

## Local 853 members

### Omar Beas Costco Sunnyvale 18 years union/8 months steward



"The position was there and I've always like helping people. A steward asked me if I'd do it and I said yes! What I like about being a steward is

being able to listen to the member's concerns. Patience. Communication. I have to be all grown up!"

### Katrena Ledbetter Compass Transportation 12 years union/12 years steward



"I like the mediation. If the company is wrong, I like going after them. I like for everybody to get along and I don't like to see discord. My job is

being able to recognize when the company breaks the rules of the contract and bringing it to the union's attention."

### Joe Simao Cargill Salt 37 years union/8 years steward



"The members encouraged me. It's important to follow the contract, which I call the bible! Members have a voice; I need to back them up on

whatever the situation may be. Most of the time, I enjoy it."

## Ready-Mix member wins national recognition

The National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA) has named Local 853 member David (Bronc) Buoncristiani, of Central Concrete Supply, the 2019 Ready Mixed Concrete Delivery Professional Driver of the Year.

The NRMCA's panel of industry judges selected Buoncristiani as the top driver from a group of more than 1,000 outstanding applicants from across the U.S. The judges honored him for his career achievements, outstanding safety record, professionalism, driving competency and customer service skills.

A 30-year employee at Central's South San Francisco facility, Buoncristiani is not only a great driver, he's also a committed union member, serving as shop steward, and always eager to help his co-workers.

On his application, Central Concrete Supply's Operations Manager Joe Cerrito wrote, "While hauling over 15,000 cubic yards of concrete incident-free in 2018, David navigated some of San Francisco's most challenging roads and terrain with exceptional driving skill, intuition and attention to detail."

The judges were also impressed with his letters of recommendations which included one from contractor Steve Benesi of Malcolm Drilling Company who wrote, "As a superintendent I have worked with and have met many concrete drivers and I would rank Dave in the top 1%. He is



*Congratulations to David Buoncristiani for winning the NRMCA Driver of the Year Award.*

rock solid when it comes to anything related to concrete."

"He's an all-around helpful person," says Local 853 Business Rep Bo Morgan. "We've sat together on the contract negotiating committee, and he always welcomes the new members, which keeps the shop strong. He definitely deserved this honor."

As the winner of the 2019 award, Buoncristiani received a \$5,000 check from the Truck Mixer Manufacturers Bureau. He and the runners-up were honored in March at the NRMCA's Annual Convention in Tampa, Fla.

## After 41 years, it's time for a good retirement



*From left: Trustee Scott Gonsalves, Retiree Bill Ames, and Trustee Joel Bellison celebrate Ames' retirement.*

Bill Ames has been a loyal Local 853 member working at Gillig for more than 41 years. His career there started in July, 1977 and he retired in January.

The company hosted a retirement luncheon to celebrate his long career at the company and Local 853 Trustees Scott Gonsalves and Joel Bellison were on hand to present him with a Teamster jacket. Congratulations Bill—the Local wishes you a long and happy retirement.



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## Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union



### Stewards hone skills in grievance handling

On Saturday, February 9, about 50 stewards came to the Oakland Hilton to strengthen their skills at grievance handling. The six-hour seminar was taught by IBT Training and Development Department Associate Director Sally Payne. The day included a review of how to get the facts and properly document issues that arise among Teamster members at a shop, as well as working in groups to come up with recommendations for a variety of case studies.

In addition, the stewards heard from the Teamsters' attorney, Sheila Sexton from the Beeson Tayer & Bodine law firm about grievance and arbitration procedures, and from Shane Gusman of Broad & Gusman, about laws that impact the steward's role.

"Stewards are truly the heart of the union because they take on the extra duty of representing members, and serving as the eyes and ears to the union staff for what's happening at the shop on a day-to-day basis," says Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Hart. "Events like this should help them be more effective stewards, and have more confidence in their skills. It's always great to bring them together like this."

The seminar was originally slated to take place last October, but the workers at the Oakland Hilton were on strike, and the union had to delay the event rather than cross a picket line. Watch for the next seminar in October.



*At top: About 50 stewards attended a seminar on grievance handling in February.*

*Above: Sally Payne, from the IBT Training & Development Department offers key lessons.*





# CONNECTIONS

## Great contract for City/County of SF Teamsters

Teamster members who drive the construction vehicles for the City and County of San Francisco are now doing that work with a little more of a smile. Local 853 members haul the big equipment, the tractor trucks that clean out the sewers, the water trucks, and more. On May 9, those 200 Teamsters overwhelmingly ratified their new three-year agreement, and according to Business Rep Dan Harrington, "It's the best contract we've been able to get in the last 20 years."

Harrington explained that the negotiations had to go to mediation, "but we settled the contract before having to invoke arbitration."

Harrington says that the salary adjustments and premium increases put more money on the table than ever before. "The negotiation process was very stressful but we got the best yield ever. Everyone will see a minimum 11% increase over three years. One group got a 10% salary adjustment on top of that, bringing them up to area standards. Each department had issues to resolve and they were all addressed, most in our favor."

"The negotiations were frustrating," agrees Chief Shop Steward James Long, who's been driving heavy equipment for the city for 19 years. "But in the end, there were no takeaways and we got language improvements along with raises and premiums that we haven't seen since 1991."

"We had a strong negotiating team, and that made all the difference," Long adds. The increases at the end of the contract term will be some of the highest in the industry, which, he says, "is great for driving a construction truck. Our members are very happy with this contract."

The talks started in March. "The last two days were particularly hectic. We still had 40 issues to resolve on the last day," Harrington says. "But the return for the guys was phenomenal and that made it all worth it."



On May 9, the drivers for the City & County of San Francisco were pleased to ratify the best contract their unit has gotten in the last 20 years. (Picture was taken by Steward James Long.)

Harrington took the lead in the negotiations, but says he couldn't have done it without the great team behind him. "The thing that's really good is that the Stewards gave us valuable information that enabled us to box the city into a corner. They had nowhere to go, so they had to agree to at least some of our proposals."

The stewards researched industry standards, comparing current San Francisco rates to those paid for the same work in Santa Clara, Sacramento, and Los Angeles. This enabled the team to get an extra 10% increase for some job classifications. In that light, Harrington particularly wanted to acknowledge the great work of

Stewards James Long, Pete Whitcomb, Joe Barry, Kevin Reavy, James Sheehy, Dennis Callahan, Eric Kessler, Scott McDonald, Jonathan Hee, and Drew Evans.

Harrington also says that the attorneys, Susan Garrea, from the Beeson, Tayer and Bodine law firm, and Chris Platten were bulldogs who watched every single word. "We couldn't have gotten this deal without them."

And most importantly, he thanks the members who paid attention, stayed involved and stayed strong until the end. "The members are why we work so hard, and we can't make advances without them," he was quick to add.



President James P. Hoffa joined Local 853 stewards at a "No on 32" get-out-the-vote rally in San Leandro in 2012.

*Congratulations  
President Hoffa*

for 20 years at the helm  
of the International  
Brotherhood of Teamsters!

## Spring has sprung for labor and for Teamsters Local 853

By DENNIS HART

It's spring time, and with the cold, wet winter finally behind us, it is time for a renewal and rebirth—as that is what spring brings. It is also a rebirth and renewal in your Local, your Joint Council, your International and in the larger labor family to which we all belong. There is a fresh, renewed step in the labor movement, starting, as always, with your Local.

The Local continues to organize and continues to grow. Our staff and members continue to fight for and deliver historic contracts. There is a renewed commitment from the top down in our Local to do everything possible to get the best contracts for you, the members. A few recent examples are the two-year contract extension that was negotiated in the liquor industry. The contracts at Southern Glazers Wine & Spirits and Young's Market Company were extended by an overwhelming yes vote, because they continue to be the best in the country.

Another example is the unanimous yes vote at Compass for a new contract. Not only did this contract match the master shuttle bus contract, but exceeded it in some areas. Once again, this is the best in the country.

The last example is the Costco contract that covers 1,500 members in our Local. The contract, which covers California and East Coast stores, passed with a 94% yes vote across the nation, and this contract is,

once again, the best in the country for the retail industry.

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*"There is a renewed commitment from the top down in our Local to do everything possible to get the best contracts for you, the members."*

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Your Joint Council is also feeling a rebirth. The Council is once again taking political action to protect your jobs and your pension by supporting and getting pro-labor candidates elected. The Joint Council, through our lobbying, was able to defeat two soda tax bills that would have hurt our soft drink drivers. They also continue to defeat legislation that would undermine our Ready-Mix drivers.

Your International is also riding the wave of renewal. The leadership is helping to support organizing drives throughout not only our Joint Council, but the country. The International continues to give

support to this Local whenever we need it.

We not only belong to the Teamsters Union, but we belong to the family of labor. We associate with many Labor Councils across the Bay Area to help and support each other. The larger Labor family is also feeling a rebirth. We have witnessed recent strikes in the hotel industry and of course the teachers' strikes that started in West Virginia, spread to Arizona and Oklahoma, and came to California, in Los Angeles and Oakland. The renewed fight in those unions brought about historic gains for their members.

The Stop and Shop strikes in New England brought about historic gains for the labor movement. This strike was successful because of the support of the community, and unlike some past strikes, the politicians even came and marched with the picketers, giving their support to the strikers.

So, have faith that this Local, your Joint Council, your International and your universal Labor family has a renewed call to action. Participate at your workplace and support your leadership. Feel proud to be a Teamster and a union member.



## 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.

### 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.

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### 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.

### 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].

*How did you get to be a steward and why is it important?*

**Glenda Houston**  
**First Student Oakland**  
**Steward for 2 years**



“They voted me in and I couldn’t say no! It’s important so the drivers can be heard. When there’s a “he-said, she-said” issue,

a steward can come in and have your back. Having a union and a rep means there are steps the company has to go through. That benefits our employees.”

**Daniel Gee**  
**AEG / Coliseum**  
**39 years union/10 years steward**



“Our supervisor was a steward, which was a conflict of interest. So I stood up. You want the workplace to be safe without harassment and get

paid a fair wage for what you do. And make sure your rights are not violated or abused and that the employer follows procedure according to the contract.”

## Members at Compass Transportation have new contract

On March 23, the 240 members at Compass Transportation ratified a new four-year agreement. “While this was not a part of the master agreement and had to be negotiated separately, it was ultimately as good, if not better than the master,” says Stacy Murphy, who led the negotiating team.

“The members had voted down the company’s first offer and ratified it the second time around only after the company increased the

‘park out pay,’” she says. “These were tough negotiations that took almost six months, but the members stood strong. In the end, they got all the great benefits that the members at Loop and WeDriveU fought so hard for.”

Murphy wanted to thank the negotiating team of Marco, Nickia, Jose, Katrena and Ronnie, along with 853 staffers Tracy Kelley and Mike Henneberry.



## Representative from DRIVE coming to your worksite!

A representative from the International’s DRIVE program will be visiting Local 853’s worksites the week of July 8-12.

DRIVE, which stands for Democratic Republican Independent Voter Education is a vitally important program that puts labor’s interests at the forefront of any political battle that may be happening. It is non-partisan and simply puts the interests of the labor movement as a whole in consideration first.

As an organization, although we are strong and many, we do not have the funds or resources that large corporations and interest groups have when it comes to applying political pressure. All too often, we’ve seen corporations put as much money as needed into whatever new idea they have to stomp out the labor movement. They tend to outspend labor unions by a ratio of 15 to one.

DRIVE depends on contributions—small weekly contributions—from members like you to make sure this does not happen and that workers’ voices are magnified in the political arena. Please keep this in mind when the Representative visits your worksite and consider giving generously.

## Back pay won for wrongful termination

When San Leandro-based Athens Bakery learned that a model employee who had worked hard for them for more than a year had not fully-disclosed everything about himself on his job application the previous year, they fired him.

“We didn’t think that was fair, so we grieved the case,” says Business Rep and Local 853 President Lou Valletta. “Then the case went up to arbitration.”

Ultimately, the member won full back pay and was reinstated to his old job. However, because he didn’t want to go back to that company, the company settled by paying him \$35,000.

“This was a great employee who proved his value to the company every day,” adds Valletta. “It was worth the fight to make him whole. That’s what unions do.”





Members at RVR Distributing are pleased with their new 3-year contract.

## Good contract in a budding industry

The 18 drivers and warehouse workers at RVR Distributing (Continuum), which is the largest distributor of cannabis in North America, unanimously ratified a new three-year contract in April.

According to Business Rep Steve Beck, “the contract includes excellent wages and benefits.” These include substantial wage increases every year along with pension increases every year of the contract. The agreement also includes a ratification bonus and

improvements in holidays, sick leave and vacation.

This is a growing industry,” Beck adds. “In the last two years, this company grew from six members to 18 and another six are in their probationary period.”

“As Local 853 has always done, with this contract,” he says, “we’re setting the standard for the industry and other states are looking at what we’ve accomplished.”

## No News is Good News!

By Terry Post

In 2015, Local 853 Business Representative Stu Helfer came up with a “crazy” idea—to pass a state law that provides prevailing wages for all ready mix drivers delivering to publicly-funded construction sites. The idea of the legislation was to level the playing field by forcing non-union contractors to bid jobs at the same wage rate as union contractors.

To the astonishment of just about everyone, the bill, AB219, passed the legislature and was signed by Governor Brown.

While the victory was important, the battle wasn’t over. After several lower court appeals by ready mix employers, AB219 survived an appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The only course of action remaining for the employers was to take their case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The last day the employers could file their appeal to the nation’s highest court was April 22, 2019. It was a great relief when our lawyers informed us that there were no reports of an appeal having been filed.

The lack of an appeal to the Supreme Court means that no further appeals are available for the employers, establishing AB219 as law in California.

So, yes, when it comes to ready mix drivers, no news is good news.

## Gil Palomino Southern Glazer Wine & Spirits 13 years union/8 years steward



“I was elected unanimously. We were having some problems with management that gave me a sense of responsibility. I have to hold myself to a higher standard. My job is to build a strong relationship with management. If everyone gets along, it’s more efficient. I love representing the guys.”

## Augusto Vidona Right Away Redy-Mix 11 years union/7 years steward



“I wanted to learn more about the union. It’s supposed to protect our rights and benefits. The industry is changing and we, as members, need to be more involved in what’s happening. That starts with education. The steward is the first line of defense.”

## Jim Estelita Matagrano, Inc. 33 years union/7 years steward



“The other steward left and I was asked. My job is to make sure all my members are treated fairly. A lot of people think we get perks, but no, we’re doing it for the next generation. My main goal is to recruit members to serve.”