

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

THE UNION TALKS

SEIU UHW SHOP STEWARDS MEET WITH MGH PRESIDENT FOR SPANOS HEART CENTER PROPOSAL

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This is an MGH employee-produced bi-monthly newsletter. It will report union activities and issues from MGH employees represented by SEIU United Healthcare Workers-West.



Letters and suggestions are welcome- send to dillwood@sbcglobal.net

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>

MGH president Denny Powell met with SEIU union shop stewards on May 16 to present the hospital's plans for the proposed Alex G. Spanos Heart Center. The center would be a five-story building located next to the North Wing, with 128 acute care beds, specializing in cardiac care. The East and South wings of the hospital would be converted to subacute beds and office space, as the old building will no longer meet earthquake standards for acute care. In addition to medical services, the Heart Center will include a coffee bar, Healing Garden, and a new chapel. If all goes as planned, the Spanos Center would open in 2009, while the East and South wing acute care beds would be phased out by 2013.

The proposed Spanos Center would expand Mercy General's highly rated cardiovascular program, and in so doing, bring changes in where we work and how the hospital fits into the surrounding neighborhood. Concerns surrounding these changes were addressed in a question and answer session.

An immediate concern was expressed by Ken Hensley, who wondered what the effect on jobs would be,



40th & J has seen many changes. The site now occupied by MGH was once a dairy farm when the Sisters bought the land in 1919.

given the plan for a reduction in overall beds (343 acute and subacute beds in 2008, reduced to 259 in 2014), and the increase in RNs due to MGH's response to the nurse/patient safe-staffing law. MGH's Spanos Center project representative, Cindy, stated that once the Heart Center is up, hospital occupancy (which now averages 60%) would increase, such that there would be a net increase in acute care bed occupancy.

To the question: "Will there be any adverse effect on SEIU members at this hospital as a result of the Spanos Center?" Denny Powell stated that there would be no adverse effect on SEIU members.

In answer to a question about the planned mix of services, Powell said that the comprehensiveness of services would remain the same— we would still have non-cardiac surgeries, the Emergency Department, Labor & Delivery, etc. It was emphasized that cardiovascular surgery is the #1 reason for hospital stays, and the Spanos Center would ensure MGH's competitiveness in that area.

So what stands between the proposed Spanos Heart Center and its planned completion in 2009? The process of meeting legal requirements is underway: the application for the Center has been filed with the City of Sacramento and the City is conducting an environmental impact report. Neighbors within 1,000 feet of the hospital will be notified by the City and given a chance to be heard, and the Planning Commission will review the hospital's application in 2006.

The problem faced by the proposed Spanos Heart Center is one faced by

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WAS IT A DEAD RAT OR BLACK MOLD?

Concern over the appearance of mold in several areas of our workplace led to a recent meeting with hospital officials to discuss the issue. Union Chief Shop Steward Raj Dayal, Field Rep Josie Summers, Sharon Martinez, Ellen Dillinger, and HR representatives Jim Anderson and Cyndi Kirch heard MGH Safety Officers Bruce Smith and Holly Smith describe the mold problem and the appropriate protocol for employees to follow when mold (or any hazard) is suspected.

“There are no mold thresholds published by OSHA” Bruce said, adding that “mold is everywhere.”

Research on EPA and Cal-OSHA web-sites shows this to be true, although passage of the Toxic Mold Protection Act in California in 2002 may ultimately set standards for indoor air quality and mold exposure.

The Toxic Mold Act requires the California Department of Health to “convene a task force to advise it on the development of standards for the permissible exposure limits to indoor mold....and for the identification and remediation of mold.”

Until standards are set, California agencies may take enforcement action against employers with buildings containing mold, ranging from



Is it black mold or ??? No, continuing the Dairy theme of page 1, this is Dairy Cow #1385 of UC Davis. Note the symmetrical solid form, one of the many characteristics which distinguishes animals from mold. Also, unlike mold, cows do not “waft sporadically” through air or water.

building closures to administrative penalties. These enforcement actions take place under the “general duty” provisions of law which protect public and worker health.

“But if mold is everywhere, what can be done about it?” Molds are microscopic fungi that produce spores which travel via air and water. When the spores land in a damp location, they begin growing and thrive in areas of humidity. To control mold, “correct water intrusion, leakage, or other uncontrolled accumulation of water” in the work-

site. (Cal/OSHA General Sanitation Requirements#3362).

Is there a “Code Mold” in our workplace? No, but MGH does have a protocol in place which employees are encouraged to follow. For reasons of patient care and employee health, and as good stewards of hospital resources, employees should report signs of mold (or of any health and safety hazard) to the Safety Officer, Holly Smith. This can be done by calling Holly(phone 4121) or by photocopying and filling out the Safety Hazard Suggestion form in your department’s Safety Manual and sending it to Holly, who will meet with you, and check out the hazard. She will then coordinate with Engineering and Employee Health, depending on the nature of the issue.

Signs of mold can be visual, such as a stained ceiling tile, olfactory (musty or “dead rat smell”), or manifest as physical symptoms such as allergic reactions, aggravation of asthma, or infection. The adverse health symptoms caused by mold can be difficult to distinguish from colds or an allergic reaction to other non-mold entities, so consultation with your doctor and Employee Health is advised.

Ellen Dillinger, Imaging Services

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”-- President Franklin Roosevelt.

UNIONS LEAD DAY OF ACTION AT CAPITOL

"Give me an 'F!' --'60's musician Country Joe McDonald delivered a new version of the old Fish Cheer to a crowd of nearly 15,000 gathered at the State Capitol steps on May 25th for a "Day of Action."

Teachers, nurses, firefighters, healthcare workers, and members of other unions met to protest Governor Schwarzenegger's plans to balance the state budget with cuts to middle class workers and the poor. The crowd was particularly incensed by Schwarzenegger's plan to spend 80 million on a special election this fall at the same time he is planning Medical cuts and renegeing on promised money for schools.

Older now, and married to a nurse, Country Joe's revised Fish Cheer spelled 'FIRE ARNIE!'



Spanos Heart Center proposal..... continued from page 1

any urban project-- Neighborhood concerns with parking and traffic. Neighbors fear an increase in traffic with increased hospital patronage, and do not want a towering parking garage (none is planned), and/or to live adjacent to a parking lot. The project proposes a 150-space surface parking lot at Mercy Care, 29 new spaces where the chapel is now, and will add a half-level to the current parking garage, for a total of 250 new parking spaces.

The issue can be looked at in several ways: MGH views this project as

providing an expanded service to the community, benefiting health care in the region as a whole. The neighbors view the project as detracting from their neighborhood. Should this be a decision based on community or neighborhood needs? Can everyone's concerns be addressed?

In the best of all worlds, Sacramento would have a quick and reliable public transportation system, no one but the patients would need to drive a car to the hospital, and the need for parking lots would diminish. It may seem like too much to ask an

institution dedicated to health care to become an advocate for public transportation, but maybe that's what all future urban projects will require.

In the meantime, proposals and planning for the Spanos Heart Center continue, with opportunity for input by all interested parties. It is hoped that the result will serve community health care needs **and** please the neighborhood.

Ellen Dillinger, Imaging Services

MGH Steward Chairs

Chief Steward
Raj Dayal
Home: 729-8187
Work: 453-4084

COPE Chair (alt.Chief)
Sharon Martinez
Home: 372-2145
Work: 453-4440

Mobilizer Chair
Betty Davis
Home: 689-8069
Work: 453-4421

Secretary Chair/Editor
Ellen Dillinger
Home: 441-3468
Work: 453-4138

SEIU UHW-West
Field Representative:
Josie Summers: 275-6342

See list of Shop Stewards
on Main Union bulletin
Board near Cafeteria.

STEWARD MEETINGS

Every third Wednesday,
Time: 1 p.m.- 5 p.m.

LOCATION VARIES

June 15: Conference Rm 2

July 20: Conference Rm 1

Aug 17: Conference Rm 2

Sept 21: Conference Rm 2

Oct. 19: Conference Rm 2

Nov.16: East/West Auditor.

Dec.21: Conference Rm 2

It is the responsibility of the shop steward to inform their dept.manager in a timely manner of release time required for shop stewards' meeting.

SEIU UHW MEMBERS SUPPORT SUTTER WORKERS



SEIU UHW shop stewards from Northern California met in Oakland on May 7 for a Hospital Division Steward Council meeting that turned into a march on Sutter Health Corporation's Alta Bates-Summit Medical Center in the Bay Area. Sutter employees at Alta Bates have been working without a contract for over a year and a strike there is contemplated.

A petition circulating among SEIU UHW members in support of the Sutter workers says "If you take one of us on, you take ALL of us on!"

SEIU members at CHW hospitals may wonder why we should concern ourselves with Sutter. If altruism doesn't interest you, think ahead to April of 2006, when the union contract reopens to bargain retiree medical benefits. As long as our biggest competitor, Sutter, doesn't pay union-level health benefits, the playing field for CHW is unequal. It's in all of our best interest that Sutter employees organize and help raise standards for both patient care and employee well-being.

"The Union Talks" newsletter is now a bimonthly publication. What does this mean? According to the dictionary, 84% of the American Heritage Dictionary Usage Panel believes that the term "bimonthly" means "every other month," while the rest think it means "twice a month." If you agree with the 84%, you will take it in stride when the newsletter now "skips" every other month. The next deadline for newsletter articles in the August newsletter will be July 21, 2005.

Have a great summer!
--Editor

to all.