



CHICAGO TEAMSTERS JOINT COUNCIL 25



NEWS>>

PHARMACIST LEARNS VALUE OF TEAMSTER POWER THE HARD WAY

Lucafo Reinstated Nine Months After Wrongful Termination

Pharmacist Laura Lucafo said she used to question whether being a Teamster was worth all of the union dues she paid each month.

When the 12-year Osco employee was inexplicably fired last fall, Lucafo learned it was worth every penny.

“After what I’ve gone through, it’s definitely worth it,” said Lucafo, a Chicago native who had spent the last nine years as a head pharmacist at Osco. “The union has been standing by me every step of the way.”

Nearly nine months after she was wrongly terminated, an arbitrator ruled in Lucafo’s favor on Thursday, June 10, 2010. She will be reinstated with full seniority, back pay and benefits.

“I feel relieved, elated, thankful for the union and a strong sense of satisfaction knowing that I really didn’t do anything wrong,” Lucafo said.

Strong Case

Lucafo was terminated on Oct. 15, 2009, without notice, cause, progressive discipline, any opportunity to move into a staff pharmacist position, or any reasonable chance to rehabilitate alleged deficiencies. She was told only that her termination was based on her May 2009 annual review.

“I was shocked,” said Lucafo, who also was three months pregnant at the time of her termination. “It was really a slap in the face because of all the good years I have given them.”

The next day, Lucafo called John T. Coli, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 727, and her union representatives sprung into action.



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“They didn’t doubt me for a second. They listened to me and were diligent about calling Osco right away and getting to the bottom of things,” Lucafo said. “They made me feel comfortable. They made me feel like they would take care of me, and they have.”

Said Coli: “We do not take these matters lightly. This local is committed to its members, and Laura’s situation really underscores the importance of the union.”

In an arbitration hearing on March 11, 2010, Local 727 General Counsel Stephanie Brinson presented evidence that Lucafo was unjustly terminated. Post-hearing briefs were submitted on May 7, and it took the arbitrator less than a month to hand down a decision in Lucafo’s favor.

“We had a very strong case to make for Laura, and in the end, the truth and the facts prevailed,” Coli said.

‘Really Good Insurance Policy’

Lucafo said she looked for a job at other retail pharmacies, but hiring freezes abound. She wanted to return to her Osco pharmacy because of the relationships she has cultivated with her patients over the years.

“The reason I work in retail is because I love seeing my patients month after month, building relationships with them. It makes me feel good knowing that they trust me and rely on me,” Lucafo said. “I’m very excited about seeing my patients again.”

For the last few months, Lucafo has been focusing on her son, Vince, who was born April 11, and all the joys – and trials – of parenthood.

Lucafo said she is grateful to have Local 727 on her side.

“Being a Teamster is like having a really good insurance policy,” she said. “You hope you never have to use it, but if you need it, it’s there. In these times of economic uncertainty, it’s comforting to have that kind of security.”

Teamsters Local 727 is an affiliate of Teamsters Joint Council 25, which represents more than 100,000 hardworking men and women throughout Illinois and Indiana.