

Davenport



TIMES

Thursday, October 13, 2005
Davenport, Washington
122nd Year, No. 20
50 cents

Serving

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Sprague-Lamont teachers discard WEA-affiliated union

SPRAGUE – In an historic move, teachers of the Sprague-Lamont School District voted Oct. 10 to decertify the teacher union and replace it with an independent professional organization called the Sprague-Lamont Professional Educators Association (SLPEA).

This is the first school district in Washington to have made such a move. On a national scale, only a handful of school districts have been successful in booting out their unions.

The movement's accomplishment, led by science teacher

Jim Dishon, means that teachers in this school district no longer are forced to financially support any union on the local, state or national level, including the Washington Education Association and the National Education Association, in order to have a voice in the bargaining process.

"It is liberating to declare our independence from the teacher unions," said Dishon. "Most of our teachers balked at paying \$700 in annual dues to the union, much of which would have helped fund social and political agendas which

were often personally offensive."

Dissatisfied with their union, the teachers of the Sprague-Lamont School District requested that the Washington State Public Employment Relations Commission conduct an election which resulted in the certification of SLPEA as the district's new bargaining unit for teachers, replacing the Sprague-Lamont Education Association, the local union.

"SLPEA believes that teachers should have choices in rep-

See **UNION**, page 12

UNION

Continued from page 1

resentation. It is my hope that other teachers take our lead and exercise their choices," added Dishon.

SLPEA sought the assistance of Northwest Professional Educators (NWPE), a non-union, non-profit professional educators association based in Spokane, to educate them about negotiation options, legal and liability insurance, benefits such as medical insurance as well as other needs of teachers.

Sprague-Lamont teachers have joined NWPE for its non-bargaining support services such as liability insurance, legal services, professional development resources, and teacher scholarships and classroom mini-grants for a fraction of the cost of union dues.

"Having worked with NWPE, it was clear to us that SLPEA can provide for our local needs without the high cost of sending dues to WEA or NEA," Dishon remarked.