

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

STATEWIDE BARGAINING REPORT

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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

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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>

As you are all aware, SEIU/CHW statewide negotiations are under way. WE ARE HERE! Since Feb. 24, 2004, we have been alternating negotiation sites between Oakland and LA.

So as not to waste time and energy, the members of our team, about 58 people from the 25 medical facilities comprising the CHW foundation, set some ground rules. We decided, as John Borsos, our chief negotiator often states, not to sweat the small stuff. We jumped right in and began preparing each article of our contract. Every member of our team contributed his or her opinion and/or concerns. We listened intently, reached a consensus, voted on our proposal, and then moved on to the next article. We managed to go through all 36 articles within the first 2 days of bargaining.

Now you may ask, "What have you accomplished?" One word: UNITY! There has never been a more committed group of people. We represent the 15,000 SEIU members who work at all of the CHW facilities. We take this responsibility very seriously. We know what you need, you have spoken to us, and we are meeting the challenge.

Though it is tedious work, we have reached tentative agreements on several non-economic articles. They



The SEIU statewide bargaining team presented 8,000 petitions to CHW at the bargaining table in Oakland March 15th. The petitions demonstrated SEIU healthcare workers' support for the goals of a master contract, retirement improvements, employment and income security (including creation of a training and upgrade fund), and expanded Union rights. Holding petitions are members from SEIU Locals 121 (RN's), 399, and 250. (photo: Gina Mastergeorge)

are Articles 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31 and 36. We ask that you refer to your contract copy for details. We will be having meetings with our Union members to go over specifics.

Now you may ask, "What is the most difficult hurdle?" We think it is Article 4, STANDARDS PRESERVED. For some reason, the CHW negotiating team thinks that we should strike it out of our contract. We are dumbfounded. Why would we do that? Standards Preserved is the foundation from which to go forward. Also, for some reason, the CHW negotiating team thinks a "Management Rights" clause is appropriate

in a Union contract. Hello?

With two remaining bargaining days left this month, March 30th and 31st, and with Federal mediators already involved in our bargaining process, we have given the CHW team notice. If the remaining non-economic articles are not completed during these last two days of negotiations, we are formally letting them know that we will be voting to authorize an informational picket within the first two weeks of April.

Now, having said that, it is our sincere hope that this will not be necessary. We want CHW to be the leader

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FROM THE CHIEF: MGH Chief Steward on Union Leave

What is a Union Leave of Absence? Well, it is when an employee takes time off from their job to work full time with Union staff and conducts union business on a daily basis.

Hi, my name is Gina Mastergeorge, and I am the Chief Shop Steward for Mercy General Hospital, currently out on Union leave. My job is to organize all SEIU 250 members throughout MGH with the goal of fighting for a fair contract.

Being part of the union staff, I get to see what happens from the inside. If only everyone could see what I see! From the field reps on up, I can share with you that they put in a lot of time making sure all of us are protected by the collective bargaining agreement that CHW/SEIU has agreed to. They spend more time either at the office or out in the field than they do with their own families. Remember, the union is not them, or me, or even a shop steward or two, it is every one of us. My hat is off to all the SEIU 250 staff who put the health and welfare of each employee first.

A lot of you may already have seen me in and around your department talking to members, and you will be seeing a lot more of me in the upcoming months. I am letting members know what is going on at the bargaining table. If I have not talked to you yet and you have questions, please feel free to stop me when you see me, or you can call me and I will answer whatever questions I can.

We are trying to keep our local bargaining team up to date also, and they are being asked to attend informational meetings in the days following the statewide bargaining sessions. I apologize for the last-minute phone calls for these meetings, but the bar-

gaining sessions occur every week, and not always on the same day.

If you have any questions, just call me or someone on the bargaining team. Most likely, there is someone from your department on the local team. The two state bargaining members from MGH are Sylvia Star from Patient Registration and Jan Karbowski from Respiratory Therapy.

I would also like to thank all of you for participating in our petition drive in support of our contract bargaining. We ended up turning in 495 signatures from MGH and still counting. This number is from the members only, so with the support of the RN's and non represented CHW employees, it was far above that.

As for being Chief Shop Steward! Well, when Ellen Dillinger handed the reins over, I was Vice Chief along with Debora Patton. Debora Patton has since resigned as Vice Chief for the time being, which brings me to the forefront alone. But, I don't see it as being alone, because we are a team. We can do this together.

The role of Chief Shop Steward is to play the middle man between the Field Rep and the shop stewards, and to attend meetings with management as needed. If an employee has any questions or concerns, they should go to a shop steward first and if that is not satisfying they can call me directly. I am hoping to put to use the joint management training classes that shop stewards and supervisors/managers attended. If there are any concerns or miscommunications in a department, I will be happy to sit down with the Dept. supervisor and/or manager along with the SEIU member(s) involved to settle those differences there, at that level.



Remember, even though the union has been here for two years now, it is still under construction. We have to build a better relationship together so we can move forward. We all have to have a little patience. I encourage everyone to read their contracts. Especially management! There are still some who think they can go against the contract. I am looking forward to sharing with those supervisors/managers the do's and don'ts of the contract. In our present contract as well as our next one, we do not have a manager's rights clause; therefore, we need to remind them of that.

So, with all that said, I will just add that I am also looking forward to meeting those of you I've not met.

And everyone, please remember this is a new experience for me, so if anyone wishes to contribute any thoughts or any time, it will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,
Gina Mastergeorge, CPhT
Chief Shop Steward, MGH

UNION LEAVE OF ABSENCE PROVIDES POLITICAL EDUCATION

On February 2, 2004, I was granted the opportunity to take a 30 day leave-of-absence for political purposes. I was given the opportunity to experience the political process up close and personal.

SEIU Local 250 was part of a group of unions that supported City Councilmember Dave Jones for State

Assembly. Volunteers worked hard, precinct walking, phone-banking, and doing everything necessary to ensure a victory for our candidate. Dave's victory was a victory for SEIU as well. In 2004, SEIU and other SEIU locals across the nation will be waging a campaign to elect a pro-worker President. One of our duties this Spring was to register voters, pro-

viding voters with information about election issues and garnering support for Proposition 56.

The political leave experience is one I will always remember, and I hope other SEIU members will have the same experience.

Suzette Walker, MSJMC

ON BECOMING A SHOP STEWARD...

Becoming a Union shop steward requires inspiration, education and, as Thomas Edison famously said about his inventions, perspiration. Since it's an unpaid job, why would anyone volunteer for it?

Brenda Emmons-Todrill (Pharmacy, MGH) became a shop steward earlier this year when Chief Shop Steward Gina Mastergeorge (Pharmacy, MGH) went on Union leave. Brenda was inspired by Gina's determination and hard work on Union issues in the Pharmacy Department and wanted to make sure the department had shop steward representation during Gina's absence. After getting the requisite petition signatures, she became a steward and was ready for the next step, **education**: shop steward's training classes.

Shop Steward's training comes in two sessions, and Brenda attended Part II at the Union Hall on March 20th.

When asked what made the biggest impression on her in the training session, she described her clarified understanding of all the benefits Union dues pay for. Wage increases and protection of employee rights stood out especially among these. She also said

"I really appreciate the confidence having Union support brings. When there are problems, if I don't have the answers, I can go to the Chief Shop Steward or the field rep and get help."



The Pharmacy Dept. has had problems with seniority issues and with issues related to staffing changes (such as using several per diems rather than creating a benefited position). These problems occurred in the Pharmacy, but as Brenda says, "These issues effect everyone in the hospital."

As noted, the shop steward's job is currently unpaid, (except for one hour per month leave to attend the shop steward's meeting). Expanded Union rights are being bargained for our 2004 contract, which will provide more paid time for shop steward volunteers. In the meantime, thanks to all who do this much-needed work!

--Ellen Dillinger, MGH

SAVE THE DATES!!!!

FRIDAY JUNE 18TH AND AND SATURDAY JUNE 19TH. 2004

SEIU Local 250 is holding its annual Leadership Conference in San Francisco this year. In addition to continuing education classes and workshops, there will be a walk across the Golden Gate Bridge for universal health care. Limited spaces are available. Contact your chief shop steward or field representative for more information.

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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,)
TBA,
(METH, FOL, WOOD)

STEWARD 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

LABOR LEADER CESAR CHAVEZ HONORED

Unions, community activists, and students marched five miles on March 27 to celebrate the life of Cesar Chavez, labor leader and co-founder of the United Farmworkers Union. The march began at St. Rose Catholic Church in South Sacramento and ended at Cesar Chavez Plaza across from City Hall. The route retraced a portion of the heroic march Chavez and the UFW made from Delano to Sacramento in 1966 in support of farmworker issues.

Many stirring speeches were made both before and after the march. Andy Imutan, former VP of the UFW, was able to provide a unique historical perspective, having been a participant in the



Andy Imutan spoke of his organizing history with Cesar Chavez.



The UFW banner carried by students, activists, and labor unionists to honor Cesar Chavez' birthday. Some employers recognize the day as a holiday.

early days of farm worker organizing in the fields of California. Imutan recounted that when Filipino farm workers went on strike, their picket lines were crossed by Latino workers, with the reverse occurring when Latinos went on strike. Despite a common cause, the two groups did not respect each others' labor actions.

In September of 1965, the Filipino farm workers struck the fields, experiencing the same problems with the Latino workers as before.

This time, they went to Cesar Chavez' group and asked him to work with them. "We realized that all must unite as one to fight for the same just cause," Imutan said.

Chavez ultimately agreed to do this, and that was the beginning of the UFW and a new era in farm labor organizing.

When labor works together, anything is possible!

--Ellen Dillinger, MGH

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in healthcare in the state of California. Many of us have worked for this organization for most of our adult lives. We love the Sisters of Mercy. We share their vision. Many of us have been through the good times and the bad times over the past 30 years with them. We only ask that

CHW be as compassionate to us, the hands-on, in-the-trenches employees as they are to our patients and their families. WE ARE FAMILY, TOO.

As your representatives, we, your team, want to assure you that we are committed to you. We are

working in earnest to negotiate the best possible contract. We want to thank you for the privilege of serving on this auspicious committee. And we look forward to keeping you updated as the negotiations proceed.

Sylvia Star, MGH
Jan Karbowski, MGH

to all.