



# HPAE LOCAL 5118 Newsletter

A Newsletter for the  
members of HPAE Local 5118  
at Cooper Hospital

THE COMMUNICATOR

September 2024

## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

An exciting change has taken place. This being my first message addressing you as your NEW president I would like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to hold this position as not only a leader, but also a fellow co-worker.

Stepping into this position during such a monumental time for our local is exhilarating and motivating. To witness the vision of our former President, Doris Bell come to light and her passing the torch on to me is a great honor. Her fifteen years of commitment, loyalty and steadfast through the highs and the lows is honorable and commendable. So, if you happen to see her in passing, please take a moment to thank her for her years of service, because she has guided us to achieve such contract other hospitals are using as a blueprint for their next round of negotiations! That is something we should all be proud of.

Now that the groundwork has been laid with our new contract, we must remain active and motivated to continue to build our Local Union. We showed a lot of unity and had a lot of power during negotiations. **Together, let us keep it going.**

**How can we continue this path?** Number one, get involved with what you can. Since negotiations, we created the Member Mobilization Team, the RN Safety and Violence Prevention Committee, recruited several new Union Reps and have several trainings scheduled for the new committee members and reps.

Consider joining one of our joint committees. Why? So, our voices are heard by Cooper's Administration. Here is where you can make a change!

For more information about these committees, please contact one of our union leaders or contact me directly at [tiffanyalexhpae@gmail.com](mailto:tiffanyalexhpae@gmail.com) and I will be sure to get back to you in a timely manner.

Keep an eye out for our NEW UNIT UNION RING BINDER. These blue binders include contact information, ADO forms, Weingarten rights, and soon to come our new groundbreaking contract. Our new contract is on our web page at [www.hpae.org](http://www.hpae.org).

Together we will continue to improve our work environment and make sure Cooper follows our new Union contract. WE DESERVE WHAT WE DESERVE!

In Solidarity,

**Tiffany Powell, RN**  
President Local 5118

## OUR LOCAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

Our bargaining unit nurses belong to HPAE Local 5118. HPAE has many other locals throughout NJ and PA.

Our Local 5118, is made up of an Executive Board, which includes: our President, **Tiffany Powell**, **Brittany Cucunato** VP, **Lisa Calabrese** VP Grievance Chair, **Carolyn Ali** VP Treasurer, **Alexandria Boffo** VP Member Mobilization Coordinator, **Lauren Kelly** VP Secretary and, **Patti Scharff** VP.

We, the Officers, cover specific areas in the hospital. It is our responsibility to keep our members in our areas updated with important union information. Usually done via email, it will always be your personal email, never Cooper email, we are not allowed to conduct union business on our work email. The Officer covering your area will also assist you with any concerns or questions you may have.

Recently we have been distributing new HPAE UNION binders to all areas' inpatient and outpatient. They are blue binders that include Union information. From time to time, we will add additional information. Please take a moment to look through your area binder, there is especially useful information provided.

One item in the binders are ADO forms, assignment despite objection forms. If you do fill one of these forms out, you might ask, where do I put them? The answer is in one of our union mailboxes. The union mailboxes are

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## PETER J. MCGUIRE SCHOLARSHIP

Every year in observance of Peter J. McGuire, the Father of Labor Day, **HPAE Local 5118** presents a \$1000 scholarship to a nursing student. The scholarship is given at the Annual Peter J. McGuire Breakfast sponsored by the SNJ AFL-CIO Central Labor Council.

This year's recipient of our Local's scholarship is Matthew Kobielnik. Matthew lives in Audubon, NJ and is attending Camden County College /Our Lady of Lourdes Nursing program.

Matthew is a member of United Here Local 54. United Here Local 54 has represented hospitality workers for over 100 years in Southern NJ, Eastern Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

Congratulations to Matthew!

Feel free to contact Patti Scharff at [jimandpattischarff@msn.com](mailto:jimandpattischarff@msn.com) for information regarding the annual scholarship.

## STAFFING COMMITTEE MEETING UPDATES

At our Joint Staffing Committee meetings, **we have focused on the need to staff certain units, specifically K10 and K9.** We were told that the INCU is almost fully staffed with new hires and there are about twenty-six open positions between both sides of K10.

We emphasized to Cooper that the **Keleman units are struggling to keep staff.** They told us that they are trying to improve the work environment. We asked them **on which areas they are focusing.** Cooper stated they are rolling out a "Welcome Home" recruitment strategy to reach out to previous employees and more experienced RNs, while also hiring new graduates from Rutgers and Drexel.

**We stressed that K9 needs help, especially on night shift.** On many nights there may only be one to three regular K9 staff members on the unit. Nurses are stressed out and morale is low. We also expressed how unsafe this is for the patients and the nurses. Cooper said they are using float and pool staff to support units where there are few staff RNs. They told us they are doing this a week in advance. **We will continue to monitor this.**

**Recently,** there was a shift on S10 when all agency nurses staffed it. **We made it abundantly clear that this cannot continue to happen. A INCU had to take charge. This is ridiculous!! We also requested a follow-up survey on the split between N/S10.** Cooper requested that the survey is done in-person. **We agreed.**

**CDU** is also expanding and has numerous job postings available. Cooper stated they predict to open the new area in October. Some positions have been filled, but they will be slowly filled due to precepting challenges.

We also discussed our concerns about the Hallway beds. Cooper stated **the CODs do not read a patient's chart to deem if they are hallway appropriate. Charge nurses, please look carefully to determine if a patient is hallway appropriate.** We discovered that a patient

who originates from the ED is considered hallway appropriate by the ED flow manager. However, ED hallway patients are different from inpatient appropriate hallway patients. Please refer to the hallway inpatient policy. We also discussed editing in Epic the hallway flowsheet for ED patients.

**We raised our concerns about the Cardiology patients, specifically on P9,** regarding the higher level of care some patients require. Cooper admitted they were behind the eight ball when they notified staff of the new Advanced Heart Failure Program. The focus of P9 is to make it a pure cardiac floor and migrate med surg patients to other floors. South 4 will continue to be utilized when P9 beds are unavailable.

**Many safety issues** were brought to Kathy Devine's attention. **We suggested upstaffing P9 to adequately care for these patients.**

Kathy stated LVADs will not occur for about another year and the details on the program are still underway.

We are distributing New Blue UNION binders on each unit, which include ADO (Assignment Despite Objection) forms. Thank you for filling out the ADOs, which we absolutely love, because we can show Cooper how bad staffing can still be. **When you fill out an ADO form, please submit an assignment sheet with these forms!**

To the floors that do not use assignment sheets and only write the assignment on the white board, please start using them. It is harder for the staffing committee to fight for you when we do not have an assignment sheet.

We appreciate everyone who filled out an ADO and encourage others to do so as well.

Sincerely,

***Brittany Cucunato, RN***  
Staffing Committee Co-Chair

## UNION CONTRACT ARTICLE 8 WORK PREFERENCE

With so many agency nurses working at Cooper, it seems to be a good time to review some contractual language.

Article 8 addresses who gets available Bargaining Unit (BU) work. In simple terms, WE DO!!

All BU work is to be given to BU nurses over agency and traveler nurses. Even if you would be on overtime. This also applies to any management that may be taking a BU shift.

Regular Full-time, Part-Time, Limited Part-time, UBP, Pool, Float and Baylor can bump an agency nurse by giving **twelve** hours' notice to a Clinical Director or the staffing office. It is suggested to do this in writing or follow up in writing so there is a time stamp of your request. This is important to have if your request was denied and a grievance is filed on your behalf. If you notice an agency

nurse slotted in Kronos, you can take that shift, using the **twelve**-hour timeline.

There have been reports of agency nurses not being competent in their assignments. When this happens, notify your CD, or COD immediately. They have been instructed to handle these situations in real time. If an unsafe condition continues, you can respectfully ask the manager to call the Nursing Administrator on call to discuss what to do. The hospital agreed at negotiations that all agency nurses should be competent to perform all tasks set forth by the employer. That is contractual language. Cooper has acted by firing or not renewing contracts of agency nurses.

Please keep the LEB informed of any situations that concern you. These concerns will be addressed and taken to administration.

## REFLECTION: MY FIRST YEAR AS A NURSE

The first year of my nursing career is a time in my life that I will never truly forget. I had worked as a nursing assistant for 11 years on the rehab floor at a nursing home prior to working as a nurse. I knew that working as a nurse at a level 1 trauma center was nowhere near what I had experienced at my previous job, however, I thought that the background that I did have would at least provide me with a good background. Although it may have helped a little bit, I do not think that there is anything that can truly prepare you for your first time as a brand-new nurse, not nursing school, not clinicals, nothing. It was such an unreal feeling that I was the one making these big decisions and having to critically think, especially because you're not just giving out these medications because the MAR says so, you have to know why you're giving them and is it appropriate to give to this patient.

For the first year of my nursing career, I used to walk through those doors with such horrible anxiety. I used to question all the time why did I become a nurse? Am I a good nurse? Can I really do this? I was so afraid of making a mistake, especially because the nurses that I worked with were all so intelligent and so good at what they did. I cried so many times on the way home from a shift I cannot even count (I still do sometimes). It took me some time, but I eventually learned to get out of my head, take a deep breath, and be confident in who I am as a nurse. The greatest part about nursing is that you are never alone, you always have a team behind you. I would not be the nurse I am today without the amazing nurses that I have worked with throughout the years.

**To all the new nurses out there, do not forget to take a step back and breathe.** You are only one person and all you can do is to try your best every day. Do not be afraid to ask for help or ask a million questions, which is why we are here. Everyone makes mistakes, the best thing you can do is to not dwell on them and instead learn from them. You are never going to know everything and that is okay. I am still learning new things to this day. Be proud of the nurse that you are and keep your head up high. **You got this!**

*Alex, RN*

## OUR LOCAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

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in two places, one is located outside the cafeteria on the second floor of the hospital and the other is located across from the Chapel on the first floor of the hospital.

We spend many hours of our personal time when we are off, going to meetings, chairing important committees, always advocating for our Bargaining Unit Nurses! If you are interested in becoming a LEB Officer or would like to join one of the committees, let your area LEB Officer know!

Using our voice, in solidarity!

**Carolyn Ali BSN**

Treasurer Local 5118

## RECIPE CORNER

Unexpected company on their way with little notice? No problem! Here is a quick pound cake you can serve, making it look like you spent hours in the kitchen!

### Quick Pound Cake

Ingredients:

6 eggs  
3/4 pounds of butter (3 sticks)  
2 1/4 cups of sugar  
3 cups of flour  
2 teaspoons of vanilla or almond extract  
3/4 cups of milk  
pinch of salt  
3 teaspoons of baking powder

In a Mixmaster, cream butter, sugar, eggs then add the rest of ingredients, adding milk in last.

Mix for 20 minutes.

Add mixture to greased (with either PAM or butter) bundt pan.

For a little extra flair, you may add mini chocolate chips.

Bake at 325 for 1 hour and 15 mins.

There you have it, a quick pound cake for your guests to enjoy! If you have a favorite receipt,

Send it to me at [lisacalabrese04@gmail.com](mailto:lisacalabrese04@gmail.com) and we will publish it.

## WHY I AM AN ACTIVE UNION MEMBER

Before I got involved with our Local Union and the LEB, I had no idea what unions were about. I knew what a union was, and I knew that if you were in trouble, you could ask for a union rep, honestly, I just knew that I had to pay my dues and that was it.

After going to negotiations and talking to members of the LEB and negotiation team I learned that there was so much more to our union. Our union, HPAAE, offers a lot. However, I think many of our members are unaware of resources available to us, and the POWER we can have when our membership is engaged. Just as we were during negotiations! Our successful leafleting's and showing of solidarity during negotiations put pressure on Cooper to open their wallets. Being part of the leafleting during negotiations not only inspired me but showed me how united we can be as a union and how much impact we can truly have.

As the Coordinator and Leader of the Member Mobilization Team, I hope to educate, organize, and inspire, however, I cannot do this without YOU. There is power in numbers, and we can really be the change that our nurses at Cooper want and deserve. We cannot just stop at negotiations; we must keep the momentum going and let Cooper know that we are a force to be reckoned with. If you are interested in learning more about our incredible Team, please email [tiffanyalexhpae@gmail.com](mailto:tiffanyalexhpae@gmail.com).

Come Join Us. **Alexandria**



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## STAFFING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Joint Staffing Committee has continued to meet monthly since our contract settled. Currently, we have a well-rounded committee. The nurses represent areas from Med/Surg, PACU, Critical Care and ED.

### Recent ADOs June-August Issues Discussed with hospital:

- ❖ Inappropriate ratios/assignments continue in Crit Care, Intermediate and Med/Surg
- ❖ Inappropriate staffing and unsafe situations
- ❖ Mandating to stay due to competencies in recovering certain patients

### Staffing Committee Updates from June-August:

- ❖ Use of Agency hours & agency overtime hours worked has continued to increase each month since May.
- ❖ Staff overtime hours worked have decreased each month since May.
- ❖ Opened unfilled RN positions decreased. Some med/surg positions have been filled. There continues to be high vacancies in all med-surg floors and ED.
- ❖ Cooper is trying to have agency nurses sign on as staff. Agency nurses are taking float/staff positions.
- ❖ Cooper continued to bring in more agency throughout the past few months.
- ❖ There are agency nurses in almost every unit/area currently.
- ❖ Continue to fill out ADO forms for any 1:6 assignments or inappropriate ratio assignment.
- ❖ Inappropriate hallway patients – ED to be given the hallway patient protocol to increase knowledge of admitted floor patients acceptable for hallways – its different for ED patients.
- ❖ Any issues with agency nurses should continue to escalate in real time to CODs/Management. PER KATHY DEVINE, when we do not like the response from a COD regarding staffing or an unsafe assignment, we can ask the COD to call the Administrator on duty.

### • ADO Forms

Reminder to keep filling out and submitting into the mailbox any Assignment Despite Objection Forms. A copy of this form will be in the new blue Union unit binders which will be delivered to all units/areas in-house and the outpatient areas. The new contract will also be put in the binder.

- Please make sure you have a clear objection to your assignment on form. Examples: over ratio, acuity of assignment/floor, staffing, or safety issues. This better helps identify the main objection in discussions with the hospital over the submitted ADOs from our nursing staff.

### Reminders

- Winter Vacation PTO (October-April) block requests and approvals were completed on units in August. PTO requests now for this time frame are on a first come first served basis.

### Important to Know – New Contract Language

- ♥ We are **NOT** to be floated to another unit on a holiday to give a nurse in the floated-to unit off.
- ♥ New off orientation nurses can now be floated on extra/OT shifts. Only base shifts are protected from floating for 3 months after orientation.

Submitted by

**Lauren Kelly, RN**  
Co-Chair Staffing Committee