

The Official Publication of UFCW Local 135 Oct-Dec 2020

The WORKER

A VOICE for WORKING FAMILIES



Inside this issue of The WORKER

- More CVS Workers Join Local 135 • CVS Organizing Blitz
- Local 135's 2020 in Review • Michael McGee Appointed to E-Board
- As COVID-19 Numbers Increase So Do Health Risks for Frontline Workers
- F4L Store Huddles • New UFCW Local 135 Website • Holiday Toy Distribution

The Worker

*A Magazine for the
Members and Retirees
of UFCW Local 135*



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Cover photo: Workers and UFCW Local 135 organizers outside newly organized CVS Pharmacy in Spring Valley

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF THE WORKER

- 3 - UFCW Local 135's 2020 in Review**
- 4 - CVS Pharmacy in Spring Valley Organized!**
- 5 - UFCW Local 135 Conducts Organizing Blitz at Non-Union CVS stores**
- 6 - As COVID-19 Numbers Increase So Do Health Risks for Frontline Workers**
- 8 - Labor Council Food Distros and Holiday Toy Drive**
- 10 - Food4Less Contract Update Huddles**
- 12 - Michael McGee Appointed to Local 135 Executive Board**
- 12 - New UFCW Local 135 Website is Now Live**

- UFCW LOCAL 135 MISSION -

The mission of UFCW Local 135 is to improve the lives of working families and to bring justice to the workplace. The UFCW is one union with one voice. We are committed to changing the places where we work and the communities where we live so that all workers have the opportunity to reach the American Dream.

UFCW members are from many backgrounds and walks of life, but come together as the UFCW for the shared goal of achieving the American Dream. The UFCW is about workers helping workers improve their standard of living. When we unite for better wages, benefits, and working conditions, we help protect and improve the livelihoods of all workers.

MISSION VALLEY OFFICE

2001 Camino Del Rio South
San Diego, CA. 92108
Monday - Friday
8am-12pm and 1pm-5pm

NORTH COUNTY OFFICE

323A South Rancho Santa Fe Rd.
San Marcos, CA. 92078
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday
8am-12pm and 1pm-5pm

(619) 298-7772

Membership – Extension 6
Insurance & Pension – Extension 8
Grievance & Contract – Extension 9

WWW.UFCW135.COM

**Social Media:
Facebook, Instagram
& Twitter: @ufcw135**

CLOSED FOR UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

Memorial Day: May 31
Independence Day: July 5
Labor Day: September 6
Veterans Day: November 11

THE HIGHLIGHTS & LOWLIGHTS OF 2020

By Todd Walters

2020 was one of the most difficult years in the history of UFCW Local 135. The pandemic was hard on our members and on our staff, but we persevered and continued to do the work necessary to service our members. Here are just some of the highlights and lowlights from 2020.

In January we stood in solidarity and picketed with members of Teamsters Local 542 who were on strike against Republic Services. Due to support from their members and the community they ratified a new contract. January also saw the beginning of the remodel of our San Marcos office and the hiring of new Union Representatives Tim Brugger and Ricardo Corona.

In February, UFCW Local 135 member and Vons pharmacist, Seung Oh, was appointed to California State Board of Pharmacy.

March was the beginning of the pandemic. During that intense month our San Marcos remodel was completed but due to pandemic restrictions we were forced to close both offices to walk in traffic, but we continued to service the members over the phone. March also saw Kaiser Permanente Zion's UBT receive the Going Above and Beyond Award from KP Southern California Region Pharmacy. Our members at Viejas Casino, Central Meat, as well as our dental offices and airport retailers, were laid off due to the pandemic. Weekly food distributions also began in March, helping feed San Diegans in need. Hazard Pay begins for some bargaining units.

In April, our Union Reps began safety audits of locations to make sure they were following mandated safety protocols. April also saw our first Mem-

bership and New Member Meetings conducted via video conference on Zoom. The development of our new website began.

In May our members at two locations in Santee dealt with some disgusting racial incidents that made national news as customers on two different occasions wore a KKK style hood and a mask with a Nazi swastika on it. Kelly Tanaka was promoted to Grievance Director. Kroger eliminates Hazard Pay and others soon follow. Local 135 handbills workers at numerous nonunion grocers throughout San Diego County. In the wake of civil disturbances around La Mesa's Police Department headquarters, Vons 2093 was looted, vandalized and set on fire, no members were hurt during the incident.

Early June marked the reopening of Vons 2093 as well as the reopening of both union offices to walk ins.

July saw San Diego County Supervisor Kristin Gaspar blame grocery workers, in a public meeting, for spreading COVID-19. In November, she lost her reelection.

In August, former UFCW Local 135 Retirees Club President, Joe Adesso passed away at 93. UFCW Local 135 joined forces with Local 324 to organize a town hall webinar on the HEROES Act with 49th Congressional District Representative Mike Levin. Membership Department Head Lindsey Bensinger organizes a Kids Halloween Coloring Contest for the children and grandchildren of Local 135 members. We hired Leslie Cervantes from Albertsons in Lemon Grove as the newest Insurance Specialist.

In September we conducted bedrock audits that determine the amount of full timers at certain companies. Over



UFCW Local 135 President Todd Walters

100 members gained full time status. The California Board of Pharmacy adopted regulations that reinforce standards set out by SB 1442, the No Pharmacist Left Alone law, that will help prevent fatigue and human errors in pharmacies. UFCW pushed hard for these regulations.

In October we held a special meeting to update our union bylaws, bringing us in compliance with UFCW International.

In November UFCW Local 135 participated in an early morning Election Day rally in Downtown San Diego. I wrote a letter to Cal/OSHA board calling for approval of COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standard. After anti-union activities took place at a nonunion CVS store that wanted to go union, UFCW Local 135 Union Reps and Organizers handbilled every nonunion CVS location in San Diego County, twice in one week.

December saw workers at CVS in Spring Valley vote to join the union. Southern California UFCW's win \$1,000,000 arbitration case against CVS Pharmacy, funds are divided equally amongst qualifying members.

2020 may have been UFCW Local 135's roughest year but we continued to do the work necessary to support and service the essential members of this union.

MORE CVS WORKERS JOIN LOCAL 135 FOR A BETTER LIFE

CVS Pharmacy in Spring Valley Organized!

On Dec. 22, workers at a CVS Pharmacy store in Spring Valley, Calif., voted to join UFCW Local 135 for workplace protections during this pandemic, joining colleagues at 57 other CVS Pharmacy stores that are represented by the local. The vote was conducted online and tallied by a representative of the National Labor Relations Board.

These workers joined our union family because they were concerned about workplace safety conditions as COVID-19 cases continue to spike in California. These workers also want quarantine pay if they get sent home, free coronavirus testing, hazard pay, seniority, a grievance procedure, and other needed benefits. Now, they will have the opportunity to address these concerns at the bargaining table.

This worker victory at Spring Valley CVS Pharmacy comes on the heels of a blatant anti-union cam-

paign initiated by the company. To disrupt the organizing drive at the Spring Valley store, CVS hired an anti-worker consulting firm, posted anti-union propaganda in the breakroom, interrogated employees, and frequently utilized intimidation tactics in the hopes of changing the minds of the majority of employees at that location that wanted to join our union. Although the company attempted to break

the fledgling organizing drive early in the process, the workers ultimately prevailed.

“In the midst of this pandemic, workers see the value in belonging to a union,” said UFCW Local 135 President Todd Walters. “Today, the workers at CVS Pharmacy in Spring Valley have chosen to be represented by UFCW Local 135. This is a victory for these essential workers that are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic!”



UFCW LOCAL 135 CONDUCTS ORGANIZING BLITZ AT NON-UNION CVS STORES

All Non-Union CVS Pharmacy Locations throughout San Diego County Targeted

In November of 2020, after workers at a nonunion CVS Pharmacy in Spring Valley reached out to UFCW Local 135, we conducted a series of organizing blitzes at all non-union locations in San Diego County.

Local 135 has over fifty CVS Pharmacy locations under our union jurisdiction. There are about another two-dozen freestanding, non-union stores throughout San Diego County.

After unjust disciplinary actions took place at that non-union CVS location, employees there reached out

to Local 135 to help them organize. The company became aware of this and immediately got to work on trying to bust this fledgling organizing drive through anti-union intimidation tactics.

To counterbalance the blatant anti-union actions of CVS, Local 135 conducted organizing blitzes at every nonunion CVS location in San Diego County. Twice in one week. Teams of Union Organizers and Representatives talked to employees, shared fliers, handed out business cards, and gauged the employees' interest in collective bargaining.

UFCW Local 135 will continue to hold conversations with non-union CVS Pharmacy employees in San Diego County to help them determine their future as working people. The choice to unionize is up to them.



STRONGER PROTECTIONS AND HAZARD PAY MUST BE IMPLEMENTED

As COVID-19 Numbers Increase So Do Health Risks for Frontline Workers

By Todd Walters

In San Diego and throughout California, COVID-19 cases are rapidly increasing, putting our state's frontline workers more at risk than ever before. These essential, frontline workers continue to show up for our communities in the face of this growing danger with more than 20,000 COVID-19 deaths statewide with over 1000 in San Diego County. More of our friends, neighbors, and family are getting exposed or sick every day. Among the frontline workers who face the gravest of risks are grocery, pharmacy, and food workers who often interact with thousands of customers daily.

Throughout this crisis, our access to food has been essential, and it is made possible because of the serious risks these workers are willing to take to keep our grocery, pharmacy, and retail stores stocked and open. As the risks from COVID-19 spike to historic levels, it is time for the CEOs of every grocery chain in California, companies like Ralphs, Food4Less, Albertsons, Vons, CVS, and Rite Aid, to step up to strength-

en safety protections and guarantee hazard pay for all of these frontline workers – union and non-union alike.

As the union for more than 13,000 workers in pharmacies, grocery stores, and many other essential businesses across San Diego county, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 135 is calling for immediate action from these companies and their CEOs. Despite the growing danger from COVID-19, many of the CEOs of the largest chains seem more interested in protecting their shareholders, than essential frontline workers and the community they serve.

The fact is that many companies like Ralphs and CVS ended hazard pay months ago; seemingly ignoring that this pandemic was not over, and the risks had not gone away. The brutal truth is that grocery workers continue to get sick and die from COVID-19. A new Harvard study found that 1 in 5 grocery workers had COVID-19, with most workers showing no symptoms. Additionally, a new report confirms there have al-



ready been over 130 grocery worker deaths and thousands of grocery, pharmacy and retail workers infected or exposed to the virus.

Here in San Diego County, hundreds of our union's members have been infected and one has died. Our members and other workers continue to carry the crippling fear of not only becoming infected, but also the real possibility that they will bring the virus home. Based on our most recent 2020 survey of America's grocery and retail workers, the number one concern they cite is not only their fear of catching COVID-19 but exposing a loved one.

Positive COVID-19 cases amongst our membership has gone up exponentially the last couple of months with November being the worst





to date. And December is already shaping up to be even worse. From customers not wearing face coverings to management not limiting store occupancy to co-workers getting sick in large numbers, these essential workers face an uphill battle to keep themselves and their families safe and healthy. Though there have been signs of hope at the store level with some managers being more pro-active than others, it's at the corporate level where many problems begin.

A truly concerning development is that even as this pandemic rages on and the risks workers face grow, America's food and retail companies, including Kroger, parent company of Ralphs and Food4Less, continue to authorize billions in stock buybacks for their wealthy shareholders. What

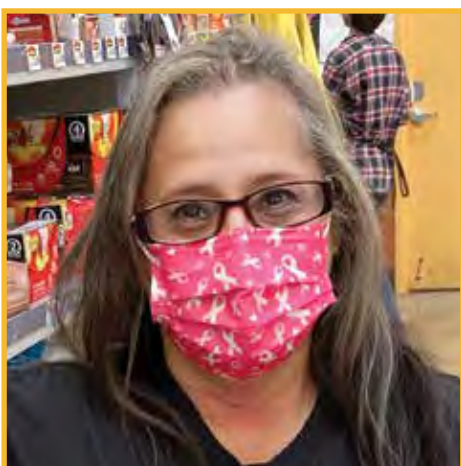
makes this so outrageous is that these same companies continue to ignore the danger their own employees are facing on the frontlines of this pandemic and are refusing to restore hazard pay as the danger persists.

Even worse, across the country we are seeing safety measures ignored with no enforcement of mask wearing, social distancing, or other essential protections. Safety measures that not only protect these frontline workers, but our communities.

With the risks of this pandemic on the rise, we are urging every grocery store and pharmacy in California to guarantee free COVID-19 testing and PPE for their workers, provide paid sick leave to all sick or exposed workers, immediately reinstate haz-

ard pay or implement it if never given, and freeze all stock buybacks until this pandemic is under control. In addition, these companies must stop refusing to disclose how many of their workers have been exposed to COVID-19. Our community, and these workers, deserve to know the truth.

The time has come for companies like Ralphs, Food4Less, Albertsons, Vons, CVS, Rite Aid and all of the others to do more and stop ignoring the pandemic nightmare we are all living through. The simple truth is this: We will only get through this crisis together, and that begins with every one of our grocery and retail companies putting the safety of workers, customers, and all our families first, not the returns of shareholders.



LABOR COUNCIL FOOD DISTROS



AND HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE



F4L



STORE HUDDLES

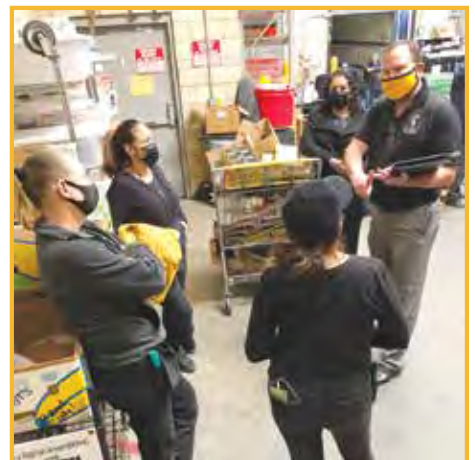
w/UFCW LOCAL 135'S LEADERSHIP TEAM



In early December 2020, UFCW Local 135's leadership team and Union Reps visited every Food4Less location in San Diego County to discuss contract negotiations face to face with members. The one-year F4L contract extension ends in March 2021 and leadership was there to receive input from members and get them involved to Fight 4 More!

Local 135 President Todd Walters emphasized to our Food4Less members that they must come together, get informed, and organize amongst themselves at the store level. The more pressure employees put on management to increase their wages and benefits the more leverage there will be to fight at the negotiating table.

Our hardworking Food4Less members have been essential during the pandemic. They deserve dignity and respect from Kroger for the job they have done and continue to do under difficult circumstances. A fair contract that values the work they perform will go a long way in showing that the company truly cares about their employees.



Essential Workers
FIGHTING 4 BETTER
- PAY!
- SAFETY!
- SCHEDULING!



MICHAEL MCGEE APPOINTED TO LOCAL 135 EXECUTIVE BOARD

First Member from CVS Pharmacy on E-Board

By Brent E. Beltrán

In November, UFCW Local 135 appointed Michael McGee as a Vice President to the Executive Board of the union. Michael fills the position previously held by Theresa Jacques who retired after working for 29 years at Rite Aid.

Michael is a Pharmacy Clerk at CVS Pharmacy 8842 in El Cajon with five years of UFCW Local 135 union service. He will be the first member from CVS to join the Executive Board. Michael is also a Union Steward at his location that is always ready and willing to help his co-workers and support his union. He's a true leader that his fellow members can depend on.

Michael was very happy to be asked to apply to become a Vice President on the E-Board. He was somewhat surprised after being recommended out of the blue by his Union Rep Chris Lopez.

When asked about what interested him in being a part of the Executive Board, Michael responded by saying "This goes beyond what I can do at the store level. It's an opportunity to do something greater for the union community."

Though he has only been a member of Local 135 for five years, Michael has a forty-year history of being a union member. Some of his first experiences of being in a union was in Colorado where he was in a construction union in the late 1970's.

In solidarity actions supporting striking Coors Brewing workers in Golden, Colorado, Michael recalls getting clubbed and beat up by law enforcement. This only instilled in him a deeper desire to support the union movement.

After moving to Los Angeles, he became a member of the Screen Actors Guild and the union for audio engineers where he worked on various Hollywood movies, TV shows, and projects.

Michael was raised by very liberal parents that encouraged him to support working people. When he was twelve years-old he worked with immigrant workers from Mexico. He remembers the bad working conditions they had to work under and the blatant racism they experienced. This was an early example to him of the need for workers to collectively organize themselves to stand up for their rights.

All of these experiences have helped him in his position as a Union Steward at his location. He understands the plight of his co-workers, the power they have when they come together, and the strength they have as a union. He uses these experiences to champion the rights of his co-workers, becoming a positive example for all Union Stewards, regardless of bargaining unit.

But unionism isn't the only love in Michael's life. He's been married for 32 years and has four adult children, the youngest of whom still



lives at home. His love also extends to the arts. Michael is an avid artist whose work is an explosion of color and abstract Cubism along the lines of Picasso with a little Basquiat thrown in the mix.

But his art is not strictly two dimensional. He's also a musician that collects guitars, a builder of sound studios, an audio engineer that produces, mixes and masters the recordings of various bands, and the owner of a multi-media art/record company called Cynykyl Productions Limited that recently put out its 102nd album. Michael is a true renaissance artist constantly producing art in its varied forms.

UFCW Local 135 is honored to have an Executive Board Vice President like Michael McGee. He brings all of the experiences he's endured through his life as a union member and artist to our union. And we are all better for it.

Congratulations on your appointment, Michael! We look forward to your continued service as a member of this mighty union!

"This goes beyond what I can do at the store level. It's an opportunity to do something greater for the union community."

NEW UFCW LOCAL 135 WEBSITE IS NOW LIVE

Over the past year, with the help of Cathy Tran of ArreolaTran Design, UFCW Local 135 has been working on redesigning a brand new website for our members. The website went live at the end of January and features an easy to navigate interface with all of the relevant info our members need at their fingertips. In addition to the previous content we have added sections for the Retirees Club, social media posts, the press and more. We've also updated sections to include more resources, recent contracts, union officers and staff, and other extras. Though it was a major undertaking we are very pleased with how it turned out. We hope you are too.

WWW.UFCW135.COM



- UFCW LOCAL 135 FIGHTS FOR THE MEMBERSHIP! -

51 members of Local 135 were **RETURNED TO WORK** in 2020!
\$127,360 AWARDED to **398** part-time **CVS MEMBERS** thru arbitration!
\$44,961 in **BACK PAY AWARDED** to **MEMBERS** in 2020!

UNION WORKERS HAVE RIGHTS! WEINGARTEN RIGHTS



*Weingarten Rights are federal rights for union workers.
Protect yourself! Call for your union representative!*

Read to Your Supervisor or Just Ask for Your Union Rep

If this discussion, meeting or telephone call could in any way be related to my being disciplined or terminated or affect any of my working conditions, I exercise my federal rights and hereby request that my union representative be present. Without their presence, I choose not to participate in this discussion or meeting. Please do not request that I waive this right.

WHAT IS THE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE?

- 1) If you think your rights under the contract have been violated, the first step is to discuss the matter with your union representative and file a grievance if necessary.
- 2) Your union representative will mediate and investigate on your behalf to help remedy your situation.
- 3) After a resolution has been reached all parties move forward to work together in enforcing the conduct and provisions of the contract.

**UFCW LOCAL 135 REPRESENTATIVES
ARE HERE TO HELP YOU!**

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE IN THE WORKPLACE!

If you have questions about your contract or have issues at your worksite, call your Union Rep or the Representation & Contract Enforcement Department at:

(619) 298-7772 Ext. 9

Grievances **MUST** be filed in person at either union office. Please do **NOT** email or contact the union on social media for grievances or member issues.

It is each member's responsibility to review and understand your company's employment policies.
PLEASE READ YOUR EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK.

MEMBERSHIP DEPARTMENT

UFCW Local 135's Membership Department focuses on day-to-day union operations for our members. Contact them for joining the union, withdrawal cards, promotions, address changes, transfers, and discount tickets.

~ Membership Department (619) 298-7772, Ext. 6 ~

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

February 16 / April 20

July 20 / October 19

6pm

NEW MEMBER MEETINGS

February 3 / May 5

August 4 / November 3

9am or 6pm

\$50 rebate to new member attendees.

Meetings last about an hour and will take place online with Zoom until further notice.

For Zoom links, email info@ufcw135.com

DISCOUNTED THEME PARK AND MOVIE TICKETS

As a courtesy to members, Local 135 usually provides discounted tickets to theme parks and movie theaters like:

LEGOLAND, SAN DIEGO ZOO & SAFARI PARK, SEA WORLD, MAGIC MOUNTAIN, KNOTT'S BERRY FARM, AMC THEATRES & READING CINEMAS

Due to the coronavirus pandemic we have stopped all ticket sales. When movie theaters and theme parks reopen we will resume sales again.

DO YOU KNOW ANY RECENT HIRES AT YOUR COMPANY THAT HAVE NOT JOINED UFCW LOCAL 135 YET?

If so, let them know that if they've been hired within the last 30 days they can easily join via text link. By joining through a text link, they avoid coming into the office and there's no money down on their initiation fee. They can check to see if they qualify to receive a personal text-to-join link by calling UFCW Local 135's Membership Department.

Have you recently gotten married, divorced or had kids?

If so, you may want to change your **DEATH BENEFIT BENEFICIARY DESIGNATION.**

Call (619) 298-7772, Ext. 8 to find out who your beneficiary is. To make changes, a form can be mailed to your address or you can download it at scufcwfund.com. Just go to Health Care, click on Forms and Documents, and then click Death Benefits.

Keep Your Info Current

- Have you changed your last name or phone number recently?
- Do you have a new address?
- Are you going on leave or moving out of the state?

Call the Membership Dept. to make any changes to your contact info or employment status.

INSURANCE & PENSION DEPARTMENT

As a member of UFCW Local 135, you may be eligible for benefits provided through the UFCW Trust Funds. There are different eligibility requirements depending on which benefit program you fall under. Your eligible dependents may also be covered as they meet the Fund requirements for eligibility. The Trust Funds provide health & welfare benefits including medical, prescription drug, dental, vision, chiropractic, mental health, pension, death benefits & COBRA continuation of benefits.

If you have questions regarding your insurance benefits or pension, call UFCW Local 135's **Insurance & Pension Department** at: **(619) 298-7772 Ext. 8**

Southern California UFCW Unions and Food Employers Joint Benefit Fund (Food Trust)

(877) 284-2320 www.scufcwfund.com

Southern California UFCW Unions and Drug & General Sales Employers (Drug & General Sales Trust)

(877) 999-8329 www.ufcwdrugtrust.org

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UFCW Local 135 - The Worker
2001 Camino Del Rio South
San Diego, CA 92108-3603

UFCW LOCAL 135 has a membership of around **13,000 WORKERS** and nearly **7,000 RETIREES** throughout **SAN DIEGO** and **IMPERIAL COUNTIES**.

52% OF OUR MEMBERS ARE WOMEN AND 48% ARE MEN

UFCW LOCAL 135 is part of America's **LARGEST FOOD AND RETAIL UNION**, **UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS** which represents over **1.3 MILLION WORKERS** across the U.S.



UFCW LOCAL 135 members consist of workers in various fields, including **GROCERY & RETAIL, HEALTH, PHARMACY & DENTAL, MEAT & SUGAR PROCESSING, CASINO, and CANNABIS.**

UFCW LOCAL 135's REPRESENTED COMPANIES



UFCW LOCAL 135 IS A PROUD MEMBER OF THE



SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COUNTIES LABOR COUNCIL