

THE UNION TALKS

2003 SEIU LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE INSPIRES HEALTHCARE WORKERS

October 2003
Volume 2, Issue 10

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>

The Leadership conference this year was held on Sept. 4th & 5th at the Marriott Hotel in San Francisco. It was a great success! All divisions from SEIU 250 were in attendance, including Kaiser, EMS, Homecare, Nursing Home, and of course Hospital. There were 1,200 hard-working members/leaders in attendance, all fighting the same fight for health care issues. It was amazing to see we are not alone.

The first day started with a great plenary session which included speaker Angela Alioto, San Francisco Mayoral candidate. What an awesome speaker she is!

We then broke off to our workshops which were led by various Local 250 staff. The workshops I attended were very well-constructed. They were educational, informative, motivational and just downright fun! The workshops are set up to teach us (shop stewards) how to handle any issues that may arise in our departments or at our facility.

After that first day of hard work, we were rewarded with a great dinner and some

dancing. Does SEIU 250 know how to treat their members or what? We had live music by the Blues Brothers for a few hours followed by a disc jockey for those late night folks! It was a pleasure to see everyone like the



MSJMC Chief Shop Steward Sherri Macias, SEIU Local 250 VP John Borsos, and Methodist Chief Shop Steward Chris Kurpies at Leadership Conference.
photo-g mastergeorge

President of SEIU 250 and all levels of Local 250 staff have as much fun as the rest of us.

The next morning we were treated to some music by the Mariachis, followed by our next guest speaker, Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante. Of course he was loudly cheered by all members/leaders in attendance. Bustamante urged SEIU 250 members to "vote "NO" on the recall and "YES" on Bustamante." He said "as Governor of California, I will

be a working class governor. I will not forget my roots." Bustamante used to work in the Central Valley fields as a farm worker.

Our last political speaker for the day was Democratic Presidential candidate Howard Dean.

Talk about excitement! He had the room on their feet. Dean praised union workers. He commented on what the trade union movement did for this country,

which was to make it possible for working people like us to live in a middle class environment.

As you can see, it was a busy 2 days. I left the leadership conference with great enthusiasm and my involvement with the union has expanded. We all need to get involved. If healthcare workers aren't active, things will just get tougher. SEIU 250

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NEWSLETTER CELEBRATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY

This edition of *The Union Talks* marks the newsletter's first year anniversary. We started the newsletter a year ago after attending the 2002 SEIU Local 250 Leadership Conference, where we were advised by Union President Sal Roselli that "to be considered successfully organized, Union members at each hospital should have a newsletter!" Riding back from the conference, our MHS group decided to create a member-written newsletter, and in October of 2002, our first edition came out.

The title of the newsletter is based on a Union song "Talking Union," first sung by the Almanac Singers (Pete Seeger, Lee Hays and Millard Lampel) in 1941, whose central line "The boss doesn't listen when one guy squawks, but he's gotta listen when the Union talks!" rang a bell for those of us who had been voiceless and Unionless at MHS.

The first year of the newsletter was also the first year of the Union contract. Has anything changed in that year? A look at the year's newsletters is a history of grievances, resolutions, and a lot of learning.

The first edition's front page story "Shop Stewards Fight Back," described a "march on the boss" undertaken to roll back a perceived MGH attack on Union shop stewards. Two shop stewards faced termination: one is still here among us and the other case is in arbitration.

Five subsequent newsletter editions reported on the contentious evolution of a management-proposed change in the MGH Environmental Services Department. That discussion required six months of meetings between management and employees, petitions, a hospital-wide informational picket in front of MGH, and finally a mediator before the change was



resolved to the majority's satisfaction. New shop stewards, new avenues of communication between management and employees, and a new Vice Chief Shop Steward, Debora Patton, emerged as a result of this bargaining process.

Other changes this year:

- 1) Shop stewards and Local 250 staff bargained with MHS a new MRI tech classification for Imaging Services.
- 2) A number of corrective actions were reduced or removed as a result of grievances filed for "unjust discipline."
- 3) "Retro pay" was won in grievances over stand-by rates or unjust discipline. Employees who were inappropriately HC'd won retro pay for days when work elsewhere should have been offered instead of HC.

Without the Union and our contract, we, as employees, wouldn't be having discussions with management about these issues. In the pre-Union days, changes or corrective actions were announced and implemented, and you either adjusted to it or you left.

Is there more to be done? No question! Seniority transfer from other hospitals, changes in job duties, the requirement to post vacated positions, and the meaning of "standards preserved" continue to be disputed

issues. Inability or unwillingness to resolve grievances at the lowest level is another problem in some units and departments.

Can we expect to see a newsletter headline like "LOCAL 250 UNION MEMBERS AND MHS AGREE ON ALL ISSUES!" in the future? We keep trying!

POLITICAL NOTE:

Several stories in this edition report on Union members meeting with legislators in order to influence their vote on issues of importance to healthcare workers.

Given limited resources, is it good to spend time on political action? Should we "fix things here" before focusing on wider political issues?

If the two were separate, I would say "yes," but the many state and federal laws that regulate us as healthcare providers and Union members make it clear that these are not separate issues.

Laws on health and safety, overtime pay, use of sick leave, the provision of "healthy family" healthcare for kids in low and no income families, and safe staffing ratios affect us all. On a national level, issues range from Medicare prescription drug coverage and Medicare payments to what kind of healthcare delivery system we will have in the U.S. The laws enacted will determine hospital reimbursement rates, who gets healthcare, and who's going to have to use the ER if they get sick.

So, yes, we need to "fix things here" but we also need to make our voice heard where the laws are made.

--Ellen Dillinger, MGH

UNION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE GOES TO WASHINGTON

Our Member Political Action Committee (MPAC) left September 6th for Washington D.C., to attend a 4 day conference. There were approximately 80 members from Sacramento attending this unique experience. We practically filled the plane as we headed out from San Francisco on Saturday night following our annual Leadership Conference in San Francisco, which, by the way, was a huge success. We arrived in Washington D.C. on Sunday morning, where MPAC members from across the country converged on Washington with our spirits high in our shirts of Purple.

We met all the Democratic Presidential Candidates (except General Clark, who was not running at that time). Each of the candidates was interviewed by Union members and asked questions on their platform for Healthcare. Every candidate was welcomed with cheers and applause by our huge crowd. We heard each one describe their plans for the future of the United States. The Rev. Al Sharpton, in his usual style, got lots of laughter from all of us.

After a great dinner, we left for some sight-seeing. We made it to the Lincoln Memorial and Viet Nam Memorial that night. As we climbed the steps to the Lincoln Memorial, I remembered the very first time I gazed upon the statue and Lincoln's face. At that time I was 12 and I was in awe of President Lincoln in all his greatness.. Now, some 40+ years later, I still stood in awe, but with much more awareness of our country and its great history. We then made our way to the Viet Nam Memorial. It was night and the Wall was lit by spotlights shining upon the names. In silence, we made our way along the path and I searched for names of friends who never came home. We had to leave then and found a great

little club to listen to some live music and mingle with others who came to meet us. We talked to strangers

their staff passed by. They greeted us with a smile and/or a wave. Our presence was seen and felt that day.



SEIU Local 250 Member Political Action Committee meeting in Washington, D.C. with Congressman Mike Thompson.

about who we were and why we were there. When we left, we had made new friends.

We lobbied Congress the next day as we made our way around our country's capital. My team met with Doug Ose's staff representative, who was very gracious to us and answered all our questions. We were there to talk about the Medicare Prescription Drug Bill and Overtime pay after 8 hours. After a picnic lunch on the lawn, we then went to Senator Mike Thompson's office. Senator Thompson was very warm and friendly and welcomed us to his office where we sat and talked to him about these same issues for ½ hour. We even got to meet his dog, who was in the other room. Other MPAC members went to different offices around the capitol and spoke on different issues regarding healthcare for the future and bills that are pending. I know we made an impact because as we sat outside many senators and congressmen and

We met with Senator Tom Harkin at a press conference and asked him questions and took pictures. The highlight of our day was meeting up accidentally with Senator Hilary Clinton. We all met at an intersection where we were to cross the street. She stopped, shook our hands and took pictures with us. She is a very warm, gracious person who you feel you've known for years. I know she won't forget us, as one of our members actually asked the Secret Service man to step aside so we could get a picture with Hilary. He was most accommodating and just stepped aside.

I think all of us who participated in this Member Political Action event in Washington, D.C. returned home with a greater sense of how politics play a role in everyone's life and how politics fits into our Union. It all came together and became more real. Without these political allies,

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THANK YOU, HARD WORKING UNION MEMBERS!

A special thanks to the following employees for participation in New Employee Orientation held at Strategic Learning: Henning Burnmeister (MGH), Sharon Martinez (MGH), and Ken Hensley (MGH). Thanks for your hard work and dedication in educating new union members on what their rights and duties are as members of SEIU Local 250.

P.S. We are still in need of additional SEIU members to participate in the New Membership Orientation. Training will be provided. Please call Field Representative Josie Summers or Mary Hennigan for additional information.

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President Sal Roselli's presentation of our union's vision plan by 2010 will include:

- ◆ Uniting all California healthcare workers by 2010
- ◆ Improving the lives of California healthcare workers
- ◆ Winning equal rights and status for all workers
- ◆ Building a progressive majority in California
- ◆ Achieving universal access to quality healthcare

- ◆ Revitalizing the labor movement

These goals can be accomplished if we all stick together. Each and every one of you has a voice. Let that voice be heard. *United we stand, divided we fall.* Let's stand tall and make this vision into reality. It is a step-by-step approach, so it will not happen overnight. But, with everyone's involvement, it will happen.

I strongly encourage those stewards/leaders who did not attend this year's conference to attend next year. Next year's leadership conference will be national, with Union

members from all over the country. You can put these dates onto your calendars now: June 19, 20, & 21. It is a very pleasurable experience that will only motivate you to attend all conferences, all leadership training sessions, your local steward council meetings and above all else, getting your co-workers involved. Hope to see you there, I know I will be.

Gina Mastergeorge, CPhT
Mercy General Hospital Pharmacy



Brenda Emmons-Todrill, Pharmacy, MGH

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR....

Hello Everyone!

I am an employee in the Pharmacy Department of Mercy General Hospital.

I'm writing because I would like to thank Gina Mastergeorge for all of her hard work with SEIU Local 250 in protecting the rights of employees here in the Pharmacy, as well in the other departments in the hospital.

Gina is going the extra mile and she has not given up the fight. Thank you, Gina!

Brenda Emmons-Todrill
Pharmacy, MGH

to all.

CONTRACT 2004: A LOOK AT THE CURRENT PENSION PLAN

If you attend the Service Awards dinner in April each year, you may notice that there are fewer long-time employees in the 15, 20, and 25 years of service range. This is not because they die after ten years of service, but because employees don't remain at Mercy for as long as they used to. A look at our pension plan may provide an explanation.

How do you figure what your pension will be? First of all, to qualify for a retirement pension, you need five years vesting in the pension plan. For the second step, you're going to have to do some math:

Take the highest 5 years of earnings out of a ten year period. Typically this will probably be your last 5 years of earnings, unless you switched to part-time or had some type of leave during this period. The following is an example of how pension math works for an employee at 65 retiring with 25 years of service:

2002	\$39,000
2001	37,000
2000	35,000
1999	33,000
1998	31,000

Add these years' earnings together = \$175,000

Divide by the 5 years = \$35,000

Multiply by .0100 = \$350.00

Subtract \$10,000 from average earnings $\$35,000 - \$10,000 = \$25,000$

Multiply \$25,000 by .0050 = \$125.00

Add \$350 plus \$125 = \$475.00

Multiply this by the number of years of service: $\$475 \times 25 \text{ yrs} = \$11,875/\text{year}$
or \$989.58/month at age 65.



Albert McConkie, Sr. Special
Procedures Tech, Imaging,
MGH

You can retire early starting at age 55, but the penalty is stiff. From age 60 through 64, you lose six and 2/3 % for every year you leave early. In the above example, if you retired at age 60, you would receive \$8,117.04 per year, or \$676.42 per month.

<u>AGE</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
55	50%
56	56.33%
57	56.67%
58	60.00%
59	63.33%
60	66.67%
61	73.33%
62	80.00%
63	86.67%
64	93.33%
65	100.00%

Do the math for yourself. Remember that your pension is taxable and federal and state income taxes apply. Add in social security and any TSA or other retirement plans you may have and see if you can live on it. If you can't, you might want to think about making an improved pension a high priority on the 2004 Union contract.

--Al McConkie, Imaging Services, MGH

SOLIDARITY

SEIU LOCAL 250 RESPONDS TO MHS OPERATIONAL CHANGE PROPOSALS

On September 4th, Local 250 shop stewards and Union staff met at MSJMC with MHS administrators to revisit MHS proposals for change. Smaller meetings had been held in August at each of the hospitals, with hospital presidents making a case for improving CHW's bond rating in order to position for future growth. Specific cuts system-wide totaled close to 108 FTE's. With \$105 million in profits made by the hospital corporation over the last three years, (and the recent announcement of bonuses to managers for keeping under budget), Union members remained unconvinced that layoffs were necessary to keep the hospitals afloat.

Financial considerations had been emphasized at each of the smaller hospital meetings, so it was with pleased surprise that we heard Renae Bugge, (Labor and Employee Relations Administrator) state that "financial considerations were not off the table, but they were not the driv-

ing consideration" for proposed changes. Local 250 VP John Borsos responded to this good news with a request to know the driving force for the changes, which he hoped was Article 1 of the SEIU-CHW collective bargaining agreement, the "Shared Vision and Responsibility" paragraph:

"The Employer and the Union share a commitment to provide high-quality, therapeutic, accessible, affordable healthcare to the communities we serve."

In the subsequent discussion, John advised that the Union would be proposing our own version of how best to staff the hospitals in light of the "Vision and Responsibility" commitment. He opened the door to change at every level, not excluding management or administration.

For the purpose of formulating the Union's proposal, surveys will be coming out in all the hospital depart-



Shop stewards meeting with MHS administrators at MSJMC.

ments. Union members are asked to fill out the survey, as well as add any additional suggestions of their own as to what sort of staffing, etc. would provide for the best patient care. With shared commitment, we can do this!

-Ellen Dillinger, MGH



"YES" ON SACTO. LIVING WAGE ORDINANCE!

"The idea behind the living wage ordinance is simple: "Make work pay. We value work in this country, but there are many people who work hard and play by the rules but whose wages won't cover the cost of food, housing, and healthcare."--City Councilmember Dave Jones, Sponsor of the Living Wage Ordinance, shown here with Local 250 Field Rep Josie Summers.

On September 30, members of the Living Wage Coalition celebrated when the Sacramento City Council approved a living wage proposal that would set a mandatory \$9/hour wage with benefits or \$10.50 without for employers who contract with the city for \$100,000 or more. Local 250 VP John Borsos was a key negotiator in making this ordinance happen. --E. Dillinger

UNION POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE....continued from page 3

it would have been much more difficult to organize and collectively bargain our contracts. We have an impact as SEIU members when we lobby for healthcare and labor issues. Everything we do now, I think we will do with a new sense of ourselves

safety

and our role as Americans and Union members. We **MUST** be heard and there is no better way to do this than to VOTE. People have died for this right and in order to make politics work, we must all join together and vote for what is important to Union

members, our families and our friends in order to have a more fair and just society.

SHARON MARTINEZ, MGH



ASK JOSIE:

- 1) Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) in what year?
A) 1956 B) 1968 C) 1970 D) 1986

Answer: A) 1970

- 2) Will a poor evaluation have any effect on an employee receiving a wage increase?

Answer: No!!! Employees will receive a wage increase regardless of whether they receive a poor evaluation. According to the contract between CHW/SEIU Local 250, the contract provision Article 17: Performance evaluations shall not be subject to the grievance procedure unless it contributes to disciplinary action.

- 3) In 1955, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merged, forming the AFL-CIO. Who was the first black vice president of the merged organization?

- A) Maynard Jackson B) Bayard Rustin C) A. Philip Randolph

Answer: A. Philip Randolph tried for many years to organize black workers into unions and end segregation in the labor movement. When the AFL-CIO was formed, Randolph was elected vice president.

- 4) According to the contract, Article 32: Upon advance written request and subject to staffing and scheduling needs, the Employer will provide up to _____ days without pay per calendar year to a Union steward for the purpose of participation in Union educational programs.

- A) One (1) day B) Two (2) days C) Three (3) days D) Zero (0) day

Answer: C. Three (3) days.

- 5) President and Congress raised minimum wage to \$2.65 in what year?

- A) 1963 B) 1968 C) 1970 D) 1973 E) 1977

Answer: E. 1977

- 6) What is the purpose of the Patient Care Committee?

- A) To address grievances B) Bargain for wages

- C) Make recommendations to improve patient services in the context of work design, or in the current method or system of patient services delivery. The committee is comprised of six bargaining unit employees and six representatives of the Employer selected by the Employer. SEIU Local 250 members went on strike in the Bay Area to have this provision in the contract and also over the fact that SEIU believes in members having a voice in patient care.

Answer: Surprise! The answer is "C"

- 7) What branch of United States Military did Cesar Chavez served in ?

- A) Navy B) Army C) Air Force D) Marines

Answer: A. From 1944 to 1946 Cesar Chavez served in the United States Navy.

THE UNION TALKS

WE NEED MORE SHOP STEWARDS!

CHIEF SHOP STEWARDS

MGH: Ellen Dillinger
Work: 453-4138

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.)

SEIU Local 250 Field
Representatives:
Josie Summers: 275-6342
(MGH, METH, BVERR)
Mary Hennigan, 275-2659
(MSJH, 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 Thurs-
day, 1730-1830 hours.
Location: DCR 3 and 4

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

DATES TO REMEMBER

*** **Title 22 Regulations and Scope of Practice for Safe Patient Care.** Specific Issues to be covered: LVN and RCP Scope of Practice. Overview of the current California Code of regulations. Five (5) Continuing Education Contact Hours. Patient Care Committee members are encouraged to attend. Cost: \$0.00.

WHEN: Saturday, October 18, 2003: 10:00a.m.- 3:30p.m

LOCATION: Local 250 Sacramento Office, 1911 F. Street, Sacramento

Register by calling: Professional Hot line (510) 587-4560 or (800) 585-4250 ext. 4560.
For additional information contact: Field Representatives Josie Summers or Mary Hennigan.

*****Professional Council** (LVNs, RCPs, Pharmacy Techs, Lab Assistants, Sonographers, Radiology Technologists, etc.). It is critical that professionals in the health care environment align with one another and speak with one voice to address quality accessible care for our patients and community. We need to advance politically, legislatively, and through the collective bargaining process, educating hospital administration, other health care workers, and the public about the key roles we play on the health care team. If you are interested in becoming part of the Professional Council please call Field Representatives Josie Summers or Mary Hennigan.

WHEN: Saturday October 11, 2003/10:00am-2:00pm

LOCATION: Oakland, 560 20th Street

*****Hospital Division Steward Council meeting in Oakland.** All Shop Stewards and Leaders are encouraged to attend. Main topic: **Contract Campaign for "2004"**. Transportation and lunch will be provided.

WHEN: Saturday, October 25, 2003: 10:00am-2:00pm

For additional information contact: Field Representatives Josie Summers or Mary Hennigan.

SHOP STEWARD TRAINING SESSIONS

According to the **Code of Conduct for Shop Stewards**, all Shop Stewards must complete Steward Training within six months of becoming a Shop Steward. Training will be offered on the following dates:

Part 1-Saturday, November 8, 2003 from 09:00am-3:00pm

Location: SEIU Local 250 Office, 1911 F Street

Part 2-Saturday December 6, 2003 from 09:00am-3:00pm

Location: SEIU Local 250 Office, 1911 F Street

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

METHODIST:

WHEN: Thursday, Nov. 6, 2003 07:00 am - 09:00 a.m. and 3:30 pm - 6:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Art Therapy room

MERCY GENERAL:

WHEN: Thursday, Nov. 13, 2003. 0700 a.m.- 0900 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m

LOCATION: Greenhouse A

Receive a copy of the contract, get information related to productivity concerns, learn about bargaining for the year "2004", and ask any question you might have!

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