



Judy Beard

Making Women More POWERful

Judy Beard vividly remembers when female delegates to the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) 1978 Convention, though few in numbers, successfully organized for consideration of their resolutions, which otherwise would not have made it to the floor.

“I felt the strength of women banding together,” recalls Beard. “I began working with and learning from women who were just as skilled as the men who had mentored me in my local.”

Beard—who now serves as executive assistant to the APWU Secretary-Treasurer Terry Stapleton—was sent by her local to the first national gathering of APWU women in 1979. The 130 women present took the historic step of founding Postal Office Women for Equal Rights (POWER). The next year they met again on the eve of the APWU Convention, and developed a winning strategy for convention approval of a measure making POWER an official and permanent part of APWU.

Karen Wing, now vice president of the San Francisco Local, attended that founding meeting in 1979.

“It was impressive and inspiring to see and be part of pushing for a greater voice and role for women in the union,” says Wing, who later honed her speaking and parliamentary procedure skills at workshops organized by her local’s POWER committee.

Even more important, she adds, was the ability to “get feedback and advice” from women in POWER from all across the country. And that network expanded as she became involved in the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and in the founding of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA).

Wing takes great pleasure in the fact that she’s been able to pass on what she was given “by helping to get other women involved in the union and helping to mentor them.”

Looking back at 1978, Judy Beard surveys the great progress made by women in APWU.

“Back then there were zero national officers. Today two members of the National Executive Board are women and there are 15 other female elected national officers,” Beard says proudly.

“We still have a long way to go but we are pushing ahead with the full support of APWU President William Burrus, who announced a special ‘Women Organizing Women’ recruitment drive during March, Women’s History Month.”

The women of POWER are continuing to make history.



Karen Wing