

## An Open Letter From Immediate Past President & Bargaining Team Member



Karen McDaniel



I am Karen McDaniel and as your past president of this chapter of Local 121RN, I have been on our Bargaining Team since 1990. In those early years, we increased start rates each year in order to attract new grads and also won across-the-board raises for RNs and Professionals. After several years, we realized that there wasn't much difference in wage rates between someone who was just hired and someone who had worked at the hospital for 10 years. We then fought for a wage scale which would pay people in a fair and equitable manner.

In our last contract, RNs won a wage scale that is based on our years of experience as RNs. RNs receive step increases on our hospital anniversary date during the first seven years and then again on years 10, 12, 15, 17, 20, 25 and 30. We agreed to allow management to phase in the scales over three years with maximum raises of 9.25 percent. Today, 146 employees are still below scale. More than half of these employees are within 3 percent of the scale. The hospital recently proposed an innovative way to bring these RNs to scale — rather than increase their pay, management wants to lower the scale.

In bargaining, the hospital has made a proposal that not only attacks our wage scale, but upon close examination, doesn't make sense.

### Providence has proposed that:

- All employees who are on or above the wage scale would receive a wage freeze for two years — that represents about 80 percent of us. This means we get NO increases at all for two years! No across-the-board and no step increase.
- The wage scale will be decreased by 3 percent in 2011

and decreased by another 3 percent in 2012. Current RN's wages won't be reduced, but new employees will be hired at a lower rate.

- Any employee who is below scale would be moved to the new scale. This is not as generous as it sounds. Remember, the hospital is proposing that the scales move downward. One-third of the people below the current scale would not get an increase because they are now at the new and "unimproved" lower wage scale.

### Upon thinking about this at length, I realized that:

- An RN who chooses to improve her skills (obtain an RNC or a BSN, for instance) and wants to climb the RN Clinical Ladder, depending whether it is 2011 or 2012, the RN might not receive an increase at all. An interesting position for a hospital which is hoping to attain magnet status and encourage RNs to go back to school.
- In two years, almost 80 percent of us would be above scale, which will make it even more difficult to bargain our next contract.
- One way management in other industries have tried to weaken workers is to create tiered wage scales and benefits so that long-term employees have better wages and benefits than new employees. Interesting, very interesting.

Our Bargaining Team is asking us to vote on whether we should hold an informational picket in the upcoming weeks. Please make your opinion count by casting your ballot!

## Voting Schedule

Friday, May 20, 2011

*Voting All Day & Night!*

Look for roving ballot boxes OR

AM Shift Change in Clark Street Pkng Lot  
11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. & 6:45 p.m. to 8 p.m.

in NCR 4

*Don't know what an Info Picket is or how it helps in contract negotiations?*

*See next page for the answer!*

Since Providence purchased Tarzana, it seems there has been a never-ending flow of changes. But one thing that has remained constant is our unity within our Union, SEIU Local 121RN, as RNs and professionals. However, with retirements and such, we have a whole population of relatively new RNs. In fact, 12 to 15 percent of Tarzana's RN and professional workforce have less than two years of experience here.

Because of that, we want to go over what our Union consists of and some of the actions we take as a Union and why.

### What is our Union?

Our Union is the whole of all RNs and professionals who are employed at Providence Tarzana. *We are our*

*Union!* In order to win competitive wages and benefits and patient and nurse safety language in our contract, we must stick together and fight for a contract that's good for everyone in our Union. *This is called collective bargaining.*

We pay dues to support our Union so that we pay our share of retaining our Union Representatives as well as Union support staff, such as attorneys, RN specialists, research and communications experts, the executive director and more.

### Why do we ask members to wear stickers and Union colors and/or scrubs?

Wearing stickers and Union colors is a visual statement to management that we are united in the fight for a strong and fair contract. It shows that we are talking with each other about the contract and we are willing to stand up for our contract! The more members who wear stickers and colors, the stronger the statement.

### What is an Informational Picket and why do we hold them?

An informational picket is held in order to let our patients and the greater public know about our issues. Much of the language we fight for in our contract has to do with patient and/or nurse safety, and everyone has a stake in something like that. In the

## Union 101

past, we have fought to have staffing ratios and safe needle practices written in our contract – things that we take for granted today. During an in-

formational picket, members would walk the line with a picket sign just like in a strike, only you would do so during your off time — during lunch, before or after work or on your day off.

- During an informational picket, our Bargaining Team expects members to be on the picket line for at least two hours before or after shift or around lunchtime.

### What is a Strike and how is it different from an Informational Picket?

A strike is undertaken after the membership votes to authorize the Bargaining Team to call a strike. It is generally a last resort in contract negotiations. During a strike, RNs would be asked to not go to work, usually for a specific duration like a week or two weeks. RNs, in turn, will not be paid for those days they do not show up. Even though the hospital does not pay RNs who don't work during a strike, it is extremely expensive for a hospital to hire replacement workers to cover a strike. It also shows management that what we are fighting for is so important that we're willing to lose pay over it.

- During a strike, members who participate would be expected to walk the picket for a couple of hours each day. This shows management and the public how many of our members support the strike.

Our Bargaining  
Team

Jim Owen  
Karen McDaniel  
Karen Pelone

Julia Clare  
Sue Stephens  
Sandy Thompson