

DESERT EDGE

UFCW LOCAL 1167

a VOICE for working America

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

June 2011



Workers at Rite Aid's distribution center applaud ILWU's successful organizing effort in Lancaster.

Union victory in Lancaster

500 workers win five-year campaign to form union and improve conditions at Rite Aid distribution center

Rite Aid workers at the company's massive Southwest Distribution Center in Lancaster declared victory on May 1 in their five-year effort to form a union and improve working conditions.

Workers signed a three-year tentative agreement with management – subject to a May 12 ratification vote – that will improve conditions at the mil-

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Employers' proposals would devastate benefits

On May 18, after months of stalling at the bargaining table, the corporations that own Albertsons, Ralphs and Vons finally revealed their proposals for the next Master Food Agreement.

Those proposals are intolerable. They would devastate our health care benefits. Over the course of a three-year contract they would cost our members an added \$450 million in premiums, co-payments and reduced access to care.

In effect, the employers' plan would shift 80 percent of future medical cost increases to their employees.

This is a plan that mimics Walmart, a notorious corporate villain whose health insurance is so inadequate and so costly that most of its employees choose not to participate.

For our members, \$450 million is a lot of money, but for the

(Please see page 3)



By Bill Lathrop



Customers who pledged support to the union with UFCW reusable shopping bags outside Ralphs 681.

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: **JUNE DUES ARE NOW DUE AND PAYABLE. IF YOUR DUES ARE NOT PAID ON OR BEFORE AUGUST 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!

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.)

Report vacations to Benefits Department

Food members are urged to fill out Loss of Eligibility (vacation) forms to maintain health coverage. This does not apply to pharmacists and drug members.

The 2004 Collective Bargaining Agreements eliminated free months for insurance coverage and replaced them with a "skip month" eligibility system. For example, September hours earn coverage for November, October for December, and so on.

In order to maintain health coverage, Food and Meat Division members must work a certain minimum number of hours every month.

Food Clerks, General Merchandise Clerks and Meat Clerks must work a minimum of 92 hours and Meat Cutters must work 76 hours. Plan B Warehouse Clerks, General Clerks, Service Clerks and Meat Clerks must work a minimum of 76 hours. Clerk's Helpers and Utility Clerks need to work 64 hours.

Don't get caught short

Paid vacation hours count toward the monthly minimum number of hours, but generally they need to be adjusted manually. This is because most stores report vacation hours when they are paid on the member's anniversary date and not when they are taken. For this reason, members may get a notice that they are

short on hours in a month in which they took a paid vacation.

Many Food members are getting notices for the first time, since they have been accustomed to taking vacation time off in the free months.

Complete the form and mail it back to the Benefits Department after you have returned from your vacation. The form is also available on the union's website, www.ufcw1167.org, under the Insurance Department tab.

As there are no longer any free months, many members taking vacations may get short-hour notices.

As in the contract, Vons will begin paying vacations when taken. Therefore, the vacation waiver may not be required, but it will depend on each individual.

Whenever members are short on hours, a Loss of Eligibility notice, with a place to list vacation hours, will be

sent to them from the trust fund in Cypress.

However, since these notices often go out right before the time eligibility would lapse, this frequently results in a temporary loss of eligibility while the health trust fund processes the information and clears eligibility.

Because hours are reported just prior to coverage lapsing, if a Loss of Eligibility form reporting a vacation is on record, you will most likely still receive a Loss of Eligibility notice, but you can just call the Insurance Department and someone generally can have your coverage reinstated within the day. If there is no form on file, then there will be a lag due to mailing and processing times.

We're here to help

If you have taken a paid vacation and think you may be short on hours as a result, call the Insurance Department at (909) 877-1110 and request a Loss of Eligibility form (vacation waiver form).

Complete the form and mail it back to the Benefits Department after you have returned from your vacation. This will maintain your insurance coverage with minimal loss of eligibility. The form is also available on the union's website, www.ufcw1167.org, under the Insurance Department tab.

The next Quarterly Membership Meeting

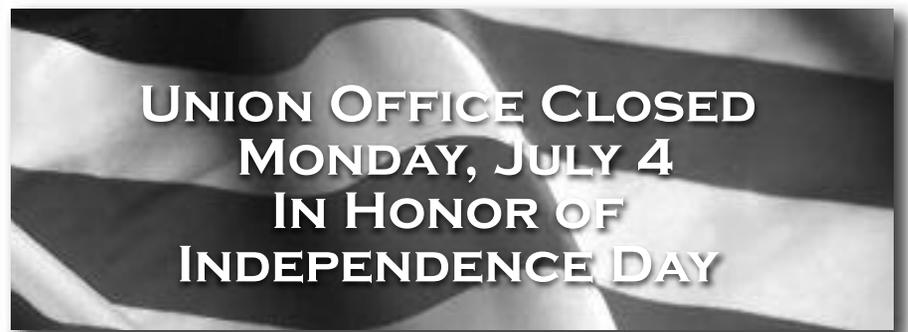
Wednesday, June 22, 2011

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

NEGOTIATIONS UPDATES

Receive special messages and alerts from Local 1167

Text 'VOTE' to 37398 or call the Hotline at (866) 662-0686



It PAYS to be UNION!

	MAY 2011	2011 TOTAL
Back pay and benefits restored to members	\$3,161.52	\$77,628.61
Members reinstated	12	103
Grievances settled	48	371
Unemployment benefits restored to members		\$10,031.00



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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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Employers' proposals would devastate benefits

(Continued from front page)

employers it amounts to only 3 percent of profits. That's a small price for the companies to pay to maintain the peace and protect current standards of health care for the workers and their families.

Instead of stepping forward on behalf of the employees who made their profits possible, the companies are risking the real possibility of a strike that would cost them much more than they are trying to save.

The companies are taking a similar approach toward pensions, wages and working conditions.

These negotiations aren't going well, but we are determined to prevail.

How you can help

A federal mediator is still engaged in the negotiations, trying to bring the two sides together. In the meantime, you can help by participating in union actions to generate support from the shopping public.

At supermarkets around our jurisdiction, union "table" volunteers are handing out colorful reusable UFCW shopping bags to customers who sign pledges of support. It's absolutely thrilling to see grocery carts like the one pictured here filled to the brim with UFCW shopping bags.

This shopper delivered an unmistakable statement of support to our members inside the store. And management got a message, as well.

The employers are acting tough in negotiations, but we have support where it counts.

Stay strong and stand united!

UNION REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Work your guaranteed hours

Leaving early a few minutes here or there may not seem like much, but over the course of a year, those minutes can add up to hours and have a ripple effect on your benefits.

While visiting one of my stores, I was approached by a member with a question about his anniversary payout.

He was wondering why his payout was short 16 hours — eight vacation hours and eight sick hours.



By Matt Bruno

I asked the obvious question:

"Did you take any time off during the year?" He said no, he didn't.

Your vacation and sick hours are based on 2,080 hours. If you're full-time and work your 40-hour guarantee, at the end of the year your vacation payout would be 40 hours and your sick payout would be 48 hours. On the other hand, if you don't work your guaranteed hours, your vacation and sick hours are pro-rated on the total hours worked minus 2,080.

The illustration above is an example of someone who went home early every day. He was guaranteed 40 hours a week or 2,080 hours in a year, but he never worked his full schedule. He actually only worked 1,756 hours out of the guaranteed 2,080 hours for the year.

As a result, he not only lost eight hours of vacation and eight sick hours on his anniversary, he saved the company 324 hours, or in his case \$6,748.92.

We receive many calls on this subject. Many members take their guarantee for granted.

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 established the 40-hour workweek. People fought hard for this guarantee and many died in the struggle.

So the next time management comes to you and asks you to help out by leaving early because it's slow, stop and think about the consequences of not working your guaranteed hours.

LAST 7 DAYS OF JULY

Be aware of your availability status

If you have been in the industry for more than a few years, you probably don't remember whether your status with your employer is "available" or "self-restricted."

According to the Master Food Agreement's Article 4A, an employee may change his or her availability twice a year, during the last seven days of January and July.

Many members mistakenly think if they list themselves as "restricted" then their employer must accommodate any restrictions they have. This is not true. Being on the "self-restricted" list only means that you are unavailable to work 40 hours over five days in any given week.

A member can be on the "available" list and still request days off.

We always encourage our members to place themselves on the "available" list. The two lists are kept separate. In the event a company does layoffs, the first list it will start with is the "self-restricted" list.

July is right around the corner. Check with your employer and, if necessary, change your status!

If you have questions, contact your Union Representative or the representative on duty at (909) 877-5000.

IN MEMORIAM

Henry Cabrera, a meat cutter formerly employed by Hartwicks, Morgan Meat and Safeway, died on Dec. 3, 2010, at the age of 81. He had been a continuous union member since September 1973.

Russell Hansen, a retired pharmacist formerly employed by Lucky, died on May 13, 2011, at the age of 85. He had been a member since October 1969.

Melba Horton, a retired food clerk formerly employed by Michael's Market, Safeway and Vons, died on May 3, 2011, at the age of 86. She had been a member since September 1963.

Rudy Lopez, a retired food clerk formerly employed by Ralphs, died on April 29, 2011, at the age of 73. He had been a continuous member since May 1966.

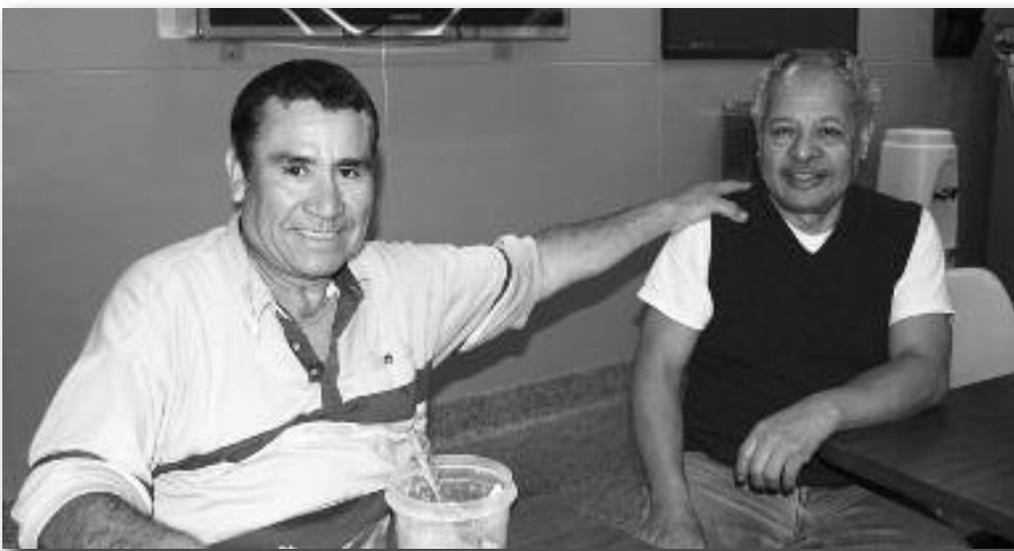
Brent Tindel, a retired food clerk formerly employed by Vons, died on April 28, 2011, at the age of 55. He had been a member since January 1972.

Gloria Wijayapala, an affiliated member formerly employed by Vons, died on May 23, 2011, at the age of 62. She had been a member since June 2003.

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



Members at Work: Riversi





side food processing plant





Our Members at Work Albertsons 6576



No school like old school

Two retirees with more than a century of combined work experience

Tom Fringer and John Moran are union retirees who can claim something not many UFCW Local 1167 members can: at least 60 years each in the grocery industry.

Moran retired in 1983 as a union manager at Thrifty-Mart, but he remembers working in the grocery business before he could officially get a job. "My mom worked at the stores," he said. "I remember bagging beans, corn, flour and sugar in the back rooms when I was a kid. We bagged them all in-store back then."

Fringer started as a "box boy" in 1946, "but box boys weren't allowed to join the union yet," he said. "I had to wait for a few years and I went with a group of the first ones in '48 or '49 to join the union."

"I'm still in touch with some of them," Fringer said. "We paid a few dollars to join and our dues were 50 cents."

Moran became a clerk in 1950 and got his union button. He remembers those days as the glory days of the union.

"Back then, grocery workers made practically nothing, so we would fight for higher pay and we got the best damn health care benefits of anyone," he said. "It was family-oriented. The whole group was like a big family."

When Fringer returned from his Navy service in the Korean Conflict, he worked at Stater Bros. with the father of *Desert Edge* columnist Maureen McCabe.

"They made me produce manager in 1956," he recalled. "Coincidentally, that's also what I was when I retired in 1994."

Different experiences

Fringer and Moran had significantly different experiences in the category of union work actions.

Moran remembers "working a lot of strikes and carrying a lot of different picket signs," while Fringer remembers that, while working for Stater Bros, he only went on strike once in the 1980s.

"We were out for about a week and that was it," Fringer said.

"I do remember that we had problems with Burt's over in San Bernardino. The employees wanted to join the union but the company wouldn't let them. I remember we were at them for a long time."

Both have seen changes in their industry and their union.

"Originally, there were no girls in the produce department," Fringer said. "There was a lot of heavy lifting involved and I remember I had the first girl in all of Stater Bros. produce working with me."

Moran is less optimistic about where he sees the Labor Movement going. "Nobody should have their bargaining rights taken away," he said, refer-



Tom Fringer



John Moran

ring to the anti-union laws that are being passed by legislatures in the Midwest. "Everybody in the Labor Movement just needs to stay level right now."

Fringer is more positive about his union benefits. "They helped a lot in my retirement," he said. "Everybody was helpful at the union office and it was nice to know everything was taken care of."

Adjustment to retirement

Each retiree has adjusted to life after work in

'Back then, grocery workers made practically nothing, so we would fight for higher pay and we got the best damn health care benefits of anyone.'

his own way.

"I wasn't ready to retire when I did," Fringer said. "My wife had gotten very ill and needed full-time care. I came home and was her caretaker until I had my first heart attack."

Fringer was forced to put his wife in a care facility, but upon realizing that the facility didn't take care of her as well as he could, he brought her back home. She passed away shortly afterward. They have two adult sons.

Fringer's other passion is in his garage.

"I build old cars," he said.

At one time, he had a stock full-fender 1932 Ford roadster, but one car has a special place in his heart.

"I have had the same 1934 Ford pickup since 1958," he said proudly. "I've had it down to bare frame three times and put a bunch of different engines in it."

He says that he has a brand new, modern Chevrolet engine to put in the car, but because of his heart problems and his defibrillator implant, he can't arc weld anymore. "I'm not sure if I'll be able to finish it one more time," he said.

Moran enjoys fishing and bird hunting, particularly pheasant. When not in the great outdoors, he enjoys spending time with his wife of 60 years and the rest of his family, including two daughters, three grand children and two great grandchildren. "My wife was literally the girl next door," he said. "She moved in next to me and the rest is history."

24 speeds, 20 miles, 1 ballot

Rio Ortiz Luis bicycles from Corona to Bloomington for strike vote

Rio Ortiz Luis is an optimist in spite of hard times.

Since moving from Downey to Corona, he has been forced to work fewer hours at his store, Ralphs 144. Sometimes it is a challenge to pay the bills and put food on the table. Rio doesn't own a car, and sometimes it's difficult to pay the \$50 per month in bus fare.

But Rio looks at his obstacles and sees challenges to overcome.

"Yes, money is tight, but at least I get to ride my bicycle and get a good workout every day," he said.

The challenge became an adventure when Rio received a notice in the mail that his union was holding a strike authorization vote 20 miles away in Bloomington.

"The last time I voted for strike authorization was in 2007," he recalled. "My friend and I went to exercise our right to vote, but this year money was tight, so I thought, 'I have a computer, I have a map, I have the invitation letter and I have my bike. Let's make this happen.'"

It wasn't the first time Rio has ridden a long distance, but the 40-mile roundtrip from Corona to the Bloomington union office and



back proved to be more of a challenge than Luis planned.

"I had a couple of adventures," he said with a laugh. "I took the Santa Ana River Trail and almost got really lost, but I found a trail manager and she helped me get back in the right direction."

Luis encountered more difficulties on desolate Riverside Avenue.

"I had no idea how deserted that road is or how many industrial areas there were," he said. "The bridge over the freeway is under

construction right now. That was definitely the most dangerous part of the ride."

Rio arrived at the union hall three hours after his departure and just in time for the 2 p.m. vote. "I definitely needed to rest when I got to the hall, but like Caesar might have said, 'I came, I saw, I voted.'"

Rio said the union members and staff were hospitable, providing refreshments and a place to rest before his return trip. After voting and recuperating, Rio saddled his 24-speed blue Trek bike and began the ride back home.

"My family would say I was nuts if they found out about what I did," he said. "But it was definitely worth it. I know my one vote could make a difference."

Rio said he didn't want to trouble his family in any way to get him to Bloomington.

"They have enough problems of their own, so I wanted to do it for myself," he said. "Now I have the extra money to pay bills and food. Plus, I learned about the area I went through."

"I did it for the little guys like me who have trouble with bills and paychecks. I did it to set a good example."

'I did it for the little guys like me who have trouble with bills and paychecks. I did it to set a good example.'

Union victory at Rite Aid distribution center

(Continued from front page)

lion-square-foot facility in California's high desert by guaranteeing:

- Health insurance rates that are fair for both individual workers and their families,
- Job security provisions to prevent work from being sub-contracted,
- A worker voice in production standards and ability to challenge unfair standards,
- Protection against intense summer heat and winter cold, using innovative indoor-temperature standards,
- A fair and impartial process for resolving disputes,
- Wage increases in each of the next three years.

"We're excited about winning this

victory, even if it took longer than it should have," said Carlos "Chico" Rubio, a 10-year warehouse worker who helped negotiate the union contract with eight of his co-workers.

Employees decided to form their union in March of 2006 after contacting the ILWU. Within months, Local 26 President Luisa Gratz was helping workers address problems with indoor heat and production standards.

Unfortunately, Rite Aid began aggressively interfering with the workers' freedom to organize:

- Rite Aid management retained an expensive team of notorious union-busting consultants,
- Rite Aid threatened and fired workers for supporting the union,

- Illegal layoffs were imposed without consulting workers and their new union,

- The company engaged in "surface bargaining" that delayed meaningful negotiations for a year.

Responding to these challenges, workers stayed united in Lancaster and helped lead a sophisticated campaign:

- Opening a direct line of communication with company shareholders and board members,
- Actively participating in the company's annual shareholder meetings in New York City and Harrisburg, Penn.
- Forming a nationwide network of Rite Aid workers and unions that included UFCW, SEIU, and

Teamsters, who shared information and coordinated actions,

- Building a powerful national coalition with United Students Against Sweatshops and Jobs with Justice,

- Launching a "pinpoint" boycott campaign at two Rite Aid stores in San Pedro on April 1.

"Rite Aid made this process much more difficult on workers and families than it needed to," said ILWU International Vice President Ray Familathe, who helped workers reach their May 1 settlement.

Familathe invited Rite Aid Vice President Traci Burch to become personally involved in the negotiations, which helped resolve the dispute.