



2020 2nd Calender Quarter Newsletter

Hello Brothers & Sisters,

Since the last newsletter not a lot has happened at the job, but a lot has happened in our country that has directly impacted our jobs.

About the middle of March is when the pandemic started and many of our members were furloughed as a result. At one point only 150 members of the 1350 members we have were actually working.

Since then, over 120 members were permanently laid off. As Visionworks permanently laid off the Lab Journeyman and Balester permanently laid off the Surfacing and ARC teams. Also, while work is slowly coming back, at the time of this letter still only about 550 of our 1240 members are back to work.

On a positive note, we are seeing more brought back to work each week, and I can only hope this won't continue for too much longer.

For those that are working, I know how difficult it has been. Just about everyday I am on the phone with HR diligently working on getting more of our members back to work and sharing your frustrations. For the Visionworks folks, just recently we were able to get breaks and lunches returned to the past practice, vacation will resume per the contract as of 7/6 and we are seeing some help added to over 75 stores.

Each day, I continue to fight for our membership in each bargaining unit trying to secure the very best terms that I can for you while we get through this pandemic together.

In addition to the pandemic. Our country is also in the middle of heavy protesting for social equality. These protestings are happening in our own back yards and also equally effect many of our workers. Our union stands with those that seek social equality.

Before the pandemic hit, the union was in the middle of bargaining with Versant Health for the Newtown Square Lab members. That has been put on hold for the current time and the union and the company signed an extension through 7/31. We have just recently learned we will be getting back to the table with the company in July to continue those negotiations.

Additionally, we have the Versant Health Latham contract negotiations coming up as well. While I don't know if that will also be extended and negotiated at a later date. What I can say is the union is going to progress as normal.

Since we are not currently in the office, surveys for the Latham Bargaining unit were mailed out to every union member on 6/23. Additionally, the union is planning to conduct a meeting at the end of July.

I am waiting to see if the law changes on crowd participation or if we will have to schedule a full day of meetings allowing only 50 members at a time, or three meetings of 75 but info will come out about that very soon.

Originally my plan was to get out on the road this year and visit all the retail locations again. Once the pandemic hit, that put those plans on hold. I am hoping to still try and visit all the locations this year before the year is up starting in August, but a lot of that depends on when we have workers back at the shops, as it doesn't make sense to visit retail locations if only one worker is working. So, time will tell with that.

There is a tentative plan to hold a GMM in October. Again, this will weigh heavily on crowd participation laws, but I plan to begin looking at venues at the end in July. The is a strong chance it will be held in Saratoga N.Y again.

Finally, I think it's important that I mention some structure changes and recognize a few members as a result of the layoffs.

In Visionworks, Ex-President Mary Dado is no longer with the company. I want to give her thanks for all that she has done over the years serving this union, she has done it all and her dedication deserves to be recognized.

Secretary Treasurer and Lead Steward of Visionworks, Sue Cowart is no longer with the company. Her dedication to the union is very much appreciated. I personally want to thank Sue for the time I have worked with her. Her integrity is second to none and I will miss her.

I also want to thank Stewards Dan Palmer, Jason Cantello, Armondo Ramirez, Gladys Betancourt, and Will Foy of Visionworks. I wish them nothing but the very best as they move on in their careers.

In Balester Optical, Lisa Knopic has decided to step down as a steward for personal reasons. I want to thank her for everything she has done. She has been a wonderful addition to that team, and I am sad to lose her.

I would also like to recognize our new stewards and board members, etc.

Visionworks

Chuck Brien: Chuck will serve as Lead Steward and Steward for NYC/Westchester Region and also serve as the new Secretary/Treasurer. He will be stepping down from the Election Committee and Compliance Officer.

Jason Dornford: Will continue to serve as a lead steward, however he will move from the NYC/Westchester Region to oversee the Central Region. Jason also serves as a Trustee on the Executive Board.

Kevin Swart: Will oversee Southern Tier Region.

Cheryl Bisbee: Will move from the Southern Tier and oversee the PA region.

Heather Duby: Will assist in the Central Region with Jason Dornford. She also serves as a Trustee on the Executive Board.

Ken Stuppy: Will oversee the Eastern Region, he has also accepted the role as Compliance Officer.

Michelle Brsoko Boivin: Has accepted a roll on the Election Committee

All other Stewards are unchanged.

Versant Health New Town Square

Alvin Ellis: Has accepted a role as a steward.

*Please Contact me if you have any interest in serving as a steward as I do have a few vacancies.

I hope that this letter finds everyone health and safe. It has once again been a very challenging year for our local. But despite all the challenges, we still are holding in there strong, and that is because of the countless effort by your shop stewards and executive board members and you, the members showing solidarity.

Our Facebook page went from 200 members following and “liked”, to over 1000 combined since the pandemic began. I am hearing from people I have not heard from in the 2 ½ years I have been the president, which is all welcomed and great.

These are all very positive signs, despite the challenges and we need to continue to stay unified at what has proven to be a very challenging time for us.

If you are not yet following the Facebook page. It is important to do so, as that is where the most updated info is shared. If you know a member that is not following, please encourage them to do so.

I hope that the next quarter starts to bring some light at the end of the tunnel and I look forward to seeing all of you again sometime soon.

In Unity
Jason