



Teamsters Local 853

CONNECTIONS

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Holidays 2017



Celebrating 80 years of fighting for members

Local 853 hosts another record crowd for annual membership appreciation event

Building a strong union takes many ingredients, but the most important come down to just a few: excellent and committed leadership, educated and committed stewards, and a strong and committed membership. It's no coincidence that commitment is the thread that must run through every aspect of the union.

On November 4, Local 853's leadership, staff, and members showed their commitment to each other at the 18th Annual Membership Appreciation event. While staff turned out at 5:30 a.m. to unload the truck, prepare a massive breakfast for 900, set up chairs, arrange the registration process and raffle prizes, and handle so many other details, another standing-room-only crowd of members came early to start fill-

ing the gymnasium at John Muir Middle School in San Leandro.

Opening the program was Local 853 President Dennis Hart, who was appointed to fill the unexpired term of President Bob Strelo. Dennis is a 40-year Teamster himself, and has worked as a Business Agent and International Representative for the Beverage Industry for more than 25 years.

Together, members, staff and leadership had an opportunity to reflect on how Local 853 has, over its 80-year history, grown to be one of the nation's largest and strongest Teamster locals.

"Our diversity is our strength," said Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise in his State of the Union address, referring to the diversity of companies represented and

the membership itself. "It is the way our nation should be and how we should want it to be."

Aloise talked about changes in the Local since he became Principal Officer in 1992, growing from 3,900 members to 11,500, and having the Local's assets increase from \$254,000 to \$9.65 million. In its history, Local 853 has only had four principal officers. "That stability, commitment, and dedication has been another of our strengths," Aloise added.

"The union is the only institution left to speak for working people, both members and non-union workers," Aloise said. "Please believe in the union, and believe in those who sacrifice every day to represent your interests."



Top: Members fill the middle school auditorium for 18th annual celebration. Above left: Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise addresses the membership with his full staff behind him; Center: Ten members took home new TV sets – from 32" up to the 55" grand prize; Right: Newly-named President Dennis Hart welcomes the crowd and begins the program.

Seeing the year out in a position of strength

By ROME ALOISE

All in all, 2017 has been a good year for our Local and our members.

After paying off our construction loans in November, Local 853 now owns our new building free and clear—a valuable asset for our members. It's twice the size of our old building and has the room for us to host negotiations on-site rather than needing to rent expensive hotel rooms for those meetings. It also has a large meeting hall with updated communications capabilities, and plenty of parking for our members. Our Oakland home is a sign of strength and economic stability, and it signals to our friends and enemies that we are a force to be reckoned with.

We have negotiated many contract renewals for our members, and most, if not all, included significant improvements.

We have also successfully organized hundreds of new members in various industries. These new members now enjoy better wages, benefits and, most importantly, job security and a right to have a say about what happens on the job. Organizing is the life blood of any union and our Local has always organized. New members make us stronger while they improve their own livelihoods and family security by joining us. If you have friends or family members who are working for non-union companies, have them contact our organizers to improve their workplace and livelihood.

Storm clouds ahead

While things have been going well in our Local, we see storm clouds on the horizon—for workers in general, and for unions in particular. Trump promised to make America great again, but in reality, none of that has happened. An increased number of jobs have gone out of the country, despite his tweets to the con-

"It is the union that is important; our members are the union, and our strength comes from our unity."

trary. While employment has increased due a growing economy, based on policies put into place before Trump was elected, the new jobs are low-paid, part-time, and without benefits or job security.

We know that unionized jobs pay decent wages and benefits, and usually offer some type of retirement. Unfortunately, the "new economy" tends to create low wage, usually 1099 jobs, where the worker takes on all responsibility for their benefits and works at the whim of their contractor. This is bad for the economy, for our cities, and for the country, as it undermines the tax base. Ultimately, new economy workers depend on social services that, in effect, you and I are paying for. This means that companies

like Walmart, Amazon, Target and the like are using your tax money

to supplement their profits. All the while, these companies are supporting Trump appointees whose jobs are to dismantle the labor movement. I worry about how much destruction can be caused in the next three years. Trump and the Republicans are not our friends. Never forget that.

Strength in unity

Even with onerous events on the horizon, our Local will get through all of this and will continue to protect you and all of our members. Local 853 is successful because we stick together, we support each other, and we have one another's backs. Our leadership is consistent, hardworking, knowledgeable, honest, and respected. In the future, things may change and some of us may go. But, ultimately, it is the union that is important; our members are the union; and, our strength comes from our unity. Stay close, circle the wagons and protect each other.

On a personal note, I want to say that I am thankful that you have given me the opportunity to represent you and stand up for you. It has been an honor to do so.

I wish you and your family very happy holidays.



Announcements

Notice to All Local 853 Members

At the February 8, 2018, membership meeting, a vote will be taken on amendments to the Teamsters Local 853 By-Laws.

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.

Check out Local 853's website

Go to www.teamsters853.org to see what the Local has been up to between newsletters. Also get business forms and other union resources.

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.

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Members: Send address changes and comments to the above address or e-mail us at connections@teamsters853.org

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].

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.

Union People

Daniel Varela

June 15, 1949 - October 11, 2017



Dan Varela

Dan Varela lived life with passion. He loved his family deeply and is survived by his lifelong partner of 50 years, Penny, his five children, and nine grandchildren. He died of cancer in October.

Dan cared fiercely about his Teamster family—he worked tirelessly for 50 years with his union brothers and sisters. He started as a truck driver with Garrett Freightlines. He then served as a Business Agent for Local 70, Local 78 and Local 853. The union he loved gave his family so much—great health care, a meaningful pension, and an abiding belief in the power of collective action against the “powers that be.” Solidarity was his religion.

A life-long athlete, Dan played football at San Leandro High and Sonoma State. He was also a world-class powerlifter, holding numerous world records in amateur and professional categories. Dan cheered passionately for his beloved 49ers from an early age.

“I knew Dan for over 40 years, starting when we were drivers in Local 70, and throughout his career as a business agent,” says President Rome Aloise. “He had a reputation for being tough, straight-forward and fair. He loved people and wasn’t afraid to laugh in the face of a problem that he would ultimately correct.”

Local 853 President Dennis Hart feels the same way. “Back nearly 40 years ago, Danny drove a freight truck and I drove a UPS truck in San Francisco and we met for coffee every afternoon at Happy Donuts. He talked about how he was going to run for office and change the Teamsters. And he did.”

Hart and Varela worked together for 20 years, as Business Agents at Locals 78 and 853. Hart says that Dan always fought for the underdog and believed in collective action. “He always had faith in the union. He was a real Teamster and a true trade unionist.”

“Teamsters owe Dan’s family a debt of gratitude for the time he sacrificed for his members and we owe him thanks for his leadership, friendship, and loyalty. He will be missed,” Aloise adds.

Local works to meet community needs



At left: Lynn Door, Pam Gaskill and Stacy Alvelais were kids in a candy store, shopping for most-needed items by the Eastmont Garden of Hope;

At Right: Rodney Smith, Stacy Alvelais, Eastmont Director Petronice Coleman, and Steve Bender fill the organization’s cupboard in time for the holidays.

This year, after the recent natural disasters around the nation, our Local and Joint Council hit the ground running to help. In September, Local 853’s own retiree Ron Valdez, organizer Steve Bender, and Trustee Mike Fritz drove the big rig straight through to Texas after Hurricane Harvey, loaded with water and other much-needed supplies. Not long after they got back, they had to load up the truck again with supplies to help the victims of the tragic fires, right here in our own backyard.

While we’re always ready to respond to tragedies, as Teamsters, we’re also here to help those in our own community. For several years, our “Sisters in Solidarity” (SIS) committee has raised funds at the Membership Appreciation meeting for the Oakland’s Eastmont Garden of Hope. Located in East Oakland, the program is part of Alameda County Social Services, and it serves victims of domestic violence, as well as those struggling in low-income jobs, or living on the streets.

Rome Aloise makes sure that the Local matches the donations that come from our members. On December 2, SIS members Pam Gaskill and Lynn Door and I took \$2,500 to Costco Redwood City to buy the items most needed—diapers, clothing, and non-perishable food. We approach the day with total elation, like kids in a candy store.

On December 8, we delivered the goods. Many thanks to Organizers Rodney Smith and Steve Bender for jumping in and helping load the goods at the Local and unload them at Eastmont. And thanks always to staffer Jan Johnson for supporting the SIS committee.

Giving and helping others is something we are all capable of. You do not have to be wealthy to lend a hand, buy a cup of coffee, or just be a good friend to someone in need. I encourage everyone to pick a day and pay it forward to someone!

Thank you, Rome, for enabling us to reach out and help those in need!

Stacy Alvelais, Business Agent

Congratulations to Local 853’s Harry Polland/ Bob Morales Scholarship winner

Sara Arredondo, daughter of Jesus Valencia, who is a Local 853 member at Loop Transportation, was recently awarded a \$1,000 scholarship from Teamster Joint Council 7’s Harry Poland/Robert Morales Scholarship fund. “I am very honored that you saw me as a great candidate for this scholarship and my gratitude cannot express it enough,” Sara wrote in a note to the Local.



What's the best thing about being a union member?



Sharon Davis
Storer School Bus
5-year Teamster

They fight for our rights and pay. They also got us raises.



Tom Ly Gillig
29-year Teamster

They protect us and they always take care of us.



Bob Sale
Semi-retired

Everything. Everyone should automatically be in a union so you can retire with social security, a 401K and a union pension.



James Gill Kaiser
9-year Teamster

They helped me keep my job. Even though I followed the rules, I was suspended. But the union fought for me.



David Plaza
Young's Market
15-year Teamster

The union gives you rights as an employee. The union helps provide you with medical and dental benefits.

They give you a voice so you can be heard.

News updates from

Working union is better

After working at Golden State Lumber for more than three years, Nick Guinea led the union organizing drive. "We hadn't gotten raises and yet the workload was increasing all the time," he says.

Unfortunately, even after the employees voted to unionize, the company has been doing all it can to avoid settling a good contract. "They're not negotiating in good faith or taking the will of their employees into consideration," says Business Agent Stu Helfer.

So Guinea took the leap and moved to Osborne Lumber. His pay immediately jumped from \$17 to \$26/hour; he now gets 12 paid holidays, is in the Western Conference of Teamsters pension plan, and has a grievance procedure. "This company recognizes and values the hard work and profes-



Nick Guinea is happy to be working under a union contract.

sionalism of our members," Guinea says. Ultimately, he adds, "it doesn't make sense to work non-union."

Getting a contract, finally

When the shuttle drivers, cashiers and valets at Expresso Airport Parking came to Local 853 to try to organize a union, they were in for a big surprise. "When we

looked into it, we discovered that they had already voted for the union," says Organizer Rodney Smith. "But somehow neither the employees, the company, or the union had acted upon that election and opened bargaining for a contract."

Smith and Business Agent Phil Ybarrolaza are setting up negotiations now.

More tech shuttle drivers ready for union

The 40 drivers at We Drive U—Am-

Random shots from the November 4 Membership



around the local

amazon signed union authorization cards. At press time, the cards were certified and the union will now represent the unit.

“The company let us know that they want to continue the great relationship that we’ve had for the last two years,” says Business Agent Stacy Alvelais.

“Our plan is to roll them into the contract we have with the other We Drive U employees. We look forward to representing this group.”

Proud to be stewards

On December 4, the workers at First Student San Jose elected their Stewards. “The election comes at an important time as the yard heads into contract negotia-



(From left) First-time Steward Victoria Tejada, Steward and negotiating committee member Jessica Rouse, Steward Lucy Sarmiento and Steward Linda Clevenger are proud to represent their co-workers at First Student.

tions next year,” says Business Agent Phil Ybarrolaza.

Across the Bay Area, school bus yards have seen large wage increases as a result of a driver shortage created by the higher-paid tech shuttles. While most school bus yards service one or two client school districts, the San Jose First Student yard services six, and all the districts have to

bear the cost of any wage increase. “We believe the workers deserve a wage increase, but getting all of the districts to ante up will be a challenge,” Ybarrolaza says.

MV votes for union

As this newsletter goes to press, the drivers at MV Transportation in Redwood City are voting to join Local 853. Welcome aboard!

Appreciation Event



Clockwise from top left: Two members win great prizes at the 2017 Membership Appreciation event (a laptop and a surround-sound set); Kaiser Permanente made getting flu shots convenient; Joint Council 7 Big Rig driver Ron Valdez and Vice President Lou Valletta pick the lucky prize winners; after signing in to the event, members pick up new Local 853 t-shirts; staff and volunteers worked hard to provide a healthy and delicious breakfast.



What’s the best thing about being a union member?

Lyle Funderburk (& Paul Gillig)
19-year Teamster

Job security. Being part of a family. It’s an extended family outside of work.



Nickia Varden Compass Transportation
1-year Teamster

Our company has started to treat us fairly instead of being looked over (if you’re lower on the seniority list), and better pay.



Jaime Lopez Costeo Hayward
17-year Teamster

They fight for the workers—wages, rights, all that good stuff.



Rich Finkes Safeway milk plant
25-year Teamster

With health coverage and good pay, my kids are taken care of. With 853 it’s nice to be one of the larger kids on the block. We’ve got good representation and the retirement pension is not too bad!



Carl McGeachy Granite Rock
35-year Teamster

Good jobs. Good pay. Good benefits. And good friends.





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Local 853 - Celebrating 80 years

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**Happy Holidays
 and best wishes
 for the new year!**



— from the officers & staff of Teamsters Local 853 —

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The above photo is of a section of the mural, painted by Mike Thornton, in the lobby of Local 853's Oakland office.