

UFCW Local 555 inks Portland grocery pacts

After 18 months of contentious bargaining, grocery workers, meat cutters and checkout clerks in the Portland metropolitan area ratified new collective bargaining agreements Jan. 23 with their employers — Kroger, Albertsons, and Safeway.

The roughly 6,000 workers are members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555. Grocers bargain jointly as Food Employers Inc. on separate contracts representing grocery workers, and meat cutters at all stores, as well as central checkout clerks (CCK) at Fred Meyer, which is owned by Kroger.

Union officials did not release the exact vote count, but said the grocery contract passed on Jan. 23 by a 90 percent margin, the meat cutters contract passed by an 84 percent margin, and CCK passed by an 85 percent margin.

Several smaller independent stores such as Kroger-owned QFC will come in under the terms of the new pact.

The contract is retroactive to July 26, 2008. The new expiration date is July 28, 2012.

Journey-level employees will receive a lump-sum payment of 25 cents for every hour worked over the past 12 months, with apprentices receiving 15 cents an hour over the same time period. Effective Feb. 1, 2010, journey-level employees will get a pay raise of 25 cents an hour, followed the next year by a lump-sum payment of 25 cents for every hour worked. Journey-level employees will get another quarter an hour on their check starting Feb. 1, 2012.

Apprentices will receive wage step increases of up to 75 cents per hour over the term of the contract.

Employers agreed to pick up the first 7.3 percent increase each year in health insurance premiums. Any increases over that amount will be paid by workers.

Employees may volunteer to work Christmas Day, but can't be scheduled to work.

"The entire labor community helped

us get this contract," Steve Konopa, Local 555 grievance director, told delegates at the Jan. 25 Northwest Oregon Labor Council meeting. "We can't thank you enough."

In a separate vote held Jan. 29, grocery workers and meat cutters at Safeway stores in Bend, Redmond and Madras ratified new contracts. There are approximately 200 union members involved.

"It's slightly different from Portland's, but it follows basically the same pattern," said Local 555 Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Anderson.

Portland and Central Oregon bargaining teams negotiated together for several months prior to the ratification voting.

Talks will continue for grocery, meat and CCK employees at Fred Meyer and Albertsons stores in Bend, Redmond and Madras. Because bargaining is ongoing, union officials did not release ratification vote numbers at Safeway.

Meantime, a separate five-year contract covering "non-food" retail workers at Portland area Fred Meyer stores expires in June. And non-food employees at The Dalles Fred Meyer still are seeking a first contract. They voted overwhelmingly to be represented by Local 555 in November 2007.

Grocery workers at The Dalles Fred



Unions promote home fire safety at hockey game

Apprentices from Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 celebrate a 1-0 "Broom Ball" hockey game victory over members of Fire Fighters Local 43 Jan. 9 at Portland's Memorial Coliseum. The annual event is held between periods of a Portland Winter Hawks game and is used to promote residential fire sprinkler safety, said Jed Scheuermann, assistant training coordinator for Local 290. The union offers a training program for residential fire sprinkler system installation that is endorsed by the Portland Fire Bureau and the Oregon Building Codes Division. In Broom Ball, contestants don tennis shoes and plastic brooms and try to slap a foam ball into the net. The firefighters have held the Broom Ball Cup for the past three years after sloshing to 0-0 ties in 2008 and 2009. This year, with just seconds remaining, apprentice David Allen-Schublin scored the winning goal. Local 290 team members from left to right are: Jaimie Ortiz (hardhat), Marcus Morris, Brian Decklar, Chris Flowers (white hardhat), David Allen-Schublin, Gerald Rasmussen, Jesse Pappas, Tomahawk, and Zach Wright.



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