

Merri Berry's new task indicative of Local 655's commitment to our members, others

By **DAVID COOK**
President



COOK

Local 655 received yet another compliment this past week that reflects positively on our Union, our staff and our commitment to not only our members but also to workers throughout Missouri.

Merri Berry, a 35-year Local 655 member serving the past 11 years as a staff member, has been invited to become Political Director for the Missouri AFL-CIO. Her job will be to educate union members and their families about critical issues facing Missouri's workers.

Her initial task will be to focus on fighting the phony right-to-work, paycheck protection and prevailing wage legislations that are now working their way through the Missouri legislature. Right-to-work has passed out of the House of Representatives and is now waiting to be taken up by the Senate, probably this week as you read this.

Merri has served Local 655 as a Union Representative servicing stores, Director of Servicing, Director of Organizing, last year as our Political Director, and most recently as an organizer. That meant a lot of her time last year was spent in Jefferson City. As a result of her excellent work with legislators, the State Labor Council invited Merri to use her political skills on a broader stage. When we were approached, we immediately agreed.

The new challenge is perfect for Merri; she's doing what she's come to love – politics.

Her selection is yet another indication of how well Local 655 is respected, and considered a leader, in our state Labor Movement.

It's not the first time a staff member has been selected to fill an important role in helping the larger Labor Movement.

A few examples: Former President Jack Valenti became a UFCW International Vice President, former Union Representative and then Director of Organizing Bob Kelley went on to become President of the St. Louis Labor Council and then back as President of Local 655; Secretary-Treasurer David Politte served as chief bargainer for the UFCW in negotiations with IBC for all UFCW locals across the country; and just this past week, I was selected by the AFL-CIO as one of only two American retail union leaders to participate in a summit with labor leaders from across the globe to discuss retail issues that impact workers worldwide. These are only a few examples of Local 655 members/staff that have been selected for additional responsibilities.

That is a credit to you, our members, for the support of, and confidence in, your Union.

That Local 655 is first committed to the well being of our members and then to the rest of the Labor Movement is spotlighted by our staff involvement in other important positions/efforts. It's something everyone can be proud of.

We wish Merri well in her new challenge. We are confident she will do a great job.

AN EXCLUSIVE TWICE MONTHLY REPORT FOR

UNION PROUD

UFCW 655
a VOICE for working America

UFCW 655 MEMBERS & THEIR FAMILIES

www.ufcw655.com

Eschenbrenner elected to E-Board

Says 'Let your voice be heard; be part of your Union'



ESCHENBRENNER

Scott Eschenbrenner, a 32-year member employed at Dierbergs Marketplace, says he's always been a solid Union supporter, but as the newest member of the Local 655 Executive Board, that's changed.

"I've always been involved, but now I want to do more. I feel like being elected to the Executive Board has empowered me. Being the 17th Vice President on the Board presents me with opportunities to help our Union grow," Eschenbrenner said. "The 'Union Strong' buttons are more important, the job is more important, the working conditions of my coworkers are more important. I feel like I can have a direct impact now."

Eschenbrenner has served as a shop steward for eight years, on the Local 655 negotiation committee and has been a political volunteer for several years, knocking on doors everywhere from Ste. Genevieve, Missouri for local politicians to Philadelphia, PA where he pushed for President Obama in his 2008 election campaign.

"The best part of being in a union is to be a part of the union," Eschenbrenner said. "A lot of people are in the Union and don't realize they actually are a part of it. Members get help from our Union officials, but the best part is having your voice and opinions heard. That's what I plan to push."

Eschenbrenner says he wants to be "the agitator, the guy who corrects those crying about how the union doesn't do anything."

"A lot of my co-workers don't even know what our Union does. So many of our members have been disconnected," Eschenbrenner said. "They don't realize the importance of attending Union Meetings to get things done. They don't realize how much the Union can do for them. I say hey, call the Union reps; we are represented by knowledgeable officials. They'll make sure your rights are protected."

Eschenbrenner says members should realize that they have options and backers in the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 655 when there are problems on the job.

"There is someone on your side. It just takes an interest," Eschenbrenner said. "I've been at this job 31 years. I didn't even think of pension credits and Union benefits years ago. I tell members to check their pensions, call the Union's Pension Department and learn about your benefits. Mostly, don't just be in the Union, be part of your Union."

UFCW GOLD Internship Program

GOLD Internship opportunities open

The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union is looking for members interested in participating in the 2015 GOLD Internship program to gain knowledge and experience needed to make a solid change in our Union, workplaces and communities.

UFCW GOLD, or Growth Opportunities for Learning and Development, is a seven-week program for rank-and-file members that will teach the skills needed to connect with fellow Union members and empower them to make a difference.

The UFCW will choose 36 members for the 2015 program that runs June 21 through Aug. 5. Interns selected are required to participate in the entire program. All interns should have a valid driver's license and be flexible with travel outside of their home area.

During the program, interns will be individually assigned to one of four action projects, including:

- Legislative and Political Action
- Organizing,
- Collective Bargaining
- Civil Rights
- Health and Safety

Last year's UFCW GOLD internship—the first of its kind—gave 36 young members the opportunity to come together from locals across the country. They worked on an earned sick leave ordinance in the city of Chicago, a Retail Bill of Rights in San Francisco, participated in the Summer for Respect alongside Walmart workers fighting for justice on the job and other important projects relating to the welfare of working men and women.

Apply today at gold.ufcw.org/application/ to be considered. Don't forget to check out the video recap of the 2014 session where participants share their experiences and talk about their service projects.

For more information, visit ufcw655.org.

Forge forward in the fight against so-called right-to-work

The war on workers continues with some State Legislators leading the charge to pass anti-worker right-to-work laws, forgetting they represent, "we the people."

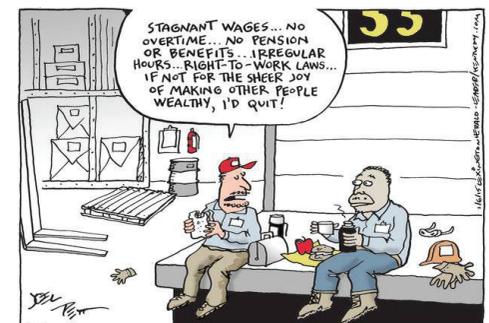
Don't let them forget!

Efforts to pass right-to-work laws are nothing more than a power grab by CEOs and big corporations to limit our voices at work.

RTW won't create good jobs or help our communities.

RTW will lead to cuts in wages and benefits for all workers, make it easier to have our jobs outsourced and make our workplaces less safe.

Pick up the phone right now and call your



State Representative at 855-626-6011. Tell them right to work is WRONG.

Walmart raise or smokescreen?



Last week, Walmart announced that it will raise wages for 500,000 hourly associates.

While this latest development is a victory for the brave members of the Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart), Walmart can and should publicly commit to doing more for its associates.

Walmart can afford to pay all of its 1.4 million workers at least \$15 per hour and provide access to full-time, consistent

hours. The company makes between \$16 and \$17 billion a year in profits, and just four members of the Walton Family – heirs to the Walmart empire – have a combined family fortune that is estimated to be nearly \$150 billion.

The Walton Family's net worth is greater than the wealth held by 42 percent of American families combined.

"We are monitoring the situation at Walmart to see if this is real progress or a smoke and mirror move on its part," said Local 655 President David Cook. "If this is really an improvement for Walmart workers we expect it to have a positive impact in our future retail bargaining."

WANT WEEKENDS OFF?

Next VOP training session
(Volunteer Organizing Program)

Thursday, March 26 at 6 p.m.

RSVP David Cook at 636-394-6500