



United Food and Commercial Workers Local 951  
3270 Evergreen Drive NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525

John Cakmakci  
President

Dave Way  
Secretary/Treasurer

Karin Hopman  
Recorder

1.800.999.0951  
www.ufcw951.org  
www.facebook.com/UFCW951

Non Profit Org  
US Postage  
PAID  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Permit #580

# STEWARDS UPDATE

Vol. 9 Issue 2

May 2015

## Giant Retailers Make Promises; UFCW 951 Members Have Guarantees

Wal-Mart recently made headlines with its plan to raise workers' hourly wages to \$9 this year and to \$10 in 2016. Other retailers, including Target and T.J. Maxx, quickly followed with their own plans to raise employees' wages to \$9 per hour.

These announcements generated many questions and some complaints from members. As unit leaders, stewards need to know how to respond in these situations. Members need to be reminded that Wal-Mart and the other non-union retailers have "plans" to raise wages; there is nothing to stop them from changing their plans.

"Wal-Mart is very good at public relations. After getting a great deal of negative press for their low wages, Wal-Mart announced they were going to raise wages," John Cakmakci, UFCW 951, president, said. "The public now thinks Wal-Mart is doing right by their employees, solving their public relations problem. It doesn't matter if Wal-Mart actually raises wages."

In fact, many Wal-Mart workers have yet to see their wages increase, including the daughter of a UFCW 951 Executive Board member.

"When she asked her manager when she was going to get the raise Wal-Mart announced, he told her to 'shut up and go back to work,'" Cakmakci said. "She has yet to receive the promised raise."

Members also need to be reminded

### Remind Members of their Union Advantage

When you hear members complaining about the union, remind them of the benefits of their union contract. Members may incorrectly think their employer is legally required to provide these benefits. They need to know it's not the law but the union contract that requires they receive the following workplace advantages.

**Guaranteed Wage Increases:** Without a union contract, who receives a raise and the amount of the increase is strictly a management decision. Workers could go years without a raise or have their pay cut at any time.

**Paid Breaks and Lunches:** The law only requires minors receive a break from work. There is nothing besides the union contract preventing employers from forcing all other employees to work their entire shift without a break or lunch, paid or unpaid.

**Just Cause for Termination:** Michigan is an employment at will state, meaning workers can be terminated for any reason, or no reason at all. The just cause protection of the union contract requires employers to prove just cause before firing workers.

**Daily Overtime Pay:** The law requires overtime pay after 40 hours worked per week; it does not address daily overtime. The union contract requires members receive overtime pay after working eight hours in a day.

**Schedule Guarantees:** Without the union contract, workers have no guarantee of hours, daily or weekly. The contract also requires a schedule be posted that can't be changed at management's whim.

**Paid Holidays:** There is no law requiring holiday pay. The only reason members receive holiday pay is because they are covered by a union contract.

that if Wal-Mart and other non-union retailers do give increases, employees have no assurance they will actually take home more money, because there are no hourly guarantees.

"Non-union retailers, especially Target, are notorious for inconsistent

scheduling and the cutting of hours," Cakmakci said. "One week an employee may be scheduled for 18 hours, four the next week and none the following week. A raise doesn't mean much when you are working fewer hours."

Help Spread the Word



Monday, July 13  
Saturday, August 1

Discounted tickets include admission to both parks and an all-you-can-eat lunch. Tickets are limited and sold on a first-come, first-serve basis. Members may purchase up to six discounted tickets at \$20 each. Additional tickets are \$35 each and include the lunch and access to both parks. Members may purchase tickets for both events.

The best way to purchase tickets is online using a credit or debit card via PayPal at www.ufcw951.org or by calling the office at 1.800.999.0951.

### UFCW 951 Sign Me Up!

I want to receive important news and updates from my union via email.

Please print

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last 4 digits of SS # \_\_\_\_\_

Employer & Unit # \_\_\_\_\_ Employee ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

I want to receive UFCW 951 text message updates.

(UFCW 951 does not charge for text messages, but your cell phone carrier's message and data rates apply.) Cell Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

### Turn in Sign Me Up! Cards

Remember to use the return envelopes to mail in 20 completed Sign Me Up! cards, or give them to your union representative. Stewards received these cards at the April Steward Conferences in the session "Stewards: The Driving Force Behind a Successful Union."

Stewards who were unable to attend a steward conference will receive 20 Sign Me Up! cards from their union representative in May.



### You've Read the Update

Now take the quiz at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/maystewardquiz>

UFCW 951 has incorporated online quizzes to its steward training program. Be sure to take this month's quiz. It's short and will let your union representative know you've read the May Steward Update.

# Share and Engage UFCW 951 Members With Social Media

UFCW 951 launched its Facebook page in late 2010 with the goal of strengthening the UFCW 951 community and keeping members informed. Since then, UFCW 951 has used Facebook to provide instantaneous information to members, direct members to resources for their store issues and update members on statewide and nationwide issues affecting the working class.

"I'm 57 years old, and I'm very intimidated by computers, but I'm trying to get more involved. I know this is the way the world is going to communicate with one another," said Rick Roenicke, steward at Meijer #42. "The world is going to social media. This is a way to engage members – especially young members. If you are trying to help people, and there's an additional way you can reach them, do it."

Currently, the UFCW 951 Facebook page has nearly 1,500 "Likes." The page has provided opportunities for members to have an open dialogue with their union and one another.

"We now have a platform to reach even more members to showcase the benefits of being a union member," said Stephanie Meerman, UFCW 951 assistant representative from Meijer #71. "It's an easy way to show that stewards are active and encourages them to be involved as well. Using Facebook is a great way to offer positive feedback and combat any negativity."

UFCW 951 is calling on stewards to post, comment and interact on Facebook and with 951's other social media platforms (see below). With stewards redistributing messages from 951 to their networks, potentially thousands more members can be reached. See the box at right for tips on how you can help UFCW 951 communicate more effectively online.

## Spread the Word

Share UFCW 951 posts on your own Facebook page, Twitter newsfeed or Instagram, especially if you interact with other UFCW 951 members on social media. When your friends see your UFCW 951 status updates, they will be more informed and more likely to also share union news.

## Encourage Members to "Like" UFCW 951 on Facebook or follow UFCW 951 on Instagram and Twitter

Whenever you have the opportunity, remind members to click "Like" on the UFCW 951 Facebook page. By liking UFCW 951's page, members will be among the first to know about UFCW 951 news and events. Members can also search @UFCW951 to follow the union on Twitter and Instagram.

## Post on UFCW 951's Social Media Platforms

If you have union news to share, post it on both your personal and UFCW 951's social media pages. Posts can include anything from something you learned at a steward training or relevant political action, to UFCW 951 Foundation fundraising activities at your workplace.

Don't forget you can tag 951 in your updates. To tag, include the @ symbol before typing "UFCW 951" – this ensures your status update also shows on UFCW 951's pages. You can also post pictures and links about your workplace and your union.

## Don't Let your Union Brothers and Sisters Talk Negatively about UFCW 951 on the Web (or Anywhere Else!)

- If you see negative comments on UFCW 951's Facebook page, jump in right away.
- Often, members who leave negative, insensitive, inappropriate or inaccurate comments just need the facts. Give them the facts and offer solutions. Use it as an opportunity to educate them.
- Diffuse negativity and hostility on the page by replying calmly, kindly and with correct information. Be sure to keep it clean when responding - don't name call or use profanity.
- If you're unsure of how to answer a question or reply to a negative remark, remind the member UFCW 951 is working hard to provide strong contracts and outstanding membership benefits, or something similar that is relevant to the comment. Close by telling the member he or she is always free to contact a union representative.
- Don't escalate a conversation. If comments spin out of control, disengage from the discussion. Your UFCW 951 communications team regularly monitors Facebook; the team will decide how to best respond to the situation.
- Have fun! Social media is a fun way to interact with members. Share photos to highlight your engagement with your union.

Find UFCW  
951 Online



[www.ufcw951.org](http://www.ufcw951.org)



[www.facebook.com/ufcw951](http://www.facebook.com/ufcw951)



[www.twitter.com/ufcw951](http://www.twitter.com/ufcw951)



[www.instagram.com/ufcw951](http://www.instagram.com/ufcw951)

# From the President: Follow Through is a Must for Stewards

Thank you to all of the stewards who attended one of the 2015 Steward Conferences. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you in my breakout session. As we move forward, UFCW 951 will continue to reinforce the conferences' themes and build upon the ideas presented during the day in our communications and interactions with stewards.

One of the major concepts incorporated into each of the conferences' sessions was follow through. I cannot stress enough the importance of follow through in all of your steward duties. Whether it's notifying the union that you filed a grievance, getting back to a member with the answer to a question, or helping a union representative with a project, it is critical that you follow through in a timely manner. Not only does your reputation as a union

steward depend on it, but the success of the union hinges upon your follow through as well.

In a right to work environment, the success of the union is determined by the local's ability to sign-up new members and maintain current members. If stewards are following through on their responsibilities, new workers will want to join the union and current members will choose to retain their status. They will see the value of UFCW 951 membership and understand why being a UFCW 951 member is important to their future and strengthens their communities.

However, if stewards fail to take their position seriously and lack the follow through necessary to perform the job, it is unlikely workers want to join or remain in the union. They simply won't

see the value.

We often call stewards workplace union representatives; you represent the union at the workplace. If this representation is bad, then the union is seen as bad. Nobody wants to join something that is bad. If the representation is good, then the union is seen as good. Most people want to be part of something good.

UFCW 951 is counting on you to do a good job, by following through on your steward responsibilities to insure the success of the union for many years to come.



**John Cakmakci**  
President

## Steward Spotlight: Mary Kay Steffes-Schmitz, Meijer DC #86



**"I'm shocked and honored to be recognized for Steward Spotlight. Stewards should stop being afraid of management and speak up for members and themselves. We have to stand firm on what is right for our members. Management may not like us all the time, but with the union in place, they can't walk over us. I give my all in being a steward because I feel the members deserve it."**  
– Mary Kay Steffes-Schmitz, Meijer DC #86

Mary Kay Steffes-Schmitz has worked at Meijer Distribution Center #86 in Lansing since 1972. Originally an alternate union steward, Steffes-Schmitz transitioned to a full-time steward three years ago.

"At first, I didn't want to be a steward; I didn't think I could do it. I felt that I could only assist," Steffes-Schmitz said. "I later realized members and the steward were coming to me a lot. That's when I realized I could do this job."

Steffes-Schmitz was nominated for steward spotlight by her UFCW 951 representative, Nick Harrington.

"I officially joined UFCW 951 in July of 2014, and Mary Kay was a huge asset as I familiarized myself with the Meijer DC. She is instrumental in the unit, and members of all ages and her fellow stewards turn to her as a resource," Harrington said. "She's a mentor to new stewards, is great at grievance handling and assists from start to finish at UFCW 951 Foundation fundraisers. Mary Kay is a great steward and an all around awesome person."

Steffes-Schmitz works hard to ensure efficient and timely grievance handling. She works to get the whole story by

conducting thorough investigations.

"When I file a grievance, I do it confidently because I know what I put on the grievance form is correct. I tell members they may not win, but I'll always file for them," Steffes-Schmitz said. "Members sometimes feel better just from talking it out. I feel that I am a lawyer, mediator, and at times, a therapist. I like helping members fight their battles because many are afraid to stand up for themselves. I'm the second shift mom."