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UNION ORGANIZING

UFCW Local 555: Safeway/Albertsons organizing drive brings in 4,400 new members

Oregon's largest private sector union has just completed its biggest-ever organizing campaign. United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555, which reported 20,140 members as of September, is in the process of adding 4,400 new members. The influx is the result of a year's worth of organizing at two companies that were already mostly unionized. Safeway and Albertsons agreed to remain neutral, giving union organizers access to employees in the break room, and leaving it up to workers whether they

wanted to sign up. The campaign took place at some locations that were previously nonunion, and at nonunion departments at otherwise unionized stores. Some stores had union-represented meat and grocery workers, for example, but nonunion workers in the deli, bakery, or floral departments.

"We've found that organizing is very difficult when there's an anti-union campaign," said Local 555 President Dan Clay. "However, with an employer that's truly neutral, organizing



went really well."

Local 555 staffed up with organizers, and brought in organizers from its parent organization and other UFCW locals as well. The campaign was led by organizing director Peter Diaz, who joined Local 555 in 2016 after serving as organizing director for Seattle-headquartered UFCW Local 21 and as national field coordinator for OUR Walmart, the UFCW-led organiza-

tion that coordinated walkouts by individual Walmart employees.

The union drive came after the merger of Safeway and Albertsons. Albertsons — owned by an investor consortium led by private equity firm Cerberus Capital Management — acquired Safeway in January 2015 for \$9.2 billion.

The newly-signed-up Safeway and Albertsons employees are being added to the union health and pension plans, at which point they'll become full dues-paying members.

Cafeteria workers unionize at Lewis & Clark College

Bon Appétit Management Company, the contractor that runs the cafeteria at Lewis & Clark College in Southwest Portland, voluntarily agreed to recognize a union there on March 28 after a majority of workers signed union cards. Once a first union contract is negotiated and ratified, the cafeteria employees will become

members of Seattle-headquartered UNITE HERE Local 8.

Bon Appétit is a subsidiary of the world's largest contract food service company, UK-headquartered Compass Group. It manages



cafeterias for corporations, universities, and specialty venues, including — in Portland — University of Portland, Reed College, and the Theory Cafe at the Oregon Museum of Science & Industry.

Members from Portland and Seattle helped with the organizing effort at Lewis & Clark.

UNITE HERE also campaigned at University of Portland, but didn't find majority support for a union there.

UNITE HERE represents workers at a number of Bon Appétit cafeterias around the United States.

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