

Christine Kwapnoski

Hometown: Bay Point, Calif.

Employed by Wal-Mart, Inc. 1986-Present in Grandview, Mo; Concord, Calif.

Christine Kwapnoski's career with Wal-Mart began in 1986 in Grandview, Mo. As a cashier and cash office associate, she received excellent evaluations and an "expert" rating in the area of claims. At age 22 and eager to advance in the company, she approached both her Assistant Manager and General Managers about a promotion to management. Her request was ignored and she was unclear about how to get a promotion or management training. "I observed co-workers, mostly male, suddenly being moved into positions as soon as the positions were opened and before I had an opportunity to express interest," she said.

In 1993, Kwapnoski was temporarily transferred to Concord, Calif., to help convert a local store into a new Sam's Club. Impressed by her work ethic, the store's General Manager asked her to stay in Concord and promised her a \$2.00 an hour raise. Kwapnoski agreed and moved to California in March 1994, but never received the raise.

Over the next seven years, Kwapnoski held a variety of positions in nearly all Sam's Club departments. She received good annual evaluations and was occasionally rewarded with merit raises, but continued to be denied promotions that were granted to her male co-workers with less tenure and related experience. "When I was working as the freezer/cooler associate, I was passed over four times for the promotion to team lead, an hourly supervisor position," said Kwapnoski. Each of these four times the position went to a man.

By 2000 and with 14 years experience, she was the longest tenured hourly employee at the Concord Sam's Club. Despite this, she was paid almost the same as a male associate with one-half of her tenure. When she asked her General Manager why a male associate with less experience and less responsibility received almost the same amount she did, he replied "some people make their beds, some people make them better."

In June 2001, two weeks after the Wal-Mart gender discrimination lawsuit was filed, Kwapnoski was finally promoted to an entry-level managerial position. She continued to report to an Assistant Manager and was paid a salary that resulted in a decrease in her hourly rate since she was no longer eligible for overtime pay and was expected to work 48-52 hours a week.

After her promotion to Receiving Area Manager, Kwapnoski's General Manager suggested she "doll up," wear some makeup and dress better. The same General Manager later told her to "blow the cobwebs off her makeup." Said Kwapnoski, "I worked in the receiving area of the club at the time, which is a hot and dirty job with little, if any, contact with the public. I never heard [the General Manager] comment on the physical appearance of male co-workers."

In January 2003, the Regional Vice President who at one point been Kwapnoski's coworker in Missouri, toured her facility. "During the intervening years, I had been promoted to the lowest-level manager with an annual salary of less than \$40,000 and my former coworker had risen to one of the highest position at Sam's Club."

Kwapnoski told him about her situation and her desire to become an Assistant Manager. Soon afterward, the Director of Operations told she could enter the Management Training Program, which she began in March 2003.

During her 17 years as a Sam's Club employee, Kwapnoski watched as countless male employees were promoted, despite her excellent annual reviews, experience, and work ethic. In addition, she was repeatedly promised pay increases and advancements that never materialized. Christine Kwapnoski filed as a plaintiff in the *Dukes v. Walmart* lawsuit in April 2003.

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