

RWDSU

UFCW

RECORD

Summer 2020

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RWDSU Heroes

*Union Fighting for Workers and Safer Workplaces
as Members Step Up During Pandemic*

PAGE 8-9



Local 108 workers are doing essential jobs in New Jersey Supermarkets.

Local 338 members at Bonavita Supermarket in New York.



RWDSU Mid-South Council members at Peco Poultry in Alabama have been feeding America.



Nursing home workers - like these RWDSU members at Valley View Manor in New York - have been on the front lines of the pandemic.



Verree Road Nursing Home workers in Pennsylvania are doing their part.

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New Contract at Macy's



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The objectives of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union are to unite into this organization all workers employed in its jurisdiction in order to advance and safeguard their economic and social welfare...The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union will strive to preserve democratic processes, protect civil liberties, aid in the adoption of legislation which will promote the economic and social welfare of its members and that of labor in general and to improve the educational, social and cultural standards of society as a whole. *Through unity of purpose and action, through collective bargaining and legislation, the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union is dedicated to the ideal of making the jobs of its members the best jobs that can be devised from the point of view of wages, hours of work, physical conditions and human relations. Preamble RWDSU Constitution.*



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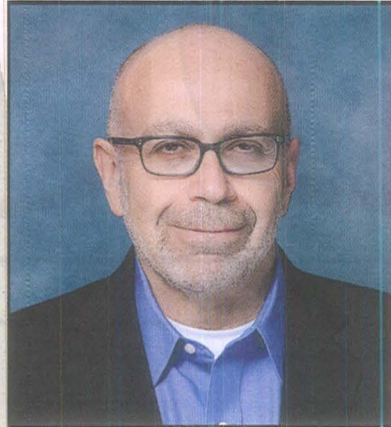
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MESSAGE FROM YOUR OFFICERS

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Secretary-Treasurer
Jack Wurm Jr.



Pandemic Reveals Workers to be True Heroes

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply affected all of us, and some of our brothers and sisters have paid the ultimate price. On page 15 of this issue of The Record, you'll see a memorial list of some of the dozens of the RWDSU members who have lost their lives due to this virus. We will always honor their memories, not just as RWDSU members, friends, and family, but as essential heroes who died while supporting America on the front lines of an unprecedented health crisis. It didn't have to happen; these heroes – supermarket workers, retail workers, poultry workers, food processors, nursing home workers, and more – were let down by a shockingly inadequate federal response and employers who in some cases didn't act quickly or effectively enough to protect their employees.

In the labor movement, we remember the dead, and we fight like Hell for the living, and that's exactly what we are committed to doing at the RWDSU.

RWDSU Heroes

RWDSU members who work in essential industries have courageously put food on America's tables and cared for America's most vulnerable in nursing homes during the pandemic. They've kept our supermarkets open and kept our food supply chain running. They've risked not only their own lives, but their families' and communities' health to help us through the worst public health crisis in over 100 years.

For many Americans, these people were virtually invisible before the pandemic. They didn't think about where their chicken was coming from when they made dinner, and they didn't notice the hundreds of people who kept their supermarkets stocked and open. Most people didn't put a face and a name to the folks who care

for their elderly relatives in nursing homes. Before, it was easy for some to not think about these things, but when the lives of family and friends depend on them, the fact that these people are heroes comes in to view.

Fighting for our Essential Workers

Since the pandemic turned our lives upside-down in early March, the RWDSU has been ahead of the curve when it comes to protecting our RWDSU heroes. In this issue of The Record, you'll read all about how the RWDSU provided Protective Personal Equipment to supermarket and food processing workers when there was none to be found, and how we exposed the poultry industry for its inadequate initial response and brought public attention to these workers' dangerous circumstances. The RWDSU was able to pressure employers to implement social distancing, raise plastic barriers between employees, and implement testing regimens. We helped promote and obtain essential worker pay – extra hourly pay and bonuses that recognized the dangerous and important work RWDSU members have been doing since the pandemic began. RWDSU locals helped out in their communities with food drives, and RWDSU members performed heroic personal deeds like feeding first responders and producing PPE for area hospitals.

One day, hopefully, this will all be over, and we will always remember the role RWDSU heroes played in keeping our country moving during some of its darkest days. Until then, we'll keep fighting, because the old adage remains true: nobody should risk their lives or health just to do their jobs and provide for their families. And nobody should have to go to work without a union there to support them and fight for them. ■

RWDSU Fights for Poultry Workers' Safety During Coronavirus Crisis

From the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, RWDSU members at poultry plants have answered the call, stepping up in a time crisis to provide for America's families and dinner tables. While these workers bravely continued to perform their dangerous jobs at great personal risk, the industry that employs them has let down workers at every turn, acting too slowly, not doing enough, and hoping to muddle through the crisis without doing everything they can to protect their workers.

In an interview with Forbes, Michael Foster, an 18-year veteran poultry worker at a Wayne Farms poultry plant in Alabama, spoke of the fear and uncertainty poultry workers have experienced in 2020.

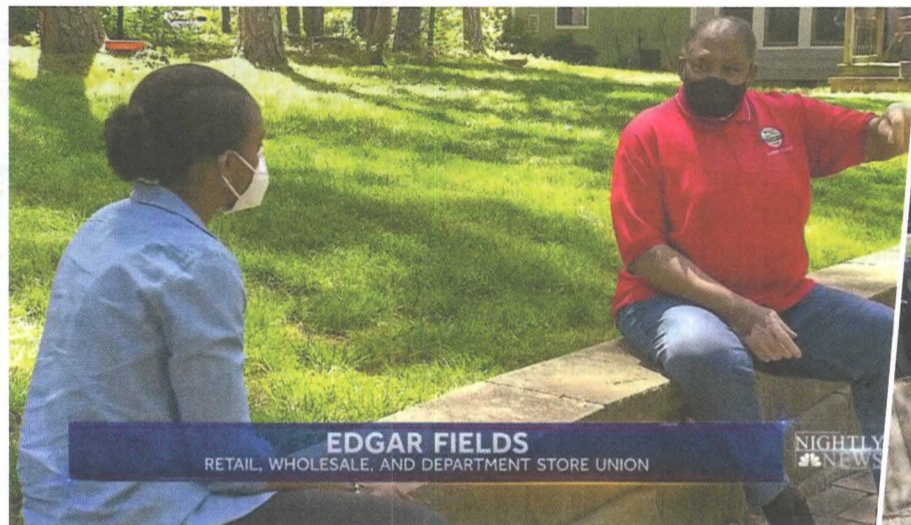
"Nobody is recognizing or appreciating us for what we're doing," Foster, 40, said. "I never experienced anything of this sort before, and I'm pretty sure a lot of us haven't. Employees are panicking. They are listening to the news. They know they're supposed to be 6 feet apart from one another...guys are working elbow-to-elbow."

RWDSU Brings the Fight to Poultry Industry

As the country came to grips with the new reality of the pandemic, and the lives of millions of Americans were drastically altered, it became apparent that as far as the poultry industry was concerned, it was business as usual. Poultry and other meat processing factories were doing little if anything to protect workers, and COVID-19 began to spread like wildfire through processing plants. Across the country, workers at meat plants were getting sick, and even dying. RWDSU plants were not spared; there have been too many deaths at RWDSU poultry plants, and hundreds of members have become ill with the disease.

RWDSU Southeast Council President Edgar Fields put the onus on the industry to do better.

"Let me be clear, RWDSU members are not expendable, they are critical to putting food on America's dinner tables, and above all else, they are hard-working people who don't sign up to



Southeast Council President Edgar Fields brought the poultry workers' story to the country during a national news interview.

die on the front lines of a pandemic in this country, and they shouldn't be dying needlessly," Fields said.

It was clear the industry had no plans to do more than the bare minimum to protect workers. And while some plants provided extra "hazard pay" for members doing these dangerous jobs, the extra money provided was insufficient, and too often tied into attendance; a policy that encouraged sick workers to return to the job.

"The industry's response, for the most part, has only been recent, sporadic and limited to a few locations, leaving most workers unprotected - despite months-long demands from the RWDSU. Poultry workers at their plants have been dying," said RWDSU President Stuart Appelbaum.

RWDSU members are not expendable, they are critical to putting food on America's dinner tables.

In June, Mid-South Council members came to the Koch Foods facility in Montgomery, Alabama, to distribute PPE (including "RWDSU Hero" cloth face masks) and renew demands for the

industry to improve working conditions and provide proper hero pay. The Mid-South Council represents workers at three Koch poultry plants.

"Our members are terrified that the one job they have that's keeping their families afloat right now may make them or their families sick or worse kill them. The fact that Koch Foods won't make time to talk to us is disgraceful and inexcusable. The executives of Koch Foods are safe at home with their families, while our members' lives are on the line, it makes me

In June, Mid-South Council President Randy Hadley came to a Koch facility in Alabama to demand the plant management protect its workers.

sick. Koch Foods must implement critical health and safety measures now to protect our members, and we demand you speak with us to ensure our members' concerns are heard," said Mid-South Council President Randy Hadley.

Latest Battlefield: Line Speeds

For decades, unions have fought the industry's efforts to continually increase line speeds so that more birds can be processed per hour, increasing profits, but also increasing stress and injuries on the job as chickens fly down the line at breakneck speeds. The pandemic opened up a new front in this fight; clearly, proper social distancing is not possible unless the industry slows down its line speeds.

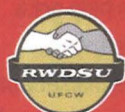
In July, amidst an alarming spike in Coronavirus cases throughout the U.S., the RWDSU issued a national call for action by the industry to slow down line speeds and protect workers.

"The poultry industry has been putting America's appetite ahead of American lives for far too long in the COVID-19 pandemic, and it stops now. The only way to ensure workers are protected is to ensure they can be socially distanced by 6-feet, in a poultry plant the only way to accomplish that is to slow down the line speeds," Edgar Fields said.

After that initial set of demands on the industry was made by the RWDSU, some companies have begun to arrange regular calls with union representatives and provide personal protective equipment (PPE) while building plastic barriers and implementing social distancing measures. Action by the entire poultry industry, however has been too little too late for workers, and workers will continue to die from COVID-19 unless significant improvements are made across the industry.

These essential workers deserve better treatment, better pay, more protection, and more respect as they nourish America. ■

"We only wish that this administration cared as much about the lives of working people as it does about meat, pork and poultry products. When poultry plants shut down, it's for deep cleaning and to save workers' lives. If the administration had developed meaningful safety requirements early on as they should have and still must do, this would not even have become an issue. Employers and government must do better. If they want to keep the meat and poultry supply chain healthy, they need to make sure that workers are safe and healthy."



Stuart Appelbaum
President
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union

When the Trump Administration sided with the industry over workers' health, the union responded, speaking truth to power.

New Contract Brings Raises, MLK Holiday for Macy's Workers

A strong new three-year contract ratified by RWDSU Local 1-S members in July brings workers an added paid holiday celebrating the birthday of civil rights icon Martin Luther King, Jr. In addition, the contract protects numerous benefits with no givebacks, raises hourly wages annually, and protects the health care plan while lowering costs for some members.

"The Negotiating Committee, led by Local 1-S President Angela Harding and Secretary-Treasurer Ron Chencinski, stood up to an aggressive management team that was trying to turn back the gains these members have won over the years," said RWDSU Regional Director Rick Marshall, who assisted in negotiations. "They stood firm, and they won a very solid contract in difficult times. Winning an additional paid holiday was extraordinary."

While the company fought the MLK holiday proposal - which occurred in the wake of the social justice protest movement happening across America - they were happy to take credit for it once they finally conceded it should be part of the new contract. Macy's not only heralded the new holiday in a press release, they announced they are expanding this holiday across the entire Macy's chain. RWDSU members won an important new paid holiday that celebrates social justice and racial equality, and in so doing, won the holiday for tens of thousands of Macy's workers across the U.S.

Unprecedented Times, Difficult Negotiations

The past six months have been historic; a pandemic unlike any we have seen in over 100 years has gripped the nation and the world while rocking the economy. At the same time, we are experiencing a social and racial justice reckoning that could finally bring much-needed progress and change. In the middle of it was an expiring contract for over 4,300 RWDSU members at Macy's stores in New York, at Herald Square in midtown Manhattan, Queens Center Mall in Elmhurst, Queens, Parkchester in the Bronx, and White Plains, in Westchester County.

Macy's - citing the pandemic and economy - claimed it needed severe givebacks in the new contract. It was hard to swallow for members, especially when Macy's sponsored a multimillion-dollar fireworks show in NYC that served as a weeklong TV commercial, and when Macy's doled out \$9 million in bonuses to executives immediately after negotiations

ended. Members were determined to stand strong and negotiate a fair contract.

The fact that the pandemic was raging at the same time made things strange and difficult, but the member-led negotiating committee was determined and Local 1-S maintained constant communication with members. Dozens of negotiations were handled via Zoom meetings, and the local held Zoom meetings with hundreds of members at a time to update them on negotiations.

The contract also contained new language for keeping members safe during the COVID-19 era, and implemented language to protect workers if any future pandemics occur.

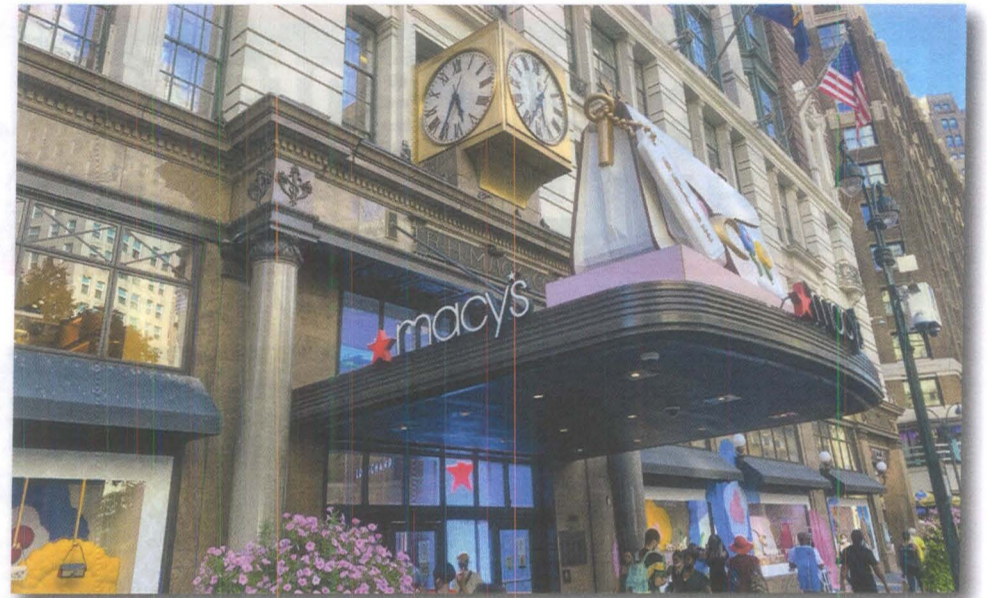
RWDSU: Keeping Retail Workers Safe as Stores Reopen

The COVID-19 pandemic devastated our economy and sent shock waves through the retail landscape with all stores closing in some areas, and "business as usual" drastically altered everywhere. The RWDSU represents thousands of retail workers, and from the very beginning has been fighting for safe workplaces in the COVID-19 era, and reopening plans that are sensible and safe for workers and customers alike. In times like this, the union difference truly shines through; there couldn't be a worse time for retail workers to be on their own with no voice, no power, and no say in their workplaces.

Protecting Workers and Customers the Priority

Retail stores across the country wanted to reopen as soon as possible, and so did politicians who saw their fortunes tied into getting the economy moving. And, workers wanted to get back on the job. But for the RWDSU, safety in stores had to be the top priority. No corporate profit is worth endangering workers or their loved ones and communities.

In New York, at the early epicenter of the crisis, the RWDSU recognized early on the importance of wearing masks to stop the spread of the virus. Working with Governor Andrew Cuomo, the RWDSU was able to help get a statewide mask mandate enacted, which would protect all retail and supermarket workers, as well as customers. As stores reopened,



Workers at the Macy's flagship store at Herald Square in New York City - the world's largest and most famous department store - are among the thousands of RWDSU Local 1-S members at Macy's with a strong new agreement.

Macy's is open again, and shoppers are returning to stores to experience the Magic of Macy's, an unparalleled retail experience of which RWDSU Local 1-S members are a huge part. And now, with this strong new contract

for the thousands of RWDSU workers at these New York stores that protects workers and shoppers and recognizes the magic RWDSU members provide, that experience is assured to continue for shoppers. ■

the RWDSU worked with employers to improve safety. At H&M and Zara stores, Local 1102 ensured that proper PPE was supplied and that social distancing signs and measures were installed on shop floors. Testing is a priority, and stores or departments have temporarily closed if a worker tests positive for the virus.

"We want a safe environment for Local 1102 members, and we want people to be able to return to work safely," said Local 1102 President Alvin Ramnarain. "It's a sensible approach I wish we saw everywhere; not just for workers but for the public health."

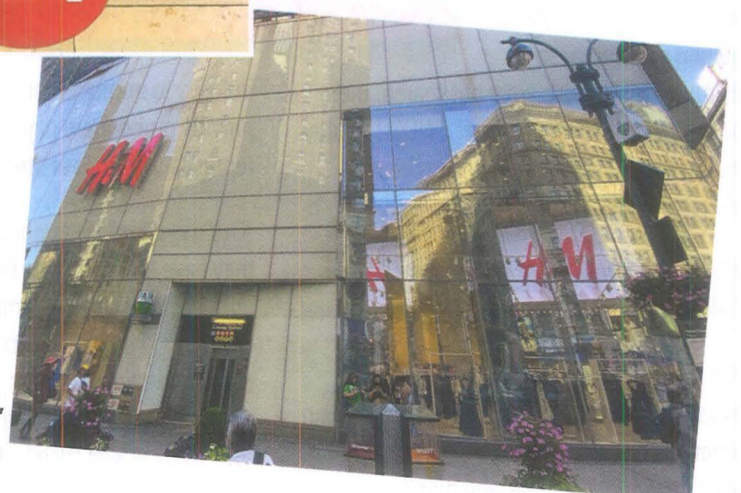
In new contracts - such as the Macy's agreement just ratified - RWDSU Negotiating Committees are bringing in language that protects workers. The contract obligates Macy's to provide proper PPE, follow CDC guidelines and spells out how management will keep the stores clean and workers and customers safe, and implements many other safety, testing, and cleaning protocols.

It's a model for future contracts and how retail needs to operate in these changed times. The RWDSU will continue to prioritize worker safety as we all move through this together. ■



At RWDSU stores, social distancing signs have been placed where customers gather, including here in front of one of Macy's Herald Square's trademark antique wooden escalators.

At H&M stores, PPE, cleaning, and sanitizing protocols are now the norm.



RWDSU A VOICE FOR WORKING PEOPLE

BLACK LIVES MATTER;

Both Criminal Justice Reform and Economic Justice are Needed

In America – and indeed the entire world – an unprecedented and long overdue conversation on racial justice is happening. We are seeing sweeping changes in the way people from all sorts of different backgrounds view ingrained racial injustices and the consequences that result for people of color. It's a societal reckoning the likes of which we have never before seen.

And while the changes being made around the country show that the protest movement is making a significant difference, it's important that we also focus on the economic issues that contribute to systemic racial injustice in the U.S. It's clearer than ever that to achieve true racial justice, we need to address the underlying economic conditions under which so many people of color live.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the poultry processing industry, a low-paying, dangerous job performed almost exclusively by people of color. Poultry workers – including thousands of RWDSU Mid-South Council and Southeast Council members in southern states – face blinding fast line speeds, extreme temperatures, and dangerous and repetitive cutting motions that often lead to debilitating injuries. It's a hard, tough, demanding job, and for the majority of them – those without union representation – it's even worse, with no voice to help make their jobs and their lives better, and nobody to stand up against the worst industry abuses.

Poultry workers have gone so far as to call themselves “modern day slaves,” and say management only cares about corporate profits at the expense of the health and welfare of their workers. And that must change. America needs to start treating all its workers – including people of color – with dignity, not just in poultry, but in all industries across the country.



In Newark, New Jersey, Local 108 members joined in BLM protests in June.



RWDSU members in New York City march for racial and economic justice.

That's just one of the many reasons that we support the Black Lives Matter movement. We embrace this movement because it is the morally right thing to do, and long overdue. Unions fight for economic equality and for racial equality. We know that these two causes

are intertwined, and we can't have one without the other.

The RWDSU has a proud history of fighting for racial justice. Today, we are proud to support the BLM fight. All workers deserve eco-

conomic and racial justice. We will not stop fighting until they are achieved. ■

During COVID Crisis, RWDSUers Lend a Hand

The COVID-19 public health crisis put an unprecedented strain on many working families and their communities. Even for RWDSU members who remained working throughout the pandemic, many worked fewer hours, and some struggled because their family members were either permanently or temporarily laid off.

RWDSU Local 338 and Local 108 members distributed food for the community in Queens, New York.



who were suffering uncertainty and loss of income. In New Jersey, Local 262 conducted a food drive to benefit members who work at Laminated, a manufacturing plant that produces paper and cardboard products.

ing money to aid victims of Hurricane Matthew that struck southwestern Haiti in 2016. In the weeks after the pandemic hit, the nightclub offered its location as a staging ground for a large food drive to help families in Queens who had been financially affected by the crisis. RWDSU Local 108 and Local 338 members helped bring in, sort, and distribute food to put on the tables of working people

“At Laminated, members are still working, but that's not the case for many of their family members. By providing groceries for these members and their families, we hope we can make it a little easier to deal with the disruptions caused by this pandemic,” said Local 262 President Danny Righetti. ■



Local 262 officers and staff distributed much-needed groceries at Laminated in New Jersey.

In Queens, NY, LaBoom nightclub and MECENAS have partnered with the RWDSU and the Reviving Haiti organization in the past to help people, including rais-

RWDSU AROUND OUR UNION

Local 530 Member Delivers During Pandemic

Local 530 member TeAngelo Robinson knows a thing or two about producing nutritious, delicious food. Not only is the RWDSU member an 18-year employee at the Gerber baby food plant in Fremont, Michigan, he's also a proud barbecue master, cooking up his famous ribs and brisket for family and friends. Robinson, with help from his family, spent the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic giving back to his community by showing appreciation to first responders helping Michigan's COVID-19 patients.

In May, Robinson and his family gave their time – and most importantly, their delicious BBQ – to provide meals for health care workers, police and fire department workers on the front lines.

“They’re putting their lives on the line to still do their job,” Robinson said. “And, it’s an opportunity to teach my son about giving, even when times are hard.” ■



Local 530 member TeAngelo Robinson (left) brings some of his delicious BBQ to first responders in May, in a story that was covered by local media.

“They’re putting their lives on the line to still do their job. And, it’s an opportunity to teach my son about giving, even when times are hard.”
– TeAngelo Robinson, Local 530



Look at those ribs! “We take great pride in our BBQ,” says Local 530 member TeAngelo Robinson.

NYC IRI Employees Win Local 338 Membership

After learning about union benefits and a campaign that saw employees working closely with Local 338 organizers, workers at Innovative Resources for Independence (IRI) became the newest members of RWDSU Local 338 early this year. With over 300 new members, the successful campaign represents a big victory for Local 338, and most importantly, the workers at IRI.

The new members work at locations in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Nassau County. Their employer focuses on working with individuals who are developmentally disabled. The Local 338 members working at IRI work directly with the individuals providing care and support in both group homes and day habilitation facilities.



(l to r) Innovative Resources for Independence workers Ulrica Joseph, Valerie Forde, and Genny Mathews (pictured earlier this year) are among Local 338’s newest members.

Explaining why he voted to join Local 338, an IRI member who’s worked at IRI for 11 years as a Direct Support Professional, says “I wanted the union for job security. I spoke with my coworkers about the benefits of having a union and I worked on keeping them informed, because the union benefits all of us.”

Currently, Local 338 represents over 1,000 members who work for non-profit agencies that care for the developmentally disabled, including IAHD and Community Resources. IRI employees overwhelmingly voted to become members of the RWDSU, noting the success of our union to fairly represent and fight for the benefits these employees deserve. ■

NEJB Helps Canteen Member Gain Citizenship

Early this year, in Massachusetts, Victor Viera, an employee at Canteen Refreshments and 1st Vice President of Local 513, became a U.S. citizen with the help of the New England Joint Board and the RWDSU. Viera received a reimbursement check for his citizenship application fee after attending an RWDSU NEJB immigration clinic. The NEJB also provided resources and information to help Viera through the citizenship application process. ■

Victor Viera celebrates his citizenship with RWDSU Executive Vice President Tina Buonaugurio early this year.



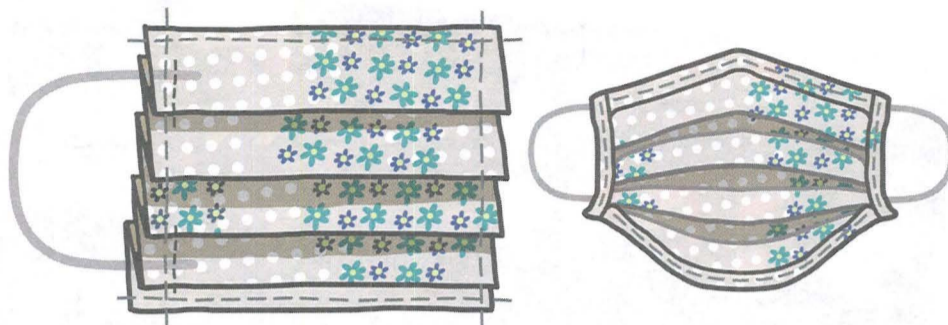
RWDSU Members Step Up During PPE Shortage

When the Coronavirus crisis began to sharply affect the U.S. in early March, and essential workers and first responders were dealing with a huge shortfall in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Local 110 member Will Christensen and his wife Debbie's thoughts wandered to "The Clicker." That's the name of the 2,000 pound fabric cutting machine that, for over a decade, had been sitting quietly in the Christensens' garage. The machine, purchased for a quilting and fabric store the couple operated years before, hadn't been used in almost 10 years. But suddenly, the Christensens saw a reason to bring it out of mothballs.

"It's almost as if we had bought this machine for this purpose, without even realizing it," said Will Christensen, who works in the fruit department in General Mills in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

"We saw videos online of people using die machines just like ours to make masks to help contain the spread of COVID-19 and to help improve safety for workers," Debbie Christensen said.

Soon, what the family had regarded as a "\$2,500 paperweight" before the crisis was helping the Christensens churn out hundreds of reusable cloth masks and mask kits a day. They've since provided tens of thousands of masks to area business and hospitals. They also produced masks for



The Christensens have provided tens of thousands of masks to area businesses, hospitals and RWDSU members.



Odalie Ince helps manufacture face shields at the Cartamundi board games factory.

RWDSU members in Cedar Rapids, including at the General Mills plant.

"We've made them for my co-workers, and even management, when they saw the quality," Will Christensen said. "This is my wife's dream she's had so many ideas and wanted to use the machine for so long, and now we have an opportunity to use it and help the community out," he added.



Will and Debbie Christensen are using their skill and equipment to produce reusable masks.



A sampling of the reusable cotton masks being produced by the Christensens.

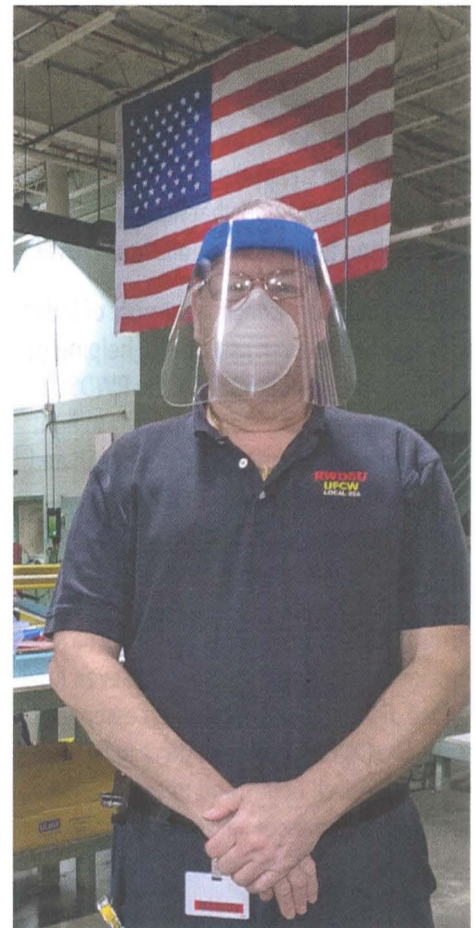
RWDSU Manufacturing Plants Find New Purpose

The Christensens aren't alone among RWDSU members who stepped up to fill the void when PPE demand suddenly skyrocketed.

In Alabama, Mid-South Council members at the idled Plantation Patterns furniture plant in Selma, Alabama, found another use for their lawn furniture factory. Plantation Patterns ramped up production of reusable cloth face masks. The plant began to produce and supply millions of masks, providing employment for RWDSU members and allowing them to give back to the community. In addition, RWDSU members at Plantation Patterns are producing special RWDSU Hero masks for RWDSU members to use and proudly show off their union membership.

In New England, Local 224 members at Cartamundi (formerly Milton Bradley) in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts, also joined in to protect first responders and essential workers during the COVID-19 emergency. Cartamundi, which usually manufactures playing cards and popular board games including Monopoly and Candyland, committed to produce 50,000 face shields. At the height of the crisis, the face shield production provided a voluntary opportunity for RWDSU members to work and give back.

"RWDSU members wanted to come to the plant and produce these face shields to help essential workers and health care workers do their jobs safely during this crisis. It was great seeing members produce these shields, a quality product that will help



Local 224 President Scott Trudell tries on an RWDSU-produced face shield.

countless working people," said New England Joint Board President Tina Buonaugurio.

For RWDSU members producing PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's just part of being a union member.

"It's a miracle that we got the union in here," said Will Christensen, who joined the RWDSU along with his fellow General Mills workers last year. "I love going to work now knowing that I have representation – we all have each others' backs. And that's what producing PPE for people who need it is all about too." ■



RWDSU Hero masks produced at Plantation Patterns in Selma, Alabama, ready to ship to their new homes.

The coronavirus pandemic has shocked the U.S. – and the world – with an unprecedented public health crisis, the likes of which we’ve never before seen, and hopefully, will never see again. And while the COVID-19 pandemic has shaken our country and changed life as we know it, our union can be proud; RWDSU members have stepped up by the thousands to do the essential work that has kept the U.S. afloat during this historic public health crisis.

RWDSU members work in a number of industries that have proven essential in helping us cope with this pandemic. And, the RWDSU has been there every step of the way to fight for members who are putting the health and welfare of themselves and their families on the line to help countless others survive during these unprecedented times.

Across the country, RWDSU members have provided crucial help, comfort, and even food on the dinner table through their essential work. The RWDSU has been there to fight for their safety, well-being, and treatment that recognizes their essential contributions.

RWDSU Food Processors: Feeding America

Thousands of RWDSU members are employed in food processing. During the sudden onset of the pandemic crisis, when it became clear that the most important thing Americans could do was stay home, these workers became truly essential. Elsewhere in this issue of the Record (page 3), you can read about the heroic efforts of RWDSU poultry workers, and the obstacles they faced and overcame to put chicken on America’s dinner tables. These workers weren’t the only RWDSU members feeding America.

Throughout the union, members faced similar issues as they sought to do their jobs, and the RWDSU worked extensively to protect them. In Iowa, Local 110 was successful in ensuring the safety and well-being of its members at Quaker Oats, General Mills and Cole’s Quality Foods during the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak.

At Quaker Oats and General Mills, the union negotiated daily bonuses recognizing the hazardous work, and both companies extended paid leave with 100 percent of their wages for fourteen days if quarantined or if family became quarantined. The union worked with Iowa food processing employers to stagger entry times, ensure proper PPE (personal protective equipment) and sanitizer was available, and to reconfigure workplaces to promote social distancing. If areas experienced positive outbreaks, areas were quickly shut down, thoroughly sanitized and employ-

Local 338 member and Acme supermarket employee Carlos H. Becerra has been helping put food on the table in New York during the pandemic.



Local 262 members Cynthia Young and Crystal Blackwell have been essential for residents and families as they serve at Mountain View nursing home in Scranton, Pennsylvania.



RWDSU

Union Fighting for Workers as Members Step Up

ees properly quarantined, and temperature checks were started at employee entrances.

Similar bonuses were also negotiated and safety protocol implemented at Pepsi and Coca-Cola in St. Joseph, Missouri, and at Kellogg’s in Kansas City.

“The Committees at all these facilities did an outstanding job, and truly are heroes and for their hard work during a very stressful time for our members and their families,” said Central States Council President Roger Grobstich.

Throughout Michigan, at food processing plants including Post cereals, Vlasic pickles, Yoplait, Gerber, Welch’s, Heinz, and Perfection Bakeries, the union worked with employers to ensure proper PPE was available, social distancing was implemented, and workers’ safety was prioritized. Workers at plants received essential worker pay bonuses and increases. The union fought for workers, to make sure their hazardous work in these trying times was recognized, and that they were protected.

At Mott’s in Williamson, New York, the union worked with the employer in the testing effort

in the parking lots, keeping members informed on the process, and helping keep morale up and the plant open.

“Vlasic and Mott’s were great examples of how the RWDSU worked with employers during the crisis,” said RWDSU Representative Joe Silva. “At Vlasic, every other line was closed to promote social distancing, and plastic barriers were erected between workers. We kept members safe, kept the factory open, and kept the pickles moving to supermarkets.”

RWDSU Nursing Homes: Protecting Workers and Residents

Throughout the U.S., RWDSU members perform essential work at nursing home and rehab facilities, helping to enrich, protect, and serve the lives of residents. During this unprecedented crisis, which hit facilities like these early and hard, it can be truly said that RWDSU members risked their lives to help protect lives, every day. Protecting these workers and the residents at these facilities often required the RWDSU to fight for measures

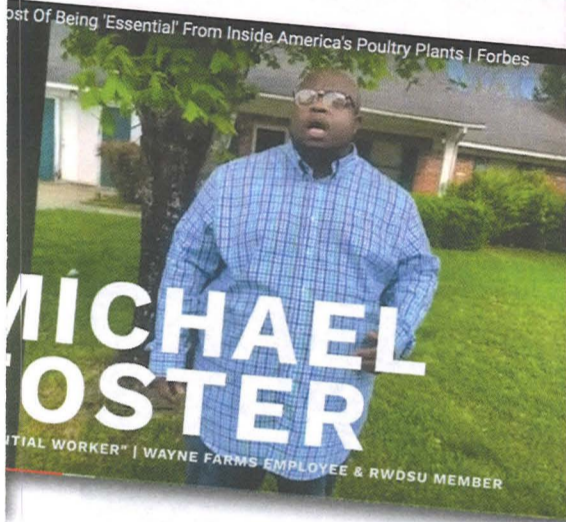
that went far beyond state and local recommendations and requirements.

“We fought publicly – going to the media and speaking with elected officials – to get these facilities to protect their workers and residents, and sometimes that wasn’t enough,” said RWDSU National Director of Field Operations Jack Caffey. “In some cases, the union was forced to step in and provide N95 masks and shields and other PPE that facilities weren’t providing. RWDSU members don’t just serve these residents; they go home to their families after work. We needed to keep everybody safe.”

“We were able to work with employers to get extra essential pay for members, and we distributed safety materials in the workplace so members could stay on top of the latest information,” said RWDSU Representative Luis Lopez.

At Local 108, which represents nursing home workers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, special zoom calls were held for dozens of members at a time to answer questions, provide information, and ensure workers could do their jobs as safely as possible. Whether in

RWDSU Mid-South Council member Michael Foster was interviewed by Forbes.com to talk about the stress and danger of working at a poultry plant in Alabama in the age of COVID-19.



RWDSU Representatives distributed face shields to car wash workers in New York City. Across the U.S., the RWDSU stepped up to help when PPE was difficult to find.

RWDSU heroes, like those employed at Valley View Manor in New York, are essential workers.



Heroes

and Safer Workplaces During Pandemic

the South, Midwest, or Northeast, the RWDSU did everything it could to force employers to do their best for workers and residents. The union helped members in dealing with this unprecedented health crisis in an industry that was an early hot spot for COVID-19.

York's supermarkets, and helped promote mask-wearing everywhere early on to make everyone safer. RWDSU Local 338 and Local 108 in New York and New Jersey pushed for implementation of proper barriers, and provided sanitizer and gloves for RWDSU members early on when these supplies were hard to come by. As these essential workers hero-

ically worked to put food on their communities' dinner tables, the RWDSU did whatever possible to keep them safe.

are essential workers and have earned the title of "RWDSU Heroes." Together, we've helped America deal with its worst national crisis in decades. The RWDSU will keep fighting for safer workplaces, and for recognition and appreciation of the courageous work RWDSU members are doing. ■

RWDSU Supermarkets: An Ongoing Challenge for Essential Workers

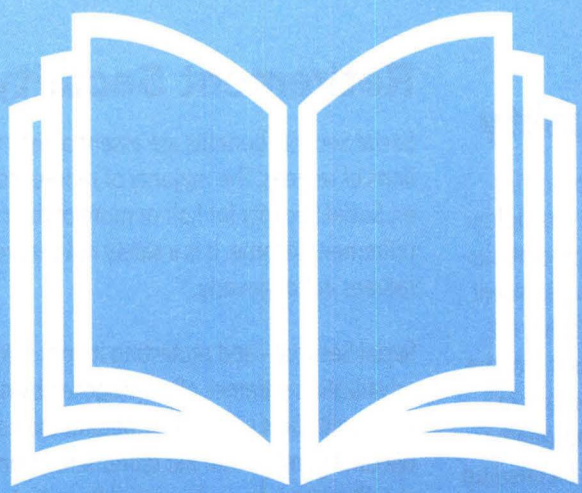
With stay-at-home orders suddenly being put into effect in many areas, supermarket workers were truly essential workers with many RWDSU members on the front lines. Supermarket workers deal one-on-one with hundreds of customers a day, and supermarkets saw increased traffic as the pandemic took hold. The RWDSU played a key role in making supermarkets safer.

In New York, the RWDSU worked with the Governor's office to push for the strongest possible protections for workers and to make mask-wearing by customers and employees mandatory in supermarkets. The mask mandate protected workers and customers at New

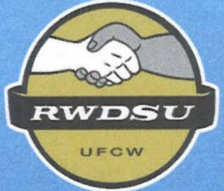
RWDSU Heroes

It's no exaggeration to say that RWDSU members who are working through the pandemic

WWW.RWDSU.ORG



COVID-19
AID &
RESOURCES



See what aid and resources are available to workers whose jobs have been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

RWDSU POLITICAL ISSUES

ELECTION 2020: THE ISSUES THAT MATTER TO WORKING FAMILIES

In just a few short weeks, we will be casting our votes for not only the U.S.

President, but also for all 435 seats in the House as well as 35 Senators. The 2020 elections will be the most important elections of our lifetimes.

And while it is the personalities of the candidates that will draw the headlines, it's the issues that affect RWDSU members and all working people that are of the highest importance to us. These elections will directly affect our workplaces, our jobs, and our union voice. Who is elected in 2020 will have an extraordinary impact on the lives of working people, our families, and our communities.



COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 public health crisis, and how we are responding to it, dominates the 2020 election issues. The U.S.' response has come up dangerously short; a highly politicized, denial-based approach that dismisses science in favor of optics and inconsistent messaging. Our failure to deal with the virus has disrupted our economy and our lives like nothing since World War II. The cost in America continues to rise, with over 150,000 dead, over 4 million confirmed cases, and millions unemployed. Our economy is in the worst shape since the Great Depression and in the U.S., and infection rates are spiraling out of control. The 2020 elections will determine our approach to tackling this historic crisis and whether or not we can turn around our so far losing battle against COVID-19.

Economy and Economic Inequality

With over 30 million Americans collecting unemployment benefits and the unemployment rate rising as high as 14.7 percent during the pandemic, and with unemployment increasing now in states that are being hit hard by the resurgent virus, it's clear that the economy is a huge issue for Americans in 2020. The elections will determine whether the needs of working people will be lifted up or ignored as we move forward.

We also need to finally address the economic inequality that sees the top 10 percent of U.S. households controlling 70 percent of total household wealth. The top one percent – the very richest among us – control over 30 percent of the country's wealth.

Those we elect in 2020 will determine if we can reverse the trend that has seen the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and everyone else lose ground since the 1970s, while at the same time repairing an economy devastated by COVID-19. Strengthening unions, protecting the right to organize, raising the minimum wage, and promoting full-time jobs could all play a role in helping to create an economy that works for all of us, not just the wealthiest few. Will our elected officials be on our side, or will they look out for the interests of the super-rich and big business?

Retirement Security

Social Security benefits are essential for millions of retirees. The majority of retirees count on Social Security for half or more of their retirement income. It is a safety net that keeps retirees out of poverty.

Social Security – and protecting it from risky privatization schemes often proposed by right-wing politicians – is more important than ever. We can't gamble with the retirement incomes of million people, and we need to protect and strengthen Social Security.

Union Voice

Strong unions in the U.S. is the key way to ensure we rebuild our economy with better jobs and a stronger middle class. The outcome of the 2020 elections may determine whether or not workers have a louder voice and can affect the direction of our country going forward – and whether or not attacks on our rights such as "Right-to-Work" laws can succeed. And, a strong NLRB and OSHA that protects workers' rights and workers' safety is entirely dependent on who we elect in November.

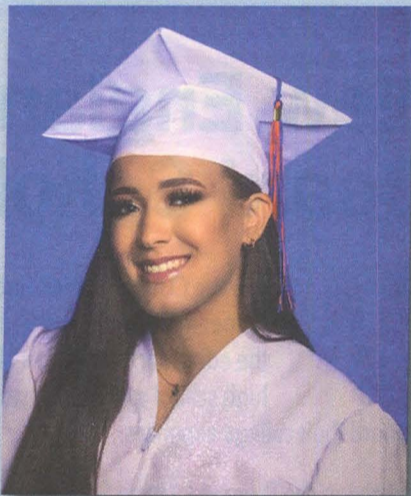
Civil Rights and Ending Discrimination

The labor movement is fighting for the respect and dignity of all working people, irrespective of race, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. Segregation, inequality and oppression harm us all. Civil rights and social equality and justice are at the forefront during this election cycle, and it's an issue that is directly tied in with our jobs and economic justice. With the U.S. facing a national reckoning on racial issues, now is the time to truly tackle these issues, end injustices, and move our country forward. ■

RWDSU AROUND OUR UNION

Local 338 Scholarship Winners New York

Local 338 scholarships have been awarded to Local 338 members and their dependents. The scholarships recognize scholastic achievement and an understanding of the importance of unions in workers' lives. The scholarships will help these Local 338 students as they pursue their higher education.



Emanuel Laub Scholarship Award winner Mia Diaz.

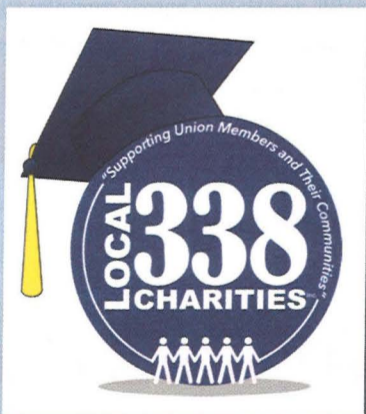
Emanuel Laub Scholarship Award

Mia Diaz took the top honor, winning the Emanuel Laub Scholarship Award, which is named in memory of the late Local 338 President. Mia's mother, Sonya Pimental, is a Local 338 member who works at Key Food. Mia will receive a total of \$8,000 (\$2,000 each year for the next four years) towards her tuition at Bowdoin College to pursue a double major in Mathematics or Chemistry and Education.

city of Illinois College of Medicine (UICOM). Katelyn, whose father Michael is a Local 338 member working at ShopRite, is attending Muhlenberg College, pursuing a biochemistry degree.

Local 338 Scholarship for Undergraduates

These Local 338 scholarship winners have received a one-time scholarship to towards the costs of tuition: Erica Albert, Daniel Conigliaro, Megan Fox, Connor Geraghty, Natalie Hughes, Maggie Marzigliano, Nicole McGlone, Sydney O' Connor, Moises Rodriguez and Dominic Zizzo.



Local 338 Book Award

This year's winners of the Book Awards Scholarship received a scholarship to help with the cost of textbooks and course fees: Sarah Branch, Michael Delfino, Alexandra Dicosola, Dana Digiglio, Brittant DiGrigoli, John Fernandez, Nicholas Frigerio, Brianna Hazoury, Yasmin Kadir, Md Masubel Karim, Thuan Luu, Diep Luu, Jenna Monaco, Katie Moore, Alexis Murry, Dominic Sapochetti, Zachary Silverman, Kelsy Smith, Bhavin Tanna, Lizzie Taveras, Jesse Velez, Megan Wilson, and James Zub.

"This year's winners are bound for great things, and we wish them congratulations and success in all of their endeavors," said Local 338 President John Durso. ■

Continuing Education Scholarship Award

Local 338's Continuing Education Scholarship Award recipients are Joseph Geraghty and Katelyn Hughes. Joseph, who was a Local 338 member and whose mother Kelly is a Local 338 member at Stop & Shop, is a sixth-year MD/PhD student at the Univer-

Coca-Cola Local 513 Massachusetts

RWDSU Local 513 members at Coca-Cola in Lowell, Massachusetts ratified a new two year contract. The two-year agreement calls for strong wage increases, and most importantly, keeps employees in the RWDSU

health insurance plan. The company is also adding additional up-front contributions to members' pension plans, and the paid vacation policy has been improved. Members will now receive five weeks of vacation after 30 years service. ■



(l to r) Mike Savard (Recorder Local 513), NEJB Pres. Tina Buonaugurio, Steve Cenik (Steward), Tina Duddy (attny), and NEJB Sec.-Treas. Phil D'Arcangelo negotiated the new contract.



Coca-Cola Lowell members discuss their new contract.

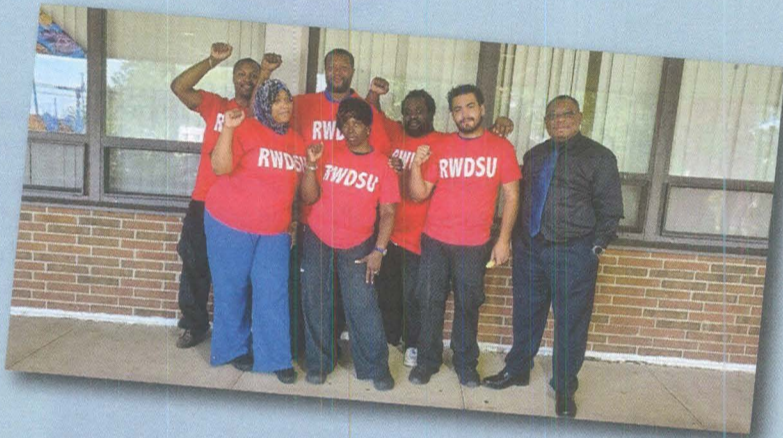
Urban Strategies Local 108 New York

RWDSU Local 108 building management workers at Urban Strategies in Brooklyn, New York, ratified a new three-year agreement. Members will receive annual wage increases of two percent, two and a half percent, and three percent over the course of the agreement, and employees with 10 or more years of service will receive additional two percent increases annually. Starting wages also increase, with starting pay at \$16 an hour for custodians and \$16.50 for superintendents. ■

RWDSU AROUND OUR UNION

Pennsylvania HHS Workers Join Local 108, Ratify Contract

New HHS members celebrate their first union contract early this year.



A group of dietary and housekeeping workers, who work with residents in area nursing homes, have joined Local 108 and won their first RWDSU contract. The workers at the HHS company sought out Local 108 because they felt their wage increases were too small, and management had taken away benefits as well as installed a sub-par medical plan. Since their company is a contractor, they worked often in union facilities, and saw the difference union employees in the industry were receiving. Now, they are experiencing that difference for themselves.

The new Local 108 members at HHS ratified their first union contract shortly after organizing. They will receive three percent annual wage increases, an extra (fifth) week of vacation after 20 years of service, and 401k matching contributions from their employer. The timing was important for these workers - joining the union at the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, the union is fighting for better PPE and hazard pay for these new members as they perform their important jobs. ■

New England Joint Board Scholarships

While the COVID-19 crisis forced the cancellation of the annual scholarship dinner in Boston, Local 513 has continued its commitment to promoting the education of children of RWDSU members, awarding scholarships to high school and college students. The winners will all receive \$1,000 toward their college expenses.

Receiving the Thomas J. Leone Scholarship award were Rianna Tamulynas, daughter of David Tamulynas, who works at Coca-Cola in Needham, Massachusetts, and Justin Kieu, the son of Viet Kieu, a member at Cartamundi in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts. Tamulynas is attending Bridgewater State University and is working to become a physician's assistant, and Kieu is attending University of Massachusetts - Amherst and majoring in chemistry.

Tamulynas also won an Anthony M. Cacciola scholarship award.

The other winners of the Anthony M. Cacciola scholarship award were Jamie and Haley Sharp, daughters of Michael Sharp, and Jacqueline Anderson, the stepdaughter of Kurt Hanlon. These winners' parents work at Coca-Cola in Needham, Massachusetts. Jamie Sharp plans on attending URI, and Haley Sharp is currently attending Colby College for biochemistry and mathematics. Anderson is attending Massasoit Community College studying to become a secondary school teacher. ■

Local 1808 Elects Officers

Members at RWDSU Local 1808 in Nebraska have elected new officers to serve three-year terms.

Franklin (Frank) Conklin assumed the office of Local 1808 President on July 1. Mike Harral began his three-year term as Secretary-Treasurer on July 1. Officers were sworn in by RWDSU Vice-President Roger Grobstich via phone on June 23. ■

Pennsylvania HHS Workers Join Local 108, Ratify Contract

Wage increases, increased vacation for employees with 20 years of service, and increased severance pay policy are among the improvements won by Local 108 members at Hercon Pharmaceuticals in Pennsylvania. The new three-year contract also allows employees to participate in the 401K plan. Employees also now have more flexibility in taking incremental time for paid vacation, sick and personal time off. ■



Local 108 Pres. Charles N. Hall, Jr., and Steward Angelina Dickson negotiated the new contract early this year.

RWDSU A VOICE FOR WORKING PEOPLE

Kraft Heinz Members Win Essential Changes

Like many food processing plants, the Kraft Heinz facility in Holland, Michigan, faced a sudden crisis in the early days of the pandemic. And like many other food processing plants faced with the Coronavirus crisis, management at the plant fell short early when it came to protecting workers and recognizing the contributions of these essential workers, who are helping to feed America during these difficult times.

RWDSU Local 705 fought hard to protect the 227 members at the plant, publicly and powerfully calling out Kraft Heinz in a news story that gained national and even international attention.

"Kraft Heinz, the nation's leading food processor, can and must do better for its workers," said RWDSU Regional Director Michael Flanery.

The union called upon Kraft Heinz to provide proper PPE for workers, to end their policy of forcing workers to use vacation time if they were quarantined or ill, and to immediately



The 227 RWDSU members at the Kraft Heinz plant in Holland, Michigan, continued to produce iconic products including their famous ketchup.

"Our union and our members won't stand to be treated as disposable at a time when they have never been more critical and essential."

repeal any and all essential pay requirements tied to attendance. The union pointed out that RWDSU members are putting Kraft Heinz products on America's tables during a national crisis, and that members deserve essential pay, but it cannot be tied to their

attendance. Tying extra pay to attendance encourages workers to come to work even when they are sick. The union pointed out

that these essential workers deserve better from the multi-billion dollar company for putting their lives on the line.

Amidst public pressure, the company agreed to do more for their valuable workers. Within a week, face masks were being provided to all workers. In addition, the policy forcing workers to use vacation time if they were sick and/or quarantined was repealed. And, Kraft Heinz agreed to extend a weekly "hero pay" stipend to compensate workers for continuing production in this dangerous environment. The plant also reconfigured areas including break rooms and production areas to promote social distancing to protect workers, and the company detailed expanded cleaning procedures at the plant.

As members continue to help feed America throughout the pandemic, these essential workers know the RWDSU has their back. ■

Union Fights for Fairmont West Virginia Members

When Fairmont Regional Medical Center, in Fairmont, West Virginia, suddenly announced its closure in February, just as the COVID-19 crisis was taking hold in the U.S., it was a tragedy for the community and the hundreds of Local 550 members who worked there. What made the closure even worse was the short notice, which the union said violated the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act of 1988 (WARN Act). The union contacted the office of West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, who agreed, and began an investigation on behalf of the Fairmont Regional Medical Center workers.

The hospital's parent company will pay more than \$240,000 to certified nurse assistants, cafeteria and maintenance workers and other support staff at Fairmont Regional Medical Center.

The pressure resulted in negotiations, and a settlement reached between the RWDSU, the hospital's parent company and the state attorney general. The hospital's parent company - Alecto Healthcare Services - will pay more than \$240,000 to certified nurse assistants, cafeteria and maintenance workers and other support staff at Fairmont Regional Medical Center who were represented by the RWDSU, Attorney General Patrick Morrisey said in a statement. The fight for fair treatment and compensation for the Fairmont workers marks the latest chapter in a long battle against an employer that was often alleged to cut corners, moves that affected both staff and patients.

"We have had to fight with Alecto and Fairmont Regional for years to maintain Health

Fairmont Regional Medical Center was a WPA project, and served the community for over 80 years.



Care for our members, as well as proper staffing levels and equipment for their patients. Our members have always put patient care first, and now Alecto needs to compensate them fairly. This company has damaged this community and our members

with their lack of ability to properly operate Fairmont General Hospital. We will continue to fight for our members' lost benefits and hope to resume conversations with the company around this swiftly," said RWDSU President Stuart Appelbaum. ■



UNION PLUS CAN HELP

COVID-19 has impacted all of us. Union Plus can help.

Our Union Plus program partners have accommodations for members struggling during this public health crisis. Participants in our Union Plus Mortgage, Credit Card, Personal Loan, or Supplemental Insurance programs may be eligible for additional hardship assistance through the Union Plus Mortgage Assistance Program and Union Plus Hardship Help.

Visit unionplus.org and follow Union Plus on Facebook at facebook.com/unionplus for ongoing program updates and resources.

Be well and stay healthy,

The Union Plus team

Learn more at
unionplus.org



IN MEMORIAM

The RWDSU family mourns the loss of our members who have passed during the coronavirus pandemic



The RWDSU family mourns the loss of our members who have passed away during the coronavirus pandemic. They spent their lives working to feed us, clothe us, care for us and meet our needs. They were employed in the various industries our union represents. We name them to honor their memory. Their spirit lives on in our fight for working people.

ANTHONY ACHAN was a 32-year member of RWDSU Local 1102 at Staples. Achan passed away on May 4. He leaves behind a wife, son and daughter.

CANDACE ALLEN was a CNA from Bessemer, Alabama and a member of the RWDSU Mid-south Council. She passed away on May 17. She leaves behind a son and daughter.

ENRIQUE ALMOITE was a member of RWDSU Local 262 for 13 years, working in House-keeping at West Caldwell Care Center in West Caldwell, New Jersey. He passed away on April 8.

GREGORY ANDREWS was a RWDSU Local 1102 member of 14 years. He passed away on May 12 at the age of 66. He leaves behind a wife, Camille and three daughters, Brooke, Tanya, and Camille.

NORA ARAGON was a five-year member of RWDSU Local 262. She worked as a Line Operator at Flexon in Newark, New Jersey. She passed on April 23.

YANIC BALTHAZAR was a cook at the SUNY Old Westbury campus and a member of RWDSU Local 1102 since 2007. She passed away on April 1. She leaves behind two daughters, and a son.

DAVID BROWN was a building service worker in the Riverdale section of the Bronx and member of RWDSU Local 670. He passed away on April 7.

IVORY "LUMP" BROWN was a member of RWDSU Local 184-L in Kansas City where he worked at the Kellogg's plant. He passed away on April 24 at the age of 54.

SHIRLEY BRUNDSON was a member of the RWDSU Mid-South Council and worked at Wayne Farms in Union Spring, Alabama. She passed away from COVID-19 on May 30, 2020.

MANUEL CHAVEZ, who went by the nickname Victor, was a member of RWDSU Local 338. He worked at Zabar's for 32 years in "The Mezzanine" section. Victor passed away on April 2.

WILLIE CURRY worked at Wayne Farms in Jack, Alabama, and was a member of the RWDSU Mid-South Council. He passed away on May 28.

JAMIE FERNANDO worked in the Luggage Department at Macy's on 34th Street. He passed away on April 3. He was a member of RWDSU Local 1-S for 26 years, working his way through various departments at Macy's. Jamie died at the age of 62.

MANUEL GARCIA was a food service worker for SCCC/Aramark at the Suffolk County Community College Brentwood Campus. He had been member of RWDSU Local 1102 since 2017 when he started work at SCCC/Aramark. He leaves behind his 3-year-old daughter, his mother and a sister.

ANNIE GRANT was a member of Local 938 of the RWDSU Southeast Council. For 13 years, Ms. Grant worked at the Tyson plant in Camilla, Georgia. She passed on April 7.

ERLINDA GUEVARA was a 23-year member of RWDSU Local 1102 at Autronics in Central Islip, New York. She started at the company in 1996 as a molding operator. Guevara passed away Sunday, April 19. She left behind a husband, three daughters and three sons.

MAURILLO GUZMAN was a member of RWDSU Local 1102 RWDSU from Queens, New York. He started working for Gate Gourmet at La Guardia airport in 2003 as a dish room attendant. Maurillo passed away on April 4, and is survived by his wife.

KOFI GYAMFI was 17-year member of RWDSU Local 338 at The Institutes of Applied Human Dynamics (IAHD) in the Bronx, New York, where he worked as a Treatment Coordinator. Kofi passed away on April 27.

GLADYS HARRIS was poultry worker at Wayne Farms in Union Spring, Alabama. She had been a member of the RWDSU Mid-South Council four years. She passed away due to COVID-19 on May 27.

KEVIN HARRIS was a RWDSU Local 108 member at the City of New Brunswick Water Department in New Jersey. He passed away on April 9 at the age of 57.

MARY HOLT worked the poultry line the Camilla, Georgia, Tyson plant for 27 years. She was a member of the RWDSU Southeast Council. She passed away April 6.

TED HUNT was a member of the RWDSU Mid-South Council who worked at Tyson Foods in Shelbyville, Tennessee, for over 20 years. He was 53 years old. He passed away in mid-July.

JACQUES MCCONICO was a 15 year member of the RWDSU Mid-South Council and worked as a CAN at Diversicare Riverchase in Birmingham, Alabama. She passed away on June 16.

LORNA MCEACHRON was a home care worker at VIP/ADDUS and member of RWDSU Local 670. She passed away on April 12.

CARLOS MORENO was a member of the RWDSU Local 670, working as a doorman on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. He passed away on April 21.

LUZ PALOMINO worked at Flying Foods in JFK airport and was a member of RWDSU Local 1102. She passed away in July.

MARIE PETIT-HOMME was a home care worker at VIP/ADDUS and member of RWDSU Local 670. She passed away on May 13.

ANA VALERIO was a member of RWDSU Local 1-S, working full-time for 19 years at the Macy's Herald Square store in the Receiving Department. She died on April 3.

WILFREDO RAMIREZ was a five-year member of RWDSU Local 262, working as a Machine Operator at Flexon in Newark, New Jersey. He died on April 16.

RYAN SANDERS was a CNA in Panama City, Florida and member of RWDSU Mid-South Council. He passed away on May 10.

ALEXANDER THOMAS was a member of RWDSU Local 670, working at Kreisler Industrial in Elmwood Park, New Jersey, for 14 years and known by his coworkers as the resident expert on weld inspection.

ALDO URRIOLA was a building service worker in Brooklyn, New York, and member of RWDSU Local 670. He passed away on April 6.

ANGEL VARGAS was an RWDSU member working at the Hi-Tek Car Wash in Queens, New York. He first joined the union in 2016 working at Off Broadway Car Wash in Elmhurst, Queens. Vargas passed away due on May 6. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

RICHARD WEBER JR. worked full-time in the Suit Department at the Macy's Herald Square flagship store. A member of RWDSU Local 1-S, Richard had 10 years of service with the company. He passed away on March 18. He was 57 years old.

ELOSE WILLIS served as Secretary of RWDSU Local 938, representing poultry workers at Tyson in Camilla, Georgia. She worked at the facility for 35 years. She passed away on April 1.

KRZYSZTOF WTULISIAK was a six-year member of RWDSU Local 670 at Kreisler Industrial in Elmwood Park, New Jersey, working to machine sync rings on the five axis machine.

WILLY ZUMARAN from Queens, New York, was a member of RWDSU Local 1102. For 16 years, Zumaran worked as a cook for Gate Gourmet at La Guardia airport. He passed away in April.

RWDSU HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDE



Workplace Health & Safety During the COVID-19 Era

The COVID-19 pandemic has focused a spotlight on health and safety conditions in our workplaces. The virus has already infected over 4,000,000 Americans and killed over 150,000. How did this happen and what can we do to contain the pandemic?

The Disease

There is still a lot we don't know about the disease, but we have learned some important things. The virus is deadly and spreads quite easily, primarily through breathing in airborne virus laden droplets and particles. Close contact with an infected person greatly increases the disease risk. And although the respiratory tract is the primary focus of health risk, the disease can attack other body systems as well. Most who have contracted the disease recover fairly quickly, but many have not.

Unfortunately, too many significant mistakes were made by our country's leaders who ignored the seriousness of the threat even as the virus spread so rapidly. The resources utilized which had effectively contained the 2009 H1N1 pandemic were not made available. Widespread testing for the virus was opposed even though it became clear that the virus was being spread by people who didn't have disease symptoms. It is estimated that had closures and cancellations of large events happened one week earlier, 36,000 more lives could have been saved.

New Normal in Our Workplaces

What we learned about the virus and how it spreads has identified the following health measures:

Social distancing, maintaining at least 6 feet distance between people. Eliminating large group gatherings. Rearranging lunch and break rooms to create more space. Staggering shifts to reduce crowding.

Installing plexiglass or other barriers when social distancing can't be achieved.

Minimizing person to person contact. Screening everyone who enters the workplace for disease symptoms.



At Tremont Nursing Home in Pennsylvania, RWDSU members wear PPE to protect themselves and residents.



RWDSU members at supermarkets like Stop & Shop in New York wear masks on the job.



Face covering for everyone in the workplace to reduce the potential transmission of the virus. Eye shields, gowns and N95 respirators are needed for any worker in contact with an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 disease.

Expanded sanitation. Regular cleaning and disinfecting of all commonly touched surfaces and work areas. Deep facility cleaning when COVID-19 outbreaks occur.

Much More Needs to be Done

Unfortunately, the measures which have been implemented are guidelines and recommendations. They aren't mandatory requirements,

and there is no enforcement if employers ignore them. That is why we need an Infectious Disease Standard. Currently OSHA is unwilling to issue one, but that doesn't prevent enactment of state regulations. In the mean time we need to identify and speak up about any problems with policies and practices which are failing to protect us and demand needed changes.

COVID-19 testing of individuals needs to be expanded dramatically because this is the best means of determining who is potentially contagious and capable of infecting more people. Testing should be readily accessible and provided at no cost. Prevention of additional infections depends on the prompt reporting of test results and full disclosure to the public of the total number of new cases.

Staying Healthy and Moving Forward

What has become clear to the American public is that we are essential workers and vital to their well-being. We deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and provided adequate compensation. Our health and safety at work is directly connected to the continued health and well-being of our communities. Worker health is community health.

Living with the restrictions and life changes imposed by this deadly virus have not been easy. But it is crucial that we continue to maintain proper distancing and always wear face coverings when we are in contact with other people. The lack of following these safety measures as states have opened up has directly led to the highest daily totals of new COVID-19 cases during the whole pandemic.

The pandemic crisis has created significant challenges but there are also opportunities. We are not alone. Our union brothers and sisters are with us. Non-union workers are seeing the power and strength we have and are reaching out to us. We can and will make a difference. We are stronger together. ■

Questions and Information

If you have any questions or want any information about COVID-19 or any other workplace hazard contact RWDSU Health and Safety at 212-684-5300. ■