

Contract negotiations start soon Speak out; be part of the process

By **DAVID COOK**
President



Well, it's finally time. After months of flyers and store visits, we're finally approaching our opening contract meetings.

The Greater St. Louis Food Employers Council contract impacts about 90 percent of our partners. The contract expires in May, and that means almost 9,000 of you will be directly affected by the contents of the new contract we will negotiate.

You can have a say in what is in this contract. You can help determine whether benefits, wages and pensions get better, stay the same or get worse.

Your involvement in our opening contract meetings sets the tone for our entire negotiation process with your company. When our partners show up to opening meetings in big numbers, it sends a clear message to the company that employees care about their contract.

It shows your company that you care about better wages and benefits. It shows your company you want more respect at work, better hours, and a better pension.

Skipping these opening contract meetings isn't just a disservice to you. It's a disservice to your co-workers, who you work with every

day. The average worker in today's world has so little control over their fate at work, but when unions negotiate contracts, you have the chance to stand up and tell us — and your employer exactly what you need.

We're having meetings around the St. Louis area, including two at our Local 655 Union Hall in Ballwin. We want it to be as convenient as possible for you to attend because asking for a better deal on the job shouldn't be a major burden.

We want to get you the best contract possible, and you can help us do that by sending a clear message to your employers that you're willing to come out and fight for the best contract.

Come to one of our opening meetings. Bring a co-worker with you. If you're a long time Local 655 partner, make sure you tell those younger employees just how important these meetings are.

If you're a new employee or a part-timer, ask your Union Rep or shop steward for more information.

We'll be sending emails and text messages with meeting times and locations. We'll be sending out tele-blast phone messages. We'll post it on our website and on Facebook. We'll put flyers in your workplace. We are committed to getting you that better life you've earned.

Let's come together in solidarity. Come to an opening meeting, and help us get the best contract possible.

OPENING CONTRACT MEETING TIMES/LOCATIONS:

South County: Feb. 9 (7 p.m.)
Holiday Inn South County,
6921 South Lindbergh Blvd.

St. Louis City: Feb. 16 (7 p.m.)
SMART Local 36,
2319 Chouteau Ave.

North County: Feb. 11 (7 p.m.)
District 9 Machinist Hall
12365 St. Charles Rock Rd.

West County: Feb. 17 (9 a.m. and 7 p.m.)
UFCW Local 655,
300 Weidman Rd.

And don't forget: Our survey is still online. Visit ufcw655.org for more info.

Get involved!

2016 VOLUNTEER ORGANIZING PROGRAM

One of the obstacles in our efforts to negotiate better contracts in 2016 and beyond is the effect of non-union competition in the retail food industry.

It can be a little confusing, but the average labor cost to union retailers is higher than non-union retailers. Average labor costs include wages, health care benefits, retirement benefits, vacation, holiday pay, sick benefits, premiums and some work rules.

The Volunteer Organizing Program provides partners with the opportunity to address the issue of unfair non-union competition.

The program will start the week beginning March 7, and will concentrate on two areas:

- Picketing/hand billing the public in front of non-union food retailers.
- Hand billing workers at non-union food retailers.

- Shifts will be scheduled and be adequate in number to accommodate flexibility for program participants. Shifts committed to by volunteers must be worked to continue in the program.

Participant obligations will be no less than 6 two-hour shifts. Shifts may be consecutive. Picket signs and handbills will be provided. Training will be provided in March at a time and location to be determined.

Per the Collective Bargaining Agreement, volunteers will be scheduled off by 6 p.m. Fridays and be off on the weekends at the volunteer's choosing.

**AN EXCLUSIVE
TWICE MONTHLY
REPORT FOR**

**UFCW 655
MEMBERS &
THEIR FAMILIES**

www.ufcw655.com

UFCW Local 655 wins back pay, reinstatement for assault victim

Shanté Matthews will be back to work soon, packing nearly \$2,000 in back-pay after UFCW Local 655 worked to get her reinstated following a wrongful termination.

Matthews, a partner at Schnucks-Sierra Vista since 2014, was the victim of an assault outside of her workplace by a co-worker after the two had a dispute.

Matthews was initially accused of having some blame in the matter despite being the victim of an unwarranted physical attack.

Management attempted to fire both Matthews and her attacker.

"There were no ifs, ands or buts about it. Nikki Rich (a Local 655 Rep.) was all over it," Matthews said. "She did a good job of communicating with me and working for me. She had my back, and it was really helpful."

Matthews, like so many UFCW partners across the state, simply could not afford to be unemployed and badly wanted to go back to work.

Despite the bad experience, Matthews said she enjoys working for Schnucks, and did not



want to have to look for a new job.

"They got me back pay, which is a really big deal for me," Matthews said. "Plus, they are working on getting me back to work at a new store, one that's not too far away so I can still work, and that's great. I want to work, I need to have a job, and Nikki did a really good job of looking out for me."

DC MLK conference motivates 655 members

The AFL-CIO's annual Martin Luther King Conference was held last week in Washington D.C., and UFCW Local 655 was just one of many locals around the country to participate.

The conference, titled "Change the Rules, Be the Power," focused on organizing, politics and other issues, including race and activism.

At least one speaker urged the federation to openly endorse the "Black Lives Matter" movement. UFCW International President Marc Perrone is holding a series of hearings nationwide as the co-chair of an AFL-CIO race and social justice commission to discuss the topic.

Kellie Boggs, a partner at Schnucks-Lindell since 2012, was among those who attended the conference.

"I met a plethora of interesting people who are doing amazing work in activism and labor," Boggs said. "There were so many workshops, panels and topics presented. I learned a lot, and I'm still processing everything."

Organized labor needs energized local partners in order to continue to survive. Whether it's standing up against right-to-work laws, fighting for a better minimum wage or working to get labor-friendly candidates elected around the nation, labor partners need to be actively involved in various organizing efforts to increase their clout.

"Yes, there is a lot of work to do, whether it's in our local contract negotiations or in Jefferson City fighting Right-to-Work or electing a new governor," Boggs said. "And some of the topics we addressed make my head hurt just thinking about all that can be done to take action."

The critical message of the conference, though, was about how any individual partner can make a difference.

"I realize that I might not be able to take it all on, and I can't save the world," Boggs said. "I can, however, take small steps to make a difference in my community and my workplace."

Happy RETIREMENT

JANUARY RETIREES

Angela Ecker Anita Brown Ann Little Barbara Hanna Carol Nester Diane L Taylor James Clooney James Gore James Schinkle James Seitz Janet Martineau JoAnn Grant Joanne Schindler John Carter John Noce Karen Marchetto	S-Dillon S-U City D-Market Place Straub-Clayton S-Telegraph Schnucks S-Woodsmill S-Sierra Vista S-Arnold S-Ladue S-Mid Rivers S-Loughborough S-Telegraph S-Ladue S-Hampton Village D-Fenton	Karen Wirtz Linda Balch Lisa Halbach Marcia Brawley Marcia Greene Mary Ann Conway MaryJane McKinney Nancy Hanff Nancy Minard Nancy Schaefer Patricia Smith Paul Mueller Robert Bubenik Robert Smith Sally Kaleb Tim Matt	S-Dorsett D-Deer Creek D-Wildwood S-Sierra Vista S-Lindell S-Shackelford S-Dardenne S-Chesterfield S-Loughborough S-Grandview S-Hampton Village D-Mackenzie D-Des Peres S-Farmington D-Lemay S-Dillon
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John Noce worked 41 years at Schnucks-Hampton Village before retiring in January. In photo, President David Cook (left) congratulates Noce.



Mary Ann Conway gave Schnucks Shackelford 35 years of hard work before her retirement in January. Conway (in photo) is congratulated by President David Cook (right) and Secretary-Treasurer Dave Politte (left).

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