

DESERT EDGE

UFCW LOCAL 1167

a VOICE for working America

Official Publication of Local 1167, United Food and Commercial Workers Union

December 2010

Wishing you
the happiest
and healthiest
this holiday season!
*From the officers and staff
of Local 1167*

Union offices will be closed Dec. 23 and 24 and Dec. 31.



**Retired Union Rep now
a wrestling exec**
See page 4.

The next Quarterly Membership Meeting Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2010

The meeting will start at 7 p.m. in the UFCW Local 1167 Auditorium,
855 W. San Bernardino Ave., Bloomington

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

What are the real motives behind Ralphs' Culture Council gambit?

Have you ever played chess? In that game there's a tactic called a gambit in which your opponent appears to offer you something, usually a pawn. He or she hopes you'll be grateful for this generous gift and snatch that pawn.

Of course, your opponent isn't really being generous. That pawn is bait for a trap that will be sprung on you down the line.

Here's the lesson we can learn from that experience: Always consider the motives of people when they offer you things.

Gambits happen in the working world, too. Sometimes your employer offers you something that appears to be generous and public-spirited. But consider the real motivations before you accept it!

Union members who work for Ralphs are being called on to participate in a company-sponsored program called the Ralphs Culture Council, which has the stated purpose of boosting employee morale and public outreach.

The program enlists Ralphs employees to care for the homeless and clean public areas in their communities.

Sounds good. But what's the motive?

Maybe Ralphs is really doing this out of this kindness of its corporate heart, but the timing of this initiative is awfully suspicious.

Why are Ralphs managers now being required to recruit people from all grocery departments? Why are they now asking for employees' cell phone numbers?

Why are they doing these things just before contract negotiations begin?

New Dave, same tactics

For the answers to these questions, we can consider some recent history:

Four years ago, shortly before the UFCW unions in Southern California sat down with the supermarket companies to negotiate our current contract, Ralphs President Dave Hirz started buying meals for his employees. At these breakfasts, lunches and dinners, he took the opportunity to ask our members about their hopes and dreams.

(Please see page 2)



By Bill Lathrop

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MAP

Membership Assistance Program

Eligible active or retired Food and Meat participants can call the toll-free MAP number at the Health Management Center at any time,
24 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK.
Food Division, call (800) 461-9179
Drug Division, call (866) 268-2510
(All calls are confidential.)

Your dues are now payable!

If you are one of the few members of the local who are not yet signed up for dues checkoff: DECEMBER DUES ARE NOW DUE AND PAYABLE. IF YOUR DUES ARE NOT PAID ON OR BEFORE FEB. 1, 2011, YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY SUSPEND YOURSELF.

With dues checkoff, all future dues can be deducted automatically from your pay check. If you do not have an authorization form, call the local and one will be sent to you immediately.

Non-payment or payment of the incorrect amount will automatically suspend you — a costly and inconvenient mistake. Although not required, the local, as a courtesy, normally sends billing notices by first-class mail to those not on dues checkoff. It is the member's obligation to pay dues in a timely manner. Not receiving a notice is not an excuse for failure to pay dues on time.

Avoid suspension. Authorize dues checkoff today!



JUST RETIRED

The month of November brought us several new retirees. **Sandra Aguilera**, Albertsons, worked for 32 years with Albertsons, Safeway, Fedco, Fedmart and Super A Foods. **Patricia Albers** worked for Albertsons and Gemco for 34 years. **Eugene Bambusch** worked for Albertsons and Lucky for 36 years. **Linda Currier** worked for Albertsons for 26 years. **Crystal DeRosier** worked for Ralphs and Alpha Beta for 32 years. **Mary Rocha** worked for Stater Bros. for 23 years. **Steve Rudder** worked for Vons for 29 years. **Tom Foon Quon** worked in the industry for 29 years with Ralphs and Market Basket.

Mark Schaedel worked for Vons and Safeway for 35 years. **Susan Smith** worked for Stater Bros. and Lucky for 23 years. **Ronald Williams** worked for Ralphs for 33 years.

Congratulations to all of our new retirees! We wish you many healthy, happy years ahead to enjoy your well-earned retirements.

JUST MARRIED

Leilani Gutierrez, Albertsons, married Jorge Alcaraz on Aug. 28. The wedding took place at I Do Weddings and the happy couple honeymooned at State Line. ... **Ronnie Robles**, Stater Bros., took Cami Ravellette to be his bride on

Sept. 11. The wedding was at the Eagle Glenn Golf Course and the newlyweds honeymooned in Maui, Hawaii.

Congratulations to all of our newlyweds!

JUST BORN

Heather Malagar, Rite Aid, gave birth to identical twin girls on Sept. 15. Julieanna Elizabeth weighed 5 lbs. 10 oz. and Isabella Joy weighed 4 lbs. 14 oz. ... **Alexandra Amador**, Stater Bros., has a new son. Samuel Guitron was born on Sept. 16 and weighed 8 lbs. 7 oz. He's a "wonderful ball of joy," his happy mother tells us. ... **Emily Baker**, Albertsons, welcomed Kenadee Rose Henson into the world on Oct. 4. Kenadee weighed 7 lbs. 1 oz. ... **Olga Ramirez**, Stater Bros., gave birth to Austin Duong on Oct. 22. Austin weighed 6 lbs. 11 oz. ... **Kathleen Calleros-Rodts**, Albertsons, is pleased to announce the birth of Jack Philip Rodts on Oct. 22. Jack weighed 7 lbs. 8 oz. ... **Lorena Raquel Alvidrez**, Stater Bros., has a new son. Matthew Anthony was born on Oct. 23 and weighed 7 lbs. 12 oz. ... **Lauren Colunga-Newton** and **Daniel Newton**, both of Stater Bros., are pleased to announce the birth of Sofia Rae on Oct. 26. Sofia weighed 7 lbs. 12 oz.

Congratulations to all of our new moms and dads!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ralphs' Culture Council gambit

(Continued from front page)

On the surface, this appeared to be a kind and considerate thing for Mr. Hirz to do. Actually, it was a pathetically transparent stunt to build loyalty to his company while undermining solidarity with our union.

Hirz's "Meals with Dave" gimmick failed to make anyone forget that his company, Ralphs, was the same company that, during the labor dispute of 2003-04, illegally locked out thousands of union members in an effort to crush the UFCW in Southern California.

This was the same company that was also indicted on 53 felony counts for actions that extended the duration of that illegal lockout, causing enormous suffering for tens of thousands of supermarket workers.

Now it is 2010, and as we prepare for our next round of contract talks, a different Dave — Kroger CEO David Dillon — is trying yet another gambit to win the affections of forgetful employees.

Your union has good reason to be skeptical about

Ralphs' motivations. Our members need to be on their guard against attempts by Ralphs management to exploit this project to spread pro-corporate, anti-union propaganda.

The Ralphs Culture Council may be a genuine public outreach program with an honest mission statement. Time will tell if it serves another purpose altogether.

We ask you to carefully consider the role of a company-sponsored organization like the Culture Council as we approach the expiration of our current Master Food Agreement in March 2011.

In the coming months, we can expect to see company propaganda in many forms, both obvious and subtle. The employers will use every trick they can to create divisiveness in our ranks and undercut our negotiators. For them, it's all about holding on to as much of their profits as they possibly can.

Just remember that there is only one organization that has your interests in its mind and in its heart: your union.

The gambit is in play. It's your move!



DESERT EDGE

Bill Lathrop
Editor

Official monthly publication of Local 1167, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, San Bernardino, Riverside and Imperial Counties, California.

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Publisher



Judge OKs unemployment class-action lawsuits vs. Ralphs and Albertsons

Two class-action lawsuits against the Ralphs and Albertsons supermarket chains were certified by a federal judge on Oct. 22.

The suits were brought by approximately 9,000 workers who claim they were improperly denied unemployment benefits while locked out during the 2003-04 Southern California supermarket dispute.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge William F. Highberger approved the suits, which challenge a decision by the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board.

Ralphs previously paid fines as well as restitution to its locked-out workers for illegal actions taken during the dispute.

The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled earlier this year that the two grocery companies violated federal antitrust laws by creating a mutual profit-sharing pact between them and Vons in case of a work stoppage.

Ralphs pled guilty in 2006 to rehiring locked-out workers under false Social Security numbers. This resulted in financial penalties of \$70 million in fines and back pay.

IN MEMORIAM

Gary Bobo, a retired food clerk formerly employed by Albertsons, died on Oct. 9, 2010, at the age of 68. He had been a member since July 1959.

Hallie Harris, a retired meat wrapper formerly employed by Mayfair Markets and Foodmart, died on Sept. 23, 2010, at the age of 90. She had been a members since May 1954.

Raymond Holmberg, a retired meat cutter formerly employed by Vons, died on Oct. 22, 2010, at the age of 67. He had been a continuous member since May 1976.

Elmer Jensen, a retired meat cutter formerly employed by Carlone's, Sage's and Gerrard's Markets, died on Oct. 13, 2010, at the age of 93. He had been a continuous member since January 1966.

Jack Johansen, a retired food clerk formerly employed by Safeway and Vons, died on Oct. 10, 2010, at the age of 80. He had been a continuous member since September 1971.

Wallace King, a retired meat cutter formerly employed by Alhambra Public Market and Safeway, died on Oct. 10, 2010, at the age of 93. He had been a member since September 1946.

Larimer Larremore, a retired food clerk formerly employed by Safeway and Lucky, died on Oct. 17, 2010, at the age of 86. He had been a member since July 1965.

Leroy Smith, a warehouse clerk employed by Food 4 Less, died on Oct. 18, 2010, at the age of 44. He had been a member since August 1984.

Charlotte Wagenfeld, a retired food clerk formerly employed by Market Basket and Super Saver, died on Nov. 10, 2010, at the age of 75. She had been a member since July 1968.

Bryan Walwick, a retired food clerk formerly employed by Lucky and Stater Bros. Markets, died on July 13, 2009, at the age of 45. He had been a member since May 1980.

Lawrence Wright, a retired food clerk formerly employed by Lucky Discount Center and Safeway, died on Oct. 13, 2010, at the age of 82. He had been a member since August 1967.

We express our condolences to the families of these deceased members.

It PAYS to be UNION!

	NOVEMBER 2010	2010 TOTAL
Back pay and benefits restored to members	\$16,531.68	\$93,161.86
Members reinstated	35	261
Grievances settled	129	1,112

UNION REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Working hours and coping with stress during the holidays

With the holidays upon us, you may be tempted to take some extra time off and lose track of the minimum number of hours you are scheduled to work each week.

Most of us want to spend extra time with our family and friends. And, of course, no one wants to miss those fun holiday parties.

But keep this in mind: The guarantee that you will be assigned a minimum number of working hours took years of hard work and contentious negotiations to achieve. It is one of the best provisions in our union contract.

Your union fought long and hard for contract language that guarantees your rights, wages and benefits. But with those rights comes an obligation to yourself, your co-workers and your employer.

So make sure you keep track of your minimum number of hours. And please don't call in sick when you are not ill!

Along with the fun times, the holidays can also be quite stressful, especially if you work in a retail food store.

Stores are packed with holiday shoppers, hours are often increased and free time can become almost nonexistent.

There are also the standard holiday stressors of gifts, family members and events to host and attend.

For some, it is not a time of joy, but a time of loneliness and sadness. We all miss those who are no longer here to share the holidays with us.

These stressors can lead some people to depression and despair.

Drugs and alcohol are often the first place some people turn for consolation when stressed or depressed. But because alcohol is already a depressant, their use can lead to an even deeper depression and more stress.

If you feel you are beginning to suffer from an alcohol problem, don't lose hope. Sometimes, simply talking with someone can help lift the burden off your back.

The Member Assistance Program (MAP) is here to help. By calling MAP at (800) 461-9179 for Food Division members or (866) 268-2510 for Drug Division members, you can receive the assistance you need to cope with depression, drug and/or alcohol problems or any other emotional problem you may be experiencing.

All calls seeking help are strictly confidential.

Have an enjoyable, safe and sober holiday season.



By Jerry Espinoza



READY TO RUMBLE

Retired Union Rep enters the ring as a wrestling exec

When he was a Union Representative for Local 1167, Frank Mott never tired of figuratively wrestling with managers to save a member's job.

"I loved the challenge," Mott said. "I'm a fighter and I'm competitive."

After he retired, he decided to try the real thing.

Mott joined the Empire Wrestling Federation (EWF), which promotes and sponsors professional wrestling matches throughout the Inland Empire.

"I've loved professional wrestling since I was 10 years old," he said. "I was a ring boy back in Norfolk, Va., where I grew up. I would pick up wrestlers' jackets after they were introduced."

Mott wrestled in high school and later was coached by a professional wrestler who went under the name of the Great Scott. He credits him with reigniting his interest in the sport.

When Mott arrived in California in 1957, he worked at retail jobs in the Azusa-Glendora area. He also helped some friends publicize professional wrestling events.

"I also did a bunch of odd jobs," Mott recalled, "everything from handing out programs to picking up wrestlers at the airport."

But in 1958, after marrying his wife, Marilyn, and with aspirations to start a family, Mott knew a union job was the only way to go.

"I began as a liquor clerk in 1962 at a Market Basket in Baldwin Park," he said. "I worked at 10 other Market Baskets until 1970, when I

was hired as a Union Rep by former 1167 President Bill Brooks."

But he still had a desire to keep his hand in pro wrestling. Shortly after he moved to San Bernardino in the early '60s, a chance meeting with Jesse Hernandez, a former professional wrestler, gave him that opportunity.

"He opened a school to train wrestlers called the School of Hard Knocks and he also started the EWF," Mott said. "I helped him book a few matches over the years, but, being a Union Rep, I didn't have much spare time."

That changed after Mott's retirement in 1995. Three years ago, Hernandez asked him to become commissioner of the EWF.

"I go to all of the matches to see that things run smoothly and nothing gets out of hand," he said.

Mott said that even after all of these years, he is still in love with the sport.

"People don't realize how hard these performers work," Mott said. "They are spectacular athletes and train hard to get where they are."

He is proud that several of the school's graduates have appeared on shows sponsored by the two biggest professional wrestling organizations, the WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) and TNA (Total Nonstop Action).

"Jesse trains them well and he does a great job to

make sure they are ready for the big time," he said.

Mott also works part-time for the United Way of the Inland Valleys.

"About six months after I retired, my wife told me, You better find something to do, or else one of us is going to wind up dead, and it won't



Frank Mott, the commissioner, gets into the act.



Wrestler of the EWF performs an acrobatic maneuver to take out his opponent as fans look on.



Jesse Hernandez and Frank Mott

be me," Mott said with a smile.

"I speak at businesses and in front of community groups and tell them how important it is to support the United Way. It's a worthy organization and I love going out and meeting people, so it was a natural job for me."

Mott and his wife are the parents of two adult daughters and have four grandchildren, ages, 11-18.

"They all live about a half hour away," he said. "We spend as much time with them as we can."

He also owns a recreational vehicle that he drives around the country. "I'm a Civil War buff," Mott said.

"We visit every battlefield we can."

Mott has fond memories of his time at Local 1167.

"I worked for both Bill Brooks and Bill Sauriol," he said. "I also worked with Bill Lathrop. I can't think of three more dedicated and committed union leaders. It was a pleasure to be with them on the front lines, fighting for our members' rights."

"I was proud of my union when I worked in the stores. I was proud to be a member of the staff. And I am a proud retiree."

Mott added: "Nothing beats working union."

Kidney donor needed

Heather Gutierrez, the 16-year-old daughter of Leilani Gutierrez, a GM clerk at Albertsons 6575 in Moreno Valley, has experienced complete kidney failure and urgently needs to obtain a transplanted kidney from a compatible donor.

Heather's struggle with a rare kidney disorder called nephrotic syndrome was the subject of an article in the October 2010 issue of the *Desert Edge*.

Anyone who is interested in testing for donor compatibility is asked to contact the union office immediately at (909) 877-5000.



Heather Gutierrez

Go online and complete the Negotiations Survey



www.ufcw1167.org

Apply for UFCW International Scholarship online!

14 winners will receive as much as \$8,000 in scholarships over four years

Your union is about more than your pay check and benefits. The UFCW is about workers coming together to build better lives for themselves. It's about creating opportunity.

That's why each year the UFCW awards several scholarships of up to \$8,000 each to UFCW members or their dependents. Fourteen Full Scholarship winners receive \$2,000 a

year for up to four years. There are also 11 Outstanding Essay winners who will receive a one-time payment of \$2,000.

The scholarships are limited to members who have been active since Jan. 1, 2010, and their unmarried children or dependents under the age of 20.

The scholarship winners will be selected and awards made on the basis of scholastic achievements,

community involvement and completion of an essay that shows understanding of the principles of the Labor Movement.

The UFCW Scholarship Application Form must be post-marked no later than April 15, 2011.

Entrants must read the Rules and Regulations thoroughly.

Complete the UFCW Scholarship Application online at

www.ufcw.org/scholarship starting in January 2011. The application will require you to fill out a family profile, list school activities and awards, your work experience and completion of an essay. If you are unable to apply online, you may request an application by writing to: UFCW International Union, Attn: Scholarship Program, 1775 K St. N.W., Washington, DC 20006.

Desert Edge wins two journalism awards

The *Desert Edge* won two awards in a recent journalism competition sponsored by the International Labor Communications Association.

The ILCA is the professional organization for trade union publications and media production departments of national, regional and local labor unions.

The ILCA's annual awards competition judges thousands of entries from hundreds of unions.

"It is gratifying to be recognized by the ILCA," said UFCW Local 1167 President Bill Lathrop, who also serves as editor of the *Desert Edge*. "Our union always stands for excellence."

On Nov. 19, the ILCA honored the *Desert Edge* with its second award in the "Photo Essay or Photo Gallery" category. The award-winning entry, reproduced at right, is titled "Members at Work: Stater Bros. 46 Hemet."

The judges commented: "Usually, bulletin-board layouts like this don't make the best photo galleries. But these photos are quite good, especially for being taken inside a supermarket.



The best of them almost achieve portrait quality. The photographer clearly worked to put the members at ease,

and it helps make a fine gallery... the entry... gets bonus points for highlighting real workers on the job."

The *Desert Edge* also took the third award in Newspaper Publication Design.

Local 1167 Scholarship Competition winners



Justin Abramson

Justin is enrolled at Palomar College and is a 2010 graduate of Calvary Murrieta Christian High School. He feels that being a member of his high school football team contributed the most to his development. He says it helped him mature as an individual and forge lasting friendships. Justin works as a courtesy clerk at Albertsons in Murrieta and plans a career in law enforcement.

a master's degree in nutrition. She hopes to be a registered dietician and, while working in that field, to continue her education to become a pharmacist. She is a 2006 graduate of Cal State San Bernardino and works as a pharmacy tech at Vons in Redlands. (Picture not available.)



Deanna Inn

Deanna credits her participation in competitive figure skating as the key to her personal development. She believes it has taught her to focus, set goals and "push harder when the going gets tough." Deanna is a 2010 graduate of Jurupa Valley High School in Mira Loma and is a freshman at Brigham Young University, where she plans to major in business and/or sports science. Her mother, Doreen Inn, works as a bakery clerk at Vons in Mira Loma.



Ashley Little

Ashley is a 2010 graduate of Hesperia High School, where she was active in the drama department. After college she wants to attend medical school and become a psychiatrist. She is active in her church and enjoys travel, photography and spending quality time with her family. Ashley is a clerk's helper at Stater Bros. in Hesperia.



Breana Boone

Breana's goal is to be an elementary school teacher and/or a dance teacher at the high school level. She is a 2010 graduate of Centennial High School in Lake Elsinore, where she was Student of the Month five times and was captain of the dance team. She enjoys working with children and believes it is important to teach them teamwork and to have respect for one another. Her mother, Mary, is a bakery clerk at Vons in Lake Elsinore.

Brent Johnson

Brent wants to be a paramedic/firefighter. He graduated from Canyon Springs High School in Moreno Valley and has an associate's degree from Riverside Community College. He participated in track and cross-country in high school and college. He says running helps him be more disciplined in life and in school. Brent is a clerk's helper at Ralphs in Riverside. (Picture not available.)



Patricia Nam

Patricia is in her third year of pharmacy school at the University of Southern California. She is a graduate of UCLA and works as a pharmacy intern at Kaiser Permanente in West Los Angeles. She wants to be an ambulatory pharmacist so she can help people manage their medications. She has worked as a volunteer tutor with children in inner-city schools and has participated in Arthritis Foundation walks.

Kimberly Ingram

Kimberly is a single mother and a student at Loma Linda University, where she is working on

Cursta McCullom

Cursta McCullom says her participation in the Mock Trial program at Murrieta Valley High School gave her the confidence, poise and public speaking skills she will need when she becomes an attorney. Cursta was a Mock Trial captain and was named best prosecution attorney. She led the clarinet section in the school band, was an advanced-placement scholar and served on the Junior Honor Guard. She plans to attend the University of Southern California. Her grandmother is Hazel McCullom, a Local 1167 retiree. (Picture not available.)

Nicholas Rodriguez

Nicholas graduated as a high-honors scholar from
(Please see page 7)

Bill Sauriol Scholarship winner wants to change people's lives

Until her senior year in high school, Bill Sauriol Scholarship winner Juliana Valentin wasn't sure what she wanted to do with her life.

An excellent student in math and science, she had considered a career in engineering, but she also had a desire to "help people."

A course in anatomy at Henry J. Kaiser High School in Fontana helped Valentin resolve her dilemma.

"I found the workings of the human body fascinating," she recalled. "It made me decide to combine the two interests and work in the area of biomedical engineering."

"Biomedical engineering," she explained, "requires the use of medical knowledge and engineering skills to create things such as pacemakers, defibrillators and prosthetic devices that help people live their lives more fully."

Valentin was one of the top students in her class and won academic awards throughout high school.

In addition to maintaining a perfect 4.0 grade point average, Valentin was a member of the National Honor Society. She volunteered in her community through the Key Club and was captain of her school's volleyball team.

Valentin also worked part-time as a courtesy clerk at Stater Bros. 179 in Fontana. She said the experience contributed significantly to her personal growth and development.

"It was my first job and it helped me gain confidence and people skills," Valentin said. "I also learned the importance of teamwork, how to work with others to reach a common goal and how to balance my time between work, school and my outside volunteer activities."

In August, Valentin entered the Boston University College of Engineering.

"I'm just getting acclimated to being away from home and being on my own," she said. "Boston is such a great place to go to school because there are so many colleges in the area. Everywhere I go, I see young people."

Valentin also expects another adjustment when the weather turns cold.

"I've never lived in a cold environment," Valentin said. "I've bought a lot of warm coats and hope that will see me through the winter."

Valentin is grateful to Local 1167 for the scholarship and for aid she has received from other sources.

"Without it I would never be able attend a school like Boston University," she said.



Juliana Valentin

Competition winners

(Continued from page 6)

Ramona High School in Riverside. He believes it is important to give back to the community in any way he can. That's why Nicholas served as an active member of the Key Club, a group dedicated to community service. He served meals to the elderly, helped build a Rose Parade float and worked on the school's Winter Festival. He plans to continue working at Stater Bros. in Riverside while in college and plans a career in law enforcement. (Picture not available.)

Jessica Temple

Jessica plans to attend Cal State San Bernardino and hopes to be a dietician. She is a graduate of Norco High School and has two undergraduate degrees from Riverside Community College. Jessica has had a lifelong interest in health and fitness. She regularly competes in body-building figure competitions and placed second in her most recent competitive event, the Max Muscle GNC Figure Competition. Jessica works as a clerk's helper at Vons in Riverside.



College and trade school grants available to members

The Union Plus Scholarship Program offers \$150,000 in scholarships annually to union members, their spouses, and dependents. The awards range from \$500 to \$4,000.

Students who are beginning or continuing their post-secondary or graduate-level education are eligible.

Awards are based on academic achievement, union statements and financial need.

This is a one-time cash award sent to individual winners for study beginning in the fall of the same year at a two or four-year college, a graduate school or a recognized technical or trade school.

The deadline to return a completed application is Jan. 31, 2011. Application packets with postmarks later than Jan. 31 will not be eligible for review.

For details or to download an application, visit www.UnionPlus.org/-Scholarship.





Thank you to all who volunteered to help get out the vote!

As union members, we have the power to make a difference. We demonstrated that power this year in key elections across the country, especially in California, Washington state, Maryland and Nevada.

As we look ahead to the 2012 elections, we see a political landscape that is different from the one we just experienced. The entire electorate — not just the base of one particular party — will be energized. This will be good for labor unions and their supporters in all levels of government.

I would like to thank everyone who got out the vote this year and spoke up for representatives who will work for working families.

In the meantime, please let your elected representatives know that you expect them to do whatever it takes to get our economy on track again and protect the rights of working men and women.

— **President Bill Lathrop**



Special thanks to:

Luis M Cisneros (Stater Bros. 97)
 Joshua Mc Elwain (Stater Bros. 97)
 Mike Trevino (Stater Bros. 104)
 Gabriel Hernandez (Stater Bros. 123)
 Donna Clarkson (Vons 2384)
 Felicia Munoz Grisham (Ralph's 118)
 Natalee Maksood (Intern from UCR)
 Ana Cabral (UCI volunteer)
 Sonia Cortes (UCLA volunteer)
 Christopher Espinoza (Volunteer)
 ...and to EVERYONE else who did their part to help get out the vote!

This poem was written by a Marine stationed in Okinawa, Japan, and was published previously in this publication. Once again, most of us will be filled with the pleasure and joy of being home with family and friends this holiday season. We often forget about all of the men and women in the Armed Forces who will be spending cold, lonely hol-

idays away from their families. This is a well-known poem and we feel it is appropriate for reprint in the *Desert Edge*. Regardless of your opinion on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, please hold our soldiers in your thoughts this season.

— **Bill Lathrop, President**

'Twas the night before
 Christmas,
 He lived all alone,
 In a one-bedroom house made of
 Plaster and stone.

I had come down the chimney
 With presents to give,
 And to see just who
 In this home did live.

I looked all about,
 A strange sight I did see,
 No tinsel, no presents,
 Not even a tree.

No stocking by mantle,
 Just boots filled with sand,
 On the wall hung pictures
 Of far distant lands.

With medals and badges,
 Awards of all kinds,
 A sober thought
 Came through my mind.

For this house was different,
 It was dark and dreary,
 I found the home of a soldier,
 Once I could see clearly.
 The soldier lay sleeping,
 Silent, alone,
 Curled up on the floor
 In this one-bedroom home.

The face was so gentle,
 The room in such disorder,
 Not how I pictured
 A United States soldier.

Was this the hero
 Of whom I'd just read?
 Curled up in a poncho,
 The floor for a bed?

I realized the families
 That I saw this night
 Owed their lives to these soldiers
 Who were willing to fight.

Soon 'round the world,

The children would play,
 And grownups would celebrate
 A bright Christmas Day.
 They all enjoy freedom
 Each month of the year,
 Because of the soldiers
 Like the one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder
 How many lay alone
 On a cold Christmas Eve
 In a land far from home.

The very thought
 Brought a tear to my eye,
 I dropped to my knees
 And started to cry.

The soldier awakened
 And I heard a rough voice,
 "Santa don't cry,
 This life is my choice.
 I fight for freedom,
 I don't ask for more.
 My life is my God,

My country, my Corps."
 The soldier rolled over
 And drifted to sleep.
 I couldn't control it,
 I continued to weep.
 I kept watch for hours,
 So silent and still,
 And we both shivered
 From the cold night's chill.

I didn't want to leave
 On that cold, dark night,
 This guardian of honor
 So willing to fight.

Then the soldier rolled over,
 With a voice soft and pure,
 Whispered, "Carry on, Santa,
 It's Christmas Day,
 all is secure."

One look at my watch,
 And I knew he was right.
 "Merry Christmas my friend,
 And to all a good night."