



N.J. cannabis cultivators vote to join Local 152 in latest success

orkers at a New Jersey cannabis cultivation site have voted to join United Food and Commercial Workers Local 152. The vote is the

latest in a string of successes for the union's Cannabis Division. Twelve cultivators at the

Twelve cultivators at the Columbia Care facility in Vineland, N.J., supported union representation through a majority card check last month, leading to the certification of the results by the New Jersey State Board of Mediation on Oct. 6. This certification designated Local 152 as the workers' union.

"We are proud to represent these cannabis cultivators," Local 152 President Brian String said. "We take seriously their trust in our union. We

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Ready to lead!

Pres. String: Dan is the best man for job

aniel Ross, Jr. believes in the power of unions.

Being a member of a union can mean different things to different people at different times over the course of one's career: a voice on the job, a safety enforcer, a bargaining representative to improve wages and benefits, and much more.

For Ross, the executive assistant to the president at Local 152, the union is a powerful tool for improving members' lives and society as a whole.

"Unions exist to improve the lives of working people and their families," he said. "UFCW Local 152 offers members a vehicle to stand up and advocate for themselves. We empower working class people to have a say in their workplaces and in the halls of government."

He didn't develop this outlook overnight. Growing up, he admired his father who served as a shop steward at

> "Dan Ross, Jr., checks all of the boxes to be the next president of Local 152. Read on to learn more about his career so far, his bargaining experience and his commitment to service. I can't think of a better person to lead our membership into the future." — President Brian String

 Daniel Ross, Jr.

Pathmark before joining the staff of the former UFCW Local 56 as a union representative.

"The Labor Movement is special to me," he said. "When I was young, I knew that my pop always had a job and was able to put food on the table. We had presents at Christmas and birthdays and went on a vacation every year. We were provided for."

Ross began his own career in the Labor Movement when he joined Local 56 as an organizer in 2000. In the first 10 years, during which Local 56 merged with Local 1358 to form Local 152, he focused on organizing workers at nursing homes and later at manufacturing facilities.

Throughout his career, Ross has formed bonds with workers across different industries and fortified their trust in the union.

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Also inside: Members at work • Health care & manufacturing industry updates

STAY CONNECTED!





UFCW Local 152 Unity Official Publication of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 152

> EDITOR Brian String

UNION HEADQUARTERS

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100% Union

New Jersey truck drivers choose Local 152 for union representation

ruck drivers across three locations in New Jersey voted overwhelmingly to be represented by UFCW Local 152 in their fight for workplace improvements.

A total of 26 workers at the Cinnaminson, Hamilton and Piscataway terminals of ECM Transport, LLC, voted to join the union in an election at an NLRB-approved offsite location on Aug. 24.

"The support of our union will enable these workers to get the respect on the job they deserve," Local 152 President Brian String said. "We look forward to bargaining a first contract that recognizes their hard work and the role they have played in their company's success."

The new members transport all types of cargo using ECM's more than 2,500

tractors and trailers in the mid-Atlantic states.

Workers at the company approached the union in June after their repeated requests for changes at the workplace were not fully addressed by management. Now, with union representation, they will be strengthened in their quest for improvements to paid time off, benefits, overtime scheduling and more.

Local 152 will now organize meetings with the drivers to draft contract proposals and schedule bargaining dates with the company.

"There is excitement among these workers about what Local 152 can do to help change their workplace," President String said. "We share that excitement and we're ready to get started creating this new chapter with them."

UFCW Discount College Program

UFCW has partnered with EBS Union College Benefit and EDVANCE to offer UFCW members and their families heavily discounted tuition rates at a number of colleges. Degree programs will now include associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees.

> For details, visit ufcw.org/ufcw-discount-college-program/



Daniel Ross, Jr.: Ready to lead!

Continued from front page

"While union members generally earn more than non-union workers, that's not always the most relevant thing in their lives," he added.

"What's the 'real' union difference? It's that you've got someone in your corner. That's priceless. Members have a process that protects them, someone to call, someone who will do their best to represent them."

At the bargaining table

Over the years, Ross said, he internalized the wants and needs of the membership, enhancing the local's success in negotiating with employers at the bargaining table.

"The working class are worth a lot more than some employers are willing to pay," he said.

"In negotiations, besides the major economic items, we continue to focus on various ways to improve our contracts, everything from protective leave language to enhancing bereavement leave to include grandchildren and other family members.

"I've seen way too many young people buried during the opioid crisis," he explained.

"Things like that are little in terms of the overall economic impact of a contract, but they can really make a difference in the lives of our members."

Armed with the knowledge and experience that comes from years of connecting with the membership, he asked for the opportunity to take the lead on bargaining several contracts. When he succeeded in this new role, he was promoted to assistant bargaining director in 2017. He took the reins as bargaining director in 2020.

In his years of negotiations, Ross has negotiated countless contracts and continues to embrace each challenge.

"I welcome the obstacles we face when negotiating contracts," he said. "I'm not intimidated by the process. There's generally always a deal to be made. After you've been beating your head against a wall for days and you finally start to see the crack where there is a path forward that's exciting to me.



Ross, third from left, at the 2023 UFCW International Convention with, from left: Director of Field Services Danette Montes-Palmore, Assistant Director of Collective Bargaining Lisa Sanders and President Brian String.

"Not many people talk about it, but for me, the key to successful negotiations is the idea that nobody loses," he continued. " Somewhere along the line, both parties should feel respected and having accomplished their goals."

Also at the heart of his negotiating strategy is keeping the needs of the members front and center, he said.

'Dan is the best man for the job.' -President Brian String

"When in bargaining, I envision that I'm bargaining a contract as if it was for my wife and kids," he said. "If I keep that focus and we remain relatable to our members, we'll put ourselves in the position to bargain the best deals we can. Our membership trust us to do that.

"We represent people who would get run over by corporations if we didn't exist to protect their interests."

In his current role as executive assistant to the president, Ross is creating new and creative ways for the union to continue to assist its members, all built on his core principles.

"It's sacred to me, serving the membership," he said. "I wake up every day ready to go to work. I've still got the fire in my belly. It's always something different every day, a different challenge. There's always somebody who needs help. "I don't look at it as a job; it's a way of life. To work in Labor, you either have it in your gut or you don't.

"Our staff cares about what they do," he said. "Working people should be able to look up to their union and see the value of their membership."

Doing good work

Ross serves on the Executive Board of Local 152, guiding the union into the future, as well as on the board of the Bryan D. Ross Foundation, the charitable organization named in honor of his brother, who died of lung cancer in 2000 at the age of 32.

The foundation raises tens of thousands of dollars each year to give to members in need.

"When my brother died, he didn't have health insurance. If anyone has been involved in a tragedy like that, the responsibility generally falls on the family." Ross said. "So the foundation grants money to members who need it for COBRA insurance coverage, to repair a home after a fire or other catastrophes. Being there for people in their hour of need is important to us."

Ross lives in Burlington County, N.J., with Elizabeth, his wife of 19 years, and his daughters, Julia and Skylar. He loves sharing his passion for the union with their children, especially when they proudly walk behind the Local 152 banner each year in the Philadelphia Labor Day parade.

"It's an awesome feeling," he said. "My kids get to see that we are a part of something bigger than just us as individuals," he said.

"We're put on earth to serve. When I pass on, I want my kids to know that I left it all on the table.

"We have to leave this place better than we found it and do good work while we're here. Labor gives us the outlet to do that."

Into the future

Ross recognizes the challenges that are ahead.

"I look forward to working with our local's leadership team into the future," he said. "Our staff is excellent and dedicated. We have worked together for many years and have a shared vision — to advance causes for working families and better the lives of our members!"



Wages, theft in contract talks

□ In this column, analyst Jeff Metzger looks at developments in the supermarket industry around the country.

s new labor contracts continue to be bargained across the Northeast, the coming months of talks will center on wages and retail theft, according to sources. One union source summarized what's been happening over the past four years: "We negotiated the last deal just before COVID changed our lives. At that time, it was imperative that we find a solution to our pension issues which were

worsening every year and threatening to implode." Our source added: "Since COVID, every aspect of our lives has become more expensive. And during the pandemic, both Safeway and Giant recorded unprecedented sales and profits. This contract represents an opportunity for our members to share in those rewards and be compensated at current cost-of-living levels."

Another key topic that both sides are prepared to address is the current level of retail theft and the security issues related to shoplifting.

"I'm not certain we can find a solution to this serious problem which has only gotten worse," said a senior level executive at one of the chains who is involved in the negotiating process. "We've made it clear that we do not want to do anything that could provoke a shoplifter into violent behavior, but I believe that our associates and our leadership can be better prepared to handle the challenges that confront all of us. It's simply an untenable situation where solutions are hard to find."

Our labor source agreed, but added: "I would like to see some binding language in our new contracts that address how all parties can collectively work together to, at the very least, be prepared for the worst possible scenario situation. Whether that's frontline training, shooting drills or other aspects of preparedness, we need better communications. However, I agree, remedies are extremely challenging. I want assurances that our retail partners fully understand that our members are extremely concerned, even frightened, about security issues in the stores."

□ Jeff Metzger's "Taking Stock" column appears in *Food World* and *Food Trade News*.



N.J. cannabis cultivators vote to join Local 152

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will ensure their voice is heard and their hard work is respected."

The cultivators at the facility grow and process cannabis, overseeing its production and preparing it for sale to consumers.

Local 152 will continue to meet with the workers to draft contract proposals and schedule bargaining dates with the company. The cultivators seek wage increases and improvements to their working environment, including training and expanded access to protective equipment.

This organizing win follows another successful cannabis-related drive by Local 152 earlier this year at an MPX facility in Pleasantville, and workers at The Botanist dispensaries in Egg Harbor and Atlantic City ratified a strong first contract with wage increases in June.

"As our Cannabis Division grows, so does our strength at the bargaining table," President String said. "A fair contract and fair treatment for cannabis workers is possible in New Jersey and beyond."

Keep your union up to date!



To continue to receive important news and updates from Local 152, visit **ufcwlocal152.org** and complete the "Change of Address" form if you move.

From the Local 152 website, you can also update your address with the Health and Welfare Office and renew your voter registration.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone to update your information right now:



Avoid these mistakes to help protect your job

our union job is too important to put in jeopardy by failing to follow proper conduct. Don't make these mistakes at work:

Confronting shoplifters

The companies have strict rules on shoplifting. They don't want you to approach, confront or detain a suspected shoplifter either inside or outside the store. You are not Loss Prevention. These suspected shoplifters could become unpredictable and extremely dangerous. Your union wants you to be safe, so don't go after shoplifters, period.

Grazing

Eating, drinking or using product before it's paid for is called "grazing," and it has cost many jobs. Don't be tempted, even if you are standing in the checkout line. Wait until you have paid for the item and have your receipt in hand.

Foul language and offensive or racial comments

No one wants to hear them. Using offensive language is absolutely against all the rules and could get you in serious trouble.

Insubordination

Refusing to do as you are told by a manager or person in charge could be considered insubordination. Don't argue! If you have a problem with an order, do what you're told and then call your union representative. The problem can be addressed at that time.

Sexual harassment

Unwanted touching (hands on another person in any form), telling off-color jokes, comments about other people, giving unwanted hugs, showing inappropriate pictures or texts, etc., can be considered sexual harassment and reported as such. What you may consider as "innocent, playful or funny," others could consider as sexual harassment.

Purchasing discounted product

Most companies have policies about employees purchasing discounted product. Be sure to follow these policies to the letter. Never put product away somewhere because you're going to "buy it later." That puts your job in jeopardy, and no discount or mark down is worth that.

Store supplies

Most companies have policies about taking company supplies, such as Band-Aids or cleaning supplies, from the shelf. These items may come from an outside supplier. Make sure you follow company policy, and if you're unsure about your company policy, ask your union representative.



Secretary-Treasurer's Report

By Dan Konczyk







LOCAL 152 MEMBERS AT VORK



















Sept. 19, 2023

Thousands of dollars were raised to benefit the Bryan D. Ross Foundation, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of America and various other charities.





HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY UPDATE



Happy retirement to Local 152 member **Sandy Garrett**, a registered nurse at Cape Regional Medical Center in Cape May Court House, N.J., who punched out of work for the final time in September after 41 years of service.



Members at Barclay's Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center in Cherry Hill, N.J., ratified a new contract.

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY UPDATE

Workers at Johanna Foods overwhelmingly authorize strike

ocal 152 members working at the Johanna Foods facility in Flemington, N.J. voted unanimously to authorize a strike against their employer on Sunday, Sept. 24.

This display of solidarity is in response to the company's persistent unwillingness to bargain in good faith with the union. Local 152 represents approximately 100 workers at the food processing plant.

"These workers trudged through the rain on their day off to come together to send a message to management," President Brian String said. "These workers deserve active engagement from their employer to negotiate a fair contract for the future."

Representatives from Local 152 and the company have met more than a dozen times since the beginning of the year to attempt to reach an agreement. For the last several months, Johanna Foods refuses to bring a complete economic proposal to the bargaining table, choosing instead to seek reductions to members' health and welfare benefits before discussing potential wage increases and other forms of compensation.

After months of frustration due to the company's lack of commitment to its workers, the union secured bargaining assistance from a federal mediator in September, but even mediation could not compel the company to negotiate a full economic package.

"The members at Johanna Foods have spoken loud and clear with this strike authorization," President String said. "They are tired of the company's insulting stalling tactics and are united in their desire for a prompt, fair contract acknowledging their dedication and hard work."

Reaching new heights: Director Peter White leads the way for the Cannabis Division

FCW Local 152's Cannabis Division has had a string of successes over the past year.

In April, workers at an MPX NJowned cannabis cultivation site in Pleasantville, N.J., voted to join the union.

In June, workers at The Botanist in Egg Harbor Township and Atlantic City ratified their first union contract after joining Local 152 in 2022.

And in October, cultivators at the Columbia Care facility in Vineland, N.J., chose Local 152 as their voice on the job.

This recent growth in the Cannabis Division is part of a coordinated effort to meet workers in the industry and help them achieve their goals, according to Local 152 Cannabis Division Director Peter White.

"Since it is a newer industry, these workers need respect, job security, safe working environments, good pay and affordable benefits," White said. "Our goals is to make these jobs become careers."

White began his own career in the union in 2013 as a cook and maintenance worker at Meadow Lakes, a continuing care retirement community in Hightstown, N.J.

"I recognized the value of the union shortly after starting there," he said. "The health care benefits were great and affordable for my family, plus we had vacation time and didn't have to work every weekend.

"These were all huge benefits when starting a family!"

He was so inspired by the

protections offered by his contract that he began to get more involved in the union. He became a Special Project Union Representative (SPUR) and also a shop steward to help his fellow members learn more about their rights on the job.

In 2020, he joined Local 152 as a union representative, working mainly with members at

health care facilities. He took part in several bargaining sessions and learned the importance of the detailed contract language that protects and empowers members.

"The language has to be very specific," he said. "Whether it's about vacations or leaves of absence, the members have to be able to utilize these things. We make sure there are no discrepancies going forward."

A bright future

Before becoming cannabis director in August 2023, he spent time in the organizing department, growing Local 152's Cannabis Division through constant outreach.

"Each facility has a different set of issues; it's not one size fits all," he said. "Some companies don't have enough employees to qualify for health insurance discounts, so that it makes it challenging for them to offer it to workers.

"Other companies don't know the proper way to handle the chemicals in the cultivation process, so the members let us know their safety concerns and what needs to change."



In addition to safety concerns, White said, the desire for affordable health care is a top priority among workers in the cannabis industry. He has found that many workers appreciate having the union to help them ask questions about their companies' policies.

"Some of these workers have grown cannabis when they were younger, but when they start working in the industry they find out that their company does it a different way," he said. "They have to follow policies and procedures now, so it's definitely a learning curve.

"With the union, they have the ability speak up, ask questions and share their knowledge without the fear of being retaliated against," he continued. "Watching the workers realize that they finally have a voice on the job is rewarding."

White sees a bright future for Local 152's Cannabis Division and its ability to make an even larger impact on the emerging trade.

"We will continue to fight for workers' rights, to grow this industry and set the standard," he said.

Happy retirement!

Marsha D. Abrams	09/01/23	Pathmark Stores/Local 152
Michael W. Alkis	09/01/23	Zallie's Supermarkets
David Robert Almeda	10/01/23	Super Fresh
Margaret A. Bellon	08/01/23	Colligas Family Market
Patrick Boyle	09/01/23	Super Fresh
Donald A. Burk	09/01/23	Acme Markets
Charles P. Burke, Jr.	10/01/23	Acme Markets
Joseph Cappetto	09/01/23	Acme Markets
Maryanne Cottrell	10/01/23	General Supermarkets
Barbara L. Cox	09/01/23	Brown's Superstores
Carolyn A. Dejesus	09/01/23	Acme Markets
Wayne J. Donahue	08/01/23	Ball Park Brands
Patricia A. Donnelly	09/01/23	Pathmark Stores/Local 198
Bette Jane Fisher	09/01/23	Super Fresh
Cynthia A. Flagg	09/01/23	Acme Markets
Sharon K. Foraker	08/01/23	Acme Markets
Jodi L. Freyman	10/01/23	Supermarkets General
Linda M. Gallagher	09/01/23	Acme Markets
Loretta D. Gitto	08/01/23	Eickhoff Supermarkets
Jose E. Golden	08/01/23	Pathmark Stores/Local 152
Antoinette N. Hall	09/01/23	Vornado, Inc. Two Guys
Francis P. Hampson	09/01/23	Acme Markets
Joan F. Hannigan	10/01/23	Acme Markets
Arlene M. Hansen-Beachem	09/01/23	Acme Markets
Brenda L. Hassler	08/01/23	Acme Markets
Barbara A. Haynes	10/01/23	Bottino's Supermarkets
Maria A. Hudson	10/01/23	Buy Rite Food Corp
Monica Huntley	10/01/23	Acme Markets
Carolyn R. Johnson	09/01/23	Butler Foods/Penn Packing
Susan Jones	10/01/23	Acme Markets
Janet A. Kellam	10/01/23	Acme Markets
Kendall K. Klein	10/01/23	Berks Packing Co.
Michael J. Kretzinger	10/01/23	Acme Markets
Larry L. Lawrence	10/01/23	Incollingo's Iga
Marguerite Lederer	10/01/23	Acme Markets
Michael Lemunyon	08/01/23	Supermarkets Cherry Hill
Maryellen Mullenix	08/01/23	Pathmark Stores/Local 152
Roseann M. Myers	09/01/23	Acme Markets
Cindy Norbury	09/01/23	General Supermarkets
Susanna D. Phister	08/01/23	Acme Markets
James C. Piel	08/01/23	Acme Markets
Sandra J. Reilly	08/01/23	Fleming Co./Shop n Bag
Alicia M. Robinson	08/01/23	Acme Markets
Dolores Roccia	09/01/23	Butler Foods/Penn Packing

RETIRE WITH DIGNITY

Local 152 members have peace of mind in retirement with health benefits and a pension that provides guaranteed monthly income for life.

09/01/97	Acme Markets
00/01/80	Acilie Markets
09/01/23	Food Fair Inc.
08/01/23	Supermarkets Cherry Hill
08/01/23	Acme Markets
09/01/23	Murphy's At The Lakes
08/01/23	Eickhoff Supermarkets
09/01/23	Zallie's Supermarkets
10/01/23	Ball Park Brands
09/01/23	Super Fresh
10/01/23	Acme Markets
10/01/23	Berks Packing Co.
09/01/23	Acme Markets
08/01/23	Acme Markets
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In memoriam

08/25/23 Zallie's Supermarkets Lynn M. Alkis 10/04/23 Super Fresh **Joan Barron** Joseph Bodor 09/24/23 Super Fresh Doris K. Buggey 08/29/23 Acme Markets Super Fresh Laura Corgan 08/20/23 Louise C. Daniels 08/01/23 Acme Markets Jane M. Davis Acme Markets 09/20/23 Ann Fertner Colonial Beef Co. 08/04/23 Norman C. Fisher 08/21/23 Super Fresh Margaret Gabriel 09/01/23 Colonial Beef Co. Lawrence Hall 08/07/23 Vornado, Inc. Two Guys **Robert W. Hartman** 10/05/23 Roberts Packing Co. **Francis Haubrich** 08/11/23 Butler Foods/Penn Packing John Hayes 09/05/23 Food Check Shop n Bag Acme Markets Stephen J. Horvath 09/18/23 Julia P. Howland 08/08/23 Pathmark Stores/Local 152 Andrew L. Johnson 08/16/23 Butler Foods/Penn Packing Albert C. Kolber Holiday Markets 10/04/23 Patricia A. Lawless-Crudele 09/30/23 Acme Markets Francis Leszczynski **Cross Bros Meat Packers** 10/11/23



Happy retirement!

Greg Canellis (26 years) ShopRite pictured with Shop Steward Chris Scherm

In memoriam

Continued from page 10

Dianne Louder	09/29/23	Acme Markets
Peter Mariello	10/08/23	Castor Shop n Bag
Bennie Mason	09/04/23	Dietz & Watson
Nancy J. Mcglinchey	08/16/23	Acme Markets
Ruth Nebel	08/02/23	Holiday Markets
Anthony J. Roccia	08/11/23	Butler Foods/Penn Packing
Lola Savage	09/17/23	Eastern Boneless Beef
Salvatore Scarlata	08/12/23	
Dorothy J. Smith	08/18/23	Super Fresh
Lillian Thomas	10/08/23	Super Fresh
Sharon K. Tummarello	09/09/23	Acme Markets
Anthony J. Villone	08/26/23	M&E #2384
Michelle A. Wagner	08/21/23	Pathmark Stores/Local 152
Barbara A. Watts	08/21/23	Acme Markets
Donna C. Wille	08/17/23	Zallies's Supermarkets

Exclusive discounts for Local 152 members!

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- Casino Pier
- Fantasy Island

Entertainment

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- Big Kahuna's
- Clementon Park & Splash World
- Philadelphia Zoo
- ...and more!

Visit ufcwlocal152.org for details



Mental health resources for Local 152 members

f you are experiencing mental health issues, know that you are not alone. Help is available. Contact the Local 152 Benefit Funds at (800) 555-4959 to find out what services are available.

9-8-8 Lifeline

9-8-8 has been designated as a new three-digit dialing code that will route callers nationwide to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, now known as the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

When people call, text or chat 9-8-8, they will be connected to counselors trained to listen to people's problems, provide immediate support and connect them to resources.

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Celebrating stewards and planning for the future

n this issue of *Unity*, we highlight the crucial role stewards perform to sustain and grow the strength of our union.

Stewards are the eyes and ears of Local 152 at the workplace. They keep the union leadership informed of important developments and at the same time keep their coworkers informed about their contracts, their benefits, their rights and more.

Our stewards also serve as examples to their fellow members by being leaders on the job. They embody union activism and often are the first point of contact for members with questions about their collective bargaining agreements.

They know their contracts inside and out so they can answer any question and make the right recommendations for members in need. They combat anti-union propaganda that can quickly spread through the workplace.

For new members, and especially those with no prior history with the Labor Movement, stewards are the key to a new world. They teach young workers about what it means to work under a union contract and how the union can improve their lives. If a new member arrives at the workplace with misconceptions about union dues, they will soon understand after a conversation with a steward that they receive a tenfold return on their investment.

Any steward will tell you stories of how rewarding it is to help a member in need, and how those members often share their appreciation with them many years and job titles later.

Charting a course together

For all of these reasons and more, we will honor our stewards at a Local 152 Steward Seminar this month. Stewards will gather and share experiences, discuss strategies, learn about educational opportunities, and help guide the union forward to meet the challenges we face in 2024 and beyond.

In a time when millions of people of



President's Report By Brian String

all ages are feeling isolated and fearful of forces beyond their control, unions are the antidote.

We deliver the message that no worker should ever have to struggle alone, and our stewards help bring that peace of mind to members every day.

Brian String