

Remembering workers during the holidays

By **DAVID COOK**
President

It's that time of year again, the giving season. And with giving comes the flood of Americans across the country spending their hard-earned cash on gifts for friends and family. Over the next few weeks, Americans will spend billions on gifts.

Whether you're an online or brick-and-mortar shopper, we are all arranging time to go get our shopping out of the way, crossing off items on our list and getting a little closer to the big day.

As you shop this holiday season, the UFCW family would ask that you take a moment to consider the people behind the products you buy. Whether it's the Christmas ham, a fancy new watch, the hottest Blu-ray, or the season's must-have children's toy, it's important to know who is profiting when you buy something.

Are local families, small business owners and the Mom and Pop storeowners of the world reaping the profits from this season's shopping? Or are those pocketing your hard-earned money running dishonest companies that hate their employees?



Store managers, truck drivers, small businesses owners, and millions of retail employees across this country make the holidays what they are. And it's important to support those who need it most during the time of year when we are all asked to consider what we can do for others.

Consider the worker and the work that makes your Christmas shopping list possible, and ask whether you've done something for them to show your gratitude. It doesn't take much. For some, it means spending your money at a local store and rejecting employee-abusing chains like WalMart. For others, it's about knowing when to stay home and not contribute to a company bringing in their youngest employees on one of their few holidays. Maybe for others it's just about remembering that every smiling face behind a name tag is a person who is hard at work, and remembering that the love and joy of the season should pass to everyone around us, not just our loved ones.

Your dollar is powerful, and companies all across the globe will spend the next month jockeying to get every dollar you'll be spending this season. Use that power, and show the country and your fellow shoppers that your dollar will only go toward products and companies that respect their hard-working employees.

Member involvement will be critical in contract negotiations

As the New Year approaches, the UFCW Local 655 family is gearing up for a busy spring that will feature contract negotiations that impact more than 90 percent of their 10,000+ members. David Cook, Local 655 President, emphasized how important it was for members to attend one of the 4-5 contract meetings that will be held around the city.

"Bargaining is decided in the opening contract meeting," Cook said. "The companies will know how many of our partners show up. If people don't show up, we're dead. We're getting a concessionary contract because companies know that if members don't care enough to come to their meetings, they won't care enough not to ratify the contract."

The contract will apply for the next three years, impacting thousands of hard-working people and their families. UFCW Local 655 officials plan on holding several meetings around the city to make it as easy as possible for employees to attend. Meetings typically only take 1-2 hours, and no member of UFCW Local 655 will live more than 30 minutes from any meeting location.

"To be blunt: three years of your life is

worth three hours of your time," Cook said.

Meeting times and locations will be posted at workplaces, but that's not all. All UFCW Local 655 members should text 'join' to 738674 to get signed up with the texting program. Messages will be minimal and important to getting important contract information out to members. Emails are also a critical tool, along with ufcw655.org and [Facebook.com/UFCW655](https://www.facebook.com/UFCW655).

Employees are encouraged to sign up for communications, check the Facebook page and website regularly, or ask their shop steward or union rep how they can get more information about being involved in contract meetings. Attending meetings and telling your employer and the union what you want and need in a new contract is the best way to secure a better deal at the workplace.

Whether it's better hours, better pay, pension, health benefits or more, you can't get what you need unless you tell someone that you need it. UFCW Local 655 remains committed to securing a better contract next year for their members, a commitment their members need to match.

Fighting for You: How we help our partners

***The UFCW Local 655 family FIGHTS for our partners.
Just ask Mollie Owensby.***

Mollie is a single parent, a mother of three and she works at Holten Meat. Mollie called her local Union Rep when her bosses attempted to terminate her in violation of her contract. Mollie's bosses may have been successful in terminating her if her Union Rep had not defended her rights under her employment contract.

On Oct 2, Mollie was fired. By Oct 12, she was back at work with a week's worth of back pay. "The union got me my back pay and my job back," Owensby said. "Without them, I would have just been fired even though I shouldn't have been. They made it easier to take care of my kids." Mollie's story is just one of HUNDREDS that we'll be telling about how UFCW Local 655 fights for YOU.

Do you have a story about how we've helped you? Contact us! We want to tell your story. Call your UFCW 655 Union Hall at 636-394-6500.

**AN EXCLUSIVE
TWICE MONTHLY
REPORT FOR**

UNION PROUD

**UFCW 655
MEMBERS &
THEIR FAMILIES**

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COOK HONORED FOR SICKLE CELL SUPPORT

UFCW Local 655 President David Cook was received the Roland B. Scott Award from Howard University Hospital Sick Cell Center in Washington D.C. in November. Cook accepted the award at the UFCW Minority Coalition Annual Ball thanks to UFCW Local 655's involvement with raising money and awareness for sickle cell research and treatment. UFCW Local 655 has many partnerships with non-profits, like United Way and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.



RYAN WRAPS UP 30 YEARS WITH LOCAL 655

Union Representative Kevin Ryan cuts the cake at his retirement party late last month. Ryan is a 30-year veteran of the UFCW family and worked with Local 655 for nearly a decade. Ryan and his whole family turned out to wish him farewell as he retired. You'll be missed Kevin!



VERES RETIRES. Shelle Veres cuts cake at her retirement party. She was a 36-year veteran of the UFCW Local 655 family, originally joining the union family in 1979. Veres worked in the front office in membership duties for 15 years. She and her husband are already making retirement travel plans. On behalf of the entire UFCW Local 655 family, we'll miss you!

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