



# CONNECTIONS

Volume XVIII, No. 3

Holidays 2020

## Essential workers keep working through pandemic, but nearly 20% of membership is not

When the pandemic struck in March, the entire economy came to a screeching halt. Travel, hospitality, sports and the arts were the first to shutter. But it was clear that not everything could stop. People needed food, health care, and a variety of services and somebody needed to do that work. Often, those somebodies were Teamsters.

Our members working in package and non-restaurant food delivery were working overtime. Retail, like Costco, was booming. Construction was deemed essential as well. And of course, if our members are working, the Local's Business Reps have to be working, too.

On the down side, we predict that as many as 20% of our members have been negatively impacted by the pandemic. Our members working in the concession and sporting industry for the Warriors, A's, and



About 80% of Local 853 members are working through the pandemic. From left: Mike Fritz, Bauman Construction; Roman Tamez, UPS; Rosie Silva, Halcon/Facebook; Reggie Knighten, Sysco; Larry Caballero, Golden Brands; Cesar Martinez, Costco Wholesale.

Giants have been out of work for the entire year. School bus drivers aren't driving, and only a few of the tech bus drivers have regular work. Those who service the travel and hospitality industry, like laundry workers and those in parking lots and car rental agencies are mostly not working either.

Hopefully, the vaccines that have been produced in record time will start getting distributed—first to health care workers and those in nursing homes who have been the hardest hit, and soon after, they'll be available to essential workers. Unfortunately, it may be a long winter before that distribution happens.

Whether you're working or not, we hope that all members will continue to be safe and follow the guidelines to stay that way: wear masks or face coverings; stay six feet apart from others where possible, and don't gather indoors with people NOT from your own household.

If you think you have symptoms, get tested immediately. If you learn that you were in contact with someone who has symptoms or a positive test, get your own test and isolate yourself immediately until you find out the results.

Currently, California and federal law ensures that your employer must cover your salary for up to two weeks if you have had a positive test, if you've been ordered by a doctor to isolate or quarantine, or if you are waiting at home for a test result. If you have questions about whether you should expect to get COVID-related pay, contact your business rep.

### Local unveils new website and video



Staying on top of what's going on at Local 853 has never been easier. Go to [www.teamsters853.org](http://www.teamsters853.org) and check out our new website. Not only can you get the latest news from the Local, but you can access whatever forms you might need, find your business rep, and learn more about your union benefits.

At the top of the website is our new

video: *Welcome to Local 853*. Meet some fellow members from your industry and others and learn why Local 853 is the place to be.

Finally, have you signed up to get text messages yet? It's not too late! Just text LOCAL853 to 877-785-3060 and follow all the prompts. The texting was busy during the election season, but is now fairly limited.

# Looking forward to a better new year

By ROME ALOISE

With only a little bit of hesitation, I will say that I am happy this year is finally coming to an end. For all of us, 2020 has been quite a hardship—with new and constant threats to our members and your families.

We do have something good to look forward to in the New Year—a new President will be sworn in January 20, 2021. I must say, from a union standpoint, this gives me hope. The current President has decimated the NLRB, changed interpretations and rules that have been in place for decades—all to the detriment of workers looking to protect themselves by gaining union representation. While the Democrats have not done enough to improve the laws protecting workers (and we know they need to be improved!), they haven't really hurt us. But this President has intentionally gone out of his way to hurt workers and reward his corporate buddies. That will end. I expect the new administration will do all it can to get legislation that will help all workers protect themselves by making it easier to join a union. Hope springs eternal!

As I write this article, we are again entering into another Covid-19 shutdown. We know this will hurt many of our members whose jobs will be cut back, hours reduced or eliminated, and who will be subjected to the stress and strain of not having an income or benefits. It is a horrible thing to have to face, but hopefully,

these next few weeks will enable us to turn the corner, to slow down the positive tests, and to start distributing the vaccines that will begin to kill this virus and start the long road back to what used to be normal.

We have worked with a number of our employers to make sure that our laid-off members maintain recall rights to their jobs when things pick up again, and our agents have continued to handle problems for those of our members who, as essential workers, are taking care of all of us. Clearly, this has been a trying time: many of our members who are working are upset about getting exposed to others while at work, and those who are not working are upset that they are having a hard time supporting their families. We look forward to a time when we can all be working safely, and joining together to make sure we always support each other and stay unified.

## Appreciating our members

Our Membership Appreciation "First Annual Drive-Through" was a great success, as was our virtual zoom "State of Our Union" address the next morning. Hundreds of members showed up to get their backpacks on Saturday; it was great to say hello to everyone and see so many familiar faces. Our meeting the next morning was attended by many members, and we were still able to hold our raffle for prizes. It wasn't as good as all being together, seeing our sisters

and brothers in person and celebrating our strength and unity, but as a substitute, it wasn't bad!



## Changes at the IBT

This next year holds the possibility of many changes in the Teamsters union. We will all have the opportunity to choose a new General President of our International Union, as President Hoffa will be retiring at the end of his term. I have proudly served on the General Executive Board for many years now, working to bring our union back from devastating ruin and I was glad to be part of that effort.

Many of you have asked when my campaign for international office will begin. While I appreciate the willingness to help with my campaign again, I will not be running for International office this time. It is time to step aside and allow for others to take over. It has been an honor to be elected nationally for more than two terms and it would have never been possible if not for you, the members of Local 853, who supported me for these many years.

Happy holidays to all of you and your families, and here's hoping for a much different and better 2021!

## 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.

### Monthly union meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. They're currently being held on Zoom. You must register in advance to attend. Go to [Teamsters853.org](https://www.teamsters853.org) for the link.

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**Postmaster:** Send address changes to: Teamsters Local 853, 7750 Pardee Lane, Oakland, CA 94621.

**Members:** Send address changes and comments to the above address or e-mail us at [connections@teamsters853.org](mailto:connections@teamsters853.org)

### WCT Pension Plan Q&A

While the pandemic is on, the WCT Pension Trust Fund is not holding in-person meetings at Local 853's Oakland office. But they'll happily chat with you on the phone. Call 510-895-8853 or 800-400-1250 to make an appointment.

### 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.

### 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].





# Membership appreciation event continues—pandemic style!

For the past 25 years, Local 853 has held an annual Membership Appreciation event that included breakfast, door prizes, a huge raffle, convenient flu shots, and the opportunity to hear about the State of the Union. Back when it started, the event attracted a few hundred members. Over the years it has grown to bring together more than 800 members at increasingly larger venues.

This year, despite so many pandemic-caused cancellations, Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise was determined to find a way to make the event happen safely. While we had to ditch the breakfast and flu shots, all the other aspects of the event took place over the course of two days.

**Day One, Saturday, October 31:** Staff gathered at 6:30 a.m. to prepare for the onslaught of cars attending the Drive-Thru gift event at the DoubleTree Hilton parking

lot in Newark. Scheduled to start at 9:30 a.m., cars started lining up at 8:00, and the staff was ready. As each car approached the parking lot, staff and volunteers passed out a registration card for the member(s) to complete as they made their way into the parking lot. Once submitted, each member in the car collected the 2020 gift—a beautiful Local 853 backpack stuffed with union-made bakery goods from Bimbo Baking. On their way out of the parking lot, they received more info from the Teamster Horsemen, the charity motorcycle group, and were quickly on their way.

At a few points, the line to get to the parking lot was backed up to the freeway. But, mostly everything moved swiftly and easily for the 1,000 people who collected backpacks that day.

**Day Two, Sunday, November 1:** About

250 members attended the State of the Union meeting and raffle, held over Zoom.

President Dennis Hart opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and the premiere viewing of the new 4-minute video “Welcome to Local 853.” And then he introduced Rome Aloise.

Rome opened his annual “State of Our Union” speech by recognizing the members: “Many of our members stepped up and are essential workers, delivering food, wine and liquor, working at Costco, at construction sites, and at many other places. You’ve kept our world running. You are real heroes!”

Rome then talked about how the Local’s staff has had to adjust to using Zoom to handle grievances, hold membership meetings, and “whatever’s needed to make sure the members are taken care of during these turbulent times.” He noted that business reps used Zoom to settle historically good contracts in Ready Mix and Construction and achieved excellent extensions in the liquor and beer industries.

The big news of the year included:

- The merger of Local 287 that brought



*Staff prepared for the drive-thru event not knowing what to expect, and the members came. About 1000 backpacks were distributed, and a few Halloween costumes made appearances!*



# What are your hopes and dreams for 2021?



**Karla Aguirre**  
**Costco Hayward**  
**5 year Teamster**

To go on vacation, get a new car, and get my daughter set up for college.



**Hernan Langarica Gillig**  
**25 year Teamster**

To get better. We need more jobs for the people.



**Mike Buriana**  
**Young's Market**  
**10 year Teamster**

Happier people at work. It's the little improvements that make people smile at work.



**Derrick Hill**  
**Costco - So SF**  
**2 year Teamster**

To get back to some normalcy. If business isn't strong, the unions won't be strong.



**Derrick Cordero Gillig**  
**20 year Teamster**

I hope for a better life, to get rid of corona, for my kids to go to college, and for me to get a raise.

new industries and companies to the local, including freight companies, UPS and DHL, bringing our combined membership up to nearly 15,000 members. "I welcome the sisters and brothers and San Jose staff to our family, and thank you for making us all bigger and stronger."

- The Berkeley Farms bankruptcy—"We've lost a cornerstone company in our Local and an iconic name in the Bay Area, and our members are still waiting to get the severance package we negotiated."

- Another year of devastating fires forced members to be evacuated, and many lost their homes. The Local was able to provide some financial help to let members know that "their sisters and brothers have their backs."

- Responding to the rash of murders of black men and women by police, Local 853 took a stand to support Black Lives Matter, and proudly displays a banner saying so on our Oakland headquarters. "Diversity, and treating everyone as an equal is why unions

the strength and the wherewithal to survive attacks from viruses, employers, the government and anything else that attacks us. Why? Because we believe in unity and loyalty. As long as we stick together and stay loyal to each other, we can beat anything and anybody."



*President Dennis Hart opens meeting*



*Steward Rosie Silva picks prize winners*



*Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise gives "State of Our Union"*

The Raffle completed the event. Prizes included Galaxy tablets, Chromebooks, HP laptops, and nine televisions ranging in size from 40" to 65". Shop Steward Rosie Silva, who works for Hallcon and drives a bus for Facebook employees, was on hand to pick the winners. Grand prizes

matter and, more importantly, why our union is strong."

"All in all," he closed, "our Local has

went to members from nearly 20 different companies.

Congratulations one and all!



**Tom Souza**  
**SF Chronicle (Ret)**  
**20 year Teamster**

I want everybody to get healthy so we can party again. It's hard to enjoy retirement when you can't get out and kick up your heels.



**Ed Miller**  
**Bimbo's Bakery**  
**17 year Teamster**

Definitely to get past COVID to see beautiful faces again. I want to get out, travel and see things. And, I hope the election goes really well.



**Art Budd**  
**City/County of SF**  
**10 year Teamster**

For Local 853 to keep rolling smoothly; for everybody to stay healthy, and for an end to coronavirus.



**Andrew Alexandre**  
**Kiewit Construction**  
**19 year Teamster**

To become a homeowner; to get more young people involved in the union; and for health and safety for all of us.



**Sean Ross**  
**UPS**  
**15 year Teamster**

I hope there's a vaccine, that we have a new president, and that we get more members in the Teamsters to build a stronger union.



## Around the Local



From left: Local 853 Business Rep Eddie Venancio, Central Concrete Shop Steward Jonathan Pinney, Jorge Vasquez and Westside Concrete Supply Shop Steward Adolfo Espinoza.

### Concrete drivers step up for a co-worker in need

When Jorge Vasquez got cancer, he didn't want it to stop his daily work routine, because he's the sole supporter for his wife and son. Business Rep Eddie Venancio reports that Jorge continued to work at Westside Building Supply in San Jose while he was getting chemo treatments.

But when Shop Steward Jonathan Pinney, who works at Cemex, saw how sick Jorge was at the worksite, he not only helped Jorge to complete the paperwork to get disability insurance which would enable him to take off work while he was getting treated, but he also started a fundraising drive for Jorge and his family. So far, Pinney and Westside Steward Adolfo Espinosa raised \$1,915 from the drivers at Westside, Cemex, Central Concrete, and from and the office staff at Teamsters Local 853.

"Jorge is so well-liked that even some of the non-union Bulk drivers donated," says Venancio. "His only request was that we keep him and his family in our prayers."

Thanks to the support of his brothers and sisters at Local 853, Jorge will be able to go through chemo and recuperate at home for the next three months with his wife—where he should be.

### SF Street Sweepers win big grievances

Business Rep Dan Harrington reports that he won two separate grievances for some San Francisco street sweepers.

In the first case, he was able to overturn a 5-day suspension through expedited arbitration, and the member, Annie Romero, got a back pay check covering all

five days. In this case, Romero was suspended for participating in an altercation with another employee. However, Harrington contends, the city denied the union the right to represent her and wouldn't allow her steward into the hearing. The arbitrator found that, because representation was not allowed, the discipline had to be

overturned. "It was a good case," says Harrington. "We stuck to our guns about the representation and we prevailed."

In the second case, a street sweeper, Frank Perez, was assaulted by a citizen. Instead of listening to the members' side or letting the union represent him, the city immediately put Perez on 30-day suspension.

"Just as the case was supposed to go to full arbitration, the City realized that the citizen was lying and that Perez was innocent," says Harrington. "They backed down and agreed to pay him nearly \$10,000 for the wages and benefits he had been wrongfully denied."

Harrington particularly wanted to thank Shop Steward James Long for being persistent in challenging the city when they deny union representation. He also thanks Susan Garea, attorney at the Beeson Tayer & Bodine law firm, for her diligence in seeing the cases through.

### Using PLAs to get work at SFO

The concrete work at the San Francisco International Airport (SFO) is covered under a Project Labor Agreement (PLA). "Unions work hard to get PLAs on big projects because they create a level playing field for wage rates," says Business Rep Stu Helfer. "It means that non-local companies can't come to the expensive Bay Area and underbid the local wages and conditions."

Helfer adds that he's been able to make language improvements in the PLAs, leveraging that language for improved coverage.

As part of the union's routine monitoring of construction work in the area, Helfer noticed that Elite, a Sacramento-based company, had set up a portable batch plant for the SFO project and had started

doing work there. "We've dealt with them before," he says, "each time, discovering that they were underpaying their workers based on California state's prevailing wage rates."

Helfer says that the union started monitoring this job and collecting data on it. He adds that the union has had to utilize some creative methods for monitoring when the work is going on, because it's all behind security fences that the union can't get through.

As a result of Local 853's labor compliance monitoring and research, the 15 drivers working on that project are now being represented by Local 853 while that project is ongoing.

Helfer wanted to give credit to Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise for his long-term vision of creating a labor-compliance program at Local 853.

Helfer adds that the Labor Compliance program and the language that we've gained under PLAs has resulted in about 400 drivers working as Teamsters in any given month.



If you ride a motorcycle and if you're interested in doing charity projects throughout the year, the **Teamster Horsemen** is for you!

As this paper goes to press, Teamsters Chapter 7 Northwest (San Francisco/San Mateo) is holding a toy drive with the SF Firefighters on December 12. To get involved now or in the future, contact Business Agent Dan Harrington at 510-915-6427.

The Teamster Horsemen Chapter 7 West (East Bay and South Bay) is also looking for new members. To get involved contact Business Agent Ray Torres at 661-903-2980.



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## Happy Holidays

From the  
officers and Staff of

**Teamsters  
Local 853**

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