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LifeSource Professionals Address Workplace Conditions to Protect Donor Safety
Phlebotomists to Announce Union Election

Critical professionals at Chicagoland's Blood Center are taking a stand and demanding better working conditions. Phlebotomists employed at LifeSource are currently seeking to join Local 881 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) to improve the working conditions at their blood donation centers and mobile blood drives.

Phlebotomists are a critical link to lifesaving resources in times of crisis. The need for blood can occur at any time and impact people of all ages. As we have seen in recent weeks across the county, the need for efficient emergency response cannot be underestimated. Without a stable blood supply, healthcare in the Chicagoland area could be compromised and in the event of tragedy first responders would be unable to save lives.

“As phlebotomists we work behind the scenes to make sure that when there’s an emergency, like the one that happened in Boston or Waco Texas, that there’s blood available to help the people that have been injured,” said Tiffany Walker, LifeSource Phlebotomist. “My work is important. I want to focus on the job I’m doing, and not have to worry about what new changes management will want to make tomorrow. I’m voting YES for the Union to ensure I can do my job as a professional.”

In a job that demands flexibility and skill, LifeSource Phlebotomists want respect and security from their employer in return. LifeSource Phlebotomists began their organizing campaign in the summer of 2012. They sought representation from Local 881 UFCW because they want to be treated as professionals. Phlebotomists have seen wages, benefits, and incentives decline or taken away. They can be disciplined when using earned sick time. Their workload has been increased, yet they are judged more harshly if the donor experience suffers as a result. Frequent changes in policy and poor communication from supervisors have become the norm. LifeSource management has also begun a series of “captive audience” meetings, creating a hostile environment in which Union supporters cannot express themselves without fear of retribution.

The efforts of LifeSource Phlebotomists to unionize are supported by local elected officials including State Senator Melinda Bush 31st District whose constituents from her district are seeking to join the union and State Senator John Mulroe, 10th District where LifeSources' headquarters are situated in his legislative district. “I want to express my support in your efforts to fight for improved working conditions to ensure that LifeSource provides outstanding blood donor services,” said Senator Mulroe. “The right to join a union to collectively bargain for improved working conditions is at the core of our democracy.”

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election is scheduled for Friday, May 3, 2013. “I applaud the LifeSource Phlebotomists in their fight to have a voice in their workplace and to ensure that their rights are respected.” said Ron Powell, President, Local 881 and UFCW International Vice President.

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Local 881 UFCW represents 36,000 members employed in retail food and drug stores throughout Illinois and Northwest Indiana, as well as a professional division comprised of health and nursing home workers, barbers and cosmetologists, and workers in other retail and service industries. Among the companies under contract with Local 881 are Jewel Food Stores, Osco Drug, CVS Pharmacy, Dominick's Finer Foods, Kroger, Schnucks, and many smaller chains and independent stores, as well as nursing homes and other business establishments. Local 881 is among the largest affiliates of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, which represents 1.4 million members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.