

State of the Union — Part 4

Take advantage of your union membership

By **JIM DOUGHERTY**
President

As we move into contract talks in an economic and political atmosphere that is crushing middle-class Americans, we know now, more than ever, that Unions play a pivotal role in protecting our wages and benefits, rights on the job, safety and health.

Unions are a necessary complement to rights and benefits authorized by law.

So as we continue through these challenging times, I want to encourage each of you to get involved with your union. Let us know what you want; let your voices be heard.

As part of our continuing effort to find new and better ways to serve and educate our members, we urge you to look at a few of the programs and opportunities we have begun or expanded in the past year.

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

Our orientation program is instrumental in helping new members understand their union roots and what our union means to their future. The original program began in 1986, but has undergone several changes and improvements. In 2006, we introduced a new Power Point system providing a more dynamic and a sharper presentation.

Local 655's New Member Orientation continues to be a model for locals across the country. Those attending the orientation gain insight into their contract rights, dues structure and grievance procedures. We explain our communication tools: The St. Louis Labor Tribune, Action Magazine, UFCW655 Web Site and FYIs, to name a few. The program explains our political involvement, our anti-Wal-Mart campaigns and our organizing purpose. One of our key goals is to instill in new members an appreciation of why membership participation is so important.

A lot of territory is covered during the one-hour program, but it is essential that new members understand what makes our union tick. We conduct new member programs every month in the metropolitan area and on a quarterly basis in the out-state areas of our jurisdiction. Last year, 541 new members



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participated. New members attending the orientation also receive a rebate from their initiation fee for taking the time to learn about their union.

OVER 600 GRIEVANCES SETTLED IN 2006

There were more than 600 grievances settled in 2006 by the Union Representatives of Local 655. Thanks to the on-the-job fielding done by our union shop stewards, there were probably as many problems settled before reaching the point of a written grievance.

Of the written grievances settled, your union officials retrieved \$191,024.13 in back pay and overtime for members. Over \$25,000 in Health & Welfare was awarded and well over \$15,000 paid towards pension benefits.

When you call the Union Hall during business hours, a Local 655 representative will be on hand to help. The Union always has one union representative assigned as the Officer of the Day to field calls and respond to emergencies. Although the representatives pick up their calls regularly from the field we realize you often may need information or help immediately. Every morning the Officer of the Day retrieves calls that were received overnight. Their job is to respond to those calls and direct them to the best point of service if they are unable to address the questions at hand. Remember, we are here to serve you and the more you can be part of the team the stronger we all will be.

Local 655's priority for the future is to keep this union strong. But our strength lies in the strength of our membership, how well you understand how the union can work for you, how well informed you are about your rights and responsibilities and how willing you are to participate in at least one of our union or community-outreach programs.

I challenge each of you to stand with your union, side by side with your fellow union members. I am happy to listen and talk with you. The union needs your strength, your minds and your time so we can come together to meet the challenges ahead. It won't be easy; it never is. But we will survive and grow if we stand together.

An Exclusive Twice Monthly Report For UFCW Local 655 Members & Their Families

LOCAL 655 REPORT

Your Neighborhood Union www.ufcw655.com

Affiliated with United Food & Commercial Workers International Union

Shop Stewards conference sets sights on ways to grow membership participation

Shop stewards are the vital link between Local 655 and its members, and in order to help our stewards be more responsive to our members, a two-day Shop Stewards Seminar last week was designed to give stewards the tools they need to give each and every member the best possible representation.

And to stress the importance Local 655 plays in the international union, the program included a visit to St. Louis by three top UFCW International officers, President Joe Hansen, Director of Collective Bargaining Pat O'Neill and National Field Director in the organizing department and Change-to-Win Vice President GERALYN LUTTY.

The intense program included a variety of skill-developing programs:

- Team Building on the job to help get more union members involved in their union and have their voices heard;
- How to organize and run a strike (a just-in-case class). It was emphasized over and over that every effort will be made to avoid a repeat of the 2003 strike, but knowledge and

preparation is always essential;

- Details of a new negotiating program the local plans to implement in this spring's talk with food retailers;

- The latest twists of Missouri's twisted Workmen's Compensation law that has steadily been decimated with the rules being stacked against injured workers since the Blunt Administration continues to control the Missouri legislature;

- Exciting new information on the campaign by WakeUpWalMart to bring corporate responsibility to the retail giant that threatens thousands of St. Louis food industry jobs – our members' jobs and livelihoods.

The training seminar, normally held in the spring at Lake-of-the-Ozarks, was held Feb. 19 and 20 at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in downtown St. Louis, months early in preparation for the upcoming food negotiations with Schnucks, Dierbergs and Shop 'n Save. The current contract covering almost 10,000 local members expires May 13 and ultimately effects dozens of Local 655 contracts.



UFCW International Union President Joe Hansen speaking at the Local 655 Shop Stewards Conference. At left is Local 655 President Jim Dougherty.

Women's Network targets wellness

The Women's Network would like to focus on a few important issues this year, and we need your help and input for the direction of our committees.

We would like to join the fight against breast cancer by furthering our members' efforts with the Koman Foundation. Help us guide the Network to where we can be most beneficial. Whether it is education, fundraising or hosting events: WE NEED YOU!

The Network is working towards providing mobile mammogram services and flu shots to members this fall, but we can only be successful if we have your help.

Bring your experience and your ideas to our first quarterly meeting on Thursday, March 8 at the Union Hall.

Meeting starts with a "pot luck" dinner, at 6:30 p.m. and a business discussion from 7 to 8 p.m. Please mark your calendars.



Test your trivia

Do you... know the facts about your Union? Know all about college mascots?

Think you're smarter than the average member?

Join us for the first annual trivia night sponsored by Young Workers United.

Members between the ages of 16-35 are invited to test their knowledge of trivia. Bring a team from your store, or a group of friends from several stores to match wits with other Union brothers and sisters.

Teams will consist of six players per table. Entry fee is \$30 per table or \$5 per person. Snacks and beverages will be provided, prizes will be awarded and the festivities promise a fun-filled night.

Date: Wednesday, March 21
Location: Local 655 Union Hall
300 Weidman Road
Ballwin, Mo. 63011

Doors open 6 p.m. Trivia at 7 p.m. Please send completed entry form as soon as possible.

For information call:
Merri Berry at 636-736-2757
Kevin Ryan at 636-736-2766



Member of the month: Debi Loewe, Wonder Bread Thrift Store-Desloge

Local 655 member helps raise funds to fight cancer

Debi Loewe leads a quiet life working in the small town Wonder Bread Thrift Store in Desloge, but in June, Loewe, a member of Local 655, will take to the streets to celebrate life, joining in a 350-mile trek across the state as part of the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life.

She and close friends will walk from one end of Missouri to the next all for the sake of raising funds to help researchers find a cancer cure.

Loewe, of Bonne Terre, got hooked on the idea of joining the walk after her best friend, Carrie Pendley, a three-time cancer survivor, decided she was up to the challenge despite a bout with cancer just last year. Pendley has survived ovarian, breast and brain stem cancer, and is now ready to celebrate life, Loewe said.

Loewe, Pendley's sisters Cathy Phipps of Farmington, Carol Yates of St. Charles, Rhonda Netherton of Altus, Okla. and Pendley's sister-in-law Tammy Myers of Park Hills are ready to celebrate with her.

"We've been sisters-in-laws and friends for 20 years, but should have been sisters," Loewe said. "That's why we named our team 'Sisters for Life,' and Carrie will be our team captain."

The team will take turns walking about 60 miles each day, with two at a time walking the relay that begins June 2 near Loma Linda and ends on June 9 in Cape Girardeau. Overall, they will travel through 11 counties

"Carrie is just really convincing," Loewe said. "And it's a great feeling knowing that I'm helping to find a cure for cancer, because that is something that touches everyone no matter what color, gender, size or shape. Everyone knows someone who has battled cancer."

Loewe and her team have a goal of raising \$20,000. To date, they have barely topped \$1,000. To contribute, contact Loewe at life4sisters@yahoo.com. Let's all wish our union sister good luck!



DEBBIE LOEWE

After reading this page take it to your break room.