

Local 5138 News

Message from the President

Wouldn't it be nice when we plan our week and synchronize our busy lives with our work schedule, to actually work those hours and not to lose pay?

Wouldn't it be nice if when we get to work, our name is on the schedule?

Wouldn't it be nice if the schedule were balanced?

Wouldn't it be nice to have PL time to take vacation; instead of using it up to cover flexed hours in order to have enough money in our paycheck to cover our bills?

Wouldn't it be nice if administration stopped saying "I know how you feel" when we talk about the impact flexing has on our income?

Wouldn't it be nice if we had the resources to do the job correctly?

Wouldn't it be nice if during our work day we are treated with common courtesy, respect, and dignity – not with one person yelling or other public displays of temper, or belittling behavior?

Wouldn't it be nice if our hard work and long hours were appreciated?

Wouldn't it be nice if when we end our day, we have a sense of accomplishment; instead of with a bad feeling in the center of our gut because we know we've done an inadequate job due to arcane staffing ratios and not enough resources to do our job well?

Know your contract. When our contract language is not followed, do something about it. Get involved!!

Kathy Whalen RN, BSN, CCRN
President, HPAE Local 5138

HPAE General Membership Meeting

The union nurses of Southern Ocean County Hospital local 5138 had their general membership meeting on May 5th. Attendance is historically light in non-negotiation years, but I was pleasantly surprised with the number of members that did participate. For those nurses that were unable to attend I have been asked to write a summary.

Our President, Kathy Whalen and our local executive board have had multiple meetings with our new Vice President of Nursing, Dr. Richard Ridge. He continues to encourage collaboration and improved communication and has already demonstrated that he will continue to honor his open door policy. How refreshing it was to have Dr. Ridge give all of us his personal cell phone number for important issues. Dr. Ridge is setting goals for SOCH to become Magnet certified. The Meridian Health system already has several Magnet certified hospitals so our new administration wants us to align with the others. In order for us to be ready for Magnet status, Dr. Ridge is encouraging all RNs to become nationally certified in their specialty area. It will be generously rewarded with \$1.75 per hour by our present contract. Also Dr. Ridge is encouraging continuing your college education as well. Many of our nurse managers are being mandated to complete their BSN in a timely fashion as a minimum standard of Meridian management.

Preparations for our next negotiations were discussed at each of the three meetings. This will be our first negotiation with Meridian. We are being led to believe that Meridian wants continuity of policies in all their facilities. This being said, our negotiating team is reviewing Jersey Shore Medical Center's newest contract to see how it compares to our own contract. We are proud of our present contract and we plan to protect and improve it next year. Contract negotiations will probably include the addition of some form of a clinical ladder. We have discussed the policies of the clinical ladder at length with the union leaders at Jersey Shore Medical Center. We have been assured that their clinical ladder is not subjective like SOCH experienced years ago but monitored and collaborated with and by fellow union nurses.

At each of the three meetings important issues were brought forth by individual units. Staffing remains a major problem. Their remains a constant shortage of nurses' aids, secretaries, techs and patient monitors. ER, CCU and Mancini 4 have all had similar flexing complaints. Their is a pattern where management flexes a nurse and cancels them without asking if the nurse will be "on call." Later in the shift these

units get slammed with emergencies, multiple admissions and deteriorating patient conditions. Flexing continues to set the nurses up to fail which in reality is not providing safe, quality care to our patients. Many nurses told stories that were unacceptable for the standard of care that is expected at SOCH.

Contract violations persist with inappropriate flexing. Know your contract language and make sure it is honored. If you are asked to flex make sure you ask, "Is it my turn? Is somebody on overtime? Is there an agency nurse working?" Several grievances have won lost wages for inappropriate flexing.

The emergency room nurses have experienced months of mishandled staff schedules which included multiple scheduling contract violations. Hopefully by the time this newsletter goes to print the nurses, with their union representative Jean Holden and our local president, Kathy Whalen will have had their meeting with Dr. Ridge to straighten out this crisis once and for all.

Meridian has two surveys coming out. Please take the time to fill these out. It gives us a voice to express our opinions about our working conditions and our management.

Meridian has educational scholarships available to SOCH employees. Check out the Meridian website for details. Also Meridian is offering a sweet deal for employees on Great Adventure discount tickets. The Meridian website also offers many other discounts and services.

Our next Rep meeting will be June 3rd at the Jennings Road Community Center. Please welcome Steve Stafford as an addition to our present CCU unit reps Carey Cranmer and Linda Palmer. We look forward to working with you Steve! We are always open to adding new unit representatives so join us at our next meeting!

The addition of refreshments and door prizes was a huge hit at the general membership meeting. Congrats to Anna Pona, Joan Deckman, and Holly Gallagher for winning gift cards valued at \$50 each!

In Unity,
Julie George RN, BSN, CCRN
Grievance Chair Local 5138

Put Your Contract to Work For You

Being an educated and informed Union member is the most effective way to benefit from your Union contract. It is every member's job to enforce the contract, to do this you must be confident in your understanding of the agreement.

To help everyone have a better understanding, we will discuss the contractual obligations regarding the use of Agency Nurses.

We are appreciative of the extra help Agency Nurses provide during extra busy times, but the rules for their use are clearly defined in our contract. One of the most important articles covering Agency Nurses is Article 10.10 Flexing on page 23. This contract section clearly states the order for a reduction in staff on a given unit. After the Hospital asks for volunteers, Agency Nurses are the next to be flexed, period. If the hospital chooses not to flex an agency nurse, then a member may not be flexed.

Article 11 Floating on page 24 clearly states that after nurses in the float pool and volunteers, Agency Nurses are the next to be reassigned. If the hospital chooses not to float the Agency Nurse then a member cannot be floated.

Side Letter 1 on page 41 states that hours of work for a specific schedule shall be offered to bargaining unit members first and Agency Nurses shall have the same scheduling requirements.

Agency Nurses must be designated on the schedule and will be pulled before bargaining unit employees.

Please assert your rights as a Union member of HPAE Local 5138 if you feel the contract is not being followed.

If you are improperly flexed or canceled when an Agency Nurse is working, you may be entitled to receive pay, please see your Unit Representative or Local Officer.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!!!!

Questions? Our HPAE Staff Representative Jeff Hayden can be reached at 856-663-0300 or jhayden@hpaе.org

Experience Matters

In the middle of April I accompanied my daughter-in-law Renee to the Southern Ocean County Hospital lab for several tests that were ordered on my six week old Grandson "Luke." We were already stressed out and anxious after multiple trips to the pediatrician's office and then a trip to a group of specialists out of Cooper Hospital. Luke had a rash that began as simple hives then progressed into wheals and welts. The tiny baby was covered from head to toe in the worst rash I have ever seen. I was on constant alert for the wheezing that I feared would follow. Upon arriving and registering in the lab, we were informed that the technicians were not comfortable drawing blood from a six week old infant and that we may have to go somewhere else. The techs really wanted to accommodate us so they placed a call to the maternity floor and asked for volunteers to draw blood from an infant. (The maternity unit was not informed that it was for a fellow SOCH employee's family member.) I can not express the relief I felt or how grateful I was when Alice Howarth showed up and very gently and efficiently drew all the blood needed for Luke's blood tests. The baby barely felt the pinch as Alice used a small butterfly needle and easily drew all three tubes of the blood that was needed. Alice is a seasoned and experienced maternity nurse and midwife. I will be forever grateful to her for going above and beyond the call of duty. We all know that outpatient lab draws on infants are not in a maternity nurse's job description, but she answered the call nonetheless. Experience most certainly matters and should be valued. Alice made a tough task look easy! I realized that day how fortunate Southern Ocean County Hospital is to have experienced, skilled and caring nurses like Alice. Thank you Alice for yet another job well done!

Julie George RN, BSN, CCRN
Grievance Chair Local 5138

HPAE CONVENTION CALL

**"GETTING
HEALTH CARE
RIGHT"**



HPAE 2010 CONVENTION
September 30 - October 1, 2010

TROPICANA HOTEL
Havana Towers
2831 Boardwalk
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

**Register by
Friday, September 24, 2010:**

Via the web at:
www.hpae.org/2010convention_registration
- Or call 201-262-5005
- Or complete the registration form below
and fax to 201-262-4335.

Registration Fee:

Members:
\$40 both days / \$25 one day

Non-Members/Guest:
\$50 both days / \$30 one day

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ St: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: () _____

Email: _____

Local: _____

Thursday, September 30, 2010

"STAFFING MATTERS"

An interactive workshop/presentation will take place.

10 am - 10:30 am Registration
10:30 am - 3:30 pm with lunch provided.

5 pm - 6 pm Registration
6 pm - 7 pm Reception
7 pm - 11 pm Dinner & Dancing

Friday, October 1, 2010

8 am - 9 am Registration & Continental Breakfast
9 am - Convention

- Election of Officers
- State of the Union
- Keynote: Transforming Health Care in NJ

- Luncheon
- State & Local Awards
- Constitutional Amendments & Resolutions

Local 5138 will pay your REGISTRATION FEE



HPAE
kamack Rd
07630

110 Kinder-
Emerson, NJ