

Clay, Anderson re-elected leaders of UFCW #555

Dan Clay has been elected to a second term as president of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555. He defeated challenger Paul Petillo by a vote of 1,830 to 629.

Mail-in ballots were counted Sept. 8.

Jeff Anderson was re-elected to a second term as secretary-treasurer by acclamation.

Terms are for three years.

Clay, 34, has worked for the union since May 2000, having started in a temporary position as a membership coordinator. He also held jobs there as an organizer and union rep before running for president, following the retirement of Gene Pronovost.

Anderson, 53, has been a member of the union for 35 years. He started in the grocery industry at age 14 in Dalles, Oregon. He joined the union at age 18 after taking a job at a Fred Meyer store in Salem. The union hired him as an organizer in 1986. Since then, he has worked in nearly every department of the local, including organizing director, director of legislative and committee affairs, and assistant director of collective bargaining.

Clay and Anderson ran on a slate in 2008, and again in 2011.

"Jeff and I have a unique way of doing things. We collaborate. We're a team," Clay said. "He does some things well. I do some things well. We complement each other's strengths and weaknesses."

They say they've made major strides in their first term to activate the membership. "Rank-and-file union leadership is unionism at its best," Clay said. "The key to success in the labor movement, or the key to its failure, is membership involvement. When members are involved, they're more willing to fight for something. When they're less involved, they're less willing to fight."

That activism, the duo said, has helped salvage some benefits in medical and pension plans during a time when most employers wanted to gut them (following the Great Recession stock market collapse).

Clay and Anderson credit "Unity Bargaining" for the early success. First rolled out by the international union in 2008, Local 555 implemented it for non-food bargaining with Fred Meyer. In those successful negotiations, contracts in Portland, Salem, Coos Bay, Newberg, and Longview were bargained simultaneously — and in tandem with grocery bargaining at sister



DAN CLAY



JEFF ANDERSON

Local 21 in Seattle.

Grocery, meat and central checkout contracts in Portland and the Bend area also were conducted under Unity Bargaining.

Those efforts were recognized by the international union last April, when President Joe Hansen presented Local 555 with a Unity Bargaining Award at its Steward Summit.

Currently, Unity Bargaining is being used to negotiate multi-employer grocery contracts covering Eugene, Salem, Roseburg, Medford, Coos Bay, Vancouver and Longview.

"This the largest membership driven collective bargaining committee I've ever seen," Anderson said. "Now, when we set bargaining dates, employers are asking how many people we're bringing."

The Eugene area bargaining committee is comprised of 45 union members.

Clay and Anderson said that during their first term they also re-established the local's Organizing Department. Today, that department employs seven organizers who are about to embark "on the most aggressive organizing this union has seen in years," Anderson said.

Recent organizing victories include a long-term care facility in Coos Bay, and grocery and central checkout employees at a new Fred Meyer store in Wilsonville. Local 555 also has filed for an election at a food co-op in Ashland.

"We recognize that organizing new members is the best way to strengthen all of our contracts," Clay said.

Local 555 represents more than 19,000 workers in Oregon and Southwest Washington. It is the largest private-sector union in the state.

STAT OF THE WEEK

The richest family in America? That remains the clan of Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton. The six Walton heirs on the latest Forbes 400 list released late last month hold a combined fortune of \$93 billion. If that \$93 billion sat in an investment returning 3 percent, the six would average \$465 million each this year in income. An assistant Wal-Mart store manager would have to work 10,764 years to match that total.

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