

# Southfield Meijer Stewards Find Key to Success

When it comes to a strong steward group, the Southfield Meijer shines.

"The stewards at the Meijer in Southfield are an excellent example of how our Steward program is supposed to work," Marv Russow, UFCW 951's president, said. "As soon as you walk in the store, you know the stewards are doing their job."

It's a job the Southfield stewards take very seriously. They work to empower their co-workers so members know their rights and what they are entitled to under the contract. The stewards have even gone so far as to highlight certain sections of the contract for members to study.

With an 'all for one, and one for all' attitude, the stewards place a high value on teamwork.

"Teamwork between our stewards is huge," Connie Smith, a deli steward, said.

The Southfield stewards often call each other on their own time to improve communication and make sure they're on the same page.

They also participate in many volun-

tary events as a group, including United Way trainings and a Gleaners Community Food Bank fundraiser, not because they have to, but because they want to. The group even held their own fundraiser, collecting over \$735 for a co-worker's family member.

When asked about the secret to being a successful steward, Latoya Burrow, a 12-year member and recent addition to the steward team, said, "Cooperation between managers and members is the key: finding a common ground and not fighting about the issues."

When Burrow hears a complaint from a member regarding the union, she simply responds by saying, "Well how strong of a member are you?"

Burrow believes a union is only as strong as its members, and encourages them to get more involved in order to see what their union can do for them.

The Southfield stewards' team approach has resulted in the store having the greatest percentage of members participating in the Local 951



The Southfield Meijer stewards enjoy attending events together, such as the recent United Way training.

Foundation membership drive. Currently, 24 percent of the store's members contribute to the Foundation

A key way they have been able to accomplish this feat is by signing members up during their orientation.

"Staying proactive is important," steward Kelvin Wheeler, said. "We also want our members to know they can trust us with their problems."

# Steward Update

Vol. 5 Issue 3

June 2011

## Survey Responses Reinforce Importance of Stewards

# Members Rely on Stewards for Information

The results of a recent survey of Local 951 members reinforced the importance of the role of stewards as communicators.

"We were not surprised members rated stewards as the most helpful source of information about their union," Marv Russow, UFCW 951's president, said. "Through the years, stewards have always been the critical communication link between the union and the membership."

While not surprised by the survey's results, the information did convince the local to increase its communication with stewards. Beginning with this June issue, the *UFCW 951 Steward Update* will be expanded and sent to members on a monthly rather than bi-monthly basis. The new format will allow for additional more timely and educational articles.

June also marks the first edition of the *UFCW 951 Bulletin*, a flyer designed to give members quick updates on Local 951 programs, issues and events. Both publications will have two editions, enabling the local to focus on the needs of members at both large and small employers, and providing as much pertinent information to stewards and members as possible.

The *Steward Update* will continue to be mailed to stewards' homes, the *Bulletin* will be distributed to members by union representatives. Stewards can request copies of the *Bulletin* to distribute at work

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Marv Russow, UFCW 951 President

from their union representative.

"I urge stewards to take advantage of these additional resources," Russow said. "With major contract negotiations approaching and the threat of right-to-work looming, the importance of an informed and active steward group is more important than ever."

## Local Sends Message to Meijer Members: Grieve all Discipline Resulting from Mystery Shopper Reports

Local 951 union representatives are distributing and posting flyers notifying members to file a grievance challenging any discipline they receive as the result of a Mystery Shopper report.

"We learned Meijer recently contracted with an outside group to conduct mystery shopping trips to evaluate employees at their stores," Marv Russow, Local 951's president, said. "While the company has every right to utilize Mystery Shoppers, we believe discipline stemming from Mystery Shoppers' reports violate members' contractual rights."

Mystery Shoppers have been "shopping" in all departments and on all shifts; therefore, all stewards need to make

sure members know to file a grievance if they are disciplined as a result of a Mystery Shopper's report.

In accordance with the contract, members have 10 days from the date they receive the discipline to file the grievance. Stewards should file these grievances as a violation of Article 5.8. The "Description of Facts" portion of the grievance form should read "Unfair/unjust discipline due to Mystery Shopper report."

"We are being very aggressive in our handling of this issue," Russow said. "We do not want to learn any member was unjustly disciplined because of a Mystery Shopper report. If there is any doubt as to whether you should file a grievance on this issue, file. Better safe than sorry."

**UFCW Michigan Day at the Toledo Zoo -- July 27**

**UFCW Reduced Rate Ticket Package Includes**

**Zoo Entry, Lunch & Parking**

**Adults \$10**

**Children (2-11)**

To make this event more affordable, UFCW 951 is offering members a reduced rate ticket package. Ticket order forms are available from union representatives and on-line at [www.ufcw951.com](http://www.ufcw951.com). Stewards can request a supply of ticket order forms from the union's communications department. Ticket order deadline: July 18, 2011.

**UFCW 951**  
VOICE for working America

3270 Evergreen Drive NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525

**Marv Russow, President**  
John Cakmakci, Secretary/Treasurer

**Phone** 616.361.7683 • 800.999.0951  
**Fax** 616.447.1000

**Email** [information@ufcwlocal951.com](mailto:information@ufcwlocal951.com)  
**Website** [www.ufcw951.com](http://www.ufcw951.com)

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# 4 Categories of Grievances

The ability to determine if the solution to a member's problem can be pursued through the grievance procedure is an important skill for stewards to develop. While most grievances fall into a single category - contract violations - there are three other types of violations that may constitute a valid grievance.

The four categories of grievances are summarized below. If you are unsure whether a situation qualifies as a grievance, contact your union representative.

## 1. Contract Violations

While the meaning of a specific piece of contract language can be debated, if management violates the union's interpretation of the contract, a grievance could be filed.

## 2. Violations of the Law

Your employer cannot violate the law. Even if your contract is silent on a specific issue, workers have the right to file a grievance if the employer violates federal, state, or local law. This would include violations of wage, health and safety, and family/medical leave laws. Employers must follow the law's most recent terms, even if the contract references an earlier version of the law.

## 3. Violations of Company Rules

If the company violates its own rules or enforces their rules inconsistently, the worker disadvantaged by such action has the right to file a grievance. For example, a worker who is caught smoking in a non-smoking area cannot be disciplined for this action if other workers, including managers, have been allowed to smoke in the area.

Before filing this type of grievance, be sure documentation is available to support your case.

## 4. Violations of Basic Worker Rights

Workers have legitimate grounds for a grievance if one of their basic rights has been violated, even if the action isn't prevented by the contract. You don't need contract language stating a supervisor can't assault or otherwise abuse or discriminate against a worker in order to file a grievance.

Discrimination occurs when two people are treated differently under the same circumstances in a way that harms or treats one of them unequally. While the most common types of discrimination tend to be based on race or sex, there are other types of discrimination including age, physical appearance, personality and union activity. Keep in mind that discrimination can be hard to prove. Encourage members to keep a log documenting the discrimination and noting any witnesses to the discrimination.

# Punch In at



1310 AM Weekdays 6-9 a.m.

Live streaming and podcasts at  
www.thetonyshow.org

Join the discussion at  
888.552.3595

The "Voice of Labor," Tony Trupiano, returned to the airwaves as the host of First Shift, Michigan's only progressive radio show airing on WDTW 1310 AM.

"The conservative media's misinformation campaign attacking the middle class and unions dominates the airwaves," Marv Russow, Local 951's president, said. "On First Shift, workers' voices will finally be heard. I urge stewards to tune in to the show and to encourage other members, along with your family and friends, to do the same. If we are going to survive the political attack on unions, we need people to understand the facts, which is what they will hear on First Shift."

# The ABCs of Proper Grievance Form Completion

The ability to file a grievance when their rights are violated is one of the greatest advantages of union membership for workers.

Stewards, however, can jeopardize members' ability to achieve the justice they deserve by improperly completing the grievance form. Improper grievance form completion can also result in "failure to represent" charges filed against the union, and unnecessary financial obligations for the union.

"The union and members are relying on stewards to make sure they are properly completing grievance forms, because what is written on those forms can literally make or break a member's case," Marv Russow, UFCW 951's president, said. "Grievance forms are official documents; as with any official document, it is critical they are correctly completed."

Instructions on how to properly complete a Step I Grievance Form follow. The sections referenced below correspond to the replica of the UFCW 951 grievance form at right.

## Section A: Grievant's Information

This section calls for the most current information pertaining to the grievant. ALL of the requested information must be completely and accurately provided in order for the grievance to be processed (except for the Grievance Number which is for internal purposes only).

When listing the member's name, be sure to include his or her middle initial and any commonly used nicknames. Listing the member's correct seniority date and rate of pay is critical as it will likely have a determinative role in the grievance case and/or settlement. If a member is uncertain of this information, have it verified before filing the grievance.

## Section B: Employer's Information

All of the lines in this section should be completed. The "Employer" line should contain the company name (e.g. Meijer), and the "Unit Number" is the number the company uses to refer to your store, building, or plant, not its address.

## Section C: Description of the Issue

This is an extremely important, and often improperly completed, section of the grievance form. In the past, stewards, either on their own or at the insistence of the grievant, provide too much information on the form and actually hurt their case.

The information requested in this section should be provided as concisely as possible. Additional information, if worded incorrectly, could cause a valid grievance to be lost. Extra details may also be used by management against the grievant. The grievance form is not the place to argue the grievance. Stewards should save the presentation of their argument for grievance meetings.

UFCW 951 wants stewards to use the following guidelines when completing Section C of the grievance form to ensure it's properly completed and contains no unnecessary or problematic information.

*Nature of the Grievance:* Only the number of the contract article(s) violated should appear on this line. Pre-printed on the form is the statement "And all other applicable language," which covers any article that may be omitted from the form.

*Description of Facts:* This is not the place to tell a story or make an argument, but to briefly note how the article(s) listed in "Nature of the Grievance" were violated. For example, "unjust discipline, customer complaint" or "improper overtime payment."

*Settlement Desired:* Pre-printed on the form is the statement "Make whole for all losses." Nothing else should be added to this section of the form.

## Section D: Grievance Filing Dates

The "Date Step 1 Filed" line must be completed in order for the grievance to be processed by the Local 951 office. It should include the day, month and year the grievance form was handed to the manager. The other lines are left blank until the Step 1 meeting is held and management provides an answer to the Step 1.

## Section E: Grievance Status

This section remains blank until the Step 1 meeting is held. After the meeting, the day, month and year of the resolution should be noted on the appropriate line, or the "Unresolved" box should be checked.

## STEP I FORM

a VOICE for working America

Grievance Number \_\_\_\_\_

*Please Print Clearly*

Grievant's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Last 4 digits of Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number (include area code) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Department \_\_\_\_\_ Classification \_\_\_\_\_

Seniority Date \_\_\_\_\_ Pay Rate \_\_\_\_\_ Status (full-time or part-time) \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Unit Number \_\_\_\_\_

Unit Manager \_\_\_\_\_

Steward \_\_\_\_\_

WHITE COPY: Union Office  
CANARY COPY: Steward  
PINK COPY: Unit Manager

NATURE OF THE GRIEVANCE: \_\_\_\_\_ And all other applicable language.

DATE OF INFRACTION: \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION OF FACTS: \_\_\_\_\_

SETTLEMENT DESIRED: Make whole for all losses.

Date Step 1 Filed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Step 1 Meeting Held: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Management Step 1 Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

STATUS

Date Settled \_\_\_\_\_

Date Withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

Date Discontinued \_\_\_\_\_

Unresolved

NATURE OF RESOLUTION: \_\_\_\_\_

I, hereby acknowledge and agree to the above listed resolution of this grievance and further, I waive any further action against my employer as it relates to this grievance. I hereby state that Local 951 has fully and fairly represented me in this matter to the best of my knowledge. Upon the execution of the above-listed resolution of this grievance, I will consider the grievance as fully and completely resolved.

Member's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date Signed \_\_\_\_\_

## Section F: Grievance Resolution and Acknowledgement

The status of the grievance will determine how this section is completed.

If the grievance is resolved, list the specific resolution (i.e. discipline removed, to be paid four hours overtime pay, etc) and have the grievant sign and date the form.

For withdrawn grievances, write "Grievance Withdrawn" and have members sign and date the form if they agree to the withdrawal.

If the grievance is unresolved, leave this area blank. In this case, the member does not sign or date the form.

In addition to properly completing grievance forms, stewards must be aware of grievance filing deadlines which vary by contract and within contracts as well. It is not unusual for wage, discipline and scheduling grievances to have different filing deadlines.

If you have a question about completing a grievance form, contact your union representative before filing the grievance.

## Remember to Inform the Union After Filing a Grievance

Once a grievance is filed, stewards must complete the following two steps.

1. Immediately call the union representative to notify him or her that a grievance has been filed.
2. Forward the grievance to the UFCW 951 office within seven days of filing by:
  - Fax to 616.447.1000
  - Email to [grievance@ufcwlocal951.com](mailto:grievance@ufcwlocal951.com)
  - Calling the Grievance Hotline at 1.800.999.0951 ext. 7 with the following information: steward's name and unit number, grievant's full name and last four digits of his/her social security number, nature of the grievance, date of the infraction, description of facts, date Step 1 filed, and the unit manager's name.