

# Reinvigorating our Organizing Department

By **DAVID COOK**  
President

When I was elected as your President, I made a commitment to you that I would emphasize the growth of UFCW Local 655. While I am proud to lead the largest private-sector Local Union in the state of Missouri, I'm also sensible to the simple truth that Labor's greatest asset is not the money we raise, it's in numbers.

A larger partnership always makes it easier to negotiate for better wages and benefits. The more of us there are, the more clout we have with employers. Unions, at their core, represent groups of hard-working people coming together with a common voice.

The same is true when we engage in political activity. We know we cannot match the tens of millions that Right-to-Work supporters pour into campaigns. But those billionaire donors only have one vote, and we will always beat them with our thousands of voting partners.

With this in mind, it's deeply important to the future of this organization that we continue to grow.

Increasing Union density is shown to drive up wages and benefits, make communities better, elect more friends of the middle class and increase the overall quality of life. The future of the middle class in America depends on the success of unions and a future focused on growing, on bringing new workers into the fold and staying important and relevant in the new economy.

We've recently re-tooled our organizing staff around this concept.

A few weeks ago, we completed a process that's taken several months and hired three new organizers to work with our new Director of Organizing, Alex Lange. This new staff is young, vibrant, and diverse. Under the leadership of Alex Lange, who is equally passionate,



COOK

I believe we will begin to see more success in organizing new workplaces under the UFCW Local 655 banner.

These new organizers come from various backgrounds, including someone from our own membership. They have great backgrounds in helping workforces Unionize, and they are committed to growing our Local for the benefit of all of us.

I expect great results from them, but I don't expect it to happen overnight. Organizing is challenging and difficult work requiring long hours and deep commitment. It's not unusual to lose your first election at a new workplace. That loss can be draining for anyone who has spent so many hours of their time hearing the stories of mistreatment and poor wages of non-Union workers.

This effort to reinvigorate our organizing staff comes alongside our efforts to ratchet up our Volunteer Organizing Committee. The VOC is a partner-driven organizing effort to put our rank-and-file Union workers like yourself in the field with our organizing staff to talk directly to non-Union workers we are looking to organize.

As good as our organizing staff can be, they will often be seen as "hired guns" for a Union. There is nothing as powerful as one Union worker talking to a non-Union worker about the benefits of joining UFCW Local 655.

I have long said that you are our best advocates, and your stories about the benefits, wages and the respect you get on the job because of your Union contract resonates deeply with non-Union workers.

We held a VOC training program in June and we'll continue to explore training programs like these so we can put more folks like yourself next to our organizers when they canvass a workplace or knock on doors.

All of this reflects a commitment to a central theme many of you have heard me talk about before: telling our story, and yours.

The better we can communicate the good that we do, the more we will grow. That's a simple fact.

## Education grants awarded to support higher education

UFCW Local 655 awarded several Education Grants to our winners at the monthly meeting in July. Grants are selected through

drawings each July and January, and anyone enrolled in higher-education classes can submit their name for the drawing.



**NANCY ADAMS** (left) and **ANDREW MEYER** were lucky recipients of the Local 655 Education Grants disbursed in July by a local drawing. President **David Cook** (center) congratulates the two.



**KENE BRATCHER**, **ANTONIA LAROCCA** and **KRISTOPHER NONDORF** also received Local 655 education grants. At right, President **David Cook** congratulates the group.

AN EXCLUSIVE  
TWICE MONTHLY  
REPORT FOR

**UNION PROUD**  
UFCW 655  
a VOICE for working America

**UFCW 655  
MEMBERS &  
THEIR FAMILIES**

www.ufcw655.com

## Meet your new organizing staff

UFCW Local 655 has hired three new staff members to fill vacancies in the organizing department as part of a months-long effort to revamp and retool a part of our workforce aimed at growing the Union.

Maria Lagorio, Bridget Kelly and LaKenya Roberson have all joined the UFCW Local 655 family as full-time organizers working under Director of Organizing Alex Lange.



ROBERSON

• **LaKenya Roberson** joins the staff after more than 12 years as a rank-and-file partner of UFCW Local 655. Before coming on staff, she worked at the Shop 'n Save Pharmacy in Ferguson as a Certified Pharmacy Technician. She became extremely active in the Union over the past two years, becoming a shop steward and attending regular meetings.

She described her most rewarding experience with Local 655 as her participation in the last time program, where she worked with the Organizing Department in an active campaign at Washington University. She described herself as "thrilled" to be joining Local 655 and describes working for the Union as a "new-found passion."

• **Maria Lagorio** joins UFCW Local 655 after more than a decade involved as an organizer and lobbyist for various organizations. A member of the LGBTQ community, the daughter and granddaughter



LAGORIO

of Teamster members, Maria organized her own workplace, a grocery warehouse, in her home state of California. She has worked as an organizer for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and SEIU Local 1. She also lobbied in Washington D.C. on behalf of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) and served as the EFCA director in Minnesota. Lagorio served as a Special Projects Union Representative with Local 655 before she was officially hired as a full-time organizer.

• **Bridget Kelly** joins UFCW Local 655 with a degree in Political Science from UMSL. She has spent time with several different political organizations and Labor Unions.

Kelly previously served as a canvasser for Hillary Clinton's campaign in Iowa, as well as with NARAL.

She also served as an organizer with SEIU. She describes Union organizing as the best way she can help strengthen the middle class in the United States.

"The most important mission to protect our partners is growing our Union market share," said Alex Lange, UFCW Local 655 Director of Organizing.

"Growing the size of our Union is a way to obtain better contracts for our current partners and fairness and respect for all workers. The team that has been assembled here at Local 655 to help organize the unorganized is a force to be reckoned with. I'm proud to be directing such a dynamic, energetic and hungry group of organizers. The future of organizing for this Union continues to get brighter by the day."



KELLY

## Save the dates

**Labor Day  
2016 Parade**

**When:** Monday, Sept. 5th  
**Where:** Local 655 will set up and meet at Olive and 15th at 7 a.m.  
**What:** Annual Labor Day Parade for all Union Brothers and Sisters

**Theme: 'We Are Union and We Vote!'**  
**Contact Mike Frame if you have any questions at 636-736-2765**

**'Light the Night'**  
**for Leukemia and Lymphoma Society**

**When:** Sept. 24th at 5 p.m.  
**Where:** Forest Park's Central Fields

**Join Us**  
Contact Jane Smith with the LLS at 314-590-2236 for questions on forming a team.

**LEUKEMIA & LYMPHOMA SOCIETY**  
**LIGHT THE NIGHT WALK**  
taking steps to make *tomorrow* today

Watch your workplace bulletin board for more information.

**Happy RETIREMENT**

**JULY RETIREES**

<b>George (Randy) Dierkes</b>	Schnucks	41 yrs	<b>Denise Granger</b>	Schnucks	38 yrs
<b>Jim Krebs</b>	Shop 'n Save	39 yrs	<b>Patty Wright</b>	Shop 'n Save	33 yrs

Share Your Pride: Share this page in your break room.