

# Victory, empowerment and action moving our Local forward

By **DAVID COOK**  
President



**COOK**

Late last week Local 655 achieved a wonderful victory. After months of hard work from our organizing staff, food-service workers employed by Bon Appetit working at Washington University voted to unionize and join our UFCW family.

Whenever workers choose to be union and speak with one voice, they increase their chances of improving their life. Bon Appetit workers for years attempted to address their concerns with management individually with limited success. Now they will have a chance to unite their voices and negotiate the better life they have earned and deserve. These workers provide a vital service to Washington University and thus the community-at-large.

I am thrilled with the success of this campaign and grateful for the hard work our organizing staff has done. But I know Local 655 cannot rest on its laurels. A Union that does not constantly seek to grow is a Union that is doomed to fail.

We must continue to focus on bringing more workers into the Local 655 family and showing the power that solidarity can have. Consistent Union growth will drive up the wages and benefits of all workers, and increase the quality of life on the jobs for all employees. This is, and should, remain the fundamental mission for all of Organized Labor.

Because we are committed to growing this local I want to make sure that our members are aware of our efforts to expand our membership.

We recently jump-started a new program called "Empower." In this program we are urging our Local 655 members to join us in

our expansion efforts.

If any member has a family member or a friend or even a casual acquaintance that might benefit from a Union coming to their workplace, let Local 655 know.

If you bring someone to our staff for a conversation about organizing their workplace, you are automatically entered to win a monthly drawing for \$400 in cash.

We are also committed to boosting our Volunteer Organizing Program. This program seeks to involve our members in direct organizing efforts at non-union businesses.

Your involvement and commitment to the VOP program gives you the automatic right to choose consecutive days off during the week, giving you more time with family and friends. We will provide the information and tools anyone might need if they'd like to take part in VOP. All we need is your passion and commitment.

The inherent value of having hard-working Local 655 members involved in our organizing efforts was evident in the campaign we just won. Dennis Shaw, a Local 655 member from Schnucks Culinaria, worked with our organizers in the final weeks of this campaign, meeting Bon Appetit employees and working with WashU students. His involvement, and the involvement of those like him, can be critical for workers looking to organize. Hearing directly from rank-and-file members about the benefits of union membership is crucial to successful efforts to organize.

When non-Union workplaces organize, they boost the power of longtime Union businesses. When less and less non-Union competition in any industry exists, the higher the standard-of-living will be for all workers in that industry.

This Local knows how critical it is to increase Union density. We will remain committed to that goal. But this goal is far easier to achieve when we have the support and involvement of you, our rank-and-file members. Together, we can lift up workers in St. Louis and all of Missouri. This Union is committed. Are you?

## Lange, Shaw join Local 655 Executive Board

A Local 655 staffer and a rank-and-file member are the two newest members of the Union's Executive Board after unanimous votes last month.

Alex Lange, a five-year member of Local 655's staff and Dennis Shaw, an employee of Schnucks Culinaria, both joined the Executive Board after being elected in April.

Lange was hired as a full-time Local 655 staff member after working for Schnucks. He spent several years working in the Organizing Department before eventually moving into servicing and working as a Union Representative.

"I'm humbled to serve on this Executive Board where we've had so many amazing people in the past," Lange said. "The Board does an incredibly important job and I take the role very seriously. I'm going to do everything I can to be an asset to the Board and to Local 655."

Dennis Shaw has been a very active partner of Local 655 in his short time. He has taken part in numerous events with Local 655 and most recently traveled several times to Jefferson City to testify before lawmakers about



**LANGE**



**SHAW**

the importance of letting St. Louis raise its minimum wage. Shaw also participated in the final weeks of the successful organizing campaign at Washington University, where his work was critical.

"Local 655 is fighting every day for hard-working people and I couldn't be more excited to be involved in that fight," Shaw said. "I'm honored that President Cook would name me to this Board and I will work hard for my fellow partners and co-workers as an Executive Board member."

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## Torpea elected Local 655 Secretary-Treasurer

Garry Torpea, an 18-year member of the Local 655 staff, was elected by the Local 655 Executive Board to fill the unexpired term of former Secretary-Treasurer Dave Politte, who retired last month.

Torpea began working for Local 655 more than two decades ago when he temporarily joined the staff to assist in an organizing campaign. Torpea excelled at the work and was hired as a full-time staffer.

In his time on staff Torpea has served as an organizer, a Union Representative, Director of the Professional Division, Director of Organizing, Director of Collective Bargaining, Director of Servicing and Assistant to the President, a role he continues to fill.

Torpea has been a partner of Local 655 for 43 years, originally working at Schnucks.



**TORPEA**

"I am thrilled and humbled to take on this new responsibility at Local 655," Torpea said. "Assuring that the dues money of our partners is spent responsibly and spent with the best interests of our partners in mind is absolutely critical for any local Union."

UFCW Local 655 President David Cook said he was confident that Garry Torpea was the ideal choice for the position.

"Garry has worked incredibly hard for this Local for decades," Cook said. "And his passion and work ethic are beyond reproach. I am confident he will do a wonderful job in this new role. He's been an invaluable member of this staff to me personally and he's demonstrated his commitment to our members time and time again."

## Donna Frame retires after 40 years with Local 655

Donna Frame, Pension Administrator at Local 655, is retiring after more than 40 years of employment. She is the longest-serving employee in the history of Local 655.

"There is no way to put into words just how knowledgeable and valuable Donna has been to this local," said President David Cook. "Her time here was absolutely invaluable. She made this Union a better organization, and made everyone who worked with her a better employee. I cannot express just how deeply she will be missed. However, if anyone has earned the right to retirement, it's Donna Frame."

Donna was just 20 years old when she first started working at Local 655 in 1976. She started off in the Local's keypunch room, where data entry took place in the days before computers became the staple of the workplace.

She quickly excelled, catching the eye of Local 655 leadership. Soon she was attending classes for computer operation and programming. She brought new technology to the office, and she taught her co-workers how to operate and enter data into the computer.

Less than 10 years after her start at Local 655, she was named Pension Administrator, a title she has held for 30 years.

"I could tell right away that this was a good place to work," she said. "People who preceded me—and I was just a young kid when I started—talked about how wonderful this place was and how they'd take care of you, especially when you retire. And it's true. I'm so grateful to have retired from Local 655 with the benefits I have."

Not only was Donna Frame the Pension Administrator, she served for many years as an office manager as well as fulfilling the duties of the secretary to the President. At any given time she was running the Pension Department, doing the bookkeeping for Local



**FRAME**

655's payroll, creating confidential materials for 655 leadership and running the entire front end of the office.

In Donna's time as Pension Administrator she served under seven UFCW Local 655 presidents and management personnel with the Pension Fund. She got along with every single one. This was a staple of Donna Frame's time at Local 655 and the Pension Fund. She worked well with every single person she

encountered.

"Everybody likes, and more importantly respects, Donna," Cook said. "I have had the complete pleasure of working with Donna for exactly 30 years. There was never a time I couldn't go to her for assistance or guidance. She was always helpful and cooperative. She was always the consummate professional, however, if she thought you were wrong or had a different opinion, she had no problem sharing her thoughts."

"For some, disagreeing with a superior is challenging, but never for Donna. She always felt she owed it to the membership of Local 655 and the participants of the Pension Fund."

"It has been a true pleasure to work for the Union and the Pension Fund. I always wanted to make sure I was doing the best job I could for the partners of Local 655 and that every participant of the fund received the personal service they deserved," Donna said. "I have always looked at the Pension Fund as if it were a child of mine; in fact I often referred to the Fund as my baby."

Donna was also a vocal proponent of the benefits of working for Local 655. Working for many years as a single mother, she says she simply would not have had the same quality of life working anywhere else.

"I thank God every single day that I had this job and I'm in the position I'm in now," she said. "I got to lead a good life, a comfortable one. That's all because of this job."

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