

Grocery Summit planned for early February

Posted On: Jan 05, 2011 (14:04:27)

Your Local Union is planning an industry-wide grocery summit on February 5, 2011 to prepare for upcoming contract negotiations.

In the past, your Union bargained a “master agreement” that maintained working conditions, wages and benefits for all Union members throughout the industry. The idea behind the summit is to build solidarity and bring the power of a united grocery membership back into the bargaining process.

The summit will be the first meeting for members of all the grocery houses to come together and discuss ways to improve communication and establish partnerships across the industry before bargaining starts in 2011.

The summit will also be an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other Teamster leaders in the grocery industry in our area and to identify key topics for contract negotiations. Members from Fred Meyer, SuperValu, Safeway, and Unified Grocers will be in attendance.

“These are tough times and it’s critically important that all of us are on the same page and present a united front as we get into bargaining,” said Teamsters Local 117’s Secretary-Treasurer Tracey A. Thompson. “Make no mistake – this is going to be a dogfight, and we need to be ready.”

Shawn Griffith, a Safeway order selector who attended a Local 117 grocery workshop last summer, stressed the importance of learning more about the bargaining process. “We have a big group of new guys who are still getting educated about why we have a Union and why we have a contract. There are a lot of issues that we are facing and it’s important that we get involved.”

John Morris, a 31-year Shop Steward at SuperValu sees health care as the number one issue in upcoming contract negotiations. “These companies are going to try to achieve takeaways that dilute our health benefits. We’ve got to take a stand and let the employer know that we’re willing to fight.”

24-year SuperValu forklift driver, Scott Fueston agrees. “Health and welfare will be one of the hottest issues in bargaining. The Union has done a great job estimating our health care expenditures, so that will be a big bargaining chip for us.”

Monty Johnson, a 17-year order selector/forklift driver at Supervalu, is concerned about his Union pension. “We’ve got a great pension now. The more we can work to strengthen it, the better our collective futures will be.”

As soon as the Feb. 5 date for the summit approaches, your Union will be sending a turnout message through grocery Shop Stewards and communication networks.

Member participation in the summit is a critical step to achieving the kind of strong Teamsters contract that the hardworking men and women of the Puget Sound grocery industry deserve.

