

Worker Solidarity Results in Major Gains as Local 23 Ratifies Contract with Giant Eagle in Pittsburgh



Local 23 members cast their votes on the new Giant Eagle contract.

After over six weeks of bargaining, Local 23 members ratified a new four-year contract with Giant Eagle. The agreement covers 5,800 UFCW members at 36 stores in Western Pennsylvania and Northern West Virginia.

The new contract includes substantial hourly pay increases; improved access to quality, affordable health benefits; higher pay rates and better vacation benefits for new workers; and a stronger retirement plan for all workers. Local 23 members approved the contract overwhelmingly – at a rate of 6-to-1 in grocery, and 5-to-1 in meat.

"Wage increases will up the standard of living for our members," said Jim D'Alessandro, a bargaining team member and Giant Eagle meat-cutter. "Improvements to the health plan mean members will be able to take their kids to the doctor when they need to, and we have secured the pension so we don't have to worry about living in abject poverty after a lifetime of work."

This resounding victory was made possible by union solidarity and spirit. Throughout the process, workers challenged Giant Eagle customers and the company – the largest supermarket chain in the area – to stand with workers.

"UFCW Local 23 members were facing a number of issues in these negotiations but our membership came together. The new contract is a testament to our solidarity and union spirit," said Tony Helfer, president of Local 23.

Some Giant Eagle franchise stores in the area do not afford the same rights and benefits as the UFCW Local 23 members. Because of that, Local 23 members plan to take the energy and momentum from this bargaining process to work toward raising standards at company stores across the region.

During this round of bargaining, Local 23 made excellent use of social networking tools, including Facebook, to keep members informed and excited about the bargaining process and to keep the pressure on Giant Eagle to negotiate a fair deal. With almost 800 people following the Facebook updates, Local 23's united voice was significantly amplified by online tools – to such an extent that even the local media took notice.

As the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* pointed out in a recent article, the local's decision to start using Facebook for bargaining updates was intended to help members who are geographically far-flung stay involved in the bargaining process. But the page also drew some attention from Giant Eagle's corporate executives – a side effect that seems to have had a positive impact on the bargaining process.

Asked by the *Post-Gazette* about the potential for rogue or undesirable comments on a page that's open to the public, Local 23 President Tony Helfer responded "We don't delete people off because we don't like what they say." Local 23's use of Facebook to advance bargaining goals and give members a forum to voice their opinions is a great example of the benefits social networking tools can have for UFCW locals.

The Giant Eagle bargaining campaign also provided an opportunity for locals across the region to show their unity and learn from one another in order to advance bargaining goals. Several locals, including Local 400, Locals 880, and Local 1059, lent a hand in bargaining, sending staff and representatives to work with members and sit in on negotiations. **OP**

Mott's Update: Workers Continue to Stand Strong for Good Jobs; Support Rolls in from Around the Country



Mott's workers and community allies rally for a fair deal with Dr Pepper Snapple.

Mott's workers in Williamson, N.Y., who were forced out on strike May 23, are continuing to stand strong in the face of unreasonable demands by Dr. Pepper Snapple Group, the parent company of Mott's. At a rally Saturday, hundreds of community members came out to stand in solidarity with the nearly 300 workers who are on strike. Workers and community supporters were joined at the rally by UFCW Executive Vice President and Organizing Director Pat O'Neill, who brought a message of solidarity from locals around the country.

As the strike continues into its second month, the workers are receiving overwhelming support from New York elected officials. In the last week alone, U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer and New York Attorney General and Andrew Cuomo have both sent letters in support of the striking workers and urged Dr. Pepper Snapple to bargain in good faith and act in the best interest of its workers.

Senator Schumer's letter stresses that the current situation "is not in the best interest of the workers, the company or your customers. Therefore, I urge you to again join the workers at the bargaining table in meaningful and good faith negotiations to forge a fair contract."

Attorney General Cuomo's letter expresses deep concern about the impact of the strike on workers, their families, and the local economy, and urges the company to preserve "high-skill, good-paying" jobs by coming to a "fair and equitable agreement."

UFCW locals around the country are taking action in advance of the July 4th holiday weekend to educate consumers about how Mott's is hurting workers and communities, and encourage them to pass over Mott's Apple Sauce; Hawaiian Punch; Margaritaville; Mr. and Mrs. T Products; Welch's Grape Juice 64 oz; Rose's Lime Juice; Snapple cans; Mott's Fruitsations; Mott's Garden Cocktail; ReaLemon/ReaLime; Holland House; and Clamato for alternative products.

For more information about the ongoing Mott's actions, visit www.NoBadApples.org. On the web site, you can find information about in-store actions, upload a support picture to the Mott's Facebook page, and print out labels to tape to Mott's products in your grocery store, which will let other shoppers know about Mott's actions! **OP**

July 4th Reminder: Eat Union!

Independence Day weekend is a great time to remind yourself to eat union! Whether you're throwing some Oscar Meyer hot dogs on the grill (with French's mustard or Heinz Ketchup!), savoring fresh fruit with Redi-Whip, enjoying a Miller Lite, or snacking on Peter Pan peanut butter or Wise chips and dip, your holiday weekend celebration is the perfect chance to support your UFCW brothers and sisters and **eat union**. To learn more about union-made snacks, add "Ufcw SnackUnion" as a friend on Facebook. The page, maintained by Local 1776, is full of great information about union-made foods and news UFCW members can use. And to find a more comprehensive list of foods made by UFCW members, visit

http://www.ufcw.org/about UFCW/ufcw_made_products/. **OP**

Due to the holiday weekend, the next issue of OnPoint will arrive in your inbox on Wednesday of next week. Have a great 4th of July!