

WSNA/OVERLAKE HOSPITAL

Washington State Nurses Association

LOCAL UNIT NEWSLETTER

August 2005

From the Desk of . . .

***Becky Dawson, BSN, RN
WSNA Nurse Representative***



There are many facets to WSNA. As you know, it is your professional organization and also your Union. These two divisions of WSNA work to improve and protect the profession of nursing. Among many things, WSNA is your voice in the workplace. Today, I would like to focus on the union part of WSNA. As your nurse representative at Overlake, I work for this division of WSNA.

The majority of union members continue to look upon WSNA as a service provider (some combination of lawyer, social worker, and insurance agent) to which they pay dues with the expectation that the Union (something they identify as separate from themselves) will take care of their problems for them. Of course, the Union should know what their concerns are, right? But how can we without hearing from you?

For any union to be effective, member participation is vital. Having said that, what does participation in the Union look like? Participation can be formal or informal. Formal participation would involve holding an officer position such as Co-Chair, Grievance Officer, Secretary, Treasurer, or Membership Coordinator. Being a Unit Rep would also constitute a more formal role. Formal participation can also occur on a more intermittent basis, such as attending a union meeting, voting to elect officers, filing a grievance, or filling out a survey.

Informal participation might include speaking up in defense of the Union, discussing the contract with a new hire, or suggesting to other RNs how the union could help with a problem. Contacting an officer or myself to ask if a particular situation is consistent with the contract language would also be considered participation. In fact, the sum of individual member's informal participation can and does have a significant impact on the Union's effectiveness.

Raise in Wages

We are now into our second year of a four year contract. As of July 11, there will be a raise for all nurses. See the contract Article 11- Compensation. 11.1 Wage Rates. In addition, for nurses who have been at Overlake for a significant amount of time, before hospitals were forced to recognize past experience to stay competitive, you may be receiving an additional step increase. This is a part of a four year process identifying nurses who were hired in at usually half of their years of nursing experience. Slowly over the years the Hospital has increased the steps. Last year during contract negotiations, as part of a retention package, WSNA impressed upon Overlake the importance of keeping their seasoned nurses in line (financially) with new hires. See the contract 11.2.1 Additional Recognition for Past Experience. Those nurses who are involved in this process were notified by Human Resources last summer.

***Overlake Hospital
Local Unit News***



From the Membership Chair

Every month the local unit officers forward a list of new RN hires to me and I send those nurses a welcome letter via their unit's rep. It's amazing how fast people come and go around this place. Given that, there is always a core group of loyal WSNA members who have been here at Overlake for a long time. You are a great resource for all of us. I encourage you to speak up and share your knowledge. There is great strength in standing together to make sure our contract is understood and followed.

YOU ARE THE UNION!

Welcome New Members!

Kimberly A. Leppert, RN
Judy A. Moore, RN
Norman G. Ryerson, RN

A warm welcome to all the new members of
2005!

Grievance Corner

During the past year I have sat in on a record number of investigational/disciplinary meetings. You might ask how can there be anything of great importance to share with another nurse so that she could be present at a meeting with my manager. Take a moment and read your contract, 6.3, Discipline and Discharge. Many of the meetings that I attended were for "communication difficulties." Another was to discuss the confusing and difficult process of layoff related to workplace injury and trying to get back to work. I also sat in on three separate meetings about workplace violence not to mention several disciplinary meetings relating to patient medication errors.

Anytime your director or manager asks to meet with you and Human Resources, the red flag should go up and bells of caution should go off. Why would my manager want to meet with me? What are the circumstances? Did I do something wrong? Why do Human Resources need to be there? Am I being disciplined? Do I need Union representation? A word of caution, always asks what is the focus of the meeting, if it leans toward discipline, you should ask for a union rep. That is what a grievance officer can be for you, someone to talk things over with, sit by you for support, and to be a neutral ear. Disciplinary meetings can be emotionally charged on both sides. Managers bring Human Resources to the meeting for support, so why not think about support for you?

In addition, the grievance officer, as well as your unit representative and Local Unit Chairs can or should be able to interpret contract language. If you think that something doesn't feel right, like your pay, hours and working conditions, call anyone of us for help. If you find that contract language has been violated, then notify your manager of the problem and then the grievance officer if there is no resolution. I can help you with the process of filing a grievance, Article 18, page 43, should there be a breach of terms and conditions of the contract.

By Mary Jo Rice, RN

Local Unit Officers

Harriet Wallendahl	Co-Chair
Gail Cohen	Co-Chair
Karen Kettner	Secretary
Mary Jo Rice	Grievance Officer
Joelle Coffman	Membership Chair
WSNA Nurse Representative	
Becky Dawson	
1-800-231-4-8482 ext. 3012	
bdawson@wsna.org	
WSNA website www.wsna.org	

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

*Annual Leadership Development Conference
Lake Chelan, WA
September 25 – 27, 2005*



Please see WWW.WSNA.org for a Registration Form.

Membership Reminder

It is the responsibility of each nurse to notify the Washington State Nurses Association of any change in work status which may include but are not limited to: **name, address, phone number, FTE increase or decrease, leave of absence, medical leave, maternity leave, leaving or joining a bargaining unit.** This change must be done in writing either by using a *Change of Information Card* or sending an email to wsna@wsna.org.

The Cabinet on Economic and General Welfare (E&GW) policy states, when a nurse is on an unpaid leave of absence, the dues are adjusted to the Reduced Membership Category during the unpaid Leave of Absence period. The accumulated dues payment is to begin within 90 day of return to work. The nurse will have up to twelve months to complete payment of these dues. *It is the responsibility of the nurse to notify WSNA of this change in work status.*

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