



2019 Second Quarter Newsletter

Hello Brothers & Sisters,

The second fiscal quarter of the 2019-year was quite the rollercoaster for our local, hitting some very high, highs and some very low, lows.

Back in January, we negotiated a new 5-year contract for the Value Vision bargaining unit. The contract was ratified at 100%.

Some of the highlights included additional amounts of money towards medical premiums and an increase in wages. One of the biggest highlights for the local was a recognition clause that will see the non-union locations recognized by this fall and any future locations to be automatically recognized. This will continue to grow our local as the Beyer's Group continues to open more locations.

After a great start in January, our local was hit with some of our darkest hours in February. On February 28th, Visionworks informed me of their intent to close the Syracuse Lab and the closing of two stores in the NYC/Westchester area. This is never anything a local president wants to hear but has to realize it is the reality in today's business world.

Immediately after receiving word of this, I ordered an emergency Executive Board meeting and informed the Board what was going on, and we put together a plan to best serve our membership and protect the future of the local. In addition to informing the Executive Board, I made sure all the Stewards were informed of these company decisions when it was appropriate to inform them.

While this information was news to me, I would be remised if I didn't say I potentially saw this coming. As a result, the union for months had already been proactive about the situation. This includes things like getting the severance language in the Latham and Visionworks bargaining units, getting the recognition clause in the Value Vision bargaining unit, bargaining the new Telehealth position in Visionworks and working with the IUE to get a full-time organizer to expand our local.

While losing the lab and the two stores was a major blow to our Local, It is important to note that our local is still very strong, representing over 1300 members and we are still one of the largest units in the IUE.

While February was a difficult month for our local, March brought back some positives.

One big announcement that I would like to share with you all is the IUE finally got approval to hire a full-time organizer and I am proud to share that the person will come right from our very own local.

I would like to recognize Orvin Caraballo from the Visonworks bargaining unit. He will be leaving our local to go work full time with the IUE.

This is the very first time someone from our local has been promoted to work within the IUE and while I will be sad to see him go, it is a tremendous honor that someone from our local was selected. I wish him nothing but the very best and having him work for the IUE as an organizer will help make sure our local is well represented and will help protect the future of our Local. (A Steward update for the Visonworks bargaining unit will be coming very soon.)

With the announcement of the closings, I made a promise to the members affected that I would do everything within my power to help them.

I am proud to say that we successfully negotiated one of the very best severance packages I have seen for this group of workers.

Some of the highlights for the lab include 80 hours of severance per year of service, 4 months of continued medical benefits at the employee rate, payout of all vacation, sick, and personal time and we will be hosting a job fair to try and place these employees in future jobs.

The union is also hoping to bring to the job fair other IUE locals that have job openings in the Syracuse area and I am working on having a recruiting firm that I have a personal relationship with to come and help place people in jobs where they have availability.

The local was also able to negotiate enhanced severance pay for the workers in the stores that are closing in the NYC/Westchester area as well.

Finally, I would like to share that in March Vice President Jose Taveras and myself met with Davis/Versant Health to discuss wages for the Latham bargaining unit.

The wages for this location have been subpar to what the industry standard are for this job in that area. Many members were very unhappy with the contract that was bargained for in 2017.

I am proud to share that the union in an unprecedented manner, was able to reopen the wage structure in the CBA and successfully bargained midterm enhanced wages and early COLA for the Latham bargaining unit.

In addition to that, we were also able to negotiate a small change to the attendance policy. While we recognize we didn't solve all the issues in the bargaining unit, this was a major step forward for these members.

I hope as our members read some of the things we are doing and providing you with the communication that you deserve and by filing, following through and winning grievances. Hopefully, you are seeing a difference in your Union and you can feel proud to be a member of Local 408. These are the type of things that I promised I would do if elected and I promise that I will continue to do. It continues to be an honor to serve as your president and I look forward to seeing all of you again soon.

In Unity
Jason