



BOWL WITH UFCW MICHIGAN

Local 876 members, their family and friends are invited to an evening of bowling, pizza, pop, and prizes at the following UFCW Michigan events.

Stewards in the Midland and Allen Park areas are encouraged to contact the Local 876 office for flyers and sign-up forms for use in promoting the event and generating participation among their coworkers.

MIDLAND VALLEY LANES

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5

6:30 - 9:00 P.M.

The \$10 per person UFCW ticket includes two games of bowling, shoe rental, pizza, pop, and prizes.

ALLEN PARK THUNDERBOWL LANES

TUESDAY, MAY 18

6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

The \$10 per person UFCW tickets includes two hours of bowling, shoes, unlimited video games, pizza and pop and prizes. A \$5 non-bowler ticket is also available.



876 Horace Brown Drive
Madison Heights, MI 48071

Roger Robinson
President

Rick Blocker
Secretary/Treasurer

George Misko
Recorder

1-800-321-6406
www.ufcw876.org

UFCW 876 STEWARD EDITION

United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 876 • Vol. 7 No. 3 • March 2010

We are Stronger When We Speak with One Voice

Local 876 Stewards Attend Kroger Unity Seminar

Over 1,000 Kroger stewards and UFCW members from five states, including more than 200 Local 876 members, attended the first ever UFCW Region 4 Kroger Unity Seminar. Held in Dayton, Ohio in early March, the seminar was developed under the leadership of Local 876 president, Roger Robinson, and his fellow presidents from Locals 75, 227, 700, 951, and 1059. Meeting in 2009, the group determined a more unified approach was necessary in negotiating with Kroger, the nation's largest traditional retail grocer.

"We know we are stronger and more powerful when we stand together and speak with one voice," Robinson said. "Therefore, we

"The seminar was very informative. We know Kroger is a profitable company and workers are a big part of that success. It is good to know that so many people are working together in this effort. A big concern is protecting our health care, with wages and pensions following closely behind. Our job is to communicate how important these negotiations are and the impact our success will have in our communities. We need to get out there and talk to not only our co-workers but our community."

Kathy Hammond
Kroger # 716, Macomb, MI

decided the best way for each local to achieve its goal of leaving negotiations with a fair and just contract, was for us to take a unified approach to contract bargaining with Kroger over the next two years."

The group's overall unity plan

"The seminar was an effective tool for all the stewards of Region 4. Together we sent Kroger the message we want a fair contract from a company that is doing well. Especially in Michigan, where Farmer Jack's business went to Kroger. We appreciate our jobs and each of us works very hard. We are loyal, but loyalty runs two ways. Workers deserve the consideration of good wages and benefits with a fair contract. We want a piece of the pie, not the entire pie. When the company succeeds, we all succeed. I give my best everyday on the job. I hope Kroger does the same at the bargaining table."

Thomas George
Kroger #487, Troy

includes an ongoing newsletter; contract application and interpretation information exchanges; the sharing of bargaining data, ideas, and strategies; and additional joint membership training sessions like the seminar.

"Cooperative training sessions serve as important reminders that we are a part of something much bigger and more powerful than this local union, and that we are not in this alone," Robinson said. "They also give the UFCW the opportunity to provide a large number of stewards and members with information, making sure everyone hears the same message and that we are on the same page, united in our approach and communication."

Continued on the next page

Seminar Helps Prepare Stewards for Kroger Bargaining

Continued from previous page

Participants at the Unity Seminar heard from UFCW top officers and staff, who didn't spend time bashing Kroger, but focused on educating stewards on the importance of banding together to build worker power to achieve their contract bargaining goals and make their union stronger.

"Our basic bargaining goals of decent wage increases, protecting health insurance, safeguarding pension, and real job protections within in the contract, are reasonable, but won't be easy to bargain," Larry Plumb, UFCW Region Four Director, said. "The economy and non-union competition will make these goals tough to achieve, which is why we need to work together and build worker power as we prepare to face Kroger at the bargaining table."

UFCW International Executive Vice President and Director of Organizing, Pat O'Neal, told the group that despite the economy, Kroger is doing well, but

"The seminar was awesome! I feel motivated now that I have more insight on the other locals efforts in working together for the same purpose. I didn't realize there were so many people all fighting for the same thing. Our union is stronger than a lot of other unions I know about. In fact, if other unions were united like ours, they would have been stronger and more successful. There is unity in the UFCW - I can feel it!"

Penny Darling
Kroger #649, Orion Township

"It was nice to see so many people with positive thoughts and good ideas that will improve our strength and our union. I liked the local union breakout sessions most because I was able to hear what other Kroger members had to say and what they thought was important. What stands out for me is the effort to engage new hires and young workers. Getting this group involved is important because many are unfamiliar or don't have a positive outlook. We need to change that false perception."

Chad Franchy
Kroger #445, St. Clair Shores

that fact alone won't help workers' achieve their bargaining goals.

"When you look at the numbers -- market share, sales, and income, Kroger workers' clearly deserve more, but you don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate," he said. "Kroger's goal is to keep wages as low as possible and profits as high as possible. For Kroger it's not personal, it's business. For the UFCW, it's personal. For us, bargaining is about putting food on the table, and a roof over our heads. It's about being able to go to the doctor, and maybe having a little left over to go on vacation. For the UFCW, it's about making life better for our members, which is why we have to negotiate as aggressively and effectively as possible."

O'Neal went on to explain how unity bargaining, with its emphasis on people power, is the union's most effective and potentially aggressive bargaining tool.

"When Kroger comes to the bargaining table, they come as a whole company with all of their resources. They have the power of money on their side, but the union has people power on its side," he said. "When Local 876 comes to the bargaining table, it comes as 876 united, with

hundreds of thousands of Kroger members across the country on their side and 1.3 million UFCW members on their side. We also have our neighbors and community groups on our side, that gives us even more power. Banding together makes us stronger, and if we are stronger at the bargaining table, our members will have better lives, that's what unity bargaining is all about."

The UFCW International Director of Negotiated Benefits, Steve Hendrickson, who has sat across the bargaining table from Kroger on many occasions, warned stewards what to expect from Kroger as their negotiations near.

"Kroger always tries to take the pulse of its workforce by gathering information from store managers regarding what UFCW members are saying," he said. "For negotiations to be successful, it's important that they hear messages of strength, unity and determination. This is the secret to bargaining success. It's not the union president or international union staff, it's the members in stores and stewards. You are on the frontlines and your actions and the messages you send to Kroger will make the difference in these negotiations."

As President Signs Historic Health Care Reform, Opponents Vow Battle Far From Over

Due to the commitment of President Obama and Democratic members of congress, and the hard work of dedicated Americans, including thousands of union members, sweeping health care reform legislation that represents a huge step forward in the struggle to ensure all Americans have access to affordable health care became law in March.

"While the health care reform legislation signed by the president is significant and extremely positive, the health care battle is far from over," Roger Robinson, Local 876's president, said. "As working families across the country were celebrating this long overdue reform of our nation's health care system, anti-worker politicians and their supporters vowed to use all their resources to strip Americans of their new health care protections."

Before the ink was even dry on the legislation, Republican members of Congress, all of whom voted against reform, and their allies began a campaign of misinformation trying to fool Americans into believing health care reform will negatively impact them and destroy the nation's economy.

"Those blasting health care reform are not acting out of the best interests of working families or this nation, rather their own personal self-interest," Robinson said. "They are looking at the 2010 mid-term elections, hoping to advance their own political careers and protect the bottom line of companies that support their political campaigns."

Recently, it was learned that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce plans to spend \$50 million in this fall's election to attack, misrepresent, and lie about the new health care reform law in the hopes of convincing voters to support Republicans. The

Chamber's new push, the *Wall Street Journal* describes as "an aggressive strategy to blunt the impact of the new law," adds to a more than \$144 million ad campaign the Chamber mounted on behalf of its business membership against passage of health care reform in the last year.

"We fought hard for health care reform, and we need to fight to protect these gains by dispelling rumors being spread about the legislation and supporting politicians who stood with us during this fight," Robinson said. "Don't be fooled, this legislation, while not perfect, is good for working families and good for this county."

It is important for union members to understand that under the new law they will be able to keep their health care coverage won at the bargaining table. Additionally, the tax on health care benefits in high-cost plans has been reduced by 85 percent and delayed until 2018.

In addition, the new law:

- Ends insurance companies' most abusive practices, including denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, beginning in September for children and 2014 for adults.

- Eliminates annual and lifetime limits on benefits, ends discriminatory premiums for women and requires government review of excessive rate increases.

- Lowers health care costs for working families by creating new health insurance exchanges to increase competition and provides tax credits and cost-sharing assistance for middle- and lower-income families to purchase insurance.

- Helps seniors purchase prescription drugs, closes the Medicare prescription drug "donut hole" and ensures seniors get free preventive care under Medicare.

Health Care Reform Timeline

The following is a timeline of when major components of the new health reform legislation take effect.

Immediately

- Tax credits for small businesses providing health coverage to employees.
- Seniors will receive \$250 rebate to help with prescription drug coverage.
- Pre-existing conditions must be covered.

9/23/10

- All kids will be covered.
- Insurance companies can't rescind coverage when people become ill.
- Lifetime limits on coverage prohibited.
- Children can stay on their parent's insurance until age 26.

1/1/11

- Premium payment reformed 80%-85% for medical care.
- Free Medicare preventative care.

By 2014

- Total ban on pre-existing condition denials.
- Health exchanges open.
- End to annual limits on benefits.