

UFCW and Smithfield Foods Launch Nationwide "Feed the Hungry" Program

The UFCW and Smithfield Foods launched a joint Feed the Hungry Program on Monday in New York City. The program is intended to bring much needed assistance to the growing number of people facing hunger and food insecurity in communities nationwide. In fact, the kick-off event was just the first in a multi city tour across America. The UFCW and Smithfield plan to donate at least 20 million servings of food to various food banks over the next three years.



UFCW staff and Smithfield Foods staff meet with Paula Dean to launch joint program to feed the hungry.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that more than 36 million people in the United States, including 12.6 million children, live in households considered to be food insecure. That is more than 1 in 10 households who experience hunger or the risk of hunger.

"The UFCW is committed to ensuring that families across the country have the relief and the opportunities they need to weather the current economic crisis. All across the country UFCW members and their locals are on the frontlines of efforts to improve and strengthen their communities, and this partnership reflects their unwavering commitment to protect and advocate for families during tough times," Joe Hansen said.

This new partnership is about bringing together organizations, including UFCW represented grocery stores, with the resources, the relationships and the know-how to ensure that vulnerable communities across the country have access to well-supplied food banks. **OP**



Members of UFCW Local 75 held a rally in support of the House health care bill in Columbus, Ohio.

House Passes Historic Legislation on Health Care: What Now?

On Saturday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 3962, legislation that makes great strides toward providing quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

The House legislation:

- improves current coverage;
- expands choices with a strong public option;
- makes health care affordable;
- requires employers pay their fair share; and
- does not impose new taxes on working families.

Make sure you call your House member and thank them if they voted for this bill. Then call your Senators and tell them to follow the House's example and pass a bill that ensures all Americans can get quality, affordable health care with the choice of a public option. Call today at 1-888-743-4403. **OP**

UFCW Local 1500 Organizes NYC Roundtable Discussion on Future of the Retail Industry

Recently, local retail employers, policy experts, community and union leaders debated the issues faced by grocery store employees and grocery store operators in a recovering economy. The discussion tackled the ways in which successful grocery businesses can also be community-leading employers.

UFCW members know that retail is the fastest growing industry in the country. To enable the growing numbers employed in retail jobs to achieve the American Dream, UFCW members are pushing back against the Walmart business model that's driven down wages, benefits and standards of living for workers and communities nationwide.

Workers attempting to join the UFCW shared how they are struggling to attain the American Dream. "For me, a union means a voice for workers on the job," said Alfredo Pena. "It means we don't have to ask the boss for things like a raise by ourselves, because we can stand together and have more power to improve our jobs that way."



UFCW Local 1500 joined local retail employers, policy experts, and community leaders in a roundtable discussion.

Pathmark employee and Local 1500 member Ann Marie Griffin spoke about the benefits of having a union at her workplace. "If it was not for the health insurance I receive as a union member," she said, "I would not have been able to have two C-sections that I needed. And because I am a union member my salary has increased over the years. I know that others at non-union stores who are doing the same work I do, for the same amount of years, they do not even come close to what I make."

Business leaders at the roundtable discussed how the union-employer partnership works well to improve their business. Fairway Market Vice President of Human Resources, Charles Farfaglia, said having the UFCW working with his company helps with problem-solving, creates lower turnover rates, and gives employees a sense of security and stability that helps them better perform their jobs.

"When employees are given an unfettered choice, they view working in a union store as desirable," he said. "That actually helps in recruiting new people. Fairway opened a store in Paramus, NJ, last March. We conducted seven job fairs and many people asked if the store was going to be union. All who asked wanted to work in a union store." **OP**

UFCW Local 1208 Activists Train to be Stewards at Tar Heel Plant

Forty activists and new union members from Local 1208 who work at Smithfield's Tar Heel, North Carolina plant attended a steward training session on Sunday, November 8. The diverse and dynamic group is working its way through several training modules which will develop their leadership skills and knowledge of how their new union works. During the session, trainees split up by departments and mapped their workplaces

for safety hazards--an exercise led by the International's Occupational Safety and Health Department. They also learned how to file grievances, and brainstormed different shop floor actions designed to address problems on the job, from dealing with a disrespectful supervisor to addressing favoritism.

"I've been working in Case Ready for five years," says Jewel Smith, one of the prospective stewards.

"I said to myself, if we ever form a union, we can make positive changes and I wanted to be a part of that. I want to be a steward because in Case Ready, it's



Prospective steward Ted Thomas works with his co-workers to map safety hazards in their department.

about 90 percent women, a lot of them are older women. It's a department where the company had a tendency to kind of run over us, but I knew if I stood up, then the rest of us could."

David Simmons, another steward in training, said, "I knew we needed some leadership in the plant. I see having a union and being a steward as an opportunity to do that. We learned the importance of mobilizing during our campaign for a union. As prospective stewards, mobilizing our co-workers is just as important now." **OP**

OnPoint EXTRA: Developing Member Activism to Build the UFCW

Through strong safety and health programs we can develop member skills, increase responsibilities and engagement of our stewards, and hold our employers accountable. We can mobilize members on issues like ergonomics and engage in shop floor actions that empower workers and improve working conditions.



The Sixth National Meatpacking, Food Processing and Poultry Safety and Health Conference featured workshops on making workplaces safer, preventing injuries, recognizing hazards, and rekindling the union spirit.

Ultimately, strong safety and health programs are a vital tool for growing the UFCW. This was the inspiration behind the Sixth National Meatpacking, Food Processing and Poultry Safety and Health Conference held during the last week of October in Council Bluffs, Iowa. More than 200 people attended, and it was the first health and safety conference for nearly two thirds of the participants.

“Activism starts on the shop floor,” said International Vice President and Local 540 President Johnny Rodriguez. “But it’s our mission to orient that activism to grow our union. It begins with signing up

“Stewards and health and safety reps have to be watchful. Problems arise throughout the plant. One way we address them is by having a monthly safety walk through where we evaluate working conditions. We make sure there are no cords lying around, no bare wires, and no holes in the floors, that all the machines have safety guards, and that the floor grates are in order. If you get a safety plan in order, you can prevent injuries before they start.” Michelle Hoskins, Local 227, Tyson



new members and building union density in UFCW represented workplaces. But it also means extending member involvement beyond the shop floor to connect with non-union workers so that they see and value the UFCW difference when it comes to safety and health in their plants.”

When UFCW stewards and rank-and-file safety committee members recognize job hazards and inform co-workers of their right to a safe and healthy workplace, workers learn firsthand how vital it is to have a UFCW voice on the job. When UFCW members get safety training and materials, they see how the UFCW delivers a safer working environment. And when our communities learn that having a UFCW voice on the job can reduce workplace hazards and injury rates, local unions can count on community support in bringing UFCW representation to non-union worksites.

“Health and safety is a big organizing issue,” says

Make Safety a Priority in Organizing Campaigns

- 1) Talk to non-union workers about how unionized workers have a voice in the workplace on safety and health through safety committees and stewards.
- 2) Give non-union workers examples of grievances filed in your plant on safety and health issues or contract language that improves ergonomics or safety and health standards.
- 3) Workers' rights to a safe and healthy workplace have "teeth" in unionized plants because the contract protects workers from retaliation by employers for exercising their rights.
- 4) Safety and health falls under "working conditions" and, therefore, is a mandatory subject of bargaining. Workers in newly organized plants are able to address long-standing safety issues.
- 5) Highlight safety as a priority in your campaign literature, videos, and online materials.
- 6) The best voices on safety and health belong to your safety and health activists! Recruit dynamic members and safety activists to talk to prospective members about the difference a union safety committee makes.

"I just took a workshop on recognizing hazards. I'm in charge of the safety committee at my plant and I wanted to get more familiar with the kind of things myself and the committee should look for. I know that when the company and union work together in trying to keep a safe working environment, it's better for both sides." *Miguel Luna, Local 2, Seaboard*



Kevin Corporon, International Vice President and President of Local 1000A in Ontario, Canada. "In fact, when we survey packing and poultry workers who want to organize, it's the number one issue they raise. They are working in an environment where repetitive motion and other injuries are common. Yet they face pressure to work when they're injured, or they're pressured to not report injuries so they won't lose pay or overtime."

Member activists come in all shapes and sizes. But there are three key aspects for turning activism into growth. First, be sure to encourage members who will stand up to the boss to become stewards and safety and ergo committee members. Second, provide ongoing training for stewards and safety committee members. And, third, demonstrate support for your safety and ergo committees by having local union officers attend committee meetings. **OP**