

HPAE



HPAE Local 5107 Newsletter

Representing Nurses at Llanfair House, Wanaque, EVVNA, and VNA of Englewood

December 2015

President's Message



I have accepted the office of Local 5107 President after the former President, Laura Dymond, decided to step down (see Laura's letter below). My acceptance is based on the support of the union members and, in particular, Laura, who strongly encouraged me to take on this job.

I have been active in the Union since I became a Rep in 2011. A little over a year ago, I joined the Local 5107 Local Executive Board as a Vice President. I have always participated in Union activities, including attending CE workshops, officer trainings, PIC, and union conventions.

I always put the interest and well-being of my coworkers first. With the continued support of my fellow Officers and Reps, I will do everything I can to advance the needs of our members and to achieve positive results.

Abdul Umoru
Local 5107 President

Letter from Former Local 5017 President Laura Dymond

I just want to thank you for your support while I was president. Thank you for understanding my decision to step down. Everyone is an asset to our local and appreciated. We may not agree on every issue, but our goals are the same: safe patient care and fair wages and benefits.

Together, we have battled the storms and celebrated our victories. I am still very involved in the local. I will be Secretary-Treasurer until the next election at the end of 2016. In addition, in my role as a part-time Staff Rep for HPAE I will be involved with grievances and disciplines. The other members of the Local Executive Board – Melvin (Llanfair House), Abdul (Wanaque), Gerry (Wanaque) and myself can be contacted with your concerns.

We must continue to be united on our issues. Get involved any way you can, whether at the local level or the state level. Health care is changing and we should be a part of the decision making. You are your patients' advocate. Thank you for all you do.

In solidarity,
Laura Dymond

Llanfair House and Wanaque Meetings/Events

We had a Labor/Management meeting with Llanfair House 10/22 to discuss some issues, including that our members should not be utilized as supervisors. Joan Orso, Director of HR for Windsor (the owner of Llanfair House) also does not want union members to "hold the keys". Every attempt should be made to prevent this.

Currently at Llanfair House, 3-11 and 11-7 nurses receive charge pay. 7-3 nurses will receive charge pay in the absence of the unit manager, especially on weekends.

We met with Wanaque management on 11/19 to discuss staffing, especially on the 11-7 shift. The staffing levels have not changed. Float nurses will have a separate schedule to not confuse them with regular staff on the floors. We asked for requests to be answered ASAP. Since our meeting, Management has made a change to respond to our concerns: the per diem rate was increased for RNs and LPNs. This was done to attract new hires and retain the current per diem staff.

Holiday luncheons at both facilities in December were a success. It was great to get everyone together and share concerns. We are open to suggestion for future luncheons. Our next luncheon will be during Nurses week, in May 2016.



Free Speech Is Not Always Free in the Workplace



Unless you have a union, the fundamental principle of free speech can end at the door of your workplace. For non-union workers, any form of communication, including bringing legitimate issues to the public, is often met by threats or punishment through harsh and sometimes illegal policies limiting

speech.

More and more companies, including healthcare companies, are creating policies that limit their workers' speech. Sometimes that speech is private between co-workers or friends; sometimes it becomes public, through protest, whistle blowing or social media. Workplace policies are becoming increasingly restrictive, though protecting our free speech rights – even our right to complain – should be fundamental. It is particularly vital in health care, since limiting a healthcare professional's rights to speak up about unsafe condition can have a detrimental impact not only on the worker, but on the patients and quality of services provided.

Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other forms of social media have become the way in which many of us express our opinions, as well as share our family news. More than two-thirds of Americans use social media sites. Globally, Twitter has 230 million active users, posting 500 million Tweets a day – while more than 70 % of all USA internet users are on Facebook.

As a result, the conflict between an employer's attempt to protect its reputation and an employee's right to speak up is being fought in these very public arenas. In New Jersey, counties, school districts and private employers have disciplined workers for their use of social media – and have also been sued by their employees for actions taken against their social media use. There are hundreds of law firms and consultants advertising and interpreting the law on what is and is not allowed within employer social media policies.

Recently, Registered Nurses at Meridian Health leafleted the community, addressed town councils, posted billboards and used social media like Facebook and Twitter to press for safe staffing levels in their workplace contract. Nurses posted pictures of themselves holding

signs with messages like "Nurses Keep Patients Safe".

The posts didn't go over well with Meridian managers who told nurses that the posts violated the hospital's social media policy. Overly broad and unreasonable restrictions on speech such as these policies could have had a chilling effect, stopping nurses from speaking up when they believed patient care is compromised, or when staffing levels are unsafe.

The hospital's reaction wasn't unique, but because the nurses' were unionized, it didn't end there. HPAE nurses found that the hospital's social media policy was filled with language violating nurses' rights and they filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the federal agency that oversees workplace rights.

In a series of recent decisions, the NLRB has found company social media policies unlawful because they interfere with employees' right to act collectively, which are protected acts under the National Labor Relations Act.

It's important for workers to know the limits of their rights, and the extent to which their employers will search their personal social media accounts. Many employers continue to attempt limiting social media in an effort to censor postings they just don't like. And that should be unacceptable to all of us.

As part of their contract settlement, Meridian Health agreed to bargain with HPAE over the social media policy so that it no longer violates employee rights. Without their union, both the voice of nurses and of patients would have been unprotected.

Nurses and healthcare workers know it is essential to protect the privacy rights of their patients in their communications, and to refrain from harmful or discriminatory speech. They don't want to harm their employers – but they do want solutions to unsafe staffing levels, or unsafe working conditions.

Instead of banning speech, I suggest hospitals listen to their nurses and health professionals, and seek solutions to the problems they raise.

Ann Twomey
President HPAE

VNA Contracts

On December 11, 2015 the two VNA bargaining units (EVVNA and VNA of Englewood) had their first bargaining session with management. The contracts both expired October 31st, but we had previously signed an extension of the contracts until December 31, 2015.

At the first bargaining session, we made our priorities clear: economic and benefit improvements, workload concerns and negotiating the effects of the merger of the Barnabas home healthcare and

hospice agency on our members at EVVNA. Our goal is to protect and improve our members' working conditions, whether they are longstanding HPAE members, or newly integrated staff from Barnabas.

MANAGEMENT ACKNOWLEDGED OUR CONCERNS AND WE MUTUALLY AGREED TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT AGAIN, TO JANUARY 31, 2016, SO THAT WE HAVE TIME TO FULLY DISCUSS THE ISSUES.