

Once upon a time in a place not far from here lived 7 people who would work tirelessly on behalf of their.... Your first thought might have been the seven dwarfs but this group was the negotiation team of Local 5252. This negotiating team relied on the experience of Lori Sutherland, our Cupe Representative and our President, Laurel Rugland.

I would like to nominate Laurel Rugland for the EWSC Advocate Award because of the many years of hard work she has done on behalf of educational workers in our province.

Laurel is the president of Local 5252 and has worked very hard for the last 15 years to improve the working conditions of her previous and current locals. Her former employer had offered no raises for 4 years and was now offering a 1% raise. She and others decided that conditions needed to change and her group decided to join the caretaker's union. This started her long journey to protect and improve the lives of those she represents.

I have worked beside Laurel for quite some time and have always marveled at her composure while representing our members. She believes in the principle of fairness and respect and lives by those principles. She takes responsibility of making sure her members are taken care of very seriously. She considers each situation that crosses her way with thoughtful insight. She is steadfast and very focused as she attends to the needs of the membership of her local. This was especially evident during her last round of bargaining. Laurel has been at the bargaining table five times and this has adequately prepared her for the last round of bargaining. Prairie Valley School Division has a large geographical area and she wanted to make sure that she understood the concerns and needs of our entire membership. Five pod meetings were held in hopes of hearing from our members in the best way possible. Surveys were taken and our negotiating team was given a clear mandate from our members to pursue parity with other educational support workers in our school division.

Our members were working in a school division that believed it was permissible to pay members considerably less for the same job in the same job classification. During those very stressful and trying negotiations she never lost her focus, or the will to keep carrying on. During the last year, each member of the negotiating team spent over 250 hours working to reach the goal of parity. Laurel mentioned that at times it would be easy to give up but that's when her resolve was the strongest. Our union members showed us tremendous support by

attending meetings, writing letters to newspaper, getting over 2500 postcards signed, starring in videos and finally voting to strike. She was so impressed by the support of our membership and this empowered the whole negotiating team at the bargaining table. Laurel appreciates the support of all the members in our local and was so excited to see more members become active in their union. Perhaps the greatest gift was to see our workers start to believe in themselves.

Like Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs our story does have a happy ending. Wage parity will be achieved through the application of even increments in each year of the agreement. At the start of the 2014-2015 year, we will have reached complete wage parity. Wage increases ranged from 17%-37%. This was such a victory for our 300 plus union members.

Laurel is an extraordinary leader who has enabled our union to achieve great gains for our members. She has been instrumental in raising awareness of important issues within our membership. I have learned a lot working with Laurel and I am honored to call her my friend. Thanks for taking the time to consider this application. I think Laurel would be a very deserving recipient of this award.

Respectfully submitted by,

Janice Wolfmueller  
Local 5252

Nominee's Name: Laurel Rugland  
Local 5252