

# A Perspective: Looking back...and forward

By **DAVID COOK**  
*President*

## Part 2 of 2 Parts

In Part 1 I outlined several key steps we've taken to begin the changes at Local 655 in order to strengthen our ability to win the best possible contracts for our members. In this concluding Part 2, I'll review other steps we've taken to strengthen our Union for moving forward into the future.

At the Shop Stewards Seminar last May, I rolled out my vision of the future for Local 655.

**This vision is clear and concise -- We must grow our Union Density in the industries we represent in order to be able to negotiate stronger contracts, the type of contracts YOU and your family deserve.**

In that message I outlined a plan and a series of actions to attain this goal:

- **To engage the membership of Local 655 to become our spokespeople.** There is no better messenger of the benefits of being a member of Local 655 than YOU, our current members. There is absolutely nothing stronger than personal testimonials about the benefits of belonging to our Union. We need you to talk to your friends, family and even strangers about our Union, encouraging them to consider joining with you, with us, to help make their lives better.

To that end we have been working nonstop to communicate our message with you, our members.

## IN JUNE...

- **We began leadership work site visits** where Secretary-Treasurer Politte and I visit member work sites every other week. The purpose of these visits is to talk with you personally about our Vision For The Future and your role in helping us win better contracts.

**I can't say it often enough: we can't do this alone. It's going to take the combined efforts of our membership -- that's YOU -- with our Executive Board and Staff to win the kind of contracts you deserve.**

So far, we've been to 24 stores: SCHNUCKS: City Plaza, Concord



Village, Cottleville, Des Peres, Dorsett, Duchense, Grand & Kosuth, Hampton Village, Sierra Vista, Westfall Plaza. SHOP 'N SAVE: Arnold, Chip-

pewa, Gravois, Lemay, Maplewood, Moline Acres, South Lindbergh. DIEBERGS: 94 Crossing, Arnold, Manchester, Market Place, Southroads. KROGER: Warrenton. BILL'S MARKET.

Our goal is to get to every work site by the end of 2012 or early 2013.

- **We rolled out the ASK Program**

for our Shop Stewards.

In this effort, we mail an "ASK" flyer to every Shop Steward asking them to perform a specific task: it may be to sign up five members for the Text Program or collect seven email addresses from coworkers to go into our new email database.

We have accountability for the effort by following up with a report to the Stewards with a list of who completed the ASK and each Steward's individual results. The effort has had a solid start. We expect to have even more Stewards participating this year as part of their overall responsibility to you and Local 655.

## IN JULY...

- We completed the election of officers. Your entire leadership team was elected by acclamation, only the second time that's happened in 25 years. I personally, and the entire leadership team, was honored by this



vote of confidence. I believe this was a reflection of both the long relationship and trust you have in us and your approval of the New Direction we are taking Local 655 in order to win better contracts in the future.

## IN AUGUST...

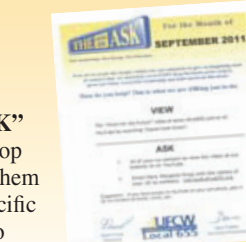
- We launched a new direction with our current employers emphasizing how important it is to us, and our members...

... that they operate UNION in any new locations they open and, ... in their locations where they currently operate non-union, they allow those employees the opportunity to choose Union representation without the intimidation and harassment we see in organizing campaigns.

We started the program with a letter to our members in one of the food chains and then followed up with several meetings and frank discussions with top company management to let them know our concerns and that continuing to act in this manner is the wrong choice and *not acceptable*.

## IN SEPTEMBER...

- We recorded a YouTube video for the world to see and hear our message. This was our first of many new communication outreach efforts to bring our Union into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. If you haven't seen it yet, go to YouTube and check it out: UFCW Local 655. I would appreciate your feedback.



## IN OCTOBER...

- We rolled out our own Local 655 Texting Program (text, "UFCW" to 738674 to register). In today's world there is no better way to communicate an urgent message than texting, whether it's a contract update, or a detail regarding an attack on workers' rights, or just

a reminder of an upcoming meeting. We'll be doing it as often as an urgent need arises.

**Keep up-to-the-minute with your Union, register now, text "UFCW" to 738674.**



## IN NOVEMBER...

- We introduced our new Facebook page; find us on Facebook, UFCW Local 655. This is our newest way to help members stay in touch with each other. We have, and will continue, to post items that are relevant to everyone.



**In looking back on these past nine, hectic months, we have a lot to be proud about, brag about if you will. But there is no time for bragging. We must move forward with our Vision to GROW OUR UNION in order to attain the contracts you deserve. To do this, we MUST:**

- All wear our UNION PROUD button on the job;
- Build our communication networks among our members;
- Build our database of member email addresses;
- Grow our list of members signed up for our Texting Program; and
- Strongly encourage our members and friends to "like" us on Facebook.

**Members, if we are to succeed for YOU, we must be able to communicate with you. If you are not currently signed up for texting, if we don't currently have your email address or you have not "liked" us yet on Facebook, please help us help you by doing so NOW. Communication is the key to success.**

## WE ARE JUST BEGINNING

### Work site visits...

We will be continuing our leadership work site visits. In early 2012 we will begin visiting our outstate and manufacturing locations. Once we've visited every work site, we'll start over again. I believe there is no better way to encourage you to become an active member of Local 655 than for you to talk directly to your leadership.

### Encouraging member involvement...

In addition, we need to do a better job of engaging you in the Union's activities.

As a starter, we are considering a comprehensive member survey to determine your interests. Once we understand your interests outside of work, we can encourage you to assist your Union in areas you are already involved with.

For example, those members already active in their church, mosque or synagogue, are the best people to help deliver our message to their fellow parishioners and faith leaders. If we need the assistance of faith-based organizations to fight off the assault on workers' rights, we know are coming this year, these are the best members to deliver our message. This is just one example of why YOU, our members, are our best asset.

In the past, we have not asked you for that kind of help or made it easy for you to give it. We are working to change that.

### On politics...

Regarding the political attack on workers we know is coming, recent issues of our *Labor Tribune* have outlined a number of anti-worker bills already pre-filed in the legislature, bills designed to attack workers in Missouri.

**This time, Local 655 won't just be reactive, we'll be in the forefront to protect workers in Missouri.**

We'll have more lost timers on the street door knocking. We will be using phone banks to educate the public, and most importantly we'll have members and staff lobbying in Jefferson City on a regular basis.

## You can help indirectly...

Most of our members may not want to be involved in this fight directly. But there is a way everyone can help protect your job, protect your rights to a safe workplace, and protect your ability to have a voice on the job through your Union:

**Join ABC, our Union's Active Ballot Club.** ABC is a voluntary political payroll deduction.

These aggressive campaigns to protect our rights cost money. Local 655, and all Unions, have limited resources. That's why last October and November we had a big push to sign up more members with ABC.

This year, our ABC resources will not be going to friendly politicians as much as they have in the past, but rather a large portion of ABC-collected money will be used right here in Missouri for the legislative fights we'll be facing.

The corporations are donating freely and in large amounts to take away workers' rights. We need your financial help through ABC to help us stand up and fight.

## You can help directly...

In addition to participating in ABC, just as valuable is volunteering to help with one (or more) of our direct action programs — door knocking, telephone banking, or coming with us to Jefferson City to lobby our legislators.

"I have no experience," you say? No problem. We'll give you the training you need to help out in any of these efforts. Just let your Union Representative know you're interested in a more hands on commitment, and we'll take it from there.

**Please, if you are not the person that wants to get involved directly, then donate today to ABC. Help yourself by helping to provide the financial resources we desperately need for our fight.**

**In closing I want each and every member of Local 655 to know how honored I am every day to be your president and how committed I am to attaining better contracts for you in the future.**

I know that TOGETHER, we are capable of great things. I, Brother Politte, our Staff, Executive Board and Shop Stewards, look forward to making sure we accomplish our goals.

**The measure of our success is truly in YOUR HANDS. The more you become LOUD and PROUD members of Local 655, the better we will do.**



As always, and Proud to be your President...

*David M. Cook*  
David Cook