

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**

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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

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.



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.

