

**Stronger Together**For Immediate Release: May 24, 2005

Union Workers at George Junior to Hold “VOTE NO!” Rally

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Vice President

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Vice President

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SEIU Local 200United, the union representing over 200 Direct Care Workers at the George Junior Republic, will hold a mid-day rally on Wednesday, May 25, urging members to vote down the agency’s “last and final” contract proposal.

The proposal would afford all non-probationary members of the bargaining unit a 20¢ per hour raise retro-active to May 1 with an additional 20¢ for senior workers on November 1. The junior non-probationary workers would receive an additional 10¢ on their one-year anniversary of employment. Current probationary employees will receive 20¢ on their one-year anniversary. “There is a similarly convoluted schedule of increases in the second year of the proposal and straight pay increases in the third,” said Union Representative Mark Keith.

“The unfairness of management’s offer is the low increases compounded by the agency’s demand that our members absorb an additional 5% of their health insurance premium,” said Keith. Under the current proposal, the average George Junior worker, currently earning \$8.90 per hour, will be earning \$9.10 and paying \$69 per month for individual health insurance. “Add in the co-pay for dental and our average member is below the Tompkins County living wage,” said Local 200United’s Chairman, Bob Lucas. “In fact, many of our members with families are at the poverty rate.”

Substandard wages and benefits translate into higher employee turnover. In turn, these direct-care workers aren’t able to develop sustained relationships with the agency’s clients, many of whom come to George Junior from broken homes and otherwise dysfunctional families.

Following the rally, Local 200United members will vote on the contract at the Dryden VFW Wednesday afternoon and evening, and Thursday morning.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Union Members will be rallying in front of 380 Freeville Road (Route 38), Freeville, NY at 11:30 AM. From Route 13 in Dryden, take Route 38 north/west, approximately 2 miles.

Contact: Union Representative Mark Keith, 607-423-0027 (cell)

SEIU Local 200United represents more voluntary human service agency workers than any other union in Upstate New York. In total, the Local represents over 12,000 workers in human services, the public sector, education, and building services in 52 Upstate counties.

**SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
AFL-CIO,CLC**

SYRACUSE OFFICE

1153 West Fayette Street
Suite 302
P.O. Box 1540
Syracuse, NY 13201
Phone: 315/424-1750
Fax: 315/479-9030

BUFFALO OFFICE

2495 Kensington Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14226
Phone: 716/631-8940
Fax: 716/631-3929

Albany
55 Grant Avenue
Albany, NY 12206
518/438-4206

Binghamton
2006 North Street
Endwell, NY 13760
607/748-0751

Hudson Valley
594 Rte. 299
Highland, NY 12528
845/883/4155

Rochester
225 West Broad St., Suite B
Rochester, NY 14608
585/464-8880