

THE STETHO-SCOOP NEWSLETTER

LOCAL 4-200

SUMMER 2024/ VOL. 01



IN THIS INAUGURAL ISSUE

About This Newsletter

A Letter From Your President

Membership Meeting Schedule

Hope Blooms for RNs in New Brunswick

Unions 101: What is a Shop Steward?

Support from the Community

Open Hearts: 4-200 and Community Generosity

Local 4-200 Inspires RNs Across NJ

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

A LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

When elected to serve as your VP2, I shared in my bio: "I will enthusiastically continue to serve our diverse membership in achieving our shared goals, living our shared values, and actively working together to fully realize our potential as USW Local 4-200, a respected and unified force for good." I stand by this goal as I now stand with you, humbled and honored to serve as your President.

Together with you, your board, and with one another, let's please continue to support each other as we have through life's many different seasons. Every day is another chance to learn, to grow, to be the best versions of ourselves that we can be, to share whatever gifts we have, to feel emotion and achieve goals, and to be a meaningful connective thread in this amazing fabric of humanity and love- all as we directly affect the lives of those we care for. Nurses' resilience, resourcefulness, adaptability, skill, and knowledge empower us to accomplish all the miracles we are a part of daily.

I look with hope to the future that with our collective time, talents, and abilities, we can lift each other up, allowing grace and kindness through this process forward. It is the solidarity we share in caring for our patients and their families with excellence, empathy, and most importantly with safety that is the power of our union- your USW 4-200. People united to care for people. It speaks to our collective voice in improving working conditions and promoting better quality of life and I am thankful to collaborate with you all to do just that.

As Helen Keller said "Alone we can do so little but together we can do so much", I wholeheartedly agree and am excited for what we will all accomplish together. **-Jennifer Kwock, President**

REMEMBERING AUGUST 4TH, 2023

On August 4, 2023, the 1,700 nurses belonging to USW Local 4-200 walked out into the unknown. The overwhelming majority of members voted to strike over improved nurse staffing because of how deeply it was impacting both our own and our patients' wellbeing.

As our 134 day long strike progressed, we found ways to build solidarity within and across our many departments. We lifted each other up, grabbed national attention, and fought for justice for all nurses and patients across the state. Members became empowered by engaging with their local communities, and their workplace by becoming interested and active within the union.

This union newsletter has been established as a result of the dedication of members like you. We hope that this inaugural issue informs and excites you about what possibilities there are when you engage with the systems around you by using your voice.

Special Thanks To:

-The election committee led by Virginia Cheng for their diligence in meticulously following our bylaws to ensure a fair and transparent process in our executive board election in April.

-Our members choosing to donate to the North Brunswick Fire and Rescue Department, and the striking workers at Silgan Container in Edison.

Local 4-200 Executive Board:

President - Jennifer Kwock

Vice Presidents - Stephanie Barrera
- Nancy Lipschutz

Recording Secretary - Jenny Angeli Go

Financial Secretary - Emma Lapena

Treasurer - Jessica Newcomb

Chief Shop Stewards - Carol Tanzi

- Christian Kane

Trustees - Sweet Jessica Galvarole

- Ryan Siegel

Newsletter Contributors

Editor - Christian Kane

Writers - Amanda Leger

- William Mumford

Formatting - Erika Colindres

Contributors - Stephanie Belonia

- Sweet Jessica Galvarole

Please Email

4200Newsletter@gmail.com if you have any questions, concerns, stories, or interest in the newsletter team!

Membership Meetings:

Magyar Reformed Church

175 Somerset Street

New Brunswick

October 3rd, 2024 - 8 am

November 7th, 2024 - 8 pm

Events:

September 16-19th - Shop Steward Training

TBD: Trunk or Treat!



HOPE BLOOMS FOR RNS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Seven months have passed since the conclusion of our strike. In that time, 20-gauge IVs and ultrasound probes have replaced placards and pamphlets. The extremes of scorching heat and bitter cold on the picket lines have given way to the familiar chill of the operating room and ever-present warmth unique to the floors. Paystubs instead of gift cards, scrubs in lieu of solidari-tees, patient advocacy coupled once again with patient care : nursing at University Hospital has by all appearances resumed its regular rhythms.

Media coverage and casual conversations regarding the strike's progression only reinforce this perception, as if the story of our struggle reached its climax with the ratification of a contract inclusive of safe-staffing language and we now find ourselves ensconced in the epilogue. The temptation thus becomes to accept the contract, the strike's most obvious and tangible product, as its primary impact and to consider our responsibility toward the achievement of that end fulfilled.

This is not so.

Whether in the form of looming strikes for mandatory

staffing ratios in health care systems throughout New Jersey, or Senator Bernie Sanders' reference to the strike as a reminder of how "when you stand with your brothers and sisters in struggle, you become more of a human being" during an interview with British media this past February, our world has become replete with reminders that the contract no more represents the summation of our efforts than does a single blossom encompass the entirety of a fruiting tree.

Recognition that our impact endures and will manifest in ways that we may not anticipate highlights our true responsibility; that is, to continue to raise awareness among our communities of the importance of mandatory staffing ratios and to support our colleagues at other institutions who find themselves where we once found ourselves not so long ago.

Moving forward, as you continue to place patient care at the center of all that you do, never take for granted the power that you wield as both a union member and a nurse with unique gifts and experiences. After all, our story, as caregivers, advocates, and agents of change, has only just begun. **-Will Mumford**

UNIONS 101: WHAT IS A SHOP STEWARD?

If unions are formed by workers to improve their benefits and working conditions, shop stewards are the natural leaders who have stepped up into a protective role. They are trained in understanding how the contract and company policy interact, and ensuring that the guarantees we have bargained for are defended. Anything that is in our collective bargaining agreement (CBA, or "contract") is protected and cannot be changed without the union's consent.

Management knows company policy and how it relates to its employees, but is not always aware that the contract is enforced over policy when the two disagree. And if the union and management disagree on what the contract says, there are processes to ensure that a fair resolution is reached. When the

union initiates this process, it is called a grievance.

Like any form of government, the union works best with your participation. If you feel that your contractual rights aren't being respected, or that something is unfair and should be addressed in our next contract: you should speak with a shop steward. If nurses are patient advocates, stewards are worker advocates. We're here to help you be a part of the greater local. Just like a patient should share their concerns with their nurse, us nurses should share our concerns with our shop stewards.

We have nearly twenty members who have stepped up to train as stewards this month, please look forward to working with them as they learn the role! **-Christian Kane**

THE HISTORY OF LABOR DAY

On June 28, 1894, Congress passed an act establishing the first Monday in September each year as Labor Day to honor the contributions workers have made for all workers. The 40 hour work week had not yet been established by law. Child labor would not be outlawed until 1938. As of that first Labor Day, hundreds of Americans had been killed in labor related violence between strikers and law enforcement, federal troops, or company militias. Violence would begin to lessen over time as the rights of workers and management were established and protected by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). This Labor Day, please take a moment to remember those that came before us and fought hard for the rights that we often take for granted today.

UPDATES FROM THE LOCAL

April- The Collaborative Staffing Practice Council began meeting to establish staffing guidelines for units not specified in the contract. CINJ Outpatient Department was the first to be addressed.

July- Enforceable staffing guidelines began as per the contract. There have been no explicit deficiencies reported, with staffing protests received relating to acuity and deficient ancillary staff. The hospital has been hiring significantly more nurses, with over 120 in July and August alone.

August- The 4-200 executive board attended the USW District 4 Education Conference for new officer training.

SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY

Here are some excerpts from letters of support that we received during the strike from communities near and far.

"What you nurses are doing is beyond your hospital, beyond RWJ, beyond NJ, its for nurses everywhere. Thank you!"

Maria of Paterson, NJ

"Your passion to support your patients and community under great duress is an example for us all!" **David of Bloomfield NJ**

"We support you because you've opened the door for healthcare workers to stand up in New Jersey." **Isaac of Jersey City, NJ**

"Stay strong – the community is behind you!" **Troy of East Brunswick, NJ**

"I admire you all more than you could ever know. The strength you all have is palpable. Solidarity forever!" **Beth of Brooklyn, NY**

"As a nursing student, I deeply appreciate the determination y'all have to fight for a just healthcare workplace for yourselves and patients. I talk about your struggle with my classmates regularly, and we are behind you fully. Solidarity." **Gabe of New Milford, NJ**

"Your concern for your patients is to be applauded. Not many people would give up their benefits so others could be benefited." **Christina of Anderson County**

"As a patient and former healthcare worker, staffing is critical for all. Stay united and strong. Many appreciate you!" **Karyn of Washington D.C.**

"You are fighting for nurses everywhere! We need safe staffing ratios nationwide! Don't give up!" **Taylor of Rochester, NY**

"Solidarity from Wisconsin!" **Phil of Madison, WI**

HIGHLIGHTS



United Steelworkers Helped Gatecrash Magnet Conference

The United Steelworkers made our presence known at the 2023 ANCC Magnet Conference in Chicago, IL. A massive projection could be seen by all approaching the conference building's facade, and attendees were seen with our informational pamphlets.



Bernie Sanders Brings Us National Spotlight

Senator Bernie Sanders gave our struggle national attention, with letters of support, virtual town halls, and held an official US Senate HELP Committee hearing here in New Brunswick on October 27th, 2023. Here he is pictured asking a committee of nurse leaders questions regarding staffing ratios



Nurse Blake Supports 4-200 with Rally and Toy Drive

A special thanks to Nurse Blake for helping spread our message across social media, showing up to New Brunswick to demonstrate with us, and for organizing a beautiful toy drive for the children of 4-200 nurses.

OPEN HEARTS: 4-200 NURSES AND OUR COMMUNITY ALIKE SHARE GENEROSITY AND HOPE WITH ONE ANOTHER



It is far more meaningful to be generous and empathetic while suffering than when we are content. The qualities that make nurses so impactful have led some of us to have a ceaseless passion for caring for our communities. We would like to recognize the selfless dedication and hard work of some of our members in caring for their communities.



Vicki McGuire thoughtfully coordinated a blood drive through the NY Blood Center. As nurses at a Level 1 Trauma Center and Comprehensive Cancer Center, we see firsthand the tremendous impact these donations have on our patients. The initial drive was so successful that Vicki extended it to help fill the ongoing need. In one month, our membership was credited for twenty-eight donations, which means twenty-eight lives saved.



Stephanie Belonia, Stephanie Tovos, Erika Colindres, Kimberly Haspel, Anita Cruz, and Jesica Burgos coordinated the Nightmare Before Safe Staffing Trunk or Treat. Our membership donated candy and gently-used costumes for the event, which was open to the community. Twenty-seven cars lined the union office parking lot, decorated in all manners of fun from Cookie Monster to Barbie to Star Wars. Participants voted for their favorite vehicles with our Shock Trauma, PICU, and CINJ units being the top picks.

Karen Carey is responsible for Backpacks for David, an annual drive conceived to celebrate the memory of her son and his love of volunteer work. Last year the drive collected twenty-four backpacks filled with clothing, toiletries, and food for the homeless and disadvantaged. Lori Haman and Carrie Harmer assisted in delivering the backpacks to Elijah's Promise in New Brunswick. Karen reports that it was the most successful year thus far—so much so that this November she is doubling her goal.



Last but not least, our strike was rounded out with the Solidarity Toy Drive for the children of our nurses. Our membership, their loved ones, and nurses from around the country donated gifts from an Amazon wish list sponsored by Nurse Blake. Countless hours were dedicated to the season of giving by Jennifer Kwock and her family, Nina Kesely and her family, Melanie Fryar-Francis, Michelle Lee, Jenny Torres, Joanna Backiel, MaryLynn Dupuis, Stephanie Torres, Melody Aquino, Jessica Aquino, and Carol Tanzi. Nearly five-hundred presents were delivered to the children by Santa himself and his very own North Brunswick Police escort. -



Amanda Leger

LOCAL 4-200 INSPIRES RNS ACROSS THE STATE TO DEMAND, AND WIN, BETTER STAFFING

The nurses of USW 4-200 set a precedent for nurses in New Jersey when we took a stand to protect the safety of our patients and our profession. Since our historic contract, nurses organized under HPAE successfully bargained for their own improved staffing ratios. Nurses at Cooper University, Englewood Hospital and Palisades Medical Center, secured better staffing ratios after their members authorized strikes and held town halls regarding staffing.

HPAE president Debbie White credited her members' resolve to our inspiring fight for safe staffing. Her statement was quoted by NorthJersey.com as, "That strike gave us much needed resolve. Feelings of apprehension were among the employers much more than the workers." With these victories following in our footsteps, another 3100 nurses have secured improved staffing ratios. This will ensure higher quality care for patients, and higher job satisfaction for nurses.

Research has repeatedly shown these to be the primary drivers of the staffing crisis afflicting our profession. Five more HPAE hospitals will be negotiating contracts next year. As more hospitals demonstrate that this is the way to move forward with healthcare in New Jersey, the fight for safe staffing legislation gains more leverage.

After holding a NJ Senate Health Committee hearing on nurse staffing in January, Senator Vitale made the first significant revision to his bill in nearly 20 years. The proposed Patient Protection and Safe Staffing Act (S2700/A3683) would establish staffing ratios for both nurses and CCTs in all hospitals across NJ. Since this new bill was introduced, it has continued earning support in both the NJ Senate and Assembly, however some of the sponsors of the previous bill have yet to sign on the new one as cosponsors.

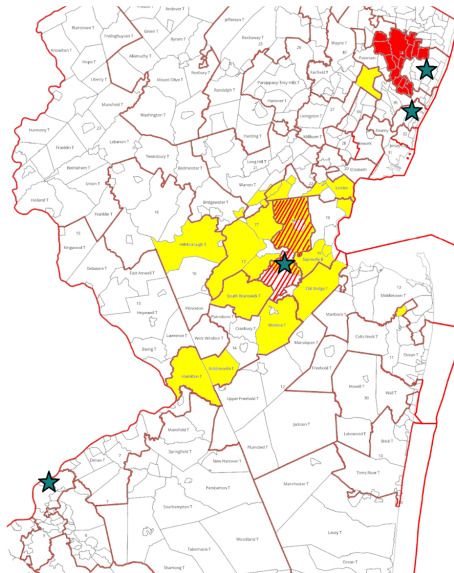
If every representative currently in office that had ever cosponsored the bill in the past sponsored it now, A3683 would have 26 cosponsors in the assembly, and S2700 would have 20 in the senate. For reference, there are 80 members of the assembly, and 40 senators total. Support has NEVER been higher for this bill.

Listed below are the representatives that were cosponsors of the bill in 2023 that have yet to cosponsor the bill this year. If you see one of your representatives, please reach out to their offices once again and remind them to support bills S2700/A3683. The bill has been endorsed by the New Jersey State Nurses Association, and federal legislation has been endorsed by the American Nurses Association.

-Christian Kane

Representative

Sen. Vin Gopal	District 11	(732)-695-3371
Sen. Andrew Zwicker	District 16	(908)-308-8672
Asm. Robert Karabinchak	District 18	(732)-548-1406
Asm. Sterley Stanley	District 18	(732)-875-3833
Sen. John McKeon	District 27	(973)-377-1606
Sen. Teresa Ruiz	District 29	(973)-484-1000
Sen. Nellie Pou	District 35	(973)-247-1555
Asm. Lisa Swain	District 38	(201)-576-9199
Asm. Chris Tully	District 38	(201)-576-9199



Pictured: Townships (yellow) and State Legislative Districts (red) that have endorsed safe staffing legislation thanks to our members' appeals to their communities. Hospitals with contractual staffing ratios pictured with stars.

