

President's Message

By HealthCare-PSEA President Sandi Zubek, RN

Solidarity. “Where else are they gonna go?!” - was an actual insulting quote from an administrator on the Indiana Regional Medical Center’s management bargaining team. He had the nerve to say this to one of our Indiana Registered Nurses Association nurses on the bargaining team, during a negotiations session.

His patronizing reply was in response to her challenging the hospital team to explain how they intended to keep good nurses at the facility with the massive increases in health insurance costs proposed by

the management team.

It’s as accurate – and damning – an assessment of the state of labor relations in America as I can think of in recent times. Executives expect us to “do more with less.” They want to reduce our take-home pay with massive shifts of health care costs onto our shoulders. They expect us to accept staff burnout and increases in worker turnover if the result is lower employment costs.

Patient health and safety be damned. It’s no secret that these are deeply challenging times for our movement generally and for nurses.

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Clearly, managers do not now and never will look out for our best interests.

No, the only ones who can stand up for us, and for the conditions that provide truly world-class care for our patients, are us. So, I raise a salute to the nurses and lab techs fighting the good fight for a stronger future at Indiana and, soon, Highlands, our two local associations who are bargaining this year.

Together, our solidarity will see us through to victory.

News from HealthCare-PSEA Locals

Bucks County Nurses Association

by **Bonnie Neiman**
PSEA UniServ Representative

On Nov. 27, 2018, HealthCare-PSEA president, Sandi Zubek, visited all the locations where the Bucks County Health Department nurses work. Sandy handed out thank you “kisses” to members. Our statewide president was warmly received by all the members she had the opportunity to meet. Thank you, nurses, and thank you, Sandi!

Highlands Hospital Nurses Association and Lab Technicians

By **Stephanie Cramer**,
PSEA UniServ Representative

It is time to negotiate once again! The contract between Highlands Hospital and Highlands Hospital Nurses Association and Lab Technicians will expire on April 28, 2019. Therefore, the parties will commence bargaining by the end of January. The negotiations team has been meeting regularly to prepare the initial proposal that aligns with

the concerns submitted by the membership.

In addition, the hospital is in the process of adding a new Behavioral Health Unit which it hopes will bring more revenue and staffing to the hospital. While the hospital continues to face staffing challenges, it is encouraged that this new unit will be a positive change. In the meantime, the association is still waiting for the hospital to finalize the details of a settlement between an employee and the hospital that had been agreed upon during a federal mediation last December. With

(continued on Page 2)

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

so many changes happening internally, HHNALT is optimistic for positive negotiations.

Indiana Registered Nurses Association

Indiana Nurses Union Organizes for Action: No shortage of community or coffee on the picket lines for Indiana Nurses

By Annie Briscoe, PSEA Region Advocacy Coordinator

During the last week of November, more than 300 HealthCare-PSEA members with the Indiana Registered Nurses associations didn't work their regularly scheduled shifts at the Indiana Regional Medical Center.

Instead, they could be found on the picket lines.

Working under a contract that expired on Oct. 31, the IRNA called for a one-day strike on Nov. 26. Operating on a 24-hour strike was no challenge for IRNA members, who are accustomed to working shifts during all hours of the day. The picket lines outside of the hospital entrances were just as energetic at midnight as they were at noon. The outpouring of community support never stopped regardless of the rain and snow.

Community members, fellow union members, and nurses from other non-union health care systems showed their support for IRNA by donating food, money,

gift cards for supplies, ponchos, carafe after carafe of coffee, and by writing letters to the editor in support of IRNA, and even by marching side by side with IRNA members on the picket lines. APSCUF members from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, located just down the street, marched during their lunch break. SEIU members from Pittsburgh made the drive to show their solidarity. Local business owners posted our fliers in their storefront windows and wore "I Love IRNA Nurses" stickers around town.

While the nurses intended to return to work the next day, taking an economic strike under the National Labor Relations Act affords certain protections to a private employer. One such advantage is the employer's right to carry out the terms of a contract with replacement workers. In this case, that term was for five days. So, IRNA members could not return to work until Saturday, Dec. 1. From Nov. 27-30, IRNA members organized informational picketing at a prominent location under the "IRMC Park" archway on Philadelphia Street and continued to receive an outpouring of community support.

During this time, bargaining continued with sessions scheduled through mid-January. While no contract agreement has been reached yet, there has been some progress made at the table on key issues including health care and paid leave. Additional bargaining sessions have been scheduled.



(continued on Page 3)

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

Somerset Professional Nurses Association

By Tim Tuinstra, PSEA UniServ Representative

The Somerset Professional Nurses Association has seen activity ramp up quite a bit lately.

Several grievances and at least one arbitration are now proceeding

due to the hospital's repeated use of agency nurses at times when members have been sent home for supposed lack of work. Hoping for the best outcome, the nurses nevertheless are pursuing their contractual grievance process to enforce the language in the contract to protect their rights.

Separately, the hospital's ongoing

affiliation with the UPMC system is expected to be completed by late January or early February. Stay tuned for details in subsequent editions of *PULSE*.

Beyond that, nurses are beginning to discuss possible goals in bargaining for their next contract. The current contract is set to expire March 23, 2020.

AFT Nurses and Health Professionals Annual Professional Issues Conference

Throughout the country, hospitals are merging into larger and larger systems, both not-for-profit and for-profit. Health care consolidations and corporatization can mean vital services may be closed, patient care and job security threatened, and access reduced while costs go up. Decisions about our care move into private board rooms farther and farther from the communities we serve. At the same time, AFT members and community allies are fighting for new ways to protect and improve care: from setting conditions on mergers and consolidations to advocating for state and national solutions.



At this year's Professional Issues Conference, our affiliate leaders and members will tackle these problems with creative solutions that protect care and the work we do.

Some topics for panels, discussions, and workshops include: the impact of and

strategies for challenging corporatization and consolidation in health care; state and national approaches to health care for all; building effective labor-management committees for staffing and safety; and much more!

American Federation of Teachers/Nurses and Health Professionals is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American

Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation. Up to 12 continuing education credits will be awarded.

Registration information is coming soon! Check the website here: <https://www.aft.org/healthcare>.

2019 HealthCare-PSEA Board Meeting Dates

10 a.m.
Wednesday, March 20
Johnstown Office

Annual Meeting
2 p.m.- Wednesday, July 24
Gettysburg

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