



THE PATIENT ADVOCATE

HPAE

LOCAL 5105 Newsletter

THE PATIENT ADVOCATE
A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBERS
OF HPAE LOCAL 5105 AT VIRTUA
MEMORIAL/CNS

December 2019

Message from the President

Negotiation UPDATE

Our Union Contract expires May 31st, 2020! Our Local Executive Board has been very busy working on the strategic plan for Negotiations 2020 since January 2019. We have carefully put together a campaign calendar which clearly spells out our plan to gain the best contract for all our members. We have sent out contract surveys to poll the membership on what they think needs to be the focus of these upcoming negotiations. For those who have not had the opportunity to fill out a survey there is still opportunity to do so!! There is a link (survey monkey) on the **Memorial RNs (HPAE)** Facebook page under the ANNOUNCEMENTS or go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9DJK5ZN> The deadline for the survey will be December 15th. For those who are less tech savvy the unit reps where given hard copies that can be filled out by hand and placed in union mailbox. The surveys will be used in part to develop proposals and steer the negotiation team in the direction of the wishes of the membership. The elected officers are still accepting any wishes for units to meet with the board and speak to their specific contract concerns!! Please contact me 609-354-8065 if your unit would like to meet with the officers and we will set up a date prior to January 2020!!

Negotiation dates have been submitted and most have been accepted by the employer. We are still nailing down April dates and March dates. We have submitted March 13th (Friday the 13th) for our first day of negotiations!! We have planned a **BUTTON DAY on March 11th** to kick off negotiations and will be asking everyone to support the negotiation team by either coming out to pass out buttons at the employee entrance or wearing the button during work hours that day!! We have teamed up with our Sister Local 5118 Cooper RN's (who will also be negotiating at the same time as us) and they too will be having their negotiation kick off March 11th with a Button Day!

We are in the process of selecting the 2020 negotiation team that will represent our membership at the negotiation table. It is now time to decide if you want to be a member of this team. Ideally, we would like a representative from each clinical area or division. As a member of the negotiation team you are expected to attend all negotiation sessions, negotiations training/proposal development sessions, membership meetings during negotiation and the final ratification session. Anyone interested please contact me and I will give you the details.

Negotiation sessions will be open to all members who are in good standing and we plan on having special breakout sessions for the more unit specific proposals to be addressed by those who know their units the best. Remember **YOU are the UNION** and without your support, involvement and show of solidarity we will not accomplish what we deserve and want in our 2020 contract.

Sheryl Mount
President Local 5105

FAMILY

I have worked at Virtua for many years. When I was recently asked to write something for the paper, I started to reflect back on my time here at the Hotel V. Although I feel like I could tell some stories a mile long, one theme stood out to me, "family". Here at Virtua Memorial we are family. It feels like I am here with my peers somedays more than at home. We have all come to know so much about the lives of our peers that we spend so much time with.

Throughout my time here at Memorial, I have had the opportunity to work on several different units from 4NE, 5 stokes, and now my home of over 2 years 4NW. I have worked on all the inpatient med/Surg floors and met some amazing people. Even though we all come from different specialties, we all represent a smaller piece of one very big family. When one-unit hurts, we all come together and help. When the ER lost Hattie a few years ago, we felt it through-out the hospital. When we lost Wilson from 5 stokes, it was also felt throughout the hospital. His wife worked on another unit and was pregnant with a child. The staff here at Virtua Memorial banded together and held a fundraiser for the family and gathered Christmas presents for the kids. We didn't have to do that, we choose to do that. They were family.

As the holidays approach, I often find myself reflecting back on my own life choices and where I am now. I have met so many amazing and interesting people. I am in awe of my peers who volunteer both privately and in groups. Through donor dash runs, walks, volunteering at food banks and kitchens, collecting donations, running for causes, and Christmas drives. Nurses are always giving back. We not only care for our patients but our communities too. Even when the holidays have passed, there are many of us who hang out after work together, some even vacation together. We have units who go out to lunch with staff who no longer work here for one reason or another. They may be gone from our units but we have not forgotten them. They were family.

Virtua has had many gimmicks throughout my years here to promote togetherness. But the truth is we are already there. On each unit, I have seen and heard about celebrations of holidays, graduations, babies' weddings, career moves, and just about anything else we can celebrate. Virtua aside, we are all family. Each unit a smaller version of a very large family. We even have patients on our units over the years that have been with us for a while. I have seen units come together to gather clothes and other basic items to help make their stay with us a little bit easier. Nurses and techs have come out of their own pockets and bought those patients cups with straws, regular pillows, mascara, earrings, yarn to knit, pie, shoes, and even clothes to help make life just a little bit easier. As we pass by their rooms each day, we make sure we say hi as we call them by name. Most of them have become like family too. Family is not only blood but those that surround us and put smile on our faces and comfort to our lives. We are one large dysfunctional but thriving family. With the holidays coming, what's more important than family.

Some people say that it's easy what we do because we get paid well. But the truth is we come back here each day because it is what's in us and because of the people we work with. #Family

Anna Speaker BSN, CMSRN, RN

Thinking about becoming a Rep?

We can always use more Reps! This is true! If you are asked if you are interested in becoming a Rep it is because: 1) people already come to you with questions and concerns; 2) you would like to learn more about how the Union works and 3) we think you can do the job. Maybe it is all of these! Don't sell yourself short!

The best thing about becoming a Rep (from my personal experience) was that I really could gain a better understanding of what goes on between the Union and the employer. This allowed me to better focus my energies and better advocate for myself and my peers. Rep training and the other free training offered by HPAE is not anything you could get anywhere else – it is specially tailored to advocacy, politics and the healthcare arena we find ourselves struggling in every day. It is not built around profit, but safety of healthcare workers and patients which is the exact opposite of a big business mentality.

Thank you to everyone who came out to the Rep training! The training provides a good foundation to jump start the ideas of advocacy and strength in numbers with the goal of a safe environment for everyone. We have already been gearing up for negotiations and will need people who are strong and can stand up to the many negative tactics by those who do not care about a Bargaining Agreement. The only "agreement" those people are looking for is for you to sign your life away when you sign up to work.

Beth Cohen VP Hospital

CNS Update

Home Care has gone through many changes in the last 3 months....transitioning to a new case management format, changeover of schedulers and welcoming new management as Donna Berry took over the position of Director and Nancy Buckwald as team manager.

We are all working together to make this transition the best that it can be for all. We, as your union leaders, are working with our new scheduling and management team in maintaining contract language. Because of this, it is imperative that we keep the lines of communication open, and are informed of any contractual issues, so they can be resolved appropriately.

Thanks to all our members who have worked so hard to continue to provide excellent care to our patients even with all of the challenges we have been presented with. Please keep in mind that negotiations are coming up in the New Year and we will be working diligently to get our members the finest contract.

Kelli Zambetti Frazer CNS VP

COPE Safe Staffing Update

The journey towards achieving safe staffing continues! As many of you know, our union has been fighting for safe staffing ratios for a long, long time. Hospitals have been spending lots of money fighting such legislation while simultaneously spending enormous amounts on patient satisfaction initiatives. Bill A-5954, introduced by New Jersey Republican Assemblymember Nancy Munoz, RN on November 18th, proposes having nurse-led committees (comprised of at least 55% nurses) determine nurse staffing levels for their hospitals as part of the facility's licensing conditions. These committees would purportedly consider the mix of nursing experience, technology in use, patient acuity/needs and facility layout when determining the appropriate nurse to patient ratios for each unit. Hospitals would then have to file these staffing plans with the state department of health. This proposal has been referred to the Assembly Health Committee, but there is not a set date for a hearing yet. Seven other states including Connecticut have implemented similar plans. If you know or have been a nurse working within such a system, please e-mail dove220@gmail.com to share the pros and cons of your experience as well as any information you may have about who decides which nurses get to serve on the committees.

Happy Holidays from your HPAE Committee on Political Education Jennifer Pepe, Melody Shantz & Claudia Storicks



Introduction: New Secretary Treasurer

As some of you know, I was appointed to the position of Secretary/Treasurer in October. Accepting the position was not a decision I took lightly. I knew that contract negotiations were coming up next year, not to mention that I've never done anything like this before! With the encouragement from the President and new Vice President, I decided to take on this new role. I'm learning so much in these first few months, mostly how to take notes and write minutes. If you don't know me, here's a little introduction. I've been at Virtua almost 10 years on 3NE and I've been the COPE co-chair for almost two years. I love listening to podcasts and drinking craft beer. I enjoy following politics, mostly on the national level, and I'm active with COPE and local grassroots organizations. I realize that it will take a while for me to really feel comfortable in this role, but, believe me when I say I am so proud to be part of this union. The other members of the LEB have welcomed me with open arms, and I truly look forward to this next year and all the challenges it will bring. I'm ready.

Melody Schantz Sec/Tres

Who's Got Your Six?

I have worked at Virtua since July of 1997, of course when I started the name wasn't Virtua, but trust me it was pretty much the same environment for nurses. I came just after all the hard work was done to get HPAE to be our representing union. Prior to being a nurse I worked in a grocery store for over eight years that also had a union, so I knew the value of a union coming to work at this institution, and I was glad to know I would have union protection as a nurse. When I first got out of nursing school I did work at a facility that was not union protected and saw first hand how nurses without protection could be treated. For example: the floor I worked on got a new manager who did not care for one of the nurses on her staff prior to becoming the manager. And after she became the manager she harassed the nurse for trivial things and eventually she had this nurse terminated. The terminated nurse was a very skilled and competent nurse, and in some ways I feel this created a feeling of insecurity for the new manager. Another repetitive issue was when it came time for your annual review and pay raises, it was usually solely at the discretion of your manager. If your manager had favorites (regardless of their work habits and skill) they could possibly get a bigger raise than some of the more dedicated, skilled nurses. When I started working at Virtua, the opportunity to get a voice back and someone to help keep the playing field a fair and just place to work was **VERY** exciting!

At Virtua, even with a bargaining unit in place we are not completely insulated from unfair and unjust acts. I have seen many things happen at our institution, even those that consisted of wrongful termination. I have witnessed the power of union backing that will support the fight to rectify these wrongs. You may not appreciate what exactly having union backing means, but trust me, anyone of us at anytime can run into a situation where we need the union to represent and support our fight. Therefore, it is important recognize that **WE ARE OUR UNION**. We need to stand together, regardless of personal feelings for one another, and protect each other. It's just like in the military when they are in a gun fight, they don't stop to consider if they "like" their fellow soldier, rather they "got their six" and provide protection against the enemy. At Memorial HPAE has your six, more importantly I have your six.

Dawn Mango Jones Labor Delivery Rep

Grievance Update Winter 2019

As day light get shorter and the nights get colder. Don't get caught in the dark. Be aware of your union rights. As your grievance chair, I would like to take this time to remind all of my fellow bargaining unit employees of their Weingarten Rights.

As a union member you have a right to have a union representative at any interview or meeting that could lead to disciplinary action against you. The Supreme Court case of National Labor Relations Board vs Weingarten, decided in 1975, established this basic entitlement and the procedures for when and how union reps may participate in interviews. Collectively, these rules are referred to as "Weingarten rights."

I recommend everyone keep a copy of the unit representatives with them, whether on paper, an updated copy in the red union binder on your unit or simply a picture of the list on their phones.

If you get called to a meeting by management:

- Ask if the meeting could lead to discipline
- Reach out to a union rep to attend meeting with you- **DO NOT GO ALONE !!!!! Our contract allows you 24 hours to secure a Rep!!**
- You have the right to reschedule a meeting to a reasonable time that is convenient for all, union rep, you as well as management.
- Do not put any statements in writing without checking with your union rep first; most times we advise AGAINST this activity.
- If you do not agree with the discipline given, you or your union rep should contact me to discuss filing a grievance.

Electronically signing your discipline is an acknowledgment you have been informed, not an admission to the offense.

We are continuing to file grievances on behalf of our bargaining unit employees, currently we are working on a Class Action grievance over Competencies and disciplines as well as ongoing incorrect cancelations. I am also pleased to report that we recently had an unjust discipline removed from an employee's file, and we have correctively won our Class action grievance for incorrect summer vacation denials for OR/CCU employees. The employer has reeducated managers on Summer/Critical vacation contract language in regard to the contractual process and procedure. Many managers did send out an email as a result of this reeducation. ANY QUESTIONS on how to submit Summer/Critical vacation request refer to contract section 9.7 page 48 or reach out to any E-Board member.

Please don't hesitate to contact me or any of our unit representatives with any questions regarding the grievance process. I also want to reiterate the importance and value of filing grievances when you feel the collective bargaining agreement (contract) has been violated; and/or reporting issues when Virtua is not complying with their contractual obligations. Much like how management's requirement of RL incident reporting for addressing issues, our Union also requires official submissions of complaints in order to facilitate change. Our union is here to assist you and ensure management follows the contract. We all want to work together, with transparency in providing resolution for our members with issues as well as grievances. Following the appropriate process requires communication between the union and management, which leads to a timeline of fair resolution. With Contract negotiations coming up we need to be aware of issues that need to be addressed. Positive change and corrective action make for a better, safer work environment for us all.

Yours in Solidarity,
Bonnie Terwilliger, RN~BSN
Grievance Chair-HPAE Local 5105
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