

# UNION ADVOCATE

## To JOIN US, CONTACT:

SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin  
4513 Vernon Blvd, Suite 300  
Madison, WI 53705  
608-277-1199  
larryw@seiuhcwi.org



PUBLISHED BY AND  
FOR OUR UNION  
MEMBERS AT  
UWHCA

VOLUME 2013  
ISSUE 6

## IS UWHCA REALLY A NURSE "MAGNET HOSPITAL" DURING 2014?

BY MIKE CORDES, RN, KAREN GESZVAIN, RN, CAROLYN MEYER, RN, ANN LOUISE TETREAU, RN

Over the years, UWHC employees worked tirelessly to improve working conditions and quality care. Through our efforts, achieved through union bargaining, we achieved many successes like improving staffing and banning mandatory overtime. These efforts did not go unnoticed, and UWHC was awarded with Magnet status. These provisions led to UWHC's Magnet designation; the conditions didn't come from our Magnet status.

The award was, and remains, a trophy for the UWHC Board to display as evidence of its credibility, more important to administration than to the average nurse who appreciates and helped cause the pt centered and nurse empowering conditions.

We've seen nurses approach management with ideas for improvements that would benefit pt and staff, but UWHC management too often rebuffs these for flimsy reasons. The general attitude of management has seemed that they listen to our collective voice because they have to. They haven't treated empowered care providers as partners, but as adversaries. In the absence of a union contract, nurses serving on committees to affect pt care will likely find their participation even more frustrating.

We could soon lose our independent voice at the table through our union contract and our contract provisions that helped UWHCA gain the acclaimed "Magnet Status".

Without a contract, we will be subject to anything that management wants. Not only would our voice be in

jeopardy, but we could lose all the rights we won over the years. This will seriously affect morale and pt care. Working through 5000 STRONG as a union, we have frequently offered to talk with management about our concerns about the threatened loss of our independent voice, but they've expressed no interest to date (but we won't and shouldn't give up).

According to a survey published in the January issue of Nursing 2006, unlike a union contract, Magnet does not equate to higher salaries. An independent 2008 study "concluded that the presence of unionized workers meant higher quality of care." Nor does the Magnet designation does not necessarily mean higher quality care - after paying the application fee, during 2001 sixty-five percent of applicants were granted magnet status.

In short, it is our union contract and independent voice that has made UWHC great.

### Qualities of a Magnet Hospital

#### Shared governance:

UW hospital has several nurse committees (education, research, practice, etc.), but the presence of committees without independent nurse voices is not shared governance. Except for our speaking up as a union, the general attitude of UWHC for decades has been that the executives in administration make the decisions. The only example UWHC cites for shared governance in its "We are Magnet Study Guide for Success" highlighting collaborative governance "are advocating for

*Continued on Next Page...*

The UNION ADVOCATE *is looking for articles like* this one. Please share your experiences at UW Hospital and Clinics with your co-workers. Write to the union office on 4513 Vernon Blvd. Suite 300 Madison, WI 53705 or email [LarryW@seiuhcwi.org](mailto:LarryW@seiuhcwi.org).

**Thank you to all who offered their opinions in the semi-annual Staffing Survey that will be helpful during forthcoming Labor-Management Meetings.**

...Continued from page 1

resources of a shorter version of a male external catheter, softer flossing tool for oncology patients and a new dressing for use with intravascular ports." Is this the best example of nurse empowerment that we have through shared governance? It must be because this is the only example included.

Promoting Professional Growth:

UWHC does encourage all personnel to grow professionally and provisions in our union contract enable this.

Collegial Relationships:

Although UWHC purports to exhibit this, it fails. Staff nurses are routinely disrespected by those above them in title or educational attainment. Professional experience doesn't carry the respect it deserves.

Professional Recognition:

The UWHC NCAP program for recognizing excellence of nurses is grossly inadequate. Long term experienced nurses are accorded the same designation as a one year nurse. The process for acquiring higher competence is a maze of paperwork that is highlighted by an essay contest. Too little objective evidence is used to determine competence. The advancement must also be renewed every three years and applicants should have no discipline on record. The NCAP program, like a lot of UWHC programs is merely a facade.

**THANK YOU TO ALL THAT SIGNED PETITIONS DELIVERED TO CEO DONNA KATEN-BAHENSKY AND THE UWHCA BOARD!**

# HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION HEARS FROM UWHC EMPLOYEES DELIVERED 1,198 SIGNED PETITIONS

On December 4th, 108 union members and community allies rallied outside UW Hospital and Clinics before turning in 1,198 petitions to Donna and the Board requesting they formally recognize our right to have an independent voice on the job. Our efforts have not gone unnoticed.

The December 11th issue of the Capital Times printed an editorial in support from Michael Schuler, senior administrator of the First Unitarian Society. Additionally, staff writer Jack Craver covered our action.



**We're gaining momentum and the public is watching!**

**WWW.SEIUHCWI.ORG**