

“No Pay, No Way”

Don Bosco Workers’ Campaign to End Wage Theft

Funded by

Self Development of People

The Don Bosco Workers of Port Chester, New York repeatedly faced wage theft by some of their employers. These low-wage workers who are often hired on a daily or weekly basis, find that at the end of the day (or week) that the employer walks away without paying them. Some restaurants steal workers tips. Other employers refuse to pay overtime, insist on “of the clock” work, or refuse to pay minimum wage. In 2006 the workers in Port Chester began to organize. In 2014 they received a grant from the National Self Development of People Committee, which is funded by the One Great Hour of Sharing. This enabled them to partner with a broad coalition of labor, government and faith groups to launch a campaign making the wider community aware of the problem and its consequences. These workers tend to spend their wages locally so local businesses suffer when workers wages are stolen or withheld. Social service costs increase and the whole community suffers.

Businesses that sign a pledge to pay all wages due by law are given a Good Workplace Decal to display in their storefront. State level politicians such as s Senator George Latimer have become involved and developed a bill to protect workers. The campaign, the first of its kind in the country, has been considered highly successful. In recognition, Don Bosco Workers will be receiving the Micah Award from the Stuart Center in Washington, DC. this May.

Rev. Cathy Surgenor and Rev. Bruce Baker conducted the site visit for this SDOP Grant.