

BUILDING COMMUNITY

SW Washington Labor Council hands out 650 boxes of food in 45 minutes

The Southwest Washington Central Labor Council (SWCLC) handed out 650 food boxes in 45 minutes May 14 at Tower Mall in Vancouver. The boxes contained fresh produce, milk, dairy, cooked meats, and other perishable items. They went to anyone who needed it—union or not.

The labor council has been operating an “In Solidarity Food Bank” since just before Christmas for 152 union members who were laid off or furloughed because of COVID-19. Many are public school employees. The council raised \$22,000 for the program, with volunteers personally shopping for the unemployed union members based on their needs.

“It just got too big for us to keep up,” said SWCLC President Shannon Myers. The food bank ended in late April, but the need for food did not.

Myers happened to share her concerns with Lori Vaughn, a representative with American Income Life in Portland. “Lori asked me, ‘Would you like a food truck?’ She said all we needed was a location.”

So, with help from State Rep. Sharon Wylie and Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle, Myers found a spot at Tower Mall, where a drive through vac-



ination clinic was already set up. Vaughn then helped the labor council secure fresh food boxes through the USDA Farmers to Families program. The federally-funded national program was implemented over a year ago as a temporary, emergency relief effort to respond to severe market disruption caused by the global pandemic. With the economy improving since vaccinations for COVID-19 came out, the program is slated to end on May 31.

On Friday, May 14, a semi-truck delivered wrapped pallets carrying 650 boxes weighing 30 pounds each to the Tower Mall parking lot. Thirty union volunteers helped unload the pallets and prepare the food for distribution. They made signs and set up safety cones to direct traffic. It opened to vehicles for contactless loading at 11:39 a.m. By 12:24 p.m. the boxes were gone.

While they were at it, the 30 union volunteers also provided information about the PRO Act and how a union can help at work.

“We’re a well-oiled machine here,” Myers said. “Everyone jumped on board. We had so many volunteers. No one was exhausted at the end of the day. It was amazing.”

IBEW 89 warns labor strife may be coming with purchaser of Frontier

A Northwest telecom union is raising the alarm about Zply Fiber, which bought bankrupt cable/internet provider Frontier Communications in April 2020 for \$1.3 billion. IBEW Local 89 represents Frontier’s 700 Oregon and Washington workers in a collective bargaining agreement that runs through May 31, 2021, and the union is expecting to meet with Zply to bargain a successor agreement. But Local 89 Business Manager Matt Carroll says it took 10 weeks and four requests to get the company to agree to bargaining dates, and then the company was a no-show at the first scheduled bargaining session May 11, 2021.

“This is going to be tough,” Carroll said in a press statement. “When they only offer you two dates then fail to show on the first one, it is hard to remain optimistic that an agreement will be reached.”

Local 89 says Zply has so far failed to reach agreement with other IBEW locals either.

Zply, based in Kirkland, Washington, is a subsidiary of WaveDivision Capital, a private investment company. It serves over 500,000 customers in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana from offices in Beaverton, Oregon; Everett, Washington; and Hayden, Idaho.

Carroll says he’s worked for over a year to establish a relationship with Zply Fiber in anticipation of bargaining.

With no makeup date selected, Carroll is asking AFL-CIO affiliates to tell Zply their actions are unacceptable to IBEW members, and to customers and communities. Union supporters can call Zply Fiber at 425-250-8199, Ext #102, or email executives@zply.com.



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