

Hundreds rally for union drive

By JAY FITZGERALD

Hundreds of health-care workers rallied yesterday in the Longwood area to call for unionization of tens of thousands jobs at the city's prestigious hospitals.

The popular Dropkick Murphys played songs, and pro-union speeches were delivered as the powerful Services Employees International Union tried to increase pressure on hospitals to negotiate with workers.

"We're very hopeful for

(a union vote) before the end of this year," Michael Fadel, executive vice president of SEIU Local 1199, said in an interview before the start of yesterday's rally in the heart of the Longwood medical area.

But first the union wants hospitals to agree not to "intimidate" workers who want to join SEIU, Fadel said.

Past union drives at many city hospitals have failed — and hospital executives have shown no sign they

plan to drop their opposition this time around.

One hospital official said yesterday that the SEIU effectively wants a "one-way" deal in which hospitals agree beforehand not to oppose union-drive efforts.

Most nurses across the city already belong to unions.

But the SEIU is now trying to sign up custodians, lab technicians, cooks and other workers at largely non-union teaching hospitals associated with universities.

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PAYING DUES: The Dropkick Murphys performed at a pro-union rally in the Longwood hospital area. **Page 19**



STAFF PHOTOS BY MATT STONE

DROPPING IN: Boston's own Dropkick Murphys performed yesterday at an SEIU rally that drew hundreds in support of a unionization drive at city hospitals. Cindy Bird, SEIU's unit secretary for North Adams Regional Hospital, below, leads the crowd in chants at yesterday's lively event.