



The Communicator

HPAE Local 5118 News

July 2016

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Are you registered to vote in 2016? I ask because we should all exercise our right to have our voices heard by casting our vote in November. The middle class in our country is under attack. We, as nurses, are in the middle class that is being destroyed by greed.

In our profession providing safe patient care has to come first – it should not be the bottom line. As the President of our local union, I had the pleasure to meet former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton when she came to the MD Anderson Center. On behalf of all nurses, I took the opportunity to express to her the need to have safe staffing levels in order to provide our patients with the highest quality of care.

I hope you will take the time to become familiar with the positions of each of the candidates and VOTE in November. It's also critically important that our next President supports our efforts as a Union and protects our rights as Union members.

One of the rights workers have is to organize a Union. When we organized with HPAE it took being united, a lot of personal time and commitment by the nurses at Cooper. One of the most impassioned nurses who led our fight was **Diana Rigliano**. Diana believed that our patients would be better served if we had a mechanism to hold the hospital accountable to us. She was a very special nurse who was not afraid to take on the employer for her patients and her co-workers.

Sadly this year Diana passed away. In memory of Diana we asked her daughter, Laura Decker, who is also a nurse at Cooper, to write about who her mother was as a Nurse and a Union Activist.

Doris Bell
Local 5118 President



Carolyn Walko and Diana Rigliano leafletting at Cooper

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Life is a journey. We all have a story to tell. I would like to give you a small glimpse into the life of my mother, Diana Rigilano. She wore many hats as most women do, but nurse was her most comfortable role. She always said she was so lucky to fall into a profession that she loved so much. So when that profession was threatened she did what many were afraid to do; she took a stand for her patients and her profession.

Diana was a pioneer, a modern day Rosie the Riveter. She initiated contact with HPAE after recognizing a need to be a voice for her patients and her peers. She was the forward momentum in starting the HPAE Union at Cooper Hospital for Registered Nurses.

Diana recognized that management was failing her and her nursing peers. They failed to recognize them as people with needs, families, and lives outside of the hospital. The management outlook was, “we pay you, you work for us.” They failed to recognize that these nurses had a strong work ethic; they viewed their work with pride, and they wanted to provide safe care for their patients. These nurses were skilled professionals; They are educated, board certified, and carry specialty certifications as vast as the diagnoses presented to them.

Management viewed these hard working nurses as “weak, whining women”. They never kept their promises; they pretended to listen and would respond with generic statements. The managers used standard arguments, such as “there is no money in the budget”, yet there would be spending in less critical areas, not related to patient care. Diana would use the analogy, “It’s like telling your kids that there is no money for Christmas, but then you buy yourself jewelry and new cars.”

She got fed up. She began gathering information about what the nursing staff faced in different units. Diana began asking other nurses what types of problems they were encountering on their floors. Here is just a summary of some problems other nurses had told her about:

The nurse would need to take the patient for a test, which required them to be on a monitor for transport, but there wasn't one available or working properly.... IV pumps weren't functioning.... Patients were agitated and combative due to their medical condition, aides or secretary were pulled to other floors to cover.... Newly diagnosed patients, who needed education and emotional support, were treated medically instead of being offered this support. The nurse would run in, start an IV, and hand out medications and leave to tend to the next patient. All the while, more documentation needed to be completed.... Nurses were spending time troubleshooting computer issues, covering for low staff, and dealing with improperly functioning equipment instead of providing their skilled role of patient care..... The morale was low, the nurses felt hopeless and voiceless..... Nurses were EXHAUSTED. And Diana was FED UP.

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Diana emailed HPAE and HPAE Organizer Lisa Ricardelli called her that evening. They met the very next day. To Diana, forming a union seemed impossible. She called a friend from Oncology and they had their first meeting in August of 1998. They had 3-4 meetings per week with 1-4 people per meeting. By March of 1999 Diana and Lisa had met with over 350 people. The most important thing they did was educate the nurses. Secondly, they kept it secret.

When they were sure they had enough people they prepared for battle. They formed an organizing committee; the people on the committee had a Cooper Nurses Unite paper and got signatures. We compiled the signatures into a mission statement of Cooper Nurses Unite. The nurses leafleted; they were afraid, but they were also educated and had a copy of the law in their pocket. The day they leafleted it was cold, but they had a lot of nurses. Cooper had security guards out to scare them and they called the police, but not only were we prepared for war, we had a strategy.

We educated nurses on what to expect because the hospital then retaliated by hiring an anti-union firm, they had mandatory meetings, and passed out scary literature to intimidate nurses. They also had one-on-one meetings with staff to try and dissuade them from organizing. We reinforced our commitments and leafleted the nurses' quotes. Nurses got support from other nurses and advertised their election with another leaflet and contract excerpts and more nurses' quotes. We advertised how a union could help us. We prepared for the vote about what would happen and reinforced the goodness of our union and how they passed a needle stick bill and were lobbying. It was evident then that it wasn't just about Cooper, it was throughout the country. We talked about staffing and decision-making and the emphasis on safety. If doctors had a contract, why shouldn't nurses?

Once we voted and overwhelmingly won our right to organize, it was then time to negotiate a fair contract. The nurses formed a negotiating committee and had a representative from each specialty. We filled out surveys about what was most important (staffing, floating, benefits, pay) and we began negotiating. We had a plan. We had public signatures, large posters, and billboards on Route 676 and on buses. We did public rallies with other unions, other nurses, family and friends, banners and signs.

The first contract was settled and ratified by the membership in November 1999. It was a win-win situation. Nurses could provide better care and received better compensation. The public was then more informed about the number of nurses to care for them. Morale improved and safety improved. At the same time, our union was in the forefront in advocating in the state legislature for a needle stick bill, a no mandatory overtime bill and a staffing bill.

Diana was so proud of her colleagues. She would tell you today that YOU are the union. YOU can make a difference. You have to speak your truth because no one knows the problems your unit is facing unless you speak up. So, when it's time to fill out surveys about your upcoming negotiations, be sure to do so!

Always remember the road less traveled is sometimes full of obstacles, often times it is on that road that your character is truly tested but have the courage to take risks. Have the courage to accept that you're not perfect nothing is and no one is — and that's okay! Go where there are no guarantees. Get out of your comfort zone even if it means being uncomfortable. Be bold enough to live life on your terms, and never, EVER apologize for it.

Laura Decker

Joint Hospital and Union

Are you looking for Ladder Points? Want to get involved and make a difference in your working conditions? Help keep employees safe and healthy? Get more involved with your Local?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above, we have a committee for you!

Local 5118 and the hospital, meet on a regular basis to discuss all these issues.

Many committees are contractual. We are always looking for interested Union members to participate.

Current committees are Safe Patient Handling, Staffing, Labor Management, Joint Health and Safety, Violence Task Force, and a new Blood Borne and Sharps committee.

These meetings occur anywhere from quarterly to monthly, depending on the committee.

If you are interested, contact any Officer for more information.

In solidarity,
Patti Scharff RN



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SAVE THE DATE

**HPAE CONVENTION
October 6—7, 2016**

**Bally's
1900 Boardwalk
Atlantic City, NJ 08401**

Grievance Corner

Grievance Updates

Disciplines:

1. Lab specimen mislabeling- The hospital is issuing a written warning as a first time offense if you mislabel or forget to label a specimen. This discipline is harsh, so please triple check your labels and lab specimens before you send them to the lab.
2. Parking- nurses continue to park below the 4th level of the garage. The first offense is a written warning. The second offense is suspension of your parking privileges.. With the new badging in and out of the nesting area, it is so important to park where you are assigned. Pool nurses - please make sure your debit card is active and you are parking where you should on weekends and extra work days. You CAN NOT pull a ticket and pay if you are working that day or coming in for a skills fair/ BLS etc. You can ONLY pull a ticket and pay if you are coming in for personal reasons (doctor's appointment / test) or if you are visiting a patient (non-business reason).
3. Documentation- a nurse was written up for documenting her personal opinion about a patient's pain level. Please only document objective information.
4. HIPAA- nurses have been given written warnings for looking into patients' records in epic that they are not taking care of. They have also gotten written warnings if they look up just the room number of a patient for personal reasons. This is especially true if there is a VIP patient in the hospital. If you or a visitor wants to know if a patient is in the hospital, please direct them to admissions. Remember to fill out an authorization form if you want to access your family's information. This form is only good for one year so please be careful.
5. CLN, BLS, Skills Fair, etc.- you MUST complete all certifications and mandatory requirements on time. If not, the hospital has suspended nurses until all documentation is complete.

Grievances:

1. Violation of Holiday schedules- Article 7.7- RNs with 20-29 years of service will work 1 summer and 2 winter holidays- An RN was denied the requested holidays (which were on her track) because of staffing needs. HPAE has filed a grievance.
2. Disparate treatment- HPAE has two grievances for different disciplines given to nurses for mislabeling a lab specimen and a late call out. They have both been denied at a step 2. We are advancing them to a step 3, which is the last step of the grievance process. If the grievances are denied then the local executive board will vote to decide if they should go to arbitration. An arbitration is when the hospital and HPAE hire an independent person -an arbitrator - to hear the grievance case and make a final decision on the outcome.
3. Discipline without just cause- An RN was given a written warning for unprofessional conduct. HPAE is seeking to have the discipline reduced to a verbal warning.

FYI:

1. Winter holiday requests are due by August 15. Please make sure your vacation request is in by then and your CD has posted the available weeks for you to view and select.
2. Schedules - Please make sure you are submitting your schedule requests by the submission date. A new system, Kronos, will be initiated soon by the hospital and will be able to track all times and dates of submissions. To adhere to the contract you will still be able to submit a 6 week schedule (only for areas that have established this practice).

Compliances and Competencies

It seems like it's always something. Just when you think you're caught up, another required competency or compliance comes along.

Unfortunately, if they aren't completed on time, or expire, you can't work.

It's so important to try and keep up with the dates.

Your nursing license, CLN competencies, particular Unit competencies, Certifications, your PPD, it goes on and on.

Check your email frequently. In many areas, managers will send out reminder emails, or post expiration dates of nurses requirements. This helps.

Ultimately, the responsibility is yours. Let's all try to help each other remember!

In solidarity,
Patti Scharff RN

Submitted by Jackie Franchetti, RN BSN, Grievance Chair



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Emerson, NJ 07630

 facebook.com/hpaeaft

Address Service Requested

Local Donates \$1500 to Fellowship House in Camden



For the second year in a row, Local 5118 RNs at Cooper University hospital have given a substantial donation to the Fellowship House in Camden. After collecting \$1,500 from the local's membership, local officers presented the money (and a symbolic check representing the amount) to the non-profit organization.

The local also purchased healthy snacks for all of the kids.

This year the Fellowship House of South Camden is celebrating their 50th anniversary. Fellowship House offers an after-school program and a reading enrichment program for grades 1-4, summer camp for children entering grades 1-4, an evening program for youth and job training for teens. Fellowship House also provides evening programming to support the children's parents. (Photo to the right: Local 5118 President Doris Bell with one of the kids who participates in Fellowship House programs)

Your Local Officers Update

As Union Officers we address many issues going on in the hospital which you may not be aware of.

Most recently, we have met with the hospital on several occasions to discuss Kronos. Kronos will replace Per-Se. Instead of a paper schedule most of us are familiar with, we will now input our schedule into Kronos, an electronic scheduling program. Kronos is still in the planning stage, but will be here soon, very soon. Your Union Officers have been there to make sure self scheduling, as per our contract, is preserved.

P5, the inpatient MD Anderson Oncology Unit, opens on July 7, 2016. We had multiple meetings to maintain the transfer language in our contract.

Your Union Officers have been participating in joint committee meetings, such as Labor/Management, Staffing and Safe Patient handling to name just a few. These meetings have resulted in tangible results, including additional medication scanners and dealing with malfunctioning equipment.

Meeting on K8, with Local 5118 President Doris Bell and management representatives, resulted in techs doing vital signs, equipment repaired and a committee formed to develop guidelines for drips in that area.

Currently we have four Union Officers for our local and about 1200 plus RNs in our union. Each Officer thus covers about 300 bargaining unit RNs, we rep nurses, we answer questions, we help interpret our contract.....most importantly we fight for our contractual rights on a daily basis. There is a lot of work.

In Solidarity,
Carolyn Ali RN
VP HPAE Local 5118