

President's Message

By HealthCare-PSEA President Sandi Zubek, RN

www.healthcarepsea.org

“Why do I pay my union dues?”

Do you ever hear this from your members or potential new members upon hire? (Maybe a better question is, do you ever go through a month WITHOUT hearing some version of this?) It's easy to get incensed at this kind of thing. You spend endless hours a week doing your actual regular job as a lab tech or nurse. Then you go way above and beyond, helping with a member's grievance – bargaining better pay and benefits – fighting with the administration to meet your patients' and members' needs. You push legislators to enact laws and policies that would better serve public health.

Then somebody wants to know what has “the union done for me?” Hand them this newsletter and let them see the members, leaders, and staff who are bargaining, enforcing the

contract, working with the employer to improve the hospital/nursing home/lab/home health, pushing the employer as needed, advocating at all levels of government for patients, lab techs, and nurses alike, and so much more. Show them our members are fighting with all their might, amid fiercely hostile Indiana Regional Medical Center administration actions, to get a fair contract. Surviving and outlasting the hospital team – one day longer! Tell them about our nurses and lab techs working with management to try to save health care in rural southwestern Pennsylvania at Highlands Hospital in Fayette County, while bargaining for a fair contract.

Point out their dues at work, helping the nurses transition into a mega health care system at what is now UPMC Somerset hospital. Even as they gear

up to bargain their next contract, these sisters and brothers work around the clock to help their patients transition into the new world of large health care networks taking over rural health care facilities.

Finally, show them the success of our members in preserving union membership at the Bucks County nursing home and county health division, in the face of the anti-union assault by the U.S. Supreme Court that ripped away fair share fees in a shameless attempt to turn our members against each other.

This success beautifully illustrates the REAL reason they should pay the union dues. Remind them, the union is not an outside force – the union is all of US!

News from HealthCare-PSEA Locals

Bucks County Nurses Association

by **Bonnie Neiman**
PSEA UniServ Representative and
Trish Barish, RN, Treasurer, BCNA
and Nicole Connors, RN, Secretary-BCNA

The Bucks County nurses work in three different locations. The majority work in the Bucks County nursing home - Neshaminy Manor, the

Health Department in Doylestown, and the Health Department in Levittown. The Levittown office has the smallest number of nurses, five in total: one nursing supervisor, one sexually transmitted diseases (STD) coordinator, and three generalists.

Every weekday, these nurses provide education to the community on all the topics below, however they also have a daily schedule:

Mondays- this office provides

immunization clinics for patients who are underinsured or have no insurance, ages 1-18. Certain vaccines are also provided for community members who are over age 18.

Tuesdays- are reserved for STD/HIV clinics where the public can receive testing and treatment for these conditions as well as counseling on safe sex. When needed, the clients are referred to partner agencies.

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News from HealthCare-PSEA Locals (cont. from Page 1)

Wednesdays and three Thursdays per month- the Bucks County Health Department Levittown office provides support for prenatal and postnatal mothers and babies. The nurses are responsible for providing monthly home visits that consist of providing education regarding labor/delivery, nutrition for mother/baby, breastfeeding, newborn care, SIDDS Prevention, injury prevention, and normal growth and development which also includes weighing and measuring the baby at each visit. The nurses are also responsible for making referrals to community resources as needed including: WIC, Mother Bachman, Catholic Social Services, and Welfare Department.

Other important programs for prenatal and postnatal mothers and babies in Bucks County are:

Perinatal Hepatitis B Program (PHB)- The nurses provide case management to women in Bucks County who have been diagnosed with Hepatitis B during their pregnancy. The nurses are responsible for educating the expectant mothers as well as coordinating the initial Hep B/HBIG vaccination in the hospital and follow-up vaccine/post vaccine testing with the pediatrician. The nurses follow these patients from before birth to 12 months old.

Vaccines for Children Program (VFC)- The nurses are responsible for performing Quality Assurance visits on all pediatric and family health care providers who distribute vaccines provided to them by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. This includes providing education on the proper storage and handling of these vaccines.

Thursdays once per month, the Levittown office conducts Tuberculosis (TB) clinics. The nurses provide case management,

assessment, and education to patients who have been diagnosed with active TB, Latent TB, or suspect of either type. They also work closely with pulmonologists to ensure proper care and positive outcomes for every patient.

Every day, the Levittown nurses are responsible for following a caseload of patients who have been assigned to them for a duration of time lasting anywhere from days to years depending on treatment regimen. They coordinate care with the patients' other health care providers, dispense medication, and assess patients on a monthly basis or more if necessary and conduct contact investigations for highly contagious cases. They are also responsible for providing education about TB, new improvements in testing as well as treatment to provider offices, treatment facilities, and the community.

In addition to providing these services for the community, and the newly added Epidemiology program covering campylobacter and giardia investigations, the Levittown offices also house programs providing WIC, concealed carry permits, dog licenses, passports, restaurant/pool inspections, West Nile mosquito program, and Veterans affairs. Wow! There is a lot happening in Levittown!

Highlands Hospital Nurses Association and Lab Technicians

By Stephanie Cramer, PSEA UniServ Representative

Highlands Hospital has spent much of the last year finding ways to expand hospital services that will better support the Connellsville community and bring about revenue for the hospital. The hospital's efforts

have been focused around wellness, prevention, and care within the realms of autism, stress management, and behavioral health services.

Highlands Hospital celebrated its relocation of the Highlands Hospital Regional Center for Autism last fall allowing for an enrollment of up to 70 students. In addition, this past April, the hospital hired a new general surgeon which is expected to increase the overall volume of patients.

Even more significantly, the hospital recently opened its newly renovated Extended Care Health Unit for behavioral health patients. This new addition to the hospital will be supported by 30 employees, many to still be hired, who will share responsibilities between the different hospital units. From the Association's perspective, this new unit brings about a promising outlook of stability for the hospital's future.

HHNALT began negotiations this past February. Since a new contract has not yet been reached, the association will begin working under status quo as they continue to bargain a successor agreement. Both parties agree that the focus of this new agreement needs to be recruitment and retainment based on the newly expanded services. The hospital would like to eliminate the use of agency nurses and be fully staffed with its own nurses and lab technicians.

On May 6, 2019, HHNALT and PSEA celebrated Nurses' Week and Lab Technicians' Week. The officers, Nancy Morgan, Tamra Guth, and Charlotte Keller, along with Stephanie Cramer, PSEA UniServ, delivered thank you gifts to every member as well as provided a cake for each unit to share in appreciation and solidarity.

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News from HealthCare-PSEA Locals (cont. from Page 2)

Indiana Registered Nurses Association

By Tim Tuinstra, HealthCare-PSEA UniServ representative

Indiana Regional Medical Center inappropriately and prematurely declared an impasse during ongoing bargaining talks toward a new contract with the nurses of the Indiana Registered Nurses Association (IRNA), followed by an outrageous implementation of paid time off. Additionally, overtime provisions were effective April 7, and the rollout of health insurance plans announced for July 1. These actions are happening despite the union's willingness to continue negotiations under the terms of the prior contract that expired on Oct. 31, 2018.

Among the appalling strong-arm tactics utilized by hospital management were an improper impasse declaration, the inappropriate imposition of terms, surface bargaining, intimidation of union members, attempted direct dealing, attempted circumventing of the union bargaining team, encouraging members to drop union membership, and more. Together, they constitute

bargaining in bad faith, which violates the employer's obligations under federal labor law.

Consequently, IRNA filed formal charges of Unfair Labor Practices against the hospital with the National Labor Relations Board. The investigation, interviews by the NLRB agent in charge of the case, document filing, provision of evidence, and more are well underway in this case at the time of this article's writing.

In the meantime, IRNA members are engaging the public in the fight to ensure the provision of high-quality health care for the community. Health fairs featuring blood pressure screenings and bargaining updates are critical to this effort. The nurses express their ongoing gratitude for all the tremendous support they continue to receive from fellow members of HealthCare-PSEA, general PSEA members, and the public overall.

Somerset Professional Nurses Association

By Tim Tuinstra, HealthCare-PSEA UniServ representative

UPMC's takeover of Somerset Hospital is off to a decent start from

the perspective of the nurses in the Somerset Professional Nurses Association (SPNA). The facility recognized the union immediately and honored the existing contract, rather than seek to reopen it or challenge the union itself.

Furthermore, UPMC Somerset worked in advance with the union to facilitate the transition from the Highmark health insurance plans previously available, into equivalent plans from UPMC insurance. Union concerns have been listed by management, and changes made in accord with requests by the union and compliance with the union contract's terms.

Separately, members gathered for food, fun, and fellowship at a general membership meeting on the evening of May 22 at the Italian Oven in Somerset. Among the topics addressed were preliminary efforts as SPNA gears up to bargain the next contract with the hospital. The current collective bargaining agreement will expire in March 2020. A negotiations team will be formed, members surveyed, and a compensation awareness program presented as bargaining preparations advance.

Spring Legislative Update: Sprouting the Seeds of Change

by Erika Brunelle, PSEA Government Relations

For years, nurses have warned of a patient care crisis due to short-staffing, and finally, lawmakers are listening. Legislation introduced in the PA General Assembly this March—House Bill 867 and Senate Bill 450—would require safe nurse-patient ratios in Pennsylvania hospitals. In just a few months, more than 80 state legislators, as well as Gov. Tom Wolf and Lt. Gov. John Fetterman have pledged their support for improving nurse staffing.

As short-staffing continues to drive nurses to leave the profession in record numbers, lawmakers are

finding it more and more difficult to ignore. The Joint State Government Commission (JSGC), the non-partisan research organization that serves the General Assembly, released a study in April 2019, which included recommendations for addressing PA's health care workforce needs. The JSGC recommendation confirmed what nurses have been advising for years: "Reduce Nurse Attrition and Turnover by Improving Nurse Working Environment and Staffing."

In May, PSEA's legislative committee formally recommended

organizational support for HB 867 and SB 450, and PSEA delegates from across the state sent hundreds of postcards to their state representatives and senators urging them to pass safe staffing ratios.

Momentum is building to get this done. Now, more than ever, lawmakers need to hear firsthand about short-staffing and how it impacts patient care and the nursing profession. Tremendous progress has been made this spring. Lending your voice to this effort will help bring about "the season of change."

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SAVE THE DATE

HealthCare-PSEA Annual Meeting

2 p.m.
Wednesday, July 24, 2019

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1 Lincoln Square
Gettysburg, PA 17325