



Teamsters Local 117

Teamster Talk

Fighting for Workers' Rights Since 1936

Teamsters Local 117: 14675 Interurban Ave. S, Suite 307 • Tukwila, WA 98168 • (206) 441-4860 • www.teamsters117.org

SHOP STEWARDS BUILD POWER AT ANNUAL SEMINAR

26th Shop Steward Seminar and Appreciation Day



Thank you to all Local 117 Shop Stewards. You are the backbone of this Union!

Over 225 **Shop Stewards** from across your Union - public sector, private sector, and the DOC - met at the Washington State Convention Center on Saturday, March 16 for Local 117's 26th annual **Shop Steward Seminar and Appreciation Day**.

The event is an opportunity for Local 117 to recognize the incredible work Shop Stewards do in representing the members and to honor them for their service. It is also an opportunity for Stewards to educate themselves on critical issues, to review battles of the previous year, and to prepare for the fights to come.

This year, longtime union activist **Mark**

McDermott gave a presentation on labor struggles over the last 100 years, while former King County Executive **Ron Sims** provided a rousing keynote speech during lunch.

Breakout sessions were facilitated by Local 117 President **John Scearcy**, who led a discussion about challenges Stewards face on the shop floor, and Senior Staff Attorney **Dan Swedlow**, who reviewed a series of the Union's recent arbitration cases.

Thank you to all Local 117 Shop Stewards for making Teamsters Local 117 a strong and dynamic Union that fights for workers' rights. You are the backbone of this Union! ●

THEO CHOCOLATE'S UNION BUSTING: EXPOSED

Put the "Fair" back into "Fair Trade"



Workers protest in front of the Westlake Whole Foods on Valentine's Day.

The "fair" in fair trade has a shallow meaning when it comes to Theo Chocolate, a Seattle-based chocolatier, that despite its "fair trade" certification, engaged in a vicious anti-union campaign during a Local 117 organizing drive in 2010.

Once Theo heard that a majority of its workers wanted to join the Teamsters, the company hired a union-busting consulting firm, terminated a union leader, held workers in captive audience meetings that lasted up to four hours, and said that they would rather "shut down" the Fremont-neighborhood factory than sign a union contract.

Typical stuff from a company without a conscience, but from "fair trade" Theo's?

VALENTINE'S DAY HEARTBREAKER

On Valentine's Day, ex-Theo workers,

see **UNION BUSTER**, Page 2

A message from your Secretary-Treasurer



Brothers and Sisters:

Over the past week, I have watched in horror as more and more workers' bodies were pulled from Rana Plaza in Bangladesh. Thousands of garment workers, struggling to support their families on 18-26 cents an hour, were intentionally sent to work in an unsafe building.

More than 360 workers are dead, hundreds more suffer injuries that will prevent them from working again, and countless others are still missing. On April 29, the Bangladesh government called off the search for survivors.

Knowing that factory inspections were infrequent and inadequate, Bangladesh and international labor unions presented a proposal in 2011 to international retailers who profit from the Bangladesh garment industry, including Wal-Mart, Gap and H&M, to create an independent inspectorate to assess safety conditions at garment factories.

The proposal asked these multi-billion dollar corporations to pay only \$500,000 per year each to fund the independent inspectorate. Wal-Mart's response to the proposal was that it was "not financially feasible ... to make such investments," according to minutes of the meeting obtained by The Associated Press.

Not financially feasible? This from a corporation with sales of \$466.1 billion in fiscal year 2013 and net income of \$17 billion?

There are 3.6 million garment workers in Bangladesh. An annual contribution of \$500,000 on behalf of 3.6 million workers is 14 cents per worker.

Your Union has long advocated against shopping at Wal-Mart, not only because of their anti-labor practices, but because Wal-Mart puts profits over people. If you continue to shop at Wal-Mart, you need to do so knowing that the 14 cents you are saving on that pair of socks could have been invested in saving a human life.

In Solidarity,

Tracey A. Thompson
Secretary-Treasurer

"There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction." John F. Kennedy

THEO: UNION BUSTER

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together with union members and fair trade activists, gathered in front of the Westlake Whole Foods to raise awareness about Theo's efforts break the union.

The group handed out genuine fair trade chocolate from a heart-shaped piñata and leaflets with a simple message: Union busting is disgusting, whether it's coming from a billion dollar Koch brothers-funded corporation or from a local organic boutique chocolate maker.

ILRF REPORT EXPOSES UNION-BUSTING AT THEO CHOCOLATE

The action coincided with a report by the **International Labor Rights Forum** (ILRF), *Aiding and Abetting*, that denounced both Theo for squashing the union and the IMO, the Swiss-based group that certifies companies that uphold fair trade standards. Somehow the IMO branded Theo with its "Fair for Life" certification even after being informed by Theo workers that the company was violating international labor standards.

"Theo and the IMO need to be held accountable," said MacKenzie Jahnke, a union supporter at Theo who was fired by the company shortly after having received positive evaluations of her work.

"It's unfair to consumers for Theo to flaunt its fair trade label when they don't support workers. It's unfair to consumers when they say that they believe in fair trade certification when the fair trade certifiers are actually working for the companies they certify. It's a conflict of interest." ●

ORGANIZING CATCHES FIRE

117 Launches Multiple Campaigns



Airport workers demand union recognition.

The Local 117 **Organizing Department** is currently spearheading a series of organizing campaigns in different sectors with the goal of bringing hundreds of new workers into the Union.

Here's what's happening by industry:

Industry: Parking

Company: Impark

Number of workers: 30

Status: On January 18, workers voted by a 2-1 margin to join forces with Teamsters Local 117. Your Union is now in the process of negotiating a contract for workers at Impark.

Industry: Steel and scrap

Company: Steeler Drywall & Construction

Number of workers: 40

Status: Workers contacted Local 117 in February expressing their desire to have a voice in the workplace. Over the next several weeks, 80% of workers signed Union authorization cards.

On March 10, workers presented their employer with a petition stating their intent to join the Teamsters. An NLRB election took place on April 23 and employees at Steeler voted 26-2 to join Teamsters Local 117. Contract negotiations will begin soon.

Industry: Rental Car

Companies: GCA Services & Golden

Gate Car Rentals

Number of workers: 300

Status: GCA and Goldengate are sub-contracted by rental car companies, such as the Avis Budget Group, to perform a variety of services at SeaTac airport.

The workers are part of a historic multi-Union organizing drive intent on improving the lives of thousands of low-wage workers at the airport.

A new report published by **Puget Sound Sage** found that workers at SeaTac had the worst wages, benefits, and job protections of any airport on the West Coast.

On March 26, hundreds of baggage handlers, skycaps, concession workers, wheelchair attendants, and cabin cleaners announced that they had formed a Union, and they marched together to demand recognition from five companies at the airport.

So far the companies have refused to recognize the Union. Workers plan to continue their pressure campaign until their rights are respected. ●

LOCAL 117 CAUCUSES SPONSOR LOBBY DAY IN OLYMPIA

Teamsters for Tomorrow, Comité Latino and the Women's Caucus at the Capitol

On Thursday, March 21, Local 117 members from the public sector, private sector, the Department of Corrections, and the Western Washington Taxicab Operators Association (WWTCOA) teamed up for your Union's fourth lobby day this legislative session in Olympia.

Over 40 members turned out to speak with legislators about critical issues facing working families including interest arbitration rights for Teamsters at the DOC, paid sick days, collective bargaining rights, and the Washington State DREAM Act. Members also lobbied against proposed "right to work" (for



Local 117 members on March 21 Lobby Day

less!) legislation (SB5347) that is moving forward in the Senate.

The event was sponsored by three Local 117 caucuses - the **Teamsters for**

Tomorrow, Comité Latino, and the Teamsters Women's Caucus. Members from all three caucuses spoke in pre-scheduled meetings with legislators. For many members, it was their first trip to the State Capitol.

"I came to talk with Senators about two bills - the Washington State DREAM Act and the Voting Rights Act," said Jose Recinos of Seattle Iron and Metal. "We want to make sure that our kids have an opportunity to go to school and make a better life for themselves."

Tony Tellez, an AC Cook at the Washington Corrections Center (WCC) in Shelton, had this to say: "I'm here to show my support for my fellow Teamsters 117 members. I'll be touching on interest arbitration. That's a big deal for everybody at the DOC. It's important that management and Union members are on an equal playing field." ●

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!

Local 117 Jeff Alfieri Scholarship deadline: May 10



Are you a member of Teamsters Local 117 and the parent of a graduating high school senior or a student who is currently enrolled in a college or technical school and is in need of money for college?

The Local 117 **Jeff Alfieri Scholarship** of up to \$2000 is awarded to outstanding students whose parents are members of Teamsters Local 117.

The founders of the scholarship fund, Ralph and Sue Alfieri, established the scholarship in memory of their son, Jeff Alfieri, a former Local 117 Business Representative.

The deadline for the 2013 Alfieri Scholarship is May 10. An application for the scholarship and eligibility requirements are available at www.teamsters117.org.

SOLIDARITY SCHOLARSHIP FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

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If you're seeking to further your own education, consider applying for Local 117's **Solidarity Scholarship**. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and can be accessed at www.teamsters117.org.



START YOUR ENGINES!

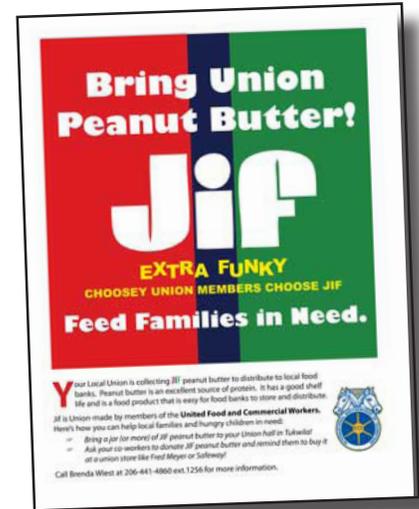
Car & Bike Show - June 22

Rods, customs, classics, and choppers all welcome for your Local Union's first annual **Car & Bike Show** on Saturday, June 22, 2013. This event is sponsored by the Local 117 caucuses to benefit your Union's **Solidarity Scholarship** for continuing education. Roll in at 9:30 a.m. Show starts at 10:30 a.m. A registration form is available online at www.teamsters117.org.



DRIVE TO FEED HUNGRY KIDS

Bring Union peanut butter to feed families in need!



Your Local Union is collecting JIF peanut butter to distribute to local food banks. Peanut butter is an excellent source of protein. It has a good shelf life, and it is a food product that is easy for food banks to store and distribute.

Jif is Union-made by members of the **United Food and Commercial Workers**. Here's how you can help local families and hungry children in need:

Here's how you can help local families and hungry children in need:

- Bring a jar (or more) of JIF peanut butter to your Union hall in Tukwila;
- Ask your co-workers to donate JIF peanut butter and remind them to buy it at a union store like Fred Meyer or Safeway.

Call Brenda Wiest at 206-441-4860 ext.1256 for more information or talk to your Business Representative.

LOCAL 117 EVENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- May 11, 2013 – Steward Advisory Council
- June 20, 2013 – General Membership Meeting
- June 22, 2013 – Local 117 Car & Bike Show

FOLLOW YOUR LOCAL UNION ON THE WEB!



Join your Union's Facebook page, follow us on Twitter at @teamsters117 and watch Local 117 videos on YouTube!

Sign up online to receive an electronic copy of Teamster Talk at www.teamsters117.org.