



CONNECTIONS

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Holidays 2019

Organizing drive at Golden Brands brings 103 new members to Local 853

The 103 beverage drivers at DBI in West Sacramento now know why a union security clause in their contract is so valuable, and, in November, they ratified a contract with Local 853 that includes it. “You have to get everyone’s backing for the union or you can never get anything done,” said Business Agent Efren Alarcon.

Back in April, Local 853 had engaged in conversations with DBI about taking over the unit, which had been organized by a different Teamster local as an “open shop.”

“We know this company well, because we represent members at DBI in San Francisco and San Jose already,” said Alarcon. “We felt we could make improvements in the contract for the workers in West Sacramento, but we needed to get union security—which means a closed shop contract. The company indicated they would go along with that.”

In May, Alarcon started gathering autho-

rization cards to make sure the workers supported it too. Previously, only 10-15% of the workers were paying monthly union dues. This meant that the union was too weak to gain solid benefits for their members. When Alarcon was able to get 80% of the employees to sign cards, he knew there would be strong support for a closed shop and a strong union.

As the summer rolled around, the process of getting a new contract was delayed due to the impending sale of DBI to Golden Brands, which is owned by the much larger Reyes Brothers Beverage Group. In mid-September, the sale was finalized and the union could engage in serious talks with Golden Brands.

Because of his longstanding work with the beverage industry nationwide,



West Sacramento employees unanimously ratify Local 853’s new “closed shop” contract.

Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Hart has a good relationship with the labor relations people at Reyes Bros and was able to ensure that they’d honor the deal made with DBI.

They did, and bargaining commenced. On Sunday, November 10, the new members of Local 853 voted unanimously to ratify their new contract. “We got them more money; we were able to shore up the new hire wage progression, have a good grievance procedure and most importantly, a closed shop!” Alarcon explained. “This is a one-year contract to get us in the door,” he adds. “We’ll do a full renegotiation in February, 2021 to deal with retirement, holidays, vacation and all of that. Meanwhile, we’ve already achieved significant improvements, and with the strong backing from the members, we look forward to getting much more in the future.”

Getting the card check and the contract took many hands. Alarcon wanted to especially recognize Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Hart, Business Agent Ray Torres, Organizer Steve Bender, Joel Garcia, an active member from DBI San Francisco who went out to West Sacramento on Monday mornings at 4 a.m. to talk to the employees, and the two stewards in the shop: Jose Chacon (warehouse) and Keith Griffin (driver), for keeping the unit up-to-date and standing strong.

Saving a life—it’s all in a day’s work

While driving back from his route on 101-South near Gilroy on a bright November morning, Ruben Lopez, a driver and Local 853 shop steward at UNFI, not only witnessed an accident, he did much more. Lopez watched a double tanker truck swerve and then flip, first the back truck and then the front.

“My first instinct was to call 911. After that you get scared. You don’t know what you’re going to see. Then, adrenaline takes over,” Lopez said.

He jumped out of his truck and started walking towards the tanker truck. Another driver, also a union member, pulled over as well, and as they walked toward the tanker, they could see it was leaking gas.



Ruben Lopez

“While we were concerned it could ignite, we decided to look for the driver, who we could see was trying to get out of the passenger side. We jumped on the tractor, pulled open the door and helped him get out,” Lopez recalls.

“After we moved him out of the way, I got out the cones from my truck and started directing traffic past the truck. It all took about 5 minutes.”

Looking back, Lopez was proud to help a fellow driver. “While we don’t haul the same merchandise, we’re in the same field. We share that common struggle that comes with driving,” Lopez says. “I just hope the favor gets returned, if that ever happens to me.”

Around the Local

Best attendance policy at UNFI

Business Agent Ray Torres reports that when UNFI was purchased by SuperValu, the company corporate culture changed. “The company started challenging everybody for everything,” Torres says. “They developed an attendance policy that would push people out.”

As a result, the union filed charges with the Labor Board. “In order to get us to withdraw the charges, they improved the policy. Now, it’s one of the best, most generous policies in any of our companies,” Torres explained. “I thank our union leadership and the members who backed us in pushing the company to do the right thing.”

Solid 3-year contract at Douglas Parking - Stanford

The 22 people who work for Douglas Parking and drive Hospital Trams around Stanford, ratified their first 3-year contract.

Vice President Stacy Murphy reports that the drivers will receive wage increases of up to 11% over the life of the Agreement.

Douglas has been under contract for two years, but they would only agree to one-year deals because they couldn’t guarantee keeping the work.

“When we started the talks, the company wanted a new one-year deal with a wage freeze,” Murphy says. “But, we held out, and got many improvements and a three-year deal which will lock them in.”

New shuttle bus contracts at Facebook

If a shuttle company wants to get work at Facebook these days, they have to come to the Teamsters for a contract. That’s just what happened with Storer Transportation and Mosaic Global Transportation.

“We were able to get a contract that matched the Master Agreement in terms of wages, health and welfare, and the 401K plan,” says Murphy.

“The beauty of having a master agree-

ment is that it protects our existing employers, who don’t have to fear getting undercut by new contractors, and it protects our members who not only got the same wages and benefits, but moved their accrued seniority and sick leave to the new contractor,” Murphy explained. “Basically, everyone wins.”

Arbitration victory at Loop Halcon

When Tracy Lee was fired from Loop Halcon in April for what the company called “insubordination,” Business Agent Tracy Kelley sprang into action.

While the grievance he filed didn’t go anywhere, Kelley was determined to see the case through and called for arbitration.

“On October 28, the arbitrator ruled that the employee was unfairly terminated. Not only did he get his job back with full seniority, he got a check for more than \$45,000 in back wages, sick time and vacation, and a sizable 401K contribution was deposited into his account,” Kelley said. “It definitely pays to have a union behind you.”

Clericals join union

The six office clerical employees at the Safeway Milk Plant in San Leandro unanimously ratified their first Teamster contract in October.

“Solidarity gained them an equal economic settlement with those already in the union at the plant,” reports Business Agent Jesse Casqueiro. “In the end, they’ll get a wage increase of \$0.70/hour each year plus the same Western Conference of Teamsters pension and health and welfare contributions as the rest of the group.”

Looking for severance in all the wrong places

Svenhards Bakery handed over their Northern California distribution to Orowheat and sold their bakery and property to US Baking. “That we know,” says Local 853 President Lou Valletta. “We also know that an arbitrator ruled that the company owed \$250,000 in severance payments (plus interest) to about 35 of our members.”

Valletta says that what the union doesn’t know is who now holds the liability for this payment. “We filed a demand letter to get the arbitration settlement, but we don’t know how this will pan out.”



If you ride a motorcycle and if you’re interested in charity, the Teamsters Horsemen is for you!

Teamsters Chapter 7 Northwest (San Francisco/San Mateo) held a toy drive with the SF Firefighters in November and raised over \$5,000. To join, contact Business Agent Dan Harrington at 510-915-6427.

On December 14, Teamster Horsemen Chapter 7 West (East Bay and South Bay) will have a toy drive. To get involved contact Business Agent Ray Torres at 661-903-2980.

Good contract at Clear Channel Outdoor

The members at Clear Channel Outdoor, who clean the transit shelters in the East Bay and West Bay, ratified a new three-year contract in November. “This is a hard job that had low pay,” says Business Agent Phil Ybarrolaza. “But the new contract changes all the pay rates be the same, no matter how long you’ve been there, which was a major issue for the members.”

Ybarrolaza says that this company deals with constant turnover, but with better wages and benefits, members will have a reason to stay.

Best contract in 22 years

Business Agent Dan Harrington has negotiated a lot of contracts at San Francisco City College over the last 22 years, and he swears this is the best one yet.

“The contract for the consolidated crafts covers seven construction/maintenance unions, including the Teamsters, who have two members there that drive the trucks and make deliveries.

The members ratified the agreement in October. “It was front-loaded. They’ll get a 6.5% increase the first year, retro to July 1, 2019, with an additional 4% in the next two years and no takeaways. Everybody was quite pleased,” Harrington added.



New steward Frieda Johnson counts the ballots



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Landmark settlements on key contracts

By DENNIS HART

As we close the chapter on 2019, your Local is once again in the forefront of settling historic contracts and setting the highest standards for other Locals to meet. This past year, our Business Agents and Officers settled numerous contracts including: liquor, Costco, Busing, Pepsi Cola, the City and County of San Francisco, and many more.

In the coming year, dozens more contracts will open, including Coca Cola, Matagrano, Bottomley, Anheuser Busch-Oakland, DS Waters, Mission Linen, and First Transit-Redwood City.

As we go to press, the Local is in intense bargaining with Sysco Foods. Members of Local 853 and Local 137, based in Redding, are working under expired contracts. Together, the two Locals have filed numerous unfair labor charges against this company.

Sysco is following a nasty pattern. Local 455, based in Denver, CO, had to go on strike. The Local there also had to file numerous unfair labor practice charges. Your Local, along with Local 137, is work-

ing hard to avoid a strike, but this company may leave us no option.

“The 2020 election will be the most important for Labor in almost 100 years.”

The 2020 Elections

In addition to our vital work of organizing, negotiating contracts, and representing our members, next year will be a time for us to become increasingly active in the political arena; 2020 is an important election year. We cannot stand by and continue to have the Trump Administration destroy the many gains the labor movement has made since the Great Depression. The 2020 election will be the most important for Labor in almost 100 years.

If you are not yet registered to vote or if you have moved, REGISTER and VOTE! Also, the next time a D.R.I.V.E. represen-

tative shows up at your worksite, sign up! Making generous political donations through the union is one of the few ways you have to fight back against the anti-worker politicians.



Local 853 Leadership Team

In closing, this will be my last column as Secretary-Treasurer. Rome Aloise, who built this great Local over the past 30 years, will be returning soon. I know he looks forward to seeing and working with all of you once again.

This has been an interesting and challenging two years for me. I would like to thank everyone for their support during this time. I never would have made it without the backing and confidence of the members and staff. It speaks volumes about this great Local and this great union.

I would like to wish everyone Happy Holidays, and let's remember to be thankful for everything we have.

2020 officers slate elected



On November 4, by acclamation, the membership of Local 853 elected officers for the coming three-year term (2020-2022).

From left: Lou Valletta, Vice President
Stu Helfer, Recording Secretary
Rome Aloise, Secretary-Treasurer
Dennis Hart, President
Stacy Murphy, Trustee
Joel Bellison, Trustee
Mike Fritz, Trustee

Announcements

Death benefit for members

Members in good standing are eligible for a \$10,000 death benefit. For your beneficiary to collect, your dues must be current. Be sure your beneficiary information is up-to-date. Contact the office at 510-895-8853 to get a form to update your information.

Charge your union dues

What's more convenient than paying your union dues with a credit card? For more information on getting set up, call the Local Union office at 510-895-8853.

WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the WCT Pension Trust Fund comes to Local 853's Oakland office to answer your pension questions. Call 510-895-8853 or 800-400-1250 for an appointment.

Monthly union meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the union hall: 7750 Pardee Lane, Oakland, CA, 94621.

SIP 401(k) enrollment

Most Local 853 members are eligible for the SIP 401(k) Plan. If you are not yet enrolled, or wish to increase your pre-tax deferred amounts—check with your business agent, your company's HR department, or call 1-800-4-PRETAX [1-800-477-3829].

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Membership appreciation event outgrows space

By Terry Post

The 2019 Local 853 Annual Membership Appreciation Meeting—held again this year at San Leandro High School—was packed with hundreds of Teamsters and their families. We were actually warned that the local fire marshal might shut us down!

Regardless, the standing-room-only crowd enjoyed great weather, fantastic food (prepared by Business Agent Ray Torres and his crew), free sweatshirts, free Kaiser flu shots and an abundance of awesome raffle prizes.

Our members were also treated to a very special surprise guest, Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego). Assemblywoman Gonzalez—a card-carrying Teamster—authored Assembly Bill 5 (AB5), which put a major dent in illegal worker misclassification throughout California. She was introduced by Joint Council 7 Political Director Doug Bloch.

“This woman is the best,” Bloch said. “She took on this fight and she took hits and punches and arrows and bullets and everything they threw at her. She came right back at them, with our support.”



After putting AB5 in historical context, Doug asked the members to “give it up for Assemblywoman Gonzalez!”

“How we doing today, Teamsters?” The Assembly Member’s energy filled the gymnasium as she proclaimed, “I love being among my brothers and sisters in the

Teamsters Union.” Before the cheers died down, Ms. Gonzalez asked, “How many years have we been under attack now?”

As she peered out over the crowd, Lorena answered her own question as if to channel what every union member in the room already knew, “Way too long, way too long.”

Acknowledging Local 853’s history of activism and legislative influence, Ms. Gonzalez told the crowd, “Thanks to this Teamster Local and a bunch of others, we were able to get this (AB5) passed.”

“But our work isn’t done,” she cautioned. “If you think these large corporations and companies, who have been making hand-over-fist money off of our work, are going to just give it up like that ... do you think they will ... NO! They don’t want to put the money back in the pockets of the workers where it belongs.

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They're not going to give the power back to the union that we demand to have."

Then she laid it all on the line. "So, they're going to come back after us this next year," she warned, "and I'm here just to ask you to please help me stay strong."

After reaffirming her solidarity with the Teamsters in the room, Assemblywoman Gonzalez departed the stage even before the applause, cheers and whistles subsided; off to another event, like a whirling Teamster tornado touching down here and there, always stirring things up.

As the crowd settled back into their seats, the time came for what most members showed up for; the highly anticipated raffle. Up for grabs were televisions, iPads, Apple watches, speakers, cameras, small appliances and so much more. Costco and Gillig members, being from two of the Local's largest bargaining units, walked away with many, many prizes, much to their highly audible delight.

Once the food disappeared, and sweatshirts were handed out,

and flu shots were administered and prizes distributed, there was wide agreement about the event's overwhelming success.

But that success—and the success of our Local—would be nothing without the unmistakable diversity of our membership. The Teamsters and their families who packed the San Leandro gymnasium are Local 853, regardless of race, creed, color, religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or occupation. Their "differences" are not obstacles, they make us stronger. We are one.

Thanks to everybody who made the 2019 Annual Membership Appreciation an event we can all take pride in. See you again next year (maybe at a larger venue).

*Pictured previous page: **Top:** Local 853 members filled the seats, bleachers and stood in the back. Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Hart gives the "State of the Union." Assembly-member Lorena Gonzalez talks about the AB5 campaign;*

***Bottom:** Staff is up early to cook and get prizes and gifts ready for members.*

*This page: **Top:** The grand prize winners of 45" to 65" television sets. (Photos by Terry Post)*

Local 853 kick starts Apprenticeship Program for JC7

Local 853 has initiated a Transportation, Distribution and Logistics Apprenticeship Program with classes at the union hall and hands-on driver training at a site in Alameda.

"This will be a real apprenticeship program for Teamsters.

Our goal is to train people for all kinds of driving," says Business Agent and Recording Secretary Stu Helper. "We want people to grow their skill-sets and rise up the career ladder as high as they want to go."

The program just received final approval from the California Apprenticeship Council. A few classes have already been completed and new ones are being developed.

Courses include (or will include): OSHA 10 for both construction and general industry, CPR, Air Brakes, Commercial Driving, CDL upgrades, and more. "Our goal is to train people for all kinds of driving—bus, truck, construction, etc.," says Helper.

"We can only have four people on a truck and our second class had five students," Helper says. "We already may need to get another truck."

Helper adds that due to AB5—the law restricting the misclassification of drivers and other workers,

accidents, a general shortage of commercial drivers, driver mills, and new rules by the California Air Resources Board, there's a great need for quality, trained drivers. "We're partnering with the College of Alameda and the West Oakland Job Resource Center to



California Labor Secretary Julie Su visited the program in November.

create an excellent teaching program. Once we get it off the ground, we hope to make it Joint Council-wide."

Watch this paper to learn about classes you might be interested in taking to improve your own skills.