

New Year brings changes and improvements

By DAVID COOK
President



COOK

It's a time of significant changes at Local 655. As this New Year dawns, we are gearing up for several big shifts in the way we provide some of our most basic services. Some of these changes are the result of necessity as the likely passage of right-to-work looms ahead. Other changes simply are the result of taking the appropriate steps to modernize and streamline our operation. There are changes coming to how our service representatives will see you and when. There are also changes coming to how we sign up new employees to join our Union. Our representatives will be equipped with tablet computers to seek electronic signatures on Union applications for new partners. We are working to allow these tablets to access store schedules anytime and anywhere, making it easier for your representative to coordinate their store visits and see you. Our reps will have less stores they are responsible for as we add a new staff member, which will ensure that they can spend more time in their individual stores and focus on our partners. We have been working with UFCW locals in Texas on how to adapt to right-to-work laws in Missouri. In Dallas and Houston, our sister locals have successfully operated for decades despite right-to-work legislation. They retain the overwhelming majority of their partners and continue to bargain good

contracts on their behalf. In the political world, our efforts remain focused on fighting right-to-work. In my capacity as Treasurer of the Preserve Middle Class America PAC, I have worked closely with the Missouri AFL-CIO to file constitutional amendments for the 2018 ballot that will make right-to-work laws illegal in Missouri. I am focusing closely on how we can continue to influence the political process on behalf of our partners and remind lawmakers in Jefferson City that the people they represent, no matter what their political party, did not elect them to make life even harder for hard-working middle class families. It is going to be hectic and challenging time for labor across Missouri and for tens of thousands of families we represent who want a better life. But I am committed to seeing Local 655 through this time and setting us on a course that will ensure our success no matter what our environment becomes. That course requires us to try new things, adopt better practices, embrace new technologies and be open to new ideas. We will become more modern, more effective and more focused. We will focus on the best way to serve you, our hard-working partners, and we will remain tenacious and passionate about what we do. With all of these new changes, we continue to want your input. If you have questions, please reach out to us. If you want to know how you can stand with your Union during these times, ask us, and we'll be happy to have you. Talk to your co-workers about the importance of their Union family and, as always, stay Union Proud and Union Strong.

New Executive Board Member Sworn In



655 WELCOMES new E-Board member, Bill Kizer,

Bill Kizer, a 28-year partner from Schnucks, was sworn in as a new member of the Local 655 Executive Board at the monthly December meeting. Bill works as a receiver at the Festus Schnucks, and has been a longtime active partner in Local 655. Bill was one of several hard-working members featured in the recent commercial ad campaign on television broadcasts around St. Louis. Bill also took an active roll during the election season working full-time for more than two months, knocking on doors, talking to voters and handing out literature on behalf of multiple candidates campaigning to protect the middle class. "I'm honored to join the Executive Board,"

Bill said. "I want to help the Union and my brothers and sisters in Labor any way I can. Local 655 is a family and I'm very excited to become an even more active partner. In these times, it's important to fight for your co-workers and the rights of workers everywhere. Unions give you a voice on the job, and that's what's so important to me right now." Executive Board members have many duties including approving certain expenditures, reviewing the budget, and providing feedback on membership. The board is made up largely of rank-and-file union members. Bill was nominated and sworn in to fill the unexpired term after the retirement of Harriet Weaver, who retired at the November Executive Board meeting.

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Local 655 Partner poised for citizenship thanks to Union family



RANDY QUINTANA SANCHEZ accepts a check from Local 655 Union Representative Karen Settlemoir-Berg. At the end of December, Randy became the first Local 655 member to receive the "New American Citizenship Fund" scholarship.

Randy Quintana Sanchez wants to become a U.S. citizen. A Local 655 member and an employee at Double G Ham, Sanchez has been working for more than a year to complete the long and expensive process to citizenship. A Mexican national working in the U.S. on a green card, Sanchez has a wife and children here in the U.S., and strongly wanted to move toward citizenship, but was struggling with the paperwork and costly fees associated with the process. Little did he know that the UFCW, through the United Latinos constituency group, provides legal assistance to their members for free and has some funds available to help cover the costs of acquiring citizenship. Karen Settlemoir-Berg, a Local 655 Union representative, had the information about available assistance translated into Spanish and brought to Sanchez' workplace. After Karen contacted the International office about getting him the appropriate paperwork, Randy, Karen, and Randy's wife all met at the Local 655 Union Hall on a Saturday to fill out all the paperwork together. At that point, UFCW International stepped in and had one of their attorneys review the forms and file them with the appropriate government agencies. This part of the citizenship can be costly, with the normal legal fees often totaling nearly \$3,000.

Randy didn't have to pay a dime. With his application approved, the final step for Randy is the "naturalization interview." If he passes the interview, Randy will become a U.S. citizen. The interview fee is also costly, costing hundreds of dollars. But UFCW and Local 655 weren't going to let that slow Randy down. At the end of December, Randy became the first Local 655 member to receive the "New American Citizenship Fund" scholarship. UFCW International and United Latinos provide the scholarship to those UFCW members looking to complete the citizenship process in order to cover the cost of the final interview. Randy must now wait until his interview date is scheduled, which usually takes a few months, before he can take the final steps on a long and winding path toward citizenship. "I'm just so grateful, so grateful," Randy said. "I'm very excited that it's almost over now. I don't know how I would have done it without Local 655." And while much of the process is now complete, there is one more thing Karen will be doing as Randy works toward citizenship. "I've already told him to tell me when his ceremony is, because I'm going to be there when he becomes a citizen," Settlemoir-Berg said.

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