

President's Message

By HealthCare-PSEA President Sandi Zubek, RN

www.healthcarepsea.org

Stronger and United

I had hoped that by now COVID-19 would have been tamed and we would be back to at least somewhat normal operations. To put it mildly, that has not happened.

As with so many other aspects of life and work in this pandemic, the work of our HealthCare-PSEA union has continued throughout. Naturally, it has taken quite a bit of adjustment and new ways of doing things to keep us moving forward.

Fortunately, by showing the same resolve, determination, and commitment that marks us as nurses and lab techs in the health care field, we can come together and find ways to do the work.

In our union, this means that our annual meeting moved to an online format. Instead of gathering in person at the Gettysburg

Hotel during PSEA's Leadership Conference, we moved it into a Zoom event.

While it is not the same as being together, HealthCare-PSEA leadership and staff conducted the business needed to wrap up 2019-20 and launch 2020-21.

During our meeting, we elected HealthCare-PSEA officers for the two-year terms running through July 2022. I will serve as president again for that term and continue working as a nurse and member of the Somerset Professional Nurses Association. Nancy Morgan, from the Highlands Hospital Nurses & Lab Technicians Association, will serve another term as first vice president.

We are proud to welcome Karen Blystone as our new second vice president. In April, Karen was

elected president of the Indiana Registered Nurses Association. Previously, she served as the association's grievance chair, and as an integral member of their bargaining team.

Together, we leaders pledge to look out for and represent the people who make up this union. We will advocate for sound public policy to help boost health and the union movement. We will work with staff to coordinate efforts and to have our voices heard at the national level with our affiliate AFT HealthCare.

Thank you for your ongoing resolve, determination, and support for each other. Stay safe, take time to care for yourself, and we will get through this pandemic stronger and united.

News from HealthCare-PSEA Locals

Bucks County Nurses Association

by **Bonnie Neiman**
PSEA UniServ Representative

The workday for the Bucks County Health Department Nurses

has looked very different during the pandemic. Many of the county's nurses work at the Neshaminy Manor nursing home. As with most health centers, the facility was touched by the virus as some residents and employees became

infected.

In mid-March, family members were not permitted to visit residents, and the nurses had to step in to fill the gaps. They provided extra doses of kindness to residents and helped families connect

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virtually. It was a difficult time for residents, as they could not see the smile behind a nurse's mask. The residents with compromised hearing had difficulty hearing the words of assurance, but the nurses persevered to provide the high-quality care they are accustomed to delivering.

Those nurses not working in the manor have assumed new tasks, as they follow the cases of COVID-19 patients in the county, making calls and recording data. Tracking infectious disease is not new for these nurses, but the level of global interest and anxiety over the virus brings new challenges. Several nurses shifted to remote work environments. In the face of these challenges, the Bucks County nurses remained professional.

We are proud to have them as members of PSEA.

Highlands Hospital Nurses Association and Lab Technicians

By Maria Degnan, PSEA UniServ Representative

The Highlands Hospital Nurses & Lab Techs continued to work tirelessly over the summer to treat countless patients with many ailments while helping to contain COVID-19. Highlands Hospital has maintained screening procedures for anyone entering the hospital. The facility is also a COVID-19 testing site for Fayette County's residents.

The screening procedures, coupled with eased restrictions on

non-essential personnel, allowed us to have several professional issues meetings over the past several months. Members of the local met with hospital administration to discuss staffing issues, wages, and scheduling concerns and were able to reach several agreements to improve working conditions moving forward. Additionally, Nancy Morgan, who serves as president of her local, was re-elected as HealthCare-PSEA's vice president at the HealthCare-PSEA House of Delegates. As always, the Southwestern Region and HealthCare-PSEA are proud of our front-line health care workers at Highlands and across the state!

Indiana Registered Nurses Association

By Tim Tuinstra, HealthCare-PSEA UniServ representative

The Indiana Regional Medical Center experienced a substantial drop in patient census within several of their units beginning with the onset of COVID-19. The patient numbers rebounded, but they remained well below normal levels. Consequently, the hospital chose to furlough 32 nurses represented by the association until patient census numbers rebounded in their specific units. Additionally, nine nurses saw their hours reduced below their normal levels but kept their jobs.

Union leaders and HealthCare-PSEA staff worked with the administration to ensure those furloughs and hour cuts occurred in

compliance with the contract. Some furloughed nurses chose to bump into other jobs for which they were qualified, per the contract's provisions.

Continuously, union leaders and staff pressed the administration to return the nurses back to work as patient census rebounded in some units. Recently, 17 furloughed nurses were back working, and two of the nurses who had their working hours reduced were returned to normal hours.

Amid this chaotic situation, the local elected officers for the next two years. Unfortunately, two of those elected officers were furloughed, which caused new officers to be selected.

The officers are President Karen Blystone, Vice President Christa Rounsley, Treasurer Deb Minto, Grievance Chair Val Davis, and Secretary Kristy Waltz. They all will serve until the spring of 2022. Working with HealthCare-PSEA staff, the officers immediately began working on a project to boost and strengthen the ranks of union unit and floor representatives. This is with an eye to the timeless work of internal union organizing and building power.

Somerset Professional Nurses Association

By Tim Tuinstra, HealthCare-PSEA UniServ representative

Throughout the summer months, the bargaining teams for Somerset Professional Nurses Association and UPMC Somerset Hospital

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engaged in contract negotiation sessions virtually, and contract proposals have been exchanged by email. Progress has been slow, with a proposed switch to a paid time off system that would combine vacation, sick, and personal leave into one system. This issue is among the items that are being bargained. More bargaining dates were set for September. The current contract is extended through Dec. 31, 2020.

Bill Carnell, association president, and statewide HealthCare-PSEA President Sandi Zubek gave updates on Somerset nurses' ongoing experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, with an uptick in Somerset County cases and at least one patient death in-hospital from the illness. Members are pleased that President Zubek

was re-elected to lead the statewide organization for the next two years.

Additionally, concerns about having enough personal protective equipment like surgical masks, facial shields, gloves, and N-95 masks remain. Too often, the hospital has nurses using, cleaning, and reusing the same masks more than is preferable to preserve PPE supplies that are hard to find.

In July, SPNA member Kristin Yoder participated in a statewide Zoom conference call with U.S. Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania to promote his new bill that would provide student loan debt reduction, pay new education costs, and otherwise provide more concrete recognition and thanks for the sacrifices and hard work of nurses and other health care workers on the front lines of the pandemic.

Kristin was recruited through our national affiliate, AFT HealthCare, which represents and advocates for HealthCare-PSEA at the federal level in Washington, D.C.

"Like the other front-line workers on this call, I'm facing a really challenging time. I work hard to keep my patients healthy, while hoping that I won't get sick or infect my family or neighbors," said Kristin Yoder.

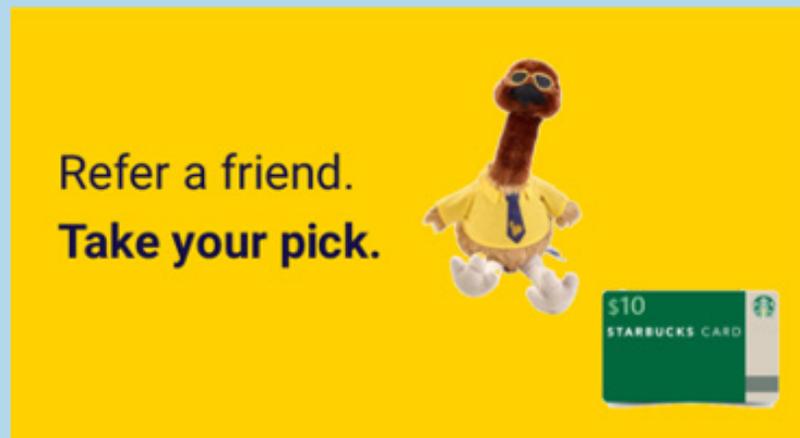
"Some politicians offer nurses and other health care workers verbal thanks for thoughts and prayers. But this is not enough. Sen. Casey's bill provides us with some support, by easing our financial burden. It helps with student loans, or supporting our kids, or our retirement. The bill is titled the 'Pandemic Service Provider Award Act,'" said Yoder.

Member Benefits spotlight: Liberty Mutual refer a friend prize giveaway

Choose between our plush LiMu emu or a \$10 Starbucks gift card when you refer a friend ... or even yourself!

Liberty Mutual is extending a special auto insurance savings opportunity to PSEA members. "We put the 'fit' in benefit," Liberty Mutual said. "Customize your insurance policy with Liberty Mutual so you only pay for what you need."

E-mail angela.fonde@libertymutual.com or call 610-235-9329 today. Contact Liberty Mutual before Oct. 31 to refer a friend ... or yourself!



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Thank you nurses - Neshaminy Manor nursing home.