was confirmed by an independent audit. Audubon is one of many environmental organizations grappling with its racist history. Workers there viewed a union as their best opportunity to address those concerns.

"An increasing number of non-for-profit groups are coming to realize the value in organizing and becoming unionized," said Local 1180 President Gloria Middleton. "They see labor as a way to gain a voice, a seat at the table, and gain control and authority over their own work spaces. The values and beliefs of unions are much the same as what employees of nonprofits promote themselves, regardless of what the nonprofit is about."

"We welcome members of the National Audubon Society to our Local 1180 family," Middleton said. "They join the growing number of other nonprofits that are seeing an explosion in popularity and coming to realize that the backing of a union voice is a positive in a movement that is gaining steam." ■



Happy Holidays

From the Officers, Executive Board & Staff
of CWA Local 1180