

# A New Year's Wish: WEEKENDS OFF

By **DAVID COOK**  
President

What would be nicer than to have weekends off next year?

Many employers have teamed with UFCW Local 655 to offer weekends off to their employees willing to help protect union grocery market share. Check with your Union Representative to find out if your employer is a participant.



The Volunteer Organizing Program (VOP) kicked off in October with 10 initial members. These members (VOPers) had weekends off from their stores in exchange for their help educating workers in non-union groceries about the value of a union contract.

Step one of the program is getting to know their non-union counterparts and the VOPers did just that. While in any non-union location selling groceries, they took the time to strike up a conversation with the workers there.

The idea: People are more open to information from a familiar face and from someone doing similar work.

The information: the value of a Local 655 Union contract.

The messenger: a grocery worker/customer who speaks to them frequently enough to be familiar.

"It is easy to connect on a worker to worker level because we share workplace concerns," said VOPer Laura Kelley.

Participation in the program requires 16 hours a month with volunteer organizing. Spread that over the month and it comes out to about a half an hour a day—AND NONE OF IT HAS TO BE ON WEEKENDS. An hour here while in a Dollar Store or couple hours there stopping by some area Target, Aldi's, etc. Wednesday mornings, Tuesday evenings, on the way to or from work; all works with the program.

"As a VOPer, in October I met my commitment without spending one hour of weekend time doing it," VOPer Paul Gebken said. "I've worked for Schnucks for 27 years and have never had four weekends off in a row. It was so nice."

Employers committed to the Volunteer Organizing Program have not only agreed to let you off weekends, but are *urging* you to become a VOPer. They understand that it will help their companies compete in the future.

But wait, weekends off are not the only benefit. You will also be helping non-union workers improve their standard of living and at the same time put us in a better position to improve the standard of living for our members.

Don't wait. Call now. For more information about becoming a VOPer in 2015 contact your Union Representative or Local 655 President Cook at 636-736-2701.

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## Schnucks-Farmington onboard with Local 655 Becomes only Union store in area

After over nine months of discussions, the new Schnucks store in Farmington opens with a Union Contract.

The Schnucks stores in the metropolitan St. Louis Area are covered under the Greater St. Louis Food Employers Council Agreement. That contract calls for any store that opens in St. Louis City/County, Jefferson County, St. Charles County or Franklin County to open with that Union contract. Any store that opens outside of these counties can open without any obligation to open Union.

Farmington is in St. Francois County. After many months of discussions with Schnucks management and owners, it was agreed that we would negotiate an agreement for the Farmington store that works for all parties.

Now, because of their Union contract, the new employees of the Farmington store have wages that are higher than the non-Union stores in the area. Unlike many of the other

area retailers, there is an employer matching 401k for the Local 655 members. Also, Local 655 negotiated affordable, top of the line, insurance for Schnucks Farmington members just like St. Louis members enjoy.

Local 655 was able to convince Schnucks of the value of having a partnership in Farmington. All Schnucks employees in Farmington will be represented by Local 655, including the meat, deli and seafood employees. Schnucks expects a total of about 120 Local 655 members in Farmington.

The new Farmington Store opened Wednesday, Nov. 19. Both the customers and employees were excited about having a quality Union grocery store in town. Schnucks is a quality grocer because it has a Union contract that provides fair wages and benefits.

When shopping for your food needs in Farmington, please shop at the only Union grocery store in town. Schnucks is located at 942 Valley Creek Dr. in Farmington.



Local 655 President David Cook swears in Inez Broom to the Executive Board.

## Local 655 names Inez Bloom to E-Board

Officers of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 655 have appointed Inez Broom to serve as a member of the Union's Executive Board.

Broom, a 28-year member, currently working as a CAO clerk at the Cross Keys Schnucks, got her start in the Local when she was hired as a bagger for National Foods at Kingshighway and Delmar. She was later moved to the floral department where she was promoted to floral manager in 1989.

Six years later, when Schnucks Markets purchased National Foods, Broom was reassigned as a general merchandise clerk. In 1998, she was transferred to Schnucks-Kossuth, where she was promoted to Center Store Lead. Three years later she became a general merchandise manager.

On May 23, Broom was reassigned to Schnucks-Cross Keys, as a grocery clerk. On Oct. 21, she was promoted to CAO clerk, responsible for verifying stock and inventory items.

"I'm glad to have a chance to work with the Union on behalf of the membership," Broom said. "The union has always been there for me; the union has *done* a lot for me. Now, it's time for me to give back.

Whatever needs to be done, I'll do it."

This summer, Broom volunteered to help at the Sickle Cell barbecue fundraiser to raise funds for research regarding a disease that currently has no cure and affects one in every 12 African Americans.

"I appreciate what the Union has done for me and now it's time to give back," Broom said. "I'm ready to help and get involved in the Union's issues and activities because, in my mind, I'm not fulfilling what I need to be doing. If this is my calling, I'm soon to find out. If there are others I can help, I want to be able to answer for them and help them any way I can.

Broom says for members to understand just how much the Union does for them, all they have to do is look at their insurance and their pay rate.

"If they'd come to the Union Meetings they'd see where their dues goes," Broom said. "Instead of griping about the Union, they need to participate and find out just how much the Union does."

She added, "I'm looking forward to learning and moving forward, and hope the Board Members will help me through the process."

Broom has one son, Melshad, 19. She lives in Pagedale.



President David Cook (left photo) presented Education Grant checks to members Sara Schulte (left) of Dierbergs-Arnold and Heather Holle (center) of Schnuck's Ballwin at the November Union Meeting.

In photo at right: President David Cook presents an Education Grant check to Kristopher Nondorf of Schnuck's Wildwood.



The two college students were selected at the last drawing in June.

Local 655 offers current members attending college, vocational school, technical school, etc., a chance to win a \$150 grant. Applications for the January drawing are due by Jan. 28. Download an application at [www.ufcw655.org](http://www.ufcw655.org).

## It's time to schedule your vacation

Vacation schedules should have been posted by Dec. 1, and that means it's time for you to schedule your vacation — no later than Saturday, Jan. 15, as done each year.

The completed vacation schedule will be posted by Feb. 15, as done each year. Vacations are selected based upon date of hire.

Employees who fail to select vacation dates by Jan. 15 will select on a first come first served basis.