

The Voice of SEIU Local 250 Members working at Mercy Hospitals in the Sacramento area.

"The boss doesn't listen when one guy squawks, but s/he's gotta listen when

THE UNION TALKS

This is the last issue of "UNION TALKS." Thanks to all contributors and readers.

CONTRACT DEADLINE EXTENDED AS BARGAINING CONTINUES.

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This is an MHS employee-produced monthly newsletter. It will report union activities and issues from facilities represented by SEIU Local 250.



Letters and suggestions are welcome-
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Ellen Dillinger, Editor

INSIDE

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An online copy of this newsletter as well as information and photographs of Sacramento union events can be seen at
<http://dillingertoons.net>

The SEIU "Contract Update Hotline" for May 8 announced success in several bargaining areas, but there is still no contract settlement. The deadline has been extended in a good faith effort to allow CHW time to cost-out the effects of various proposals.

There has been progress. First contracts varied at the 28 separate CHW SEIU-represented hospitals state-wide, and it has taken great effort to unify standards and create one statewide contract for all the hospitals. That process has not been completed, but important Union goals have been achieved.

1) We have a "standards preserved" clause in our contract. Our 2002 contract at MHS had this clause, but some of the other hospitals didn't, so we are extending a good thing to a greater number. A "standards preserved" clause guarantees that you can't be made worse by your current contract, and that is an important union goal.

2) We will **NOT** be having a management's rights clause in our contract. This means that anything not spelled out in the contract is subject to



Bargaining took place at the Sacramento Community Center during the last week of April. This "Art in Public Places" sculpture was seen outside the bargaining room, dressed in Union purple.

bargaining with the union, as opposed to decided by management. Again, this is a condition that we at MHS benefited from in our last contract, but other hospitals who did have a management's rights clause will benefit from **not** having one in the statewide contract.

3) A 4 million dollar training and upgrade fund jointly administered by CHW and the Union to provide funds for "growing" our own employees has been agreed to.

4) There is agreement on changes in job posting and job vacancies.

The bargaining process has been a long one, but the result will set a template for interaction between CHW and SEIU, and be a baseline for future improvement. As statewide bargaining committee member Nikki Sparks (Chief Shop Steward, Mercy Folsom) said, "It's very frustrating to experience the slowness of the process, but this is what we have to do if we want CHW to be the employer of choice—if we want the best health care workers to come to our hospitals first, before Kaiser."

Providing affordable, accessible, high-quality patient care is the goal of both CHW and SEIU health care workers. We will not have this if our wages and working conditions fail to attract the best available employees to our hospitals. To attract and keep the best, we have to offer the best, and that is what we seek to do in our 2004 statewide contract.

Bargaining is scheduled to continue later in the week. Our thanks to all who give their time to participate in this important process!
--Ellen Dillinger, MGH

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GENERAL MEETINGS FEATURE INFO PICKET VOTE

I am out on a union leave of absence, and during this time, I've had the pleasure of meeting other employees at some other facilities during the General Membership Meetings that I helped with. The meetings occurred during statewide contract bargaining, and included a

First, let me say that all the meetings statewide were a great success. There was an overwhelming "YES" vote to hold an informational picket if bargaining did not pick up. Fortunately, we have not yet had to hold informational pickets, as our bargainiers have so far determined that progress is being made. I want to thank everyone for participating in the voting process and demonstrating the strong support of our membership for our bargaining goals. I also want to thank a few people in particular at some of the facilities.

Woodland: Sandra Johnson, Ramon Sosa, Maria Jenkins and Celeste Gutierrez. I'm sure I missed a few, but again, thanks to all who participated.

All the people I've met have been so friendly. I really enjoyed talking with everyone and answering people's questions, and look forward to seeing you again.

In the meantime, make sure you stay informed about what is going on during the bargaining process. Each facility has two employees on the statewide bargaining team who would be glad to fill you in on the progress of bargaining. There will be informational flyers distributed at all facilities. I hear good things are happening!

Gina Mastergeorge, CPhT
Chief Shop Steward (MGH)



Roland (PCU, MGH) and Viola (EVS, MGH) counting ballots after the vote for an informational picket at MGH's April General meeting. The "Yes" vote won by a large margin, authorizing our union to stage an informational picket at all 28 CHW hospitals if the bargaining process stalled. A ten day notice is required when an informational picket is planned.

Mercy General:
Ellen Dillinger, Sylvia Star, Roland Ubaldo, Keith Lexion, Sharon Martinez, Brenda Emmons-Dodrill
Viola Vera and Pierre Mcilhargie.

Mercy San Juan:
Sherrie Macias, Vicki Taylor, Suzette Walker and Susie Bodecker.

vote at all CHW SEIU-represented hospitals to hold an informational picket if bargaining continued to stall.

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS A VALUED BENEFIT OF THE UNION CONTRACT

Our first contract ended April 30th (subsequently extended because of bargaining delays), and it is worthwhile to look at the benefits it brought us.

One of the many benefits of the Union has been "Employee rights." During this time, approximately 70

grievances were filed; of these about 80% were successfully resolved in favor of the Union. There are employees working in our hospitals today who would have been terminated without Union intervention.

The resolution of grievances takes time, particularly for the seven or

eight grievances a year that go all the way to arbitration. Still, it is well worth it when a grievance is carried to successful resolution and employee rights are preserved!

--Albert McConkie,
Imaging, MGH

EMPOWERED: YOUR PATIENT CARE COMMITTEE

Have you talked to any of the members of your Patient Care Committee? Do you know who they are? If not, find out, because they are the representative body of your peers, and one that enables your voice to be organized and heard.

The Patient Care Committee at Mercy San Juan Medical Center, created through provisions of our contract, is a bargaining unit. As a bargaining unit, we are empowered to discuss staffing issues throughout the organization, with the right to take unresolved disputes to arbitration.

Six members plus our Field Representative, Josie Summers, make up this Committee at MSJMC. They are: Sherri Macias, (Chief Shop Steward/EKG), Vickie Taylor, (Shop Steward/LVN), Suzette Walker, (Vice Chief Shop Steward/LVN), Suzie Boedecker, (Vice Chief Shop Steward/UA), Catherine McKesson, (UA), and Janiece Owens, (non-invasive Echo tech).

Recently, the MSJMC management team presented to the Patient Care Committee proposals for numerous staffing changes that targeted a select group of employees: specifically LVN's, CNA's and UA's. For these changes to be brought before

the Patient Care Committee is monumental. It shows forward movement for our Union.

Guided by the expertise of Morgan Gay, Assistant Director of Hospital Operations for SEIU, we met with the management team of MSJMC for what was the first of many such meetings. It was immediately established by the Committee that there would not be any lay-offs and this was agreed upon by management. What this means to the members is that your jobs at MSJMC are secure.

When proposals are agreed upon in the PCC, they are signed by the presiding member of both parties. This is known as a tentative agreement (TA). Before any tentative agreement can be implemented, it has to be presented to the affected members and then ratified by a vote.

With the members' constant complaints of being understaffed and overworked on our minds, the Patient Care Committee retained the right to establish detailed job duties and how they will be carried out. This will be done with much input from all of you.

For the UA's, LVN's, and CNA's, this is still a work in progress. **LVN's:** The Patient Care Committee worked hard to guarantee that you will main-

tain the same unit, same shift and same hours. It is now up to you to monitor what happens in your workplace. I bet you didn't know your contract has a provision that's pertinent to LVN's about floating. Start reading your contract and know it! When you are HC'd, floated out of turn or constantly, fill out an "Objection to Assignment" form and give it to a Shop Steward or a member of the Patient Care Committee. Now is the time to assert yourselves and stand up for your rights! **CNA's:** your workload will be better, and there will never be just one CNA working at any given time. The same applies to you as to the LVN's: follow the same procedures.

The Patient Care Committee can and will make changes, but it will only work if you start speaking up. Members, these are your jobs, your livelihood—you know when things are wrong in the workplace and you need to put a stop to it-- start speaking up!

SEIU is your BARGAINING UNIT
YOU are the UNION.
The UNION IS ONLY AS STRONG
AS ITS MEMBERS.

Vickie Taylor
Chairperson, PCC, MSJMC

MID-MAY UPDATE ON MSJMC PATIENT CARE COMMITTEE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

On April 27, affected SEIU Local 250 members at Mercy San Juan voted to ratify the tentative agreements reached after many hours of bargaining through MSJMC's Patient Care Committee. Affected employees include LVN's, Care Assistants, and Unit Assistants.

A carefully regulated re-bid process began May 10th, in which all positions in the affected job classifications were opened for bid based on seniority. No employees will suffer a

reduction in rate of pay for 24 months, and all benefited employees will retain benefited positions. For its part, the Union agreed to leave vacant any CA, UA, or LVN positions that remain unfilled or that became vacant over the course of the negotiations. Other changes specific to MSJMC positions were also agreed to, resulting in no loss of jobs and the use of attrition, per the Employer's commitment to Article 4 (Job Security) and Article 29, section C (Patient Care Committee) of our collective bargaining agreement.

The purpose of the PCC is to monitor the quality of patient services and to make recommendations to improve those services. When the Employer proposed changes in staffing grids affecting CA's, UA's, and LVN's, the issue came to the Patient Care Committee. The primary goal, that there be improvement and not decline in patient care, and the goal of job security appear to have been served by the Patient Care Committee's bargaining effort. --E. Dillinger, MGH

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THE UNION TALKS

COMMUNITY HEALTH FORUM

CHIEF SHOP STEWARDS

MGH: Chief Steward
Gina Mastergeorge
 Home: 240-2912
 Work: 453-4567

METH: **Chris Kurpies**
 Work: 423-6176

Bruceville Terrace:
Daryl Bell
 Work: 423-6025

MSJH: **Sherri Macias**
 Home: 971-0654
 Work: 537-5037

Woodland Clinic:
Annette Hendrix
 Refer to Union
 bulletin board for
 stewards' phone
 numbers.)

FOLSOM: **Nikki Sparks**
 Home: 725-0614
 Work: 983-7400

**SEIU Local 250 Field
 Representatives:**
 Josie Summers: 275-6342
 (MGH, MSJMC)
 Lydia Phillips:
 (METH, FOL, WOOD)

STEWARDS MEETINGS

Methodist/Bruceville meets
 3rd Wed. 1530-1630 hours.
 Location: Methodist Hospital

Mercy General meets 2nd
 Wed. at 1630 - 1730 hours.
 Location: MGH Green-house

Mercy San Juan meets 3rd
 Thursday, 1800-1900 hours
 Location: MSJH Conference
 Room.

Woodland Clinic and Hospital
 meets 1st thursday, 1730-
 1830 hours.
 Location: DCR 3 and 4

Mercy Folsom meets 2nd
 Tues. 1330 - 1530 hours
 Location: MHF Conference
 Room

On Thursday, April 1st, SEIU Local 250 set in motion a public campaign for its contract negotiations with CHW in conjunction with a community health care forum at St. Joseph's Catholic School in North Sacramento. Approximately 200 members of the community, including several different unions, came together to discuss the crisis in health care caused by the nursing shortage and proposed budget cuts.

The health care forum was moderated by Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg. City Councilmember Dave Jones, was also in attendance. Representing SEIU were John Borsos (SEIU Hospital Division Director), Ellen Dillinger



Suzette Walker, LVN and shop steward at MSJMC speaking at the Health Care Forum. She described the patient care problems caused by understaffing, high employee turnover, and vacancy rates in the hospital industry.

(Medical transcriber and Shop Steward, MGH), Suzette Walker (LVN and Shop Steward, MSJMC) and Pam Johnson (Kaiser Division).

The forum was a very posi-

tive step in the right direction, providing the community with insight into problems faced by health care workers and their patients. Also explained was the important role health care workers' Union contracts play in improving health care jobs and reversing high vacancy and turnover rates.

The health forum also provided information on current state legislation affecting health care. Did you know that Californians with no health insurance can be required to pay as much as four times more for care than a worker with insurance? Senate Bill 232 ensures that Californians without health insurance are charged fair prices for hospital services.



City Councilmember Dave Jones (at podium) served as a moderator for the forum. SEIU Hospital Division Director John Borsos (sitting) presented the SEIU research paper "Putting California's Hospitals on the Right Track," which describes workforce investment strategies for affordable, quality health care.

Another piece of legislation, SB2, protects the existing base of employer-provided health insurance. A repeal of SB2 will be on the November ballot and we should all oppose this repeal. To make sure we keep our benefits for ourselves and our families: **Oppose the repeal of SB2.**

Suzette Walker, Vice Chief Shop Steward, MSJMC

to all.