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STEWARD UPDATE

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Look for Changes to Steward Training

To better meet the needs of union stewards, UFCW 951 is making changes to its steward training program that the union believes will result in a more effective steward group.

“For the last few years we have been conducting quarterly trainings at several locations that featured a lot of great information, but we just weren’t reaching enough stewards,” John Cakmakci, UFCW 951 president, said. “Between family commitments, other jobs, and travel time, it was difficult for many stewards to attend these trainings. It was clear the time had come to make some changes.”

Instead of quarterly trainings on specific issues, the local is developing training modules on a variety of topics that union representatives can bring to stewards.

“This new approach will not only be more convenient for stewards, but it will also allow union representatives to hold trainings that best meet the needs of their stewards,” Cakmakci said.

The local has also received some

interest from stewards in on-line training. To determine if enough stewards would use this training method, the local is asking stewards to complete an online quiz following their receipt of the *Steward Update*.

“Implementing an online steward training program requires significant resources,” Cakmakci said. “We want to be sure enough stewards would actually use this form of training before we expend those resources.”

Each edition of the *Steward Update* will include an educational article titled

“What Stewards Need to Know.” After reading and studying the information included in the article, stewards will be able to test their knowledge by completing an on-line quiz. (See page two for this month’s article and instructions for the quiz.)

“We are continually evaluating all of our programs and looking for ways to improve,” Cakmakci said. “I encourage any steward with an idea on how we can provide them with better training to contact their union representative.”

Help Identify New Unit Leaders

To build a better union, UFCW 951 needs leaders in every unit to help with a variety of tasks including meeting new members, generating participation in union programs, and Active Ballot Club sign-up. These individuals do not have to assume all of the duties of a union steward, and can be compensated at the discretion of their union representative.

“UFCW 951 is in the process of identifying unit leaders. Since no one knows the workplace better than stewards, we need stewards to help their union representative find the right members to put in these positions,” John Cakmakci, UFCW 951 president, said. “Stewards should work with their union representative to build the best possible union leadership team in their unit.”

Mark Your Calendars -- Steward Conferences 2015

The 2015 UFCW 951 Steward Conferences will be held regionally in April. This day long event is your paid steward holiday. UFCW 951 will arrange for you to be off work for the day. In March, you will be mailed an invitation to the steward conference in your region.

Grand Rapids
Monday, April 13

Lansing
Thursday, April 16

Livonia
Tuesday, April 21

Cadillac
Thursday, April 23

Help Spread the Word



The UFCW 951 Foundation offers 12 child care scholarships of \$750 to members annually. Three scholarships are awarded in March, June, September and October. Applications are valid for the entire year.

To be eligible for a scholarship, applicants must be a member in good standing for at least 90 days and child care must be provided during the member’s working hours by a licensed child care provider.

Applications with complete eligibility requirements are available from www.ufcw951.org and from union representatives.

For over a decade, the UFCW 951 Foundation has been helping ease the cost of attending college for members and their families. Nineteen \$2,000 scholarships and five \$400 textbook scholarships will be awarded in 2015.

Applicants must be a member, or the member’s spouse, child, or grandchild (grandchildren must be under 25 years of age). Member must have 90 days in good standing with UFCW 951 as of June 1, 2015 and must remain a member in good standing for the entire academic year. Applicants must be full or part-time students attending a college, university, community college or post-high school vocational program. Complete eligibility requirements can be found on the application.

Applications are available from union representatives or online at www.ufcw951.org, and must be received by Friday, March 27, 2015.

Foundation
College Scholarship



What Stewards Need to Know: Underemployment Benefits

The beginning of the year is traditionally a slow time for several companies employing UFCW 951 members, resulting in an unwanted reduction of hours.

While still employed, members experiencing a reduction in hours (not at their request) may qualify for unemployment benefits as an “underemployed” worker.

“Many members are unaware they may qualify for unemployment benefits during periods of underemployment,” John Cakmakci, UFCW 951 president, said. “The boss doesn’t often inform workers about this aspect of the state’s Unemployment Insurance law because employers are charged a weekly fee for each of their workers who collects an unemployment benefit of any kind. As a union we need to educate members about their ability to collect unemployment benefits when their hours are cut.”

While only Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) staff can make determinations regarding underemployment benefits, stewards can provide members with general information regarding underemployment.

Determining Benefit Eligibility

The UIA uses the same criteria for determining benefit eligibility for unemployed and underemployed workers.

In general, the agency looks at the last four calendar quarters of work and requires the following criteria be met.

1. The worker earned wages in at least two of the quarters.
2. One quarter’s wages was at least \$2,871.
3. Total wages for all four quarters equaled at least one and a half times the highest amount of wages paid in any quarter, or total wages for all quarters must be at least \$17,868.

Determining Benefit Amount

Again, only the UIA can calculate an underemployed workers’ Weekly

Benefit Amount (WBA); however, members can receive a general idea of their benefit level by understanding how underemployment benefits are determined.

The UIA will first calculate their WBA. This amount is determined by multiplying the highest amount of wages they earned in any base period quarter (13 weeks) by 4.1%. The UIA adds \$6 for each dependent, up to five dependents. The maximum WBA is \$362.

The benefit payment for “underemployment” is re-calculated each week based on the worker’s weekly earnings.

- If weekly earnings are more than 1.6 times their WBA, workers do not qualify for a benefit for that week.
- If their weekly earnings are less than 1.6 times their WBA, their earnings will be subtracted from this amount, with the difference being their benefit for the week.
- If their weekly earnings are equal to or less than their WBA, 0.4 times their earnings are subtracted from their WBA with the remaining amount being their benefit.

Length of Eligibility

The UIA determines the number of weeks a worker may receive benefits by multiplying their total base period wages by 43% and dividing that amount by their WBA. Unemployment benefits are capped at 20 total weeks, regardless of whether the benefit was for a week of underemployment or unemployment.

It is important for members to understand that the number of weekly benefit payments remaining in their claim will be reduced by one week for any week they receive a benefit payment, regardless of the amount. For this reason, workers who anticipate a layoff may not want to collect benefits while underemployed, opting instead to collect their full weekly benefit for as long as possible if they become unemployed. Members can decide whether or not to claim a benefit each week they are underemployed.

Workers who file a claim based on being underemployed cannot start a new claim if they become unemployed within the same benefit year (typically 52 weeks).

How to File a Claim

Members can file a claim for underemployment online at www.michigan.gov/uia from 7 a.m. Monday through 7 p.m. Saturday.

Members can also file via phone by calling 1.866.500.0017. They can call between 8 a.m. and noon, and 12:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Thursday or Friday or on their assigned day and time based on the last two digits of their social security number.

To file a claim, workers will need their social security number and driver’s license number, or state identification, or their MARVIN PIN (if they have one).

They will also need the names and addresses of their employers and their quarterly gross earnings for the last four calendar quarters.



You’ve Read the Article
Now Take the Quiz at
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/stewardquizfebruary2015>

From the President: It’s Time to Prepare for 2016

2016 will be the start of the most challenging collective bargaining schedule in UFCW 951’s history. Most of our contracts will be up for negotiations during an 18 month period and we will be bargaining in a right to work climate. Employers will undoubtedly try to use this situation to their advantage, creating very difficult negotiations.

While it will be extremely challenging, I believe we can emerge from this bargaining cycle with solid contracts for UFCW 951 members if we all start working towards this goal now.

Having a leadership team of stewards and members at every unit to skillfully implement the union’s programs and effectively communicate with members will be critical to our success at the bargaining table.

As noted on page one, the local has started to put together these teams. Stewards can assist us by identifying members who can help in this capacity.

Stewards should also use 2015 to improve their grievance handling, leadership and communication skills and build their communication network. This includes properly reporting grievances to the union office (see the box below), keeping members informed about the status of their grievance and involving them in discussions regarding their grievance.

Gaining a reputation as someone members can count on to follow through is critical to a steward’s success. The local requires both union representatives and stewards to respond to members in a timely fashion. Stewards

should get back with a member within a day or two, even if it’s just to say they are still working on the issue.

Stewards should also use copies of the local’s promotional materials to build your communication network by greeting new members and educating longer term members. Creating a strong communication network in 2015 will enable you to more effectively communicate critical messages in 2016.

By using 2015 to become a better steward, you will help secure successes for UFCW 951 in 2016 and beyond.



John Cakmakci
President

Steward Spotlight: Sharon Clover, Meijer #63



Sharon Clover from Meijer #63 in Roseville has been a union steward for 10 years. She was originally a community service steward, and transitioned to a full-time union steward four years ago, which has enabled her to become an effective leader within her store. Clover was nominated for Steward Spotlight by her union representative, Brad Wilson.

“Sharon is a hard worker and cares about union members. You can see that every day in her work as a steward,” Wilson said. “She is great with the grievance process but also works to solve problems before having to file a grievance. She’s quick to respond and is tireless in helping others. Sharon is a true leader.”

Clover has worked at Meijer for almost 26 years. As a community service steward, Clover volunteered at and promoted union events.

“When I transitioned as a full-time steward, it was intimidating because there are so many different types of situations members could come to me with. It was challenging at first, but it has also been very educational,” Clover said. “It feels great being nominated, and I’m very honored. It makes me feel appreciated. Stewards should always ask questions and never be intimidated by management. It’s important to make sure members are not taken advantage of or misinformed by management, and I want to continue working hard to help members and be someone they can turn to.”

Stewards Must Inform the Union After Filing a Grievance

After filing a grievance, stewards are required to complete the following two steps. **Failure to comply with this requirement is grounds for removal from the steward position.**

1. Immediately notify your union representative that the grievance was filed.

2. Forward the grievance to the UFCW 951 office within seven days of filing by one of the following means:

- Fax to 616.447.1000
- Email to grievance@ufcwlocal951.com
- Call the Grievance Hotline at

1.800.999.0951 ext. 7 and provide the following:

1. Your name and unit number .
2. The grievant’s full name and last four digits of his/her social security number
3. Nature of the grievance
4. Date of the infraction
5. Description of facts
6. Date the Step 1 was filed
7. The unit manager’s name