

## ***Waking Up Wal Mart: National Campaign with Local Flair*** ***by John Evans, ESSN/JwJ Steering Committee Member***

In early November ESSN/JwJ's own Jeanine Malito took on the task of coordinating local efforts in a nationwide campaign dedicated to bringing about change in the Wal-Mart Corporation. The Wake-Up Wal-Mart movement is funded and facilitated by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union who enlisted the support of a select group of Jobs with Justice and ACORN chapters, as well as union members, human rights activists, and leaders of faith from across the country. Together they are calling on Wal-Mart to embrace the best of American values: to adopt a zero tolerance policy on child labor, provide affordable health care to Wal-Mart associates and their families, pay a living wage, end discrimination against women and people of color, and allow Wal-Mart employees their constitutional right to organize (to name just a few).

Jeanine locally orchestrated a number of nationally coordinated actions, often with very short notice. The first of these involved going inside a Wal-Mart to distribute information to employees regarding their legal rights as workers. Deanna Kilger and Jeanine spent twenty suspenseful minutes in the west Eugene Wal-Mart, expecting to be booted at any minute. A number of employees were approached, and information distributed widely throughout the store.

On November 25th, Black Friday, one of the busiest shopping days of the year, a group of committed ESSN/JwJ members and a variety of local activists demonstrated at the West 11th Wal-Mart. Despite pouring rain, harassment by Wal-Mart management, and a friendly visit from the Eugene Police Department, the event went well. Rebel activists who approached shoppers with flyers warning them of Wal-Mart's record of charging the wrong price at the register were well received. ESSN/JwJ Organizer Claire Syrett handed out flyers in the far corner of the Super Center's parking lot for more than 45 minutes before being escorted off the lot by a manager. She took that opportunity to engage the manager in dialogue about the fair treatment of workers. Two television news crews were on hand, helping to publicize the campaign and the rally.

The next event was the "Light a Candle for Change" vigil, held on a very cold December evening, as part of a national faith-based effort to address Wal-Mart's moral failures. Thank you to lay minister Karl Sorg, for his courage and wisdom. Thanks to Erik Berg (Portland JwJ) and Jeff Anderson (UFCW) who came down from Portland, bringing the light(s) with them. And special thanks to the delegation including Roger Morris, (ESSN/JwJ Program Committee) and Skye Malito (ESSN/JwJ volunteer) that accompanied myself and Karl, as he delivered a copy of the interfaith letter to Wal-Mart management.

One key component of this campaign is signing people up on the Wake-Up Wal-Mart informational website. Much of this was done by tabling at community events. Robert Greenwald's Wal-Mart documentary: "The High Cost of Low Price" brought out enthusiastic crowds at Lane Community College and Cosmic Pizza. Thanks to Mary Beth and Don Bishoff for tabling at the LCC showing, attended by over 700 concerned citizens. Signatures were also gathered at the International Human Rights Day forum at the University of Oregon on December 10th, at the ESSN/JwJ holiday party, local union offices, and Growers Market Food Co-Op. Some community canvassing was also done to gather signatures. Please take the time to visit this website at [www.wakeupwalmart.com](http://www.wakeupwalmart.com).

Congratulations to Jeanine for a very successful campaign, and a special thank you to all who devoted the time and energy to make this the success it was. And, though the identities of those who mysteriously hung "Guess Who's Not Shopping at Wal-Mart" posters throughout many parts of the Eugene may never be known, many thanks to you,

too. *Editors Note: Wal-Mart reports that its holiday sales were below expectations this year. Thank you to John Evans for his many contributions to this campaign, including authoring this article.*

### **DHL Fired Workers Update:**

There have been no new developments in the case of the temporary workers who lost their jobs at DHL last month. Teamsters Rep. Stefan Ostrach reports that Teamsters 206 plans to see what legal action might be possible but it looks like DHL has protected itself from any such action by hiding behind third party employers. The Lane County Workers' Rights Board panel that heard testimony from these workers in November held a press conference to release their initial report on the case. (The Board's report can be viewed on our website) Board Chair Margaret Hallock noted that while DHL's actions may have been legal they were not ethical. The Board called upon DHL to change the way it does business in our community and to hire back these workers directly onto their payroll, under a union contract.

In the meantime, ESSN/JwJ is asking its members to avoid doing business with DHL, and to let businesses you patronize know that you want them to use a different shipper. More direct and public actions against DHL are being planned, possibly involving other JwJ chapters where DHL has corporate offices, as well as in Germany where they are headquartered.

ESSN/JwJ is collecting donations for these unemployed workers. Checks can be sent to our P.O. Box with "DHL Workers" in the memo line. We have raised more than \$325 so far thanks to the many generous donations of our members.

**Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice Chapter in the Works:** JwJ Western Regional Organizer Paul Bigman reports that momentum is building for forming a new JwJ coalition in Southern Oregon (Ashland-Medford-Grants Pass-Roseburg). A recent planning meeting drew representation from the Central Labor Council, SEIU 503, ONA, APWU, IBEW, Western Council of Industrial Workers, and the IWW; as well as community reps from the League of Women Voters, the Democratic Party, Veterans for Progress, Unete (an immigrant rights and farmworker organization), Center for Peace Justice, and Oregon Action. Several others who couldn't make the meeting, but expressed interest, include a Unitarian Universalist congregation and the Jackson County Human Rights Coalition. The group plans to look for seed money from the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation (an ESSN/JwJ funder), and do some outreach to broaden their base. Enthused about the potential formation, Bigman notes: "I think we may be reaching the saturation point for western Oregon. What's next, Pendleton? Baker City? Arock?"

**Roseburg Nurses Vote to Join Oregon Nurses Association:** In a historic victory the nurses at Mercy Hospital in Roseburg voted 178 to 97 to join ONA this month. Mercy nurses will join more than 10,000 other nurses represented by ONA. The National Labor Relations Board conducted the January 11 election. ESSN/JwJ sends its congratulations to our newest Sisters and Brothers in Roseburg.

