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## The SoCal Workforce \*

- Southern California workers comprise over 2/3 of the state's total workforce
- Los Angeles County accounts for 38% of California's foreign-born population; Southern California accounts for 69%
- The LA/Long Beach ports complex is the largest in the country with over 10,000 long-shore workers
- Over 100,000 Home-Care workers serve the elderly & disabled in LA County
- LA County is the capital of garment production in the U.S. with over 62,000 workers
- Source: Employment Development Dept., U.S. Census Bureau, PMA, 2007

## *LOSH History and Future Directions*

*Interview With Past and Present Directors Marianne Brown (1984-2004) and Linda Delp (2005-present)*

### **What were the origins of UCLA-LOSH?**

**MB:** LOSH was initially funded in 1978 with a New Directions grant from Federal OSHA when Dr. Eula Bingham was director. Dr. Bingham had visited Sweden and saw up close the importance of an informed, active workforce in dealing with health and safety issues on the shop floor. Funding for the New Directions Program dropped off in the early 1980s when the political climate changed under the Reagan administration, and LOSH began seeking new sources of support. By 1984, LOSH had successfully obtained funds for a full-time director from the UCLA Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, a critical position that remains to this day. All other LOSH programs and staff are supported by a variety of grant funds.

**LD:** I came to LOSH from the Service Employees International Union in 1990 under a

program funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. NIEHS and key players in the labor movement had the vision to see the importance of worker health and safety education as an essential part of environmental clean up work. Today the funds from that program sustain not only UCLA-LOSH but many health and safety programs nationwide.

### **What has been the primary focus of LOSH and its programs during the past 30 years?**

**MB:** One of our major goals from the beginning was to improve health and safety by providing evidence for new federal and state worker protection policies. An example was the long struggle for an ergonomics standard at both the federal and state levels. Our efforts to promote the standard also served as an impetus for unions to educate and organize workers around



Linda Delp



Marianne Brown

the issue. In another case, LOSH worked with the California Department of Health Service's Occupational Health Branch to develop worker notification guidelines (*cont. on page 3*)

## *UCLA-LOSH 30th Anniversary Celebration*

The UCLA Labor Occupational Safety & Health (LOSH) Program would like to thank our many allies for your support during our first 30 years, and we look forward to another 30 years of working with you to improve worker health and safety.

In this spirit of collaboration and on the occasion of our 30th Anniversary, LOSH is proud to honor three outstanding occupational health & safety activists: Ruth Heifetz, Marianne Brown, and Julia Quint. Collectively they have led the fight for occupational

health and environmental justice for over three decades and continue their efforts to this day. The awards ceremony will take place in San Diego on October 26th, 2008 in conjunction with the APHA Occupational Health & Safety Section's Social Hour.

## *Training Workers to Protect the Community*

Since 1987, The Hazardous Waste Worker Training Program has provided up-to-date health and safety training to workers who handle hazardous materials and hazardous waste: those in cleanup and emergency response operations. The National Institute of



Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) funds LOSH as the lead in a five-university Western region training consortium based in California, Arizona and the Pacific Northwest. Together they reach an average of 3,400 workers each year, a diverse population from Alaska to the US-Mexico border to American Samoa. The Consortium's bilingual training activities and materials have been highlighted at conferences and staff collaborated with NIEHS to organize the first national Trainers' Exchange, a tradition that continues more than a decade later. LOSH is also

working with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and has trained almost 900 workers at West Coast ports. The training enables port workers to identify and respond appropriately to risks facing their own and the community's safety and security. Concerns about diesel exhaust prompted LOSH to expand the curriculum with the goal of building bridges between workers and the community at the largest ports complex in the country. During the 2007 wildfires, LOSH developed safety bulletins and trained California Conservation

Corps workers. LOSH also sponsored research to document problems specific to migrant Spanish-speaking workers in post-Katrina cleanup operations; findings will be published in a forthcoming book. Most recently, LOSH work along the border expanded with staff participation in a bi-national team of physicians and industrial hygienists. Together they assessed health and safety conditions at the Cananea open-pit copper mine and processing plants in Sonora, Mexico, highlighting the problems in a report that was distributed internationally.

## *Educating Youth Leaders*

The UCLA-LOSH Youth Project was initiated in 1996 with funding from the California Endowment and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to educate high school students through school-based



curriculum and peer-education activities in the South LA community. Youth documented the hazards confronting their peers in the underground economy of LA's garment district, in door-to-door sales and in fast food restaurants. They educated immigrant parents about their rights at work, organized a hearing to highlight contaminated sites in their community, and informed state health officers about their day-to-day experiences on the job. Youth leaders emerged from the pro-

gram; two have since been hired to coordinate the LOSH Youth Project. In 2005, supplemental funding from the California Wellness Foundation and the California Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation allowed us to expand beyond local high schools, reaching youth statewide through annual Young Worker Leadership Academies (YWLA). Each May, YWLA participants apply their newfound leadership skills to community service

projects they organize during Safe Jobs for Youth Month to promote workplace health and safety in their communities. YWLA has now gone national; Massachusetts youth recently held their own academy, and LOSH, in partnership with LOHP at UC Berkeley, created a how-to guide for use by groups in other communities. The guide and information about upcoming California academies are available on the Young Workers page of the LOSH website.

## *Student Engagement in the Community*

LOSH's internship program builds partnerships between student researchers and workers to expose students to the world of worker health and safety. In 2005, LOSH joined the Occupational Health



Internship Program (OHIP), an eight-week student leadership program sponsored by the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics. Students work with academic mentors and workplace sponsors to strengthen their technical skills, interact with workers and develop a mutual understanding of the underlying causes of work-related problems. Since joining OHIP, LOSH has placed 18 students in ten projects to investigate a

range of critical issues - chemicals in the car wash industry; the impact of mandatory overtime on refinery workers and of chemical emissions on the surrounding community; heat stress among industrial laundry workers; the myriad hazards facing taxi drivers including violence, limited restroom access and 12-16 hour shifts; ergonomic hazards in the hotel industry; and unsafe conditions confronting day laborers and port truck drivers. The interns'

commitment has inspired action to change job conditions. They contributed to filing Cal/OSHA complaints and negotiating Health and Safety committees in union contracts; designed materials and educated hundreds of workers; initiated partnerships with community clinics; and presented project results to union leaders, at labor-management meetings and at the annual conference of the American Public Health Association.

## *Building a Worker Activist Network*

LOSH's goal to develop a cadre of educated worker-leaders received a boost in 2002 with legislation to create a statewide Worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program (WOSHTEP). The program uses a multi-pronged approach to teach workers skills to participate in workplace and union health and safety programs and to reach traditionally underserved populations—those with limited English proficiency, young workers and those in small businesses. Train-the-trainer and innovative outreach programs expand

LOSH's reach in Southern California, where almost two-thirds of the state's workforce is located.

A growing network of health and safety specialists—over 1,600 statewide—receive education and technical assistance from LOSH and LOHP (our partners in Northern California) with support from the State Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation. The specialists have reached over 30,000 coworkers, supervisors and community members. In Southern California, they mapped hazards and documented high

temperatures in industrial laundries, leading to installation of a cooling unit; they organized courses in Spanish and Korean for restaurant owners and workers, they created a safety committee at a gas utility company and they organized a health committee of taxi drivers.

LOSH collaborates with a dynamic network of worker centers, health promoters and the Mexican consulate to reach the region's largest immigrant workforce; 38% of the state's total reside in LA County. And recent initiatives with the Building Trades target a large,

high-risk workforce through train-the-trainer courses in Spanish and through apprentice and workforce development programs, including those on the cutting edge of the move towards green collar jobs.



## *LOSH History, Future Directions cont.*

specifying what researchers must tell workers about the results of studies they have participated in. Most recently, the California heat stress standard was finally passed in 2005 after fifteen years of research, education and advocacy.

**LD:** LOSH efforts in the past have laid a foundation for our current work. For example, we worked with SoCalCOSH to educate hotel workers about the requirements of the Repetitive Motion Injuries (RMI) standard and, despite language barriers, set up a meeting so they could speak directly with Cal/OSHA representatives. This led to the first RMI citation in the hotel industry, which we hope will be a wakeup call to highlight the importance of workload as a health and safety issue. LOSH also initiated an outreach program to educate workers about California's Heat Illness Prevention standard and to advocate for stronger protections. For the last two summers, a network of health promoters

has converged on street corners to educate day laborers waiting for work; we've helped parking lot attendants, laundry and warehouse workers create safety programs and negotiate contract language; and we're working with our allies to put an end to all heat-related deaths in California. LOSH is dedicated to bridging the gaps between research, education and policy so educated workers can engage in policy debates that are, in turn, informed by research.

### **What are LOSH's future goals?**

**MB:** Strengthening worker leadership on health and safety issues in the workplace and in the broader policy arena remains an important goal. This has been accomplished by developing worker training curricula and empowerment training methods that teach workers how to access information and resources about hazards in their workplaces. This approach is exemplified by current LOSH initiatives such as

the WOSHTEP Specialist network, the worker training programs at the ports, and the statewide youth leadership academies.

**LD:** LOSH is uniquely positioned to build bridges to solve the critical problem of environmental degradation in our communities and workplaces now and into the future. We already bring groups together across the university-community divide, from labor, community and environmental groups to researchers, educators and policymakers. California—and Los Angeles in particular—has a dynamic labor movement and network of worker centers, and we've developed strong ties with both. Whether it's hotel, car wash, refinery, longshore, restaurant, janitorial or garment workers, vibrant campaigns are helping to build leaders and improve working conditions throughout the region. We're also positioned to build bridges across borders, especially in the Americas and along the Pacific

Rim. This fall LOSH will participate in the Fifth International Congress on Women, Work and Health in Mexico, and will incorporate a cross-border focus into the annual West Coast Summer Institute for Union Women to be held in LA in 2009.

Finally, LOSH is playing a role in LA's green building initiative to create good safe jobs through labor-community collaboration. I am working with our allies to develop a course beginning in January 2009 that will bring together graduate students, community leaders, and representatives of the building trades. Research findings from students' course projects will be presented to the Mayor in the spring. We hope this lays the groundwork for longer-term collaboration and for LOSH's greater involvement in community-based action research to address critical environmental concerns both inside and outside the workplace.

## UCLA-LOSH 30th Anniversary News

### *UCLA-Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) Program*

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**The UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) Program** is a nationally recognized center with a special emphasis on serving the Southern California workforce. LOSH provides bi-lingual (English-Spanish) occupational health and safety education programs in the community; teaches UCLA courses; researches the conditions of immigrant, low-wage and youth workers who are disproportionately impacted by job hazards; and provides input into public policies to improve worker health and safety.

**LOSH** is part of UCLA's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE) within the College of Letters and Science and the Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (COEH) within the School of Public Health. Founded in 1978 and now celebrating 30 years of service, LOSH has established a strong presence in Southern California, with ties to local and international labor unions, community groups, schools, local and state governmental agencies, and community health providers.

**LOSH** is supported by funding from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS); the California Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation (CHSWC) within the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR); the UCLA Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (COEH); the UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE); the California Wellness Foundation (TCWF); the California Department of Public Health (CDPH); and the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH).

## *2008 UCLA-LOSH Staff*

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LOSH Health & Safety Coordinator: Jessica Barcellona

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