

LOCAL UNIT NEWSLETTER

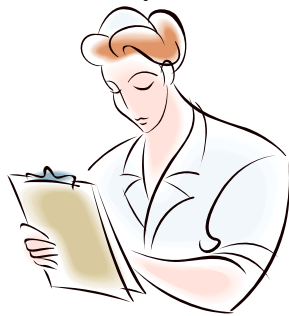
September 2005

Why I belong to WSNA

*By: Shayne Yocum, RN, CEN
Vancouver, Washington*

In twenty five years of my nursing career, I have worked in many facilities with a variety of administrations. Some of the places were associated with a union of one kind or another, and some were not. I have not always been a great supporter of unions, but I have come to realize that they have a place and a purpose.

As a nurse, I have always tried to be the professional that we all believe nurses are. I have heard the argument that “nurses, as professionals, don’t need a union...we’re professionals, unions are for blue collar workers.” Perhaps it’s the way we look at this issue that needs updating.



During the last century, nursing, as a profession, has progressed greatly. We have moved from being handmaidens to doctors, “physician extenders”, to independent practitioners. We have a Nurse Practice Act that defines our profession and scope of practice that is the direct result of the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA). These are organizations comprised of nurses representing nurses. I have been employed at jobs where the

unions representing the staff were not nursing associations. I have been a Teamster; I have belonged to the Brotherhood of Carpenters, and the Meat Packers Union, to name a few. Locally, these groups provided our part of the membership with guidance for collective bargaining, contract negotiations and grievance procedures, but at the state and federal levels, they were lobbying for truck drivers, construction workers and meat packers. Our needs as nurses were totally lost on them. They were primarily interested in our dues, which in some cases were significant. Membership in a nurses association provides us with information, advocacy, representation, protection and a number of benefits.

WSNA is a constituent of ANA, and part of our dues goes to the work that ANA is involved with at the national level, lobbying for issues pertinent to nurses. This is how we got needle-less IV systems in the hospitals, made mandatory overtime illegal, and now they are fighting the Bill that could eliminate overtime for nurses. Personally, I don’t have the time to take on these battles, and I am grateful that ANA is there to do it for me. Locally, when we want to negotiate a contract with the administration, I also don’t have the time to investigate the regional, state and national compensation packages that we should be competitive with. Again, I look to WSNA to know that information and help us to get the best possible contract and encourage the hospital to be as good as other local agencies. Their

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commitment to retain their nursing staff should be incentive to provide us with the best possible agreement, and WSNA is there to help us negotiate just that.

There is so much more to a nursing association than just the bargaining unit. I try to compare it to the physicians and the American Medical Association (AMA), or the attorneys and the American Bar Association. They don't require a bargaining unit, but the membership to those groups provides a status within the profession. Nurses can achieve the same thing. We are nurses and we should stick together for ourselves and for each other.

Members Needed

How much do you spend on lattes per week? A latte costs about \$2 to \$5. So that's \$10-\$25 per week on coffee. What allows you the luxury of having lattes? A good union contract! A great living wage. Good working conditions. Representation that includes protection in the workplace. A voice! Your union dues cost you around \$13 per week. Look at the new guaranteed raises you received in this contract. Does that raise more than cover that?

Are you aware that if you have no union, you are an at-will employee? At will employees can be fired by their employer for no reason. Your union contract protects you from being fired without just cause. Because you have a union contract, you are entitled to due process and representation.

Negotiations this year brought about some good changes for the bargaining unit, i.e. guaranteed wage increases for the first time, rest less than 8 hours and no more mandatory call in the critical care area, to name just a few. With a larger membership,

the voices of the nurses for safe patient care, is even stronger.

If you are not a WSNA member, you are riding on the backs of the nurses that pay dues. You get the benefit of better working conditions and higher wages by working in a "union shop." But you're not paying your fair share.

If you are already a member, please talk to your colleagues and ask them to join. Your union dues go to support contract negotiations by WSNA's attorneys and Nurse Representatives. You also will have representation from your Nurse Rep in meetings and grievances and WSNA attorneys representing you in arbitrations. WSNA is one of a handful of unions that gives back 3% of your dues to your membership to spend on Local Unit functions. Also, when you are a member of WSNA, you are a member of American Nurses Association and United American Nurses.

You may talk to a Local Unit Officer to get an application to join or go to WSNA's website: www.wsna.org. Payment for dues can be made through payroll deduction.

*Deb Neiman, RN
Washington State Nurses Association
Nurse Representative*

WHAT IS THE UNION UMBRELLA?

Well, just like an umbrella protects you from the rain, your Washington State Nurses Association "UMBRELLA" protects you from inequities in the workplace.



Do you know what an "At Will Employee" is? It's an employee who has no access to a Grievance Procedure, no "Just Cause" provision, no say in what safe patient care looks like, no united voice to express concerns regarding wages, hours, or working conditions.

Washington State Nurses Association wants each Registered Nurse at SWMC to know their rights under the CONTRACT. Your Union UMBRELLA!!! We want to partner with each of you in order to make your wages, hours, and working conditions what you want them to be. The way to make your contract more meaningful to you and your fellow nurses is for all of you to become participating members in your Local Unit.

WSNA and your Local Unit Officers have decided to do a series of Contract Information classes. **"CONTRACT 101"** The first will be **October 17th from 1910 until 2100**. The second class will be on **November 7th from 1910 until 2100**. Look for the room assignment in the Education Building. Join us to learn what your rights are under the contract.

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE STRONGER YOUR LOCAL UNIT IS THE BETTER RELATIONSHIP NURSES HAVE WITH THE HOSPITAL AND THEIR MANAGERS?

Another Note from the Desk of
Vicki Wornath, Co-Chair



Here it is Fall. It is one of my favorite times of the year, but this year I am a little more melancholy than usual. There will be changes in my life. After 40 years in nursing and 38 years in critical care. I can see the end of my career as a staff nurse, and

the end of 6 years as an officer in the Local Unit. There is so much to do yet, so much to learn, and tasks just started. How can I think about making these changes. Life is about changes, and how we grow with change.

When we organized as a Local Unit, we heard over and over about some of the things that were unfair from nurse to nurse, department to department. There were no methods in place to level the playing field, but now we have that through the grievances, staffing concern forms, and conference committee. Changes are taking place. The Local Unit has met with management on many occasions being your voice, expressing your concerns. Sometimes the results were not what we wanted but they were heard, evidence of that was made in our 3rd contract. Filing a grievance, filling out a staffing concern form, or letting your Local Unit know your issue is not causing trouble, it is however bringing attention to a matter that has caused you concern. YOU are the eyes, ears, and our voice. It is you who will make the wrongs right. It is you who will make your working conditions what you want by using the processes that are now in place.

Get your contract, read your contract, ask questions, and know your rights. Don't be afraid to stand up for what you believe in and what is right. Our history is rich with individuals who took a stand, and without them I might not be writing this letter to you today and you might not have the freedom to voice your concerns.

AAAHH! Fall what a wonderful time of the year. !!!!

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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.***