

Vital Signs 2.0



Communications Workers of America Local 1133



April 2016

What a difference safe staffing makes!

Primarily, a happy workplace

By Peggy Chadwick Ledwon
Past President, CWA 1133

Recently, I stepped out of my comfort zone and took a travel assignment in San Diego, California, at a women's and babies hospital.

I worked the night shift in PACU and primarily took care of C-sections, emergency GYN cases, and some vaginal deliveries. This was a 200-bed hospital and the night shift was staffed with 3 RNs, with up to 2 RNs on call. Call was voluntary, and if no one signed up, management covered it.

Even my worst shift in San Diego was nothing compared to my experiences working in Western New York, and here is why: In 1999, after a 13-year battle, nurses in California were successful in obtaining staffing ratio laws, but it wasn't until 2004 that all hospitals were required to abide by the law.

I found the nurses I worked with were happy and liked their jobs. After speaking to many who lived through this change, I learned some interesting information. California nurses take care of 2 fewer patients on med-surg floors than nurses who work without staffing ratios. The hospital has a proactive plan in place, in case volume increases or acuity becomes an issue.

Most nurses said that the biggest change was in areas that required on-call, such as PACU; the Emergency Department, where volume could increase quickly; and on the floors, where there was no more taking 6 or more patients. If the hospitals violated the safe-staffing law, they were fined up to \$25,000 for each violation.

Nurses rarely miss lunch or other breaks. I missed only 2 in the 3 months that I worked in California. My supervisor would cover me, if needed, so that I could take my allotted breaks. Job dissatis-

faction and burnout is much lower there, and statistics reflect fewer surgical deaths.

The downside of safe staffing is that, when volume is down, nurses are downsized and placed on call, or expected to help other areas if needed. Overall, no one seemed to really mind this.

When the laws went into effect, none of the ancillary staff lost their jobs, but there was some moving around of positions.

Everyone who I spoke with could not understand how RNs here could work without staffing ratios.

Working in California was a very positive experience. I always felt that I was giving good, safe care, and felt secure that if I got into a problem, I had adequate back-up. I ended my shift satisfied about the care I delivered, not going home thinking about what I could have or should have done.

California is the only state that has actual staffing-ratio laws. Most California facilities are unionized.

So, to all my New York colleagues, please keep fighting for this. Get involved, attend a rally, sign a petition, call your senator and let everyone know how important it is for New York to have safe-staffing laws. It could save someone's life.

And make yours better!

Get on the bus for Healthcare Lobby Day

Join CWA Local 1133 as we gather with other unions and allies to fight for the Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act on Tuesday, May 10. The bus departs Buffalo at 4:30 a.m. and returns at about 8 p.m. The bus trip, breakfast, lunch and T-shirt are included. For information or to register, call Terri at 828-1133, ext. 22, or tlegierski@cwa1133.com.

A Message From the President

Dear Members,

In March, we began negotiations for the RN and STC contracts (which expire in June) for Mercy Hospital members. The hospital decided to negotiate each contract at separate bargaining tables, which is different than in the past.

This is a waste of time and money because 90% of the articles for each contract are the same. This is a ploy to divide, conquer and weaken the union.

Erin Bowie, our CWA representative and lead negotiator, attends all sessions, along with myself; Kathy Kelly, vice president; and your elected bargaining committee members.

On Tuesdays we negotiate the STC contract, and on Thursdays the RN contract. All sessions are at the Fairfield Inn on Genesee Street, across from the airport. The sessions

are OPEN to ALL MEMBERS and we encourage every member to join us.

Your presence speaks volumes to management about our solidarity. We are in for the fight of our lives with this contract, so show up and show them we are up for the fight.

Presently, we are discussing non-economic articles that do not cost Mercy any money, but improve our work life. The hospital is only interested in GIVEBACKS, not IMPROVEMENTS. These are simple things such as attendance and tardiness, low census, shift rotation, and PTO buy-back.

We are met with resistance at every turn. They have indicated that they are looking for changes in spousal health coverage and higher insurance co-payments. We collected more than 1,000 member surveys and heard your message loud and clear.

NO CONCESSIONS,
ONLY IMPROVEMENTS!

Along with our bargaining tables, the St. Joe's RNs and Kenmore Mercy technical unit continue trying to get contracts. We are 2,700 members STRONG, all striving for the same thing: A fair, competitive contract.

We will not allow Catholic Health to divide us. Together we can make improvements, because together we are STRONG.

I am committed to continue working hard at this process, but we at the bargaining tables need your help. Read your mail, watch for leaflets, check the Website, attend meetings, come to bargaining, and wear your Union pins and colors. **Every member needs to be involved.** Remember, WE are the union.

In Solidarity,
Deborah Arnet

Detective work = increased dues revenue

Last August I came on board as secretary, and began to update our records to ensure that all members now have dues deducted from their paychecks. This has made a nice difference in our revenue stream!

In March, I took over as secretary/treasurer. I am honored and excited to add this to my resume. One of my responsibilities is to meet all of our new hires at orientation. This is where you receive your union membership card, dues authorization form, and a list of CWA board members and union stewards.

If you are new to the hospital, or transferred from another CHS facility, and did not receive this information, please call me at 828-1133. Also, **please notify me of any changes in your address** and other contact information.

The union has a good budget and financial plan for the 2015-2016 year. Financial balance sheets are available to all members during our quarterly meetings. Our next meeting is June 9 at 4:30 p.m. in the Union Hall on Elk Street.

I hope to see you there.

Annemarie Hawn
Treasurer/ Secretary

Don't sign away representation right

Recently, there has been an upswing in the number of **waivers** for union representation at the hospital. Under the Weingarten rights, an **employee is entitled** to a union representative when an investigation may lead to discipline, or when discipline is to be handed out.

Please exercise this right and have a union representative with you any time you meet with management about a disciplinary issue.

The hospital may have you sign a piece of paper **without explaining** that it waives your right to a union rep when you are receiving discipline. Or you might be told that there is no need for a rep to be present. This makes it very hard for us to represent you if the disciplinary action goes forward.

Do not meet with the employer alone when discipline is being considered.

In Solidarity,
Kathy Kelly
Vice-president

Workload and Staffing Meeting Schedules

Buffalo Mercy Hospital

R.N. contact: Kathy Kelly. Meets at 3 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month.

STC contact: John Wilson. Meets at 8 a.m. on the third Thursday of the month.

Locations: various

Kenmore Mercy (includes Practice Committee meeting)

R.N. contact: Rene Marriott

STC contact: Andrea Nugent

2016 Membership Meetings

All meetings held at CWA 1133 Local Hall
821 Elk Street, Suite A
Buffalo, NY 14210

Thursday, June 9 at 4:30 p.m.

Thursday, September 8 at 4:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 8 at 4:30 p.m.

Holiday party plans will be announced



The contract for Mount St. Mary's Hospital in Lewiston (which joined Catholic Health in 2014) expired in October 2015. Catholic Health extended the present contract, with acceptable wage increases and other improvements.

Catholic Health allowed Mount St. Mary's to keep its wage scale intact, unlike the other Catholic Health facilities.

Presently, St. Joe's RNs, Kenmore Technical, and Mercy RNs and STC are all at different bargaining tables. A reminder to all Kenmore RNs: We are next on the "chopping block" (January 2017).

It is important for us to support all the Catholic Health employees who are working hard at their bargaining tables. You can help by:

- Volunteering to leaflet
- Wearing union buttons and colors to show solidarity
- Attending a bargaining session

We will continue to keep you updated on the bargaining progress. Thank you for your support. Please keep updated and GET INVOLVED!

*Vanessa Quinn
Executive Board*



Photo courtesy of WNYLaborToday.com

CWA 1133 has friends in influential places!

Buffalo union leaders welcome home U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas Perez — a Buffalo native — March 8 at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations offices in the Market Arcade in Buffalo. Perez heard from area labor leaders during a panel discussion on the necessity for paid family leave. Pictured, left to right: Linda Bain, Vanessa Quinn, Sharon Scime, Ann Converse (CWA 1168), Terri Legierski, Sec. Perez, and Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul.

WNY unions take water, cash to Flint residents

*By Ann Converso, RN
Organizer, CWA 1168*

It is hard to believe this happened in our nation, but it did.

I refer to the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, where — for more than a year — city officials knowingly sent dangerously lead-contaminated water into the homes of its citizens. Now that it has been revealed, Flint residents cannot drink the water, cook with it, give it to their pets, nor bathe in it!

The problem began after Flint officials changed the city's water source. Residents immediately noticed the difference and began to complain. The water was brown, had a terrible smell, and many people developed skin issues. Citizens'

complaints were ignored for months. Independent water tests revealed the unsafe lead levels due to corrosion from the pipes that carry the water.

The union members in Western New York could not sit still while people in Flint have to live without water.

Bill Mayer of the Painters Union decided to ask unions from throughout our region to collect bottled water to take to Flint. John Mudie, president of the Central Labor Council, immediately endorsed the plan.

Union members in Buffalo, Dunkirk and other areas collected water and money at their union halls. All told, members collected more than \$5,500 and more than 40 tons of water.

The caravan to Flint consisted of a tractor-trailer, a huge U-Haul truck and two pick-up trucks so loaded down that the back fenders almost touched the ground. Tops Markets donated the tractor trailer. The Area Labor Federation donated

a significant amount of money to make the trip possible.

We arrived at a shopping center on Sunday morning and began to distribute the water at 9. We emptied all the trucks by 11 a.m.! That is how badly Flint residents need water.

There were cars lined up in the street. There were people who walked or rode bikes to pick up water. People cried over our generosity and efforts. Many blessed us for our kindness.

They are the ones who need the blessings, not us.

We need to do this again. I will forever be grateful for unions and what they do every day to better the lives of all.

I am also thankful to CWA 1168 for giving me a chance to go to Flint.

Go to Facebook Unions Got Flints Back or #LaborforFlint to see the great work of everyone involved.

Kudos to the WNY unions and others that made the Flint mission a success!



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We're on the web!

www.cwa1133.org

Member participation ESSENTIAL to forge better contract

By Robert Scime
Co-lead Mobilizer, BMH

Employees are the face of Buffalo Mercy Hospital. **We** – not the hospital management – demonstrate the commitment to excellence that our patients and visitors see.

Contract bargaining time is here. To get the fair contract we deserve, **we must stand up as one voice.**

We must demand to be treated with compassion and hospitality, and shown the respect we have earned by living up to the Mercy motto.

How can we accomplish this?
By not waiting on the sidelines for the other people we work

with to stand up to Catholic Health. CWA 1133 has a great group of mobilizers, but all union members need to keep track of what goes on at the bargaining tables, and tell other union members about it.

Information is available on our Website (www.cwa1133.org), and fliers will be distributed as warranted.

What else can you do?

- 1) Attend a bargaining session at the Fairfield Inn on Genesee Street.
- 2) Wear something red on Thursdays.
- 3) Wear CWA buttons and other gear.
- 4) Attend union meetings and activities.

5) Respectfully tell management that we won't accept contract concessions, only contract improvement.

Standing in the background, hoping the union can fix your work-related problems, is not a formula for success.

OUR union can remedy problems if **you** become involved. A domino effect of success is inevitable when we work together.

Administration is well aware of this, and is putting up formidable roadblocks.

The actions they take now are not a coincidence. They are meant to intimidate and divide us.

Be aware – be involved – be informed.

Most of all, be active!