

Dear SEIU Member,

Every now and then a person will enter our lives that will forever change it. For me, that person was Marty Smith, my husband. We met via the internet and at our first meeting in a coffee shop we knew our lives were forever changed.

Marty was a man larger than life; so gentle, caring, and a heart that knew how to give. To say he was gifted is an understatement. His abilities ranged from a musician since a child, to oil painting, and my personal favorite, a gourmet chef. I was always in awe of his cooking talents. How wonderful it was to enter a restaurant, enjoy a meal, and then be able to recreate the exact dish at home. He loved to ride his motorcycle, savor a good cigar, and enjoy each day. Our home was always filled with laughter. He had a strong code of ethics that governed his life. When Marty was your friend, it was a friendship for life. He viewed his co-workers not just as friends or acquaintances, but as family.

On November 4, 2005, Marty went out on a call. He would have been home no later than 11:30 PM. Normally, if he were to be late, I would get a call from him. That night, my heart ached. I knew that something was so terribly wrong. When the coroners rang my doorbell at 3:00 AM, it was as if my heart stopped beating.

Over the next few days, it slowly came to focus what had happened. The client he went to see had killed him in such a horribly violent manner. I felt so very lost. When I was approached by the SEIU to allow them to use Marty's name on a safety bill they wanted to promote, I knew that this is what Marty would want. He would want to ensure that his "family" would be safe.

I asked if there was anything I could do to help promote this bill in the legislature. To me, this bill was the only light that I could see out of such a horrible event. In my heart, I knew that the court process just wasn't enough to help fill the void. Trying to help someone else from death or injury and what their families would endure is what helped me to move each step at a time.

With Marty in my heart, I went to the hearings, provided my testimony as his voice. As I met other SEIU members and heard your individual stories, I knew that it was more than just Marty's voice...it was yours too.

On May 8, 2007, as I watched our Governor sign the Marty Smith Bill, House Bill 1456, into law. It was a moment of great elation. The signing of this law puts the state of Washington as setting a precedent. It is my great wish that all of the states in the union take what we have done and start promoting their own safety laws.

It has been an honor and a privilege to work side by side with SEIU 1199 members. As Marty would say, "they are my extended family" and know they are mine also.

Sincerely,
Yolanda Smith