



Chip Schieuer

County workers joined hands and encircled the county Government Center yesterday in a display of unity.

## County staff demonstrates its solidarity

By NANCY BARR  
STAFF WRITER

Hundreds of Santa Cruz County employees joined hands and circled the county building and courthouse yesterday as a show of unity in their contract negotiations with the county.

The workers carried blue balloons as they circled the buildings, then crowded in front of the courthouse to sing and listen to addresses by union leaders. Among their chants were "We deserve far better wages ... Your last offer is outrageous."

Some 1,250 employees are represented by the Service Employees International Union, which has been in negotiations with the county since the end of July. Their current contracts expire Oct. 2.

Penny Schantz, general manager of Local 415 of the union, did not discuss the details of the county's offer to the employees. She said it was an insult compared with the 11.7-percent raises given to management employees.

The Board of Supervisors held a closed session yesterday afternoon, and agreed that if a tentative agreement is reached and approved by the union before the end of this month, the board would act on it Oct. 6. If that is the case, the board indicated it would make the raises retroactive to Oct. 3.

The board cannot act on any agreement before Oct. 3, unless it were to call a special meeting, because it is not scheduled to meet next Tuesday. The supervisors do not meet on the fifth Tuesday of any month.

Negotiations are continuing this week.