



### President's Update

#### Proposed Hiring Bonuses and Wage Reopener

As many of you know, we are facing a severe nationwide nursing shortage that has prompted our employer to propose hiring bonuses in specialty areas: the ED, Cath Lab and OR as well as offer substantial bonus money to lure the already tired and traumatized staff in to work extra shifts. The high demand for registered nurses and low supply, especially in specialty areas, have created the most current nursing shortage but we all know this shortage has been "**A Thing**" for decades.

Virtua claims that to remain competitive and attract nurses in high demand areas they need to offer a \$15,000 bonus (over 2 years) to fulltime and prorated for PT and PD. These proposed hiring bonuses would give the newly hired RNs **about** a 4\$/HR pay increase over our current members. We are in the process of bargaining over the employers hiring bonus and have requested recent data regarding vacancies and turnover rates for all units and departments. We recently put out an online member survey asking our members what it will take to keep them at Virtua, what are fair wages and what are the top issues that makes them want to leave. Results will be posted!

Our position is that our members deserve recognition because we have worked on the frontlines and are still here!! Our employer cannot hire in new members at a higher rate than is offered to our present members! Hiring bonuses are a mandatory subject of bargaining as it deals with wages. We rejected their proposal and are going back to the table to discuss practical solutions to keep our nurses at Virtua and not leave to chase the increasing amount of bonus money offered by other Healthcare systems as a short-term solution to the **NEW NURSING SHORTAGE**.

We want to remind you that we have our wage reopener coming up January 2022 for our May 2022 raises. (Refer to article 6.6# in present contract). If you remember Negotiations 2020 held in the Summer of 2020 when Covid-19 seemed to be "winding down" Virtua would not budge on the 1.5% raise offered to our members for the raise increase for the contract year 2022. As a solution to this stand still, a wage reopener for 2022 was born! As the "**Great Resignation**" has become the new normal and hospitals are desperately competing for RNs, now is the time to mobilize around this issue and let our employer know what it will take to stabilize the RN workforce at Virtua. Will it be wages, retention bonuses, a safe and healthy workplace, improved working conditions or, in a perfect world, a beautiful combination of them all. As the contract language around this wage reopener states in Article #6.6 we will only be discussing wages for 2022 at this time. The rest of the contract will be in full effect until May 2023. After we have bargained for 2022 raises it will need to be brought back to the membership for a ratification vote!!

In Solidarity,  
Sheryl Mount President Local 5105

### HPAE State Convention

Our nurses and health professionals gathered virtually on October 6-7 to re-elect a tried and tested slate of state officers to continue leading HPAE for another three years. Our local could not be prouder of the leadership and advocacy that was provided by all the State officers especially "OUR" Debbie White RN during her last 3 years as State President of HPAE. For those that do not know Debbie White, she was an RN on 7 Stokes for over 25 years and was our Local 5105 President for over ten years before being elected to serve as State HPAE President in 2018. Her leadership during her over 10 years as Local president helped shape our local into the powerhouse that it is today!

HPAE unionized healthcare workers first elected Debbie White from Local 5105 as president at HPAE's 2018 Convention and now have re-elected her during the 2021 State Convention along with Barbara Rosen as First Vice-President and Alexis Rean-Walker as Secretary-Treasurer for another 3-year term. Congratulations to them all and a heart felt thanks for serving us the last 3 years.

Every 3 years at the State HPAE Convention each local gets to nominate one person from the Local that exhibits special talents and goes above and beyond to support the local's efforts to stand strong against all that our membership has endured over the last 3 years. Since the HPAE State convention was Virtual this year, we recognized Beth Cohen RN, Vice President from 3NE at our September General Membership meeting as the person that would receive our Local 5105 award. Beth not only tracked all of our exposures and illnesses related to Covid-19 but personally reached out to our exposed and sick members to check on them and answer any questions they had. She was a fierce advocate for our members when fake and faulty PPE was discovered in our workplace. She also wrote and advocated for the language that is now Side Letter 11 Pandemic Preparedness Committee in our present contract. She has chaired this joint committee since its start in September of 2020 and also is the chair of our joint Staffing Committee. Congratulations Beth and Thank you for all your hard work!!



## PTO denials during Nursing Shortage

We have been hearing of many PTO denials related to not enough staff or using Virtua's verbiage "low core staffing"! The union's position is that one staff member per shift per day is a "reasonable" request of our employer. The nursing shortage, vacancies and high turnover have fueled this most recent flood of denials. As per Article 9.7 #4 D. ***Virtua shall make every reasonable effort to grant PTO requests made during the time period specified by the process flow period. Such reasonable efforts shall include, but not limited to, pre-scheduling Per Diem staff and posting early on the requested hours.*** PTO is an earned benefit, and we should not be unreasonably denied requested days. An example of a reasonable reason for denial should be that another more senior nurse requested for that same day and shift off during process flow period. If you have been denied PTO, the reason for denial should be written on the PTO request. If you feel that you have been unreasonably denied and no other member has been granted the time you requested, first go to manager, and ask why you were denied. If manager simple, "low core staffing" with no other member off that shift and day, then we need to start pushing back on these denials. We have brought the issue of PTO denials to our Monthly Labor Management meetings and management have ask for examples of denials related to low core staffing. Please let us know if you feel you have been unreasonably denied requested PTO.

Sheryl

## Updates on Staffing Committee & Pandemic Preparedness Committee

Hi everyone! We are still in need of Reps on 7 Stokes, and we are looking for more Reps for 4NE & 4NW. The training is easy and quick! You help to support our members by learning the ins and outs of our Contract, representing members in disciplinary meetings, and sharing timely information for meetings, leafletting and bargaining sessions. There are also FREE educational opportunities at the State level and together with other Unions you can gain labor law knowledge, among other topics. If you want more information on becoming a Rep or Rep training, please contact me at 856 296 6439 or my email [tokidsbeth@aol.com](mailto:tokidsbeth@aol.com)

Also, please remember to invite our new members to our Facebook group, which is considered protected, concerted activity!

**Do you need a Rep?** Do not go into a meeting alone! You have the right to ask if a meeting could lead to discipline! If your manager cannot say "no," you have 24 hours to get a Rep!



## Staffing Committee updates:

- ♥ Security now able to sign up to do 1 to 1s to help out
- ♥ Nurses being left alone in L & D, Peds (No nurse should EVER be in a unit by themselves. A unit nearby DOES NOT count as available help, especially in cases of emergency!) – this item moved to Labor Management
- ♥ RN Bonuses extended related to high vacancy rates and higher than normal turn over of RNs.
- ♥ Military working with Rowan University to provide translators for refugees
- ♥ Military informed that escorts must remain with the patients
- ♥ Center for Learning creating a course to train PCTs in-house
- ♥ Nurses from other areas have been signing up to help as TEAM nurses in Peds R/T high volumes
- ♥ Admin working to get badge access to PCTs who come to help in Peds
- ♥ Voluntary call for nurses suggested for Peds Pav
- ♥ Possible on-call triage nurse for Peds
- ♥ Possible creation of safe room in Peds
- ♥ Looking at alternative areas for Peds patients who come in for COVID testing only
- ♥ Update forthcoming for our electronic unsafe staffing form

## Pandemic Preparedness Committee

- ♥ Refugees vaccinated upon arrival at base
- ♥ N95s to be stocked on all units!!
- ♥ Exposures!! – please note that exposure/quarantine notification should be within 48 hours (this is contractual!). If you are receiving a call, text, or email days later, that is unacceptable!! Keep good notes of date and time and location of exposure, and please, if you know of someone who took care of a patient who later tested positive for COVID-19, do the right thing, and let that person know so they can follow up with their manager. Important-if you have been exposed to Covid-19 at work fill out an occurrence report.
- ♥ Reminder that quarantine pay is for exposure where you are told to stay home but you have no symptoms! If you have symptoms, call the hotline 609 444 2828. Do not work while sick!!

We can always use your input and attendance at Staffing Committee (2nd Thursday of the month at 3pm or Pandemic Preparedness Committee (3rd Friday of the month at 3pm). These are joint committees to make your workplace safer! Our power is in our collective voice!!

Proud to be HPAE!!  
Beth

## Who Cares? We CARE!!

Perhaps things have to get worse before they get better. No, they don't. We all draw our own line in the sand. But before we hit our collective rock-bottom, what can organized nurses do? We can take responsibility for understanding problems we face as a profession. We can see ourselves, as catalysts for change, playing a unique role in changing a system that is clearly not working. Instead of giving in to the fear of conflict and retaliation, tap into righteous anger and help your co-workers find the courage and determination to act. Dismiss the feelings of hopelessness, the feeling that we have no power, develop a plan of attack, and help your co-workers find hope that change is possible and worth fighting for. Resist the division, the non-transparency pitting of co-workers against each other, and find unity to act together. Ignore the confusion, passing of messages that will try to alarm or distract us, but instead interpret and share information and find clarity to see through the chaos. Our profession has taken a huge hit. We are at an all-time staffing low, and it's only predicted to get worse. This is the year of Moral injury. There is so much to be gained by mobilizing our talents and skills to be heard as one voice. Working together, union strong, there is not a challenge that our powerful team could not meet.

In spite of all the external threats to our profession, a more serious threat to the survival of the unity of nursing is the internal threat of **apathy**. Apathy is threatening the nursing profession. Not all nurses are apathetic, but the rising number of apathetic nurses is alarming. **We are all SPENT!!**

Most nurses are committed to the care they provide to patients but leave work exhausted, feeling unappreciated and even expendable. But, by not actively being involved in the Union, you miss an opportunity to foster support achieved through networking with colleagues from different areas but who have similar challenges and ideas for change. Without unity, we fail

to see ourselves as part of a vibrant tapestry of professionals who share pride in and commitment to their profession. Who, collectively, can be that catalyst for change! I question why apathy is occurring? I sure do not feel there is a lack of passion for what we do. Aren't you concerned about the issues that impact nurses? Is there a lack of knowledge in how to become involved in the issues? Is there an absence of direction and or role models to follow? Or is apathy a perceived loss of control as a result of excessive stress resulting in the inability to see how to change the situation? In the end, does anyone care?

YES, we do! HPAE is here for you, we want to build you up and strengthen your ability to be part of the change. Participate, be an active member, join a committee, let your voice be heard. Never more so than today has the profession needed a strong united stand within the political arena. Political involvement encompasses being knowledgeable about issues, laws, and healthcare policy. As patient and professional advocates, nurses cannot continue to be spectators in the political/union arena. Activism is a critical skill nurses must learn to protect their patients, practice, and the nursing profession.

So, shake off your apathy. Recognize the importance of activism for nurses. Take an interest in politics—especially on issues related to nursing. Move beyond mere membership and take an active role in the union. Attend meetings, nurse lobby days, convention, voting and workshops. What connects **us** as a local is our passion and power as a united force. This unity will give us the renewed ability to serve our patients with skill, empathy, and strength.

*Yours in Solidarity,*

*Bonnie Terwilliger, RN ~ BSN*

*HPAE Local 5105 Grievance Chair*

## Public Service Loan Forgiveness

We encourage members to explore whether they are eligible for the he Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program. The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program is a federal program that promised student loans would be forgiven after ten years if the following criteria are met:

- Member has qualifying federal student loans
- Member is employed full-time, either 30+ hours or another employer-specified full-time position in the following venues:
- Member is employed in public service. For HPAE, this would include all public employees (e.g., Rutgers, University Hospital, Prison Systems etc.) and those employed in 'not for-profit' hospitals or other facilities. The only members that do not qualify are those who work for 'for-profit' employers.
- Have made 120 loan payments or more.

Please review the PowerPoint for specifics and/or watch the webinar on YouTube.

Visit AFT Summer to learn more, click here <https://www.aft.org/benefits/summer>.

Summer harnesses the expertise of public policy experts to optimize borrower options, and it uses technology to make the process easy and secure. The AFT trusts Summer to help our members navigate the student loan repayment landscape.

Thousands of AFT members are already benefiting from this service. I urge you to find out if you are eligible too.

In Solidarity,



# HPAE

A Newsletter for the  
members of HPAE Local 5105

110 Kinderkamack Road  
Emerson, NJ 07630  
Phone: 201-262-5005  
www.hpae.org

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*To our HPAE  
members, family & friends*

**HAPPIEST  
OF  
HOLIDAYS  
AND A  
JOYOUS  
NEW YEAR!**



# HPAE

Putting care first