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making all these
jobs better.”**

— **TAYLOR COX,**
Indiana Grand Casino

I grew up in Shelbyville, Indiana. Both of my parents worked in non-union restaurants, and they struggled to support our family without good benefits, pay or steady schedules. I worked as a bartender and server to pay for college. When I graduated I couldn't find a job that matched the tip income I made, so I decided to continue bartending.

But the irregular hours and abusive managers took a toll on me, and when I needed medical and mental health care, I hit a wall.

I was 27, and working at the Winners Circle Bar and Grill at the Indiana Grand Casino, back in my home town of Shelbyville. I badly needed foot surgery but I couldn't afford it. When managers had a bad day, they would cut me early and mess with my schedule. Everyone was getting screwed at my restaurant. Some co-workers had been there for a decade and only made \$11 an hour. Experienced cooks didn't get promoted but had to train new supervisors who were hired from the outside. The casino had been bought and sold several times and it kept getting worse with every new owner.

I didn't set out to be a "Union leader." It just happened. When co-workers saw me stick up for myself and for others, they wanted to do it too. We were so used to being divided and pitted against each other by management; it turns out most of us actually wanted to work together and help each other instead.

We won our Union election in November 2019. It was a close vote. Management tried hard to scare and divide us and it worked with some people, but not the majority.



Before the vote we were organizing for about a year, at first in secret. My restaurant has 30 employees, so I formed a team of 4 trusted workers there, and we each took responsibility for specific co-workers. When we were ready, we signed up 75% and put on Union buttons at work. Even quiet and shy workers started to speak up in meetings and tell managers to stop mistreating us.

Right before the Union vote, the casino brought in a new General Manager who promised he would fix our problems, and that we should give him a chance without the Union. False rumors spread that the union would force us to pool our tips. Managers promoted some workers to try to buy them off.

The day we won our Union vote was so emotional. The casino is one of the biggest employers in my home town, and I was part of making all these jobs better. There are people with all types of political opinions working with me, and our country is polarized. But those differences didn't divide us when it came to making changes at work that would improve our lives and our community.

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