

## Newly Organized Members of UFCW Local 440 Ratify First Contract with Smithfield Foods



*New members of Local 440 celebrate their first contract with Smithfield after organizing in October 2011.*

Last week, members of UFCW Local 440 who work at Farmland Foods in Carroll, Iowa, successfully negotiated and ratified their first contract. Workers said they wanted a union voice to address constantly changing rules, unfair write-ups and unclear attendance policies. Bargaining for the four-year contract began this past January. The contract between members and Farmland Foods includes improved bidding procedures based on seniority, improved sick and personal leave, as well as a clear system to contest and challenge the company's actions. Most importantly, workers were able to hold on to their affordable health care benefits.

Members also negotiated a \$1.40 pay raise over the course of the four-year contract but Local 440 President Leo Kanne said that the heart of the contract was never really about the money. "The workers were experiencing problems like unfair treatment, and favoritism, typical at non-union plants. Workers decided to ban together because they wanted fair treatment."

The Farmland Foods plant originally opened in 1972 and is now owned by Smithfield Foods. Workers at the plant had a union contract until the plant closed a decade ago. When the plant had to re-open a month later due to a fire at a satellite location, Farmland hired workers through a temporary agency. Once the workers were released from agency control a few years later, they wanted to organize to address issues of unfairness. Over the next few years, workers campaigned for a union voice and won their election in October 2011. **OP**

## UFCW Members in Minnesota Talk to Legislators about Their Right to Stick Together

Members of UFCW Locals 653, 1161, and 1189 visited the Minnesota State Capitol last week for a lobby day to let their legislators know that "Right-to-Work" is wrong for Minnesota families. Despite bipartisan opposition, a group of anti-worker legislators are seeking to amend Minnesota's Constitution to deny workers their fundamental rights. UFCW members understand that this effort isn't about rights or work—it's another attempt to enrich corporations at their expense. Right-to-Work laws reduce wages by \$5,000 a year and lower the likelihood that employees get health care or pensions through their jobs.

As the *Star-Tribune* (Minnesota) said in a February 18 editorial: "Right to Work represents a step away from Minnesota's economic roots and toward America's South and West. Unlike those historically low-wage regions, Minnesota has long aimed to be a high-wage, high-skill state in which the fruits of enterprise are widely and fairly shared. Weaker unions are likely to lead to lower wages and benefits, which will translate into reduced tax revenue and depleted ability for Minnesota to compete for knowledge-economy jobs."

The lobby day was critical in garnering opposition to the bill which remains stuck in the Rules Committee. UFCW members will continue to demand that their legislators focus on jobs, not anti-worker politics. **OP**



*Members of UFCW Local 1189 gather on the steps of the Minnesota Capitol after lobbying their representatives. They joined with members from UFCW Locals 1161 and 653 to stop anti-worker legislation.*

## Whole Foods Shareholders, Led by UFCW, Rebuke CEO John Mackey & Assert Their Rights



*Members of UFCW Local 88 are hand billing local Whole Foods' customers about CEO John Mackey's efforts to undermine health care reform.*

Whole Foods shareholders sent a clear rebuke to Whole Foods CEO John Mackey recently when 63% voted to restore shareholder rights that Mackey had taken away. The resolution would make it possible for shareholders to remove directors, such as Mackey, from

the Whole Foods Board. On behalf of many Whole Foods shareholders, Ellouise Patton, Special Projects Coordinator at UFCW Local 5, presented the proposal at the Whole Foods March 9th shareholder meeting. Her message to the Whole Foods CEO was that shareholders expect accountability and do not appreciate the efforts by Mackey to dilute shareholders' rights, in the same way he has denied workers' rights.

This investor strategy, guided by the UFCW's Capital Stewardship Office, is part of an effort to put pressure on irresponsible corporate leaders like John Mackey who have placed their own ideological biases ahead of shareholder value. This is the second time shareholders, led by the UFCW, have voted to decrease Mackey's power and influence on the board.

In 2009, UFCW locals around the country held him accountable for his efforts to undermine meaningful health care reform by disseminating educational information to Whole Foods shoppers, setting the record straight about health care reform and raising concerns about the CEO's position.

The UFCW, along with other shareholders, pushed the SEC to investigate Mackey after he was caught blogging under a fake name to score points against a major competitor, which Whole Foods ended up purchasing in what Mackey himself later admitted was an ill-timed, over-priced mistake. **OP**

## UFCW Legislative and Political Action Conference Set for May

The UFCW will gather in Chicago on May 8 and 9, 2012 for our Legislative and Political Action Conference. The UFCW is committed to electing candidates that will stand with workers, strengthen the middle class, and help struggling families achieve the American Dream. We will be laying out a strategic political and legislative action plan to ensure our membership is educated and motivated in this important election year. An exciting and informative agenda is planned including workshops focusing on politics, legislation, communications, and VAN (UFCW member voter file). In addition, the annual ABC awards will be presented.

The deadline to register is March 30. For more information, please contact International Vice President and Special Assistant to the President Steve Powell at 202-223-3111. **OP**



*Participants attended several sessions during the 2010 Legislative and Political Action Conference.*

## DOL Releases "Know Your Rights" Web Series for Workers

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Wage and Hour Division has developed the "Know Your Rights" video series, in English and Spanish, to provide workers with useful and basic information for different scenarios that workers regularly encounter in the workplace. It will take place on Wednesday, March 21, from 3-4 PM EDT. UFCW Stewards and Representatives may find the content of the session particularly





beneficial. The series will be hosted by U.S. DOL Wage and Hour Division Administrator, Nancy Leppink. A Q&A session will also take place after the webinar is complete.

Space is limited. To reserve a spot, please RSVP at <http://s.dol.gov/OS>. A live stream of the webcast can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/FSpUsF>.

Please contact Tania Mejía, Special Assistant to the Administrator, at [mejia.idania@dol.gov](mailto:mejia.idania@dol.gov) with any questions. **OP**

## Sign Your Members Up for 99% Spring Trainings

The UFCW has joined with a diverse coalition of groups to endorse the 99% Spring. The goal of the group is to train 100,000 activists through in-person and online modules during the week of April 9 – 15, 2012. The trainings will give activists the skills and inspiration to lead and participate in actions that confront corporate power – including worker campaigns that will directly impact the livelihoods of UFCW members and future members. UFCW organizing campaigns like Making Change @ Walmart, Ahold, Giant Eagle and Perdue will be key opportunities for local actions this spring.

Several UFCW International staff are being assigned to lead and attend these trainings, and it is a great chance to activate and mobilize local union members and develop local activists and leaders. For more information about how your members and key staff can attend or lead a training in your area, or to host a training at your local union office, visit [www.the99spring.com](http://www.the99spring.com) or contact GERALYN LUTTY at the UFCW International. **OP**



## Wisconsin OUR Walmart Members Win Additional Work Hours, Stop Part-Time Hires



OUR Walmart members in Kenosha, Wis., won a huge victory last week. As a result of associates standing together, a store manager announced that current part-timers would be given more hours, and that any further hiring of part-timers would be on hold.

“Initially, many of us were shocked at the announcement but this is a major victory for us,” said OUR Walmart member Mary Pat Tifft. “This change in policy is a direct result of associates speaking up and demanding Walmart to give current associates more hours.”

Walmart was previously hiring part-time workers, not allowing current associates to work enough hours to pay their bills and raise a family. **OP**

## UFCW SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

**Your union is about more than your paycheck and benefits.**

That's why each year the UFCW awards several SCHOLARSHIPS of up to \$8,000 each to UFCW members or their unmarried dependents.

The application will be available online from January 16 - April 16, 2012.

For more information, and to find out if you're eligible, please visit:

[www.ufcw.org/scholarship](http://www.ufcw.org/scholarship)