

President's Message

By HealthCare-PSEA President Sandi Zubek, RN

LET'S BLOSSOM TOGETHER FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

As we transition from chilly winter days to bright and sunny spring days, it's time for the union nurses and lab techs to bloom into action! Let's turn our attention toward creating better conditions for both patients and medical professionals. We have a chance now to make a real change that will blossom in the coming months — let's get started.

Amidst our medical woes, the staffing crisis stands out as a particularly thorny challenge. Working in hospitals, nursing homes, and private care can be especially trying when we lack colleagues to help shoulder the load — resulting in fatigue-induced blunders which could steer us dangerously off course both professionally and personally. Resolving this is an imperative that shouldn't wait any longer.

When it comes to providing safe, high-quality health care for patients and nurses alike, we need state mandates. With regulations already in place for nursing homes thanks to HealthCare-PSEA's and

many other's efforts, we're hopeful for protective laws mandating patient-to-nurse ratios within hospitals.

Only California has a state law requiring facilities to follow such safe staffing ratios. After many years of chipping away at opposition, there now appears to be a real chance for the Pennsylvania

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House of Representatives to consider and pass such legislation. This would be a huge step forward to achieving this vital goal. Our HealthCare-PSEA members and allies have sent postcards, attended rallies, met with legislators, and much more, to help bring about this day. We are not done yet!

The good news is that together with other allies in the union world, we now have a chair of the House Health Committee who is going to hold hearings on the proposed ratio bill. We might be able to get votes both in committee and eventually on the full House floor. Stay tuned for outreach from your local leaders

and HealthCare-PSEA staff about opportunities to help promote this further.

Working together to better our lives, we're making an impact on the local level. We can proudly say that by building strong relationships with those around us and striving for stronger contracts — including higher wages and good benefits, among others — we are steadily increasing patient care standards where it counts: at home!

Thank you for all you do, both as health care workers and as members of your union.

Together we will move forward to a brighter future.

News from HealthCare-PSEA Locals

Bucks County Nurses Association

By Bonnie Neiman, HealthCare-PSEA UniServ Representative

As in many other employment sectors, health care is facing staffing shortages. This has been accentuated at Neshaminy Manor's long-term care facility, as demonstrated in the chart below depicting January staffing numbers.

January	Filled	Vacant	Fill Rate
2018	29	2	94%
2019	28	3	90%
2020	29	2	94%
2021	26	5	84%
2022	22	9	71%
2023	17	14	55%

To attract and retain nurses, the Bucks County Nurses Association (BCNA) repeatedly asked the administration for early bargaining sessions to commence and to extend the current collective bargaining agreement, which expires in December 2024. But the administration hasn't responded. Therefore, a petition was circulated in both the Health Department and Neshaminy Manor. The petition (shown at right, above) will be hand-delivered to the Bucks County Commissioners. All registered nurses signed this petition. BCNA is expecting a response from

administration in regard to the petition.

Petition

Bucks County Nurses

Association: *Health Department Nurses, First Level Supervisors, and Registered Nurses at Neshaminy Manor*

The Problem: *Due to labor shortages in health care, registered nurse staffing in Bucks County has reduced year after year since 2019.*

The Solution: *To retain existing nurses and attract new hires to Bucks County, nurses must be offered higher wages and paid lunches for all.*

The Action: *We request that negotiations begin one year early to open the existing contract for wage adjustments.*

Penn Highlands Hospital Nurses Association and Lab Technicians

By Maria Degnan, HealthCare-PSEA UniServ Representative

In November, the nurses and lab techs at Penn Highlands Connellsville ratified a three-year contract. The hospital system followed suit and ratified the new contract. The members were pleased to see the results of their solidarity throughout the entire bargaining process, which led to a good contract. Among the contract accomplishments:

- Members obtained a \$1.75/hour raise in the first year, 2 percent raise in the second year, and 2 percent raise in the third year.
- Changes to health care to

- return to Highmark coverage.
- ACLS (Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support) certification requirement.
- A move to digital job postings.
- A continuation of quarterly staffing and professional issues meetings.

Indiana Registered Nurses Association

By Tim Tuinstra, HealthCare-PSEA UniServ Representative

Indiana Registered Nurses Association officers and members continue to grapple with the significant staffing shortages affecting treatment and service for the Indiana community. CRNA recruitment and retention, as well as overall RN recruitment and retention, are part of ongoing conversations with the union and administration.

The pandemic took a toll on the hospital's nursing staff, reducing their numbers from 300 to 240 registered nurses in the bargaining unit. While improvements have been made in certain units since then, there are still areas struggling with staffing shortages prompting administration and union representatives alike to strategize ways to remedy these gaps. Additionally, members' individual issues continue to be addressed by union officers.

Somerset Professional Nurses Association

By Tim Tuinstra, HealthCare-PSEA UniServ Representative

Casey Brown, president of the Somerset Professional Nurses

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Safer Stronger Together: Message from AFT Conference

By Terry Myers, HealthCare-PSEA Board Liaison - AFT HealthCare

The AFT Nurses and Health Professionals 2022 Professional Issues Conference was held November 12-13 in Chicago, Illinois. I attended on behalf of HealthCare-PSEA.

The health care division, to which we belong, is the second largest nurses' union in the U.S. and represents health care professionals from Montana, Alaska, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut to name a few of the states represented at this conference.

The conference opened with a keynote address by Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. Members could explore exciting presentations on topics such as the post-pandemic mental health care landscape and professional development through nursing

continuing education. Moreover, attendees had an opportunity to learn about using the "Future of Nursing" report for advocacy purposes for better working conditions and better patient care outcomes. If members read these thought-provoking presentations, they were able to earn continuing credit contact hours.

There was an array of other options for health care professionals to gain valuable knowledge and skills. They could join one of three panel discussions which tackled topics such as work-related challenges, criminalization efforts against health care workers, and corporate influence on health care.

Additionally, 15 workshop sessions offered participants up to eight contact hours each. These workshops aimed to help attendees foster their health, safety, and well-being

while exploring effective labor management committees and understanding hospital financial analysis strategies — all with the goal of preventing workplace violence.

Finally, gathering with nurses from every corner of our country not only proved to be a great source of valuable information, but also allowed us the opportunity to socialize and share experiences.

We all agreed that brainstorming possible solutions or discussing how other professionals have tackled similar issues could present us with helpful ideas for whatever challenges lie ahead.

HealthCare-PSEA funds a limited number of members to attend the AFT Issues Conference each year so if you're interested in attending the next conference, speak with your local president.

News from HealthCare-PSEA Locals *(cont. from Page 2)*

Association at UPMC Somerset Hospital, resigned recently to take an administrative position. Her colleagues thank her for the leadership she provided the last few years and wish her well in her new position.

SPNA Vice President Sandi Zubek became president upon Brown's resignation. Stephanie Bennett, RN member, has been

appointed to fill the vice president vacancy. Zubek and Bennett will serve for the remainder of the terms for those officer positions. The local will have regular elections for officers coming up later this year.

Recruitment and retention issues continue to be a major challenge in Somerset, as elsewhere across the state and country.

Various incentives to help fix that over the past few years have helped, but the shortage continues. Ongoing discussions with the hospital continue efforts to find ways to handle the workload created by the shortages. Finally, union officers remain committed and focused on addressing members' concerns or issues.

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400 North Third Street, PO Box 1724
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Richard W. Askey
PSEA President

Aaron F. Chapin
PSEA Vice President

Jeffrey D. Ney
PSEA Treasurer

James G. Vaughan
PSEA Executive Director

Sandi Zubek
HealthCare-PSEA President

Erica Garcia
Designer/Layout

Paul Shemansky
Editor



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**SAVE
THE DATE**

May 2
"Safe Staffing Rally and Lobby Day"
Harrisburg

Member Benefits program spotlight

Restaurants, travel, shopping, and more!

There are many benefits to being a HealthCare-PSEA member, and one of them is that your membership saves you money through ACCESS.

You can find thousands of discounts and saving opportunities on restaurants, hotels, travel, shopping, and more. Start using these exclusive deals today.

Your membership could save you a ton! Visit www.psea.org/mb to learn more.

