



The President's Corner

Dottie Hararas, RN

Welcome to the historic first edition of our official newsletter, *Nurses United News*.

I'd like to thank everyone involved in the production of this publication. It is a compilation of articles written by members of Nurses United, and I am grateful to each contributor.

I'd like to personally thank Nadine Dery, RN, NU corresponding secretary, who has accepted the appointment as managing editor of this newsletter. Also, a special nod goes to Stephen Frum, RN, our chief shop steward, who researched publication companies and assisted us in locating Wordfirm Inc., which has provided the template, design, and layout of this first edition.

Finally, a very big thank-you to Patty Ronayne, RN, NU board member, who kept us all on task, reminding us to get our articles in, and who provided a lot of enthusiasm and energy as we worked toward the completion of this project. ■

ADO Forms and the QPCC

Patty Ronayne, RN, Nurses United Board Member

You may have heard the term *ADO*. It is an acronym for *assignment despite objection*, and it refers to a tool that the union utilizes when there is a problem in the work setting – for example, when a situation seems unsafe or undesirable and, in the opinion of the professional nurse, needs improvement. We encourage nurses to submit an ADO form when such a work setting exists. Remember to fax your completed ADO form(s) to the union office at 301-588-8854.

Assignment Despite Objection (ADO) refers to a tool that the union utilizes when there is a problem in the work setting – for example, when a situation seems unsafe or undesirable and, in the opinion of the professional nurse, needs improvement.

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ADO forms can be downloaded from our Web site at www.nursesunited.org by clicking on the Forms link. Blank ADO forms should also be on all unit union bulletin boards. Our union representatives have put one on each board. The union bulletin boards also should have updated contact information for elected Nurses United leadership and a pocket-sized copy of the collective bargaining agreement. If you need to have any of these items replaced, let your unit union contact person know, call a union shop steward, or call the union office at 301-558-8851.

When an ADO form is faxed to the union office, it is reviewed and then forwarded to the members of the Quality Patient Care Committee (QPCC), which includes four Nurses United union members. Remember to give the original to your manager or supervisor, make and retain a copy for yourself, and fax a copy to the union office at 301-588-8854.

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Check Notes

Betsy Cerullo, RNC, Nurses United Treasurer

This is the first of a series of articles that I will be writing for *Nurses United News*. This article will describe some of the duties and responsibilities of the treasurer.

First and foremost, the treasurer must be financially and fiscally responsible for members' dues money and how it is allocated. Specific guidelines have been established for these allocations. One is the requirement of *two* board member signatures on every check that is written. This rule ensures that no one officer has jurisdiction over, or control of, the check-writing functions of the union. Currently, five board members have been authorized to write checks and are identified by the bank as cosigners for the Nurses United account.

When a check needs to be written because approved money or approved time has been spent on union activities, a reimbursement form must be completed and submitted. These forms provide a paper trail indicating how, when, where, by whom, and on what the money has been spent.

This year we initiated the use of check cards. Four board members are authorized to utilize the cards when making preapproved purchases for the union. These purchases are covered by the Nurses United 2005 budget, which was unanimously ratified by the membership this past March. The check cards allow the authorized officers to charge the NU account directly rather than using their own personal funds and waiting for a reimbursement check, as was previously required. The check cards have provided a much

more professional mechanism by which to make purchases for union needs. A Statement of Purchase Activity for each expenditure, with original receipts, must be completed anytime the check card is utilized. All paperwork is then forwarded to the treasurer by the end of each month so that the monthly statement from the bank can be reconciled.

One of the greatest business advantages of utilizing the check card is that it has enabled Nurses United to establish a credit history and financial reputation within the business community. Each month at the NU Executive Committee board meeting, the president and treasurer of Nurses United both sign off on the prior monthly statement, verifying that the bank account and statement are balanced.

In the coming months, I will begin to prepare the budget for 2006 based on the expenditures incurred in 2004 and 2005. I will be looking ahead to accommodate the financial needs and requirements of the union. As specified in our constitution and bylaws, which were unanimously ratified by the membership, the annual budget and expenditures are approved each year by the membership at the annual meeting called for this purpose.

By request, any member in good standing may make an appointment with me, or my designee, to review the budget and any financial records of Nurses United. We are very proud that we are continuing to uphold the fiduciary responsibilities required of the treasurer and officers of Nurses United. ■

Nurses United NEWS

Official Newsletter of Nurses United of the National Capital Area

Managing Editor: Nadine Dery, RN

Nurses United of the
National Capital Region
8737 Colesville Road, Suite 950
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Phone: 301-588-8851
Fax: 301-588-8854
Web Page: www.nursesunited.org
E-mail: nursesunitedorg@aol.com

Nurses United Officers

Dorothy "Dottie" Hararas, RN
President (2003–2005)
5F, Ext. 6561

Suzanne "Sue" Johnson, RN
Vice President (2004–2006)
3H, Ext. 7221

Stephen Frum, RN
Chief Shop Steward (2004–2006)
4H, 202-494-8083

Ruth "Betsy" Cerullo, RNC
Treasurer (2003–2005)
5F, Ext. 6561

Nadine Dery, RN
Corresponding Secretary
(2003–2005)
2G, Ext. 7121

Marie Edelen, RN
Recording Secretary (2003–2005)
2G, Ext. 7121

Cynthia Coleman, RN
Board Member (2004–2006)
5FN, Ext. 7010

Josephine Owusu, RN
Board Member (2004–2006)
2NEIMC, Ext. 9140

Patricia "Patty" Ronayne, RN
Board Member (2004–2006)
2G, Ext. 7121

Please address all correspondence to
Managing Editor, NU News
Nurses United of the
National Capital Area
8737 Colesville Rd. Suite 950
Silver Spring, MD 20910

The information in this newsletter is provided as a service to Nurses United members. It does not constitute legal advice. If you have a workplace problem, before you file a grievance or take legal or other action, please read the union contract and contact a shop steward or the chief shop steward.

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Communication: An Organization's Key to Success

Dottie Hararas, RN, Nurses United President

Did you know that Nurses United maintains a database containing the e-mail addresses of more than 600 of our members? This gives the union an efficient and effective way to provide up-to-date and pertinent information to our members. If you are not receiving e-mails from Nurses United, then we need your e-mail address. It will be kept confidential, as is all other information in our database. Please send your e-mail address to us at nursesunitedorg@aol.com. Also, if your e-mail account changes, be sure to send your new e-mail address to us so we can keep our database current.

We also ask that you let us know when your home address and/or phone number changes; otherwise, important information from Nurses United may not reach you. We want to stay in touch with you as we draw closer to another contract year.

Another means of communication is our professionally developed and maintained Web site: www.nursesunited.org. Our mission, vision, and goals are presented on the home page. We hope you will visit the site often, as it is updated on a regular basis. You can visit the various areas of the site by clicking the links at the top of the home page. One section of the site is entitled NU Elected Officers, which includes background information on each union official who sits on the NU board of directors and his or her term of office.

Another link takes you to the organization's constitution and bylaws, which are the rules by which our organization is run. This document was developed by our members and then unanimously ratified at a general membership meeting. This document states that the ultimate decision-making authority of Nurses United rests with the membership. Between meetings of the membership, the Executive Committee possesses such authority.

General membership meetings are held four times a year; the Executive Committee meets monthly, with occasional additional meetings when needed (see accompanying article entitled "Executive Committee Board Meetings").

Another interesting link is the one labeled FAQs (frequently asked questions), which contains information on the who, what, where, and why relating to the creation of Nurses United early in 2003.

Perhaps the most important link is to the 2004–2007 collective bargaining agreement contract. We are proud of the gains we made in the last round of negotiations. Of course, the contract can always be improved, so we encourage our members to communicate the changes they would like to see in the next contract. Our union is proud to be an open, honest, transparent, and account-

able organization; hence the contract terms were placed online for all to see and review.

All Nurses United members should have a blue pocket-sized contract for their individual use and reference. These personal-size contracts were distributed to all nurses on all shifts during the summer of 2004. As new nurses come on board, each one receives a copy from me at the new nurse orientation session that I conduct each month.

We maintain phone contact at both our main office in Silver Spring and our satellite office in the East Building on the campus of Washington Hospital Center. You may call and leave a message at either 301-588-8851 or 202-877-6033. If you leave a message in a voice mailbox, your call will be returned as promptly as possible by a Nurses United elected official.

We are also extremely proud of our system of shop stewards (see the accompanying article "Shop Steward Report"), who are elected union representatives and who have pledged to support the mission, vision, and goals of the union. Like the union officers, the shop stewards all work as clinical nurses at WHC. If you need union representation, we urge you to call one of them for assistance. Their work is coordinated by the union's elected chief shop steward, who facilitates regular meetings and educational sessions for the shop stewards, all of whom are willing and able to provide union representation on your behalf in the work setting.

There should be a union bulletin board on every unit where a nurse works. The union provides regular informational flyers with the latest news, pertinent announcements (including membership meeting dates, times, and locations), and all matters related to the nomination and election of officers, board members, and shop stewards. Watch your bulletin board for the latest information. If you do not have a bulletin board on your unit, contact the union so one can be put up.

Finally, this past December, Nurses United started what we hope will be an annual tradition. The first Wednesday in December of each year, we hope to have an all-day open house and holiday party from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m., complete with snacks and beverages. The open house hours will enable all nurses from all shifts to come visit the union office, meet the union's elected officials, and network with each other in a relaxed, partylike environment. We hope you will mark your calendar for that day.

If you think of other ways in which we can communicate the news and information of Nurses United, please let us know. ■

Know Your Contract Rights to Union Representation

An explanation of one of the most important rights of union members

Josephine Owusu, RN, Nurses United Board Member

It starts like this: A nurse is approached by a manager, who asks, “May I speak to you for a second in my office?” The nurse asks whether the discussion pertains to discipline or an investigation. The manager responds by saying that she is conducting an investigation (or addressing a disciplinary matter). This invitation by a manager to meet with a nurse regarding an investigatory or a disciplinary matter should elicit the following response from the nurse: “I’ll need to contact a shop steward so she or he can attend the meeting with me.”

Unfortunately, too many nurses go into their manager’s office without exercising their Weingarten rights, which entitle a nurse to union representation in any disciplinary or investigatory meeting by and between a nurse and management. New language in the union contract (article 3.2 c) states that a nurse has “the right to interrupt a meeting that has already commenced to request Union representation.” This applies to a meeting to discuss discipline and/or a meeting to discuss an investigation that may lead to discipline.

Representation is your right! And if you cannot find a union representative right away, at your request the manager must delay the meeting until a shop steward is located. The nurse has 24 hours to locate a union representative (please refer to article 3.2 c of the current collective bargaining agreement for the precise language). However, the manager also has the right to remove the

employee from the work setting, depending on the issue involved, until a union representative can be located. In this situation, the nurse still has the right to union representation even though she or he has been removed from the work setting. It is up to the nurse, then, to locate and arrange for a shop steward to assist in her or his case.

Remember the following key points:

- 1.** Do not go into any investigatory or disciplinary meeting without a union representative. You have the right to postpone such a meeting for up to 24 hours so that you can secure representation.
- 2.** Meet with or talk to your shop steward prior to any investigatory or disciplinary meeting to exchange the detailed information both of you will need before going into the manager’s office.
- 3.** A nurse has 20 working days (excluding holidays) to file a grievance, calculated from the time the grievance arose or from the time the grievant or the union became aware (or should have become aware) of the facts giving rise to the grievance. Check the union leaders list on your union board to find a shop steward. You do not necessarily need to reach the person listed who covers your unit; you can contact anybody on the list.
- 4.** Be an empowered, enlightened member; exercise your Weingarten rights. ■

Notes from the Recording Secretary

Marie Edelen, RN

Welcome to the first official issue of the Nurses United newsletter! During the 2004 negotiations of our first contract, both parties agreed to hold staff meetings on each unit and on all shifts.

The purpose of these meetings is to present the provisions of the contract that deal with article 3.2: discipline and discharge and the nurses’ right to union representation. Many nurses have already attended these meetings arranged by union leadership, and the feedback has been positive. Our members are eager to participate and become better informed.

During these unit visits and presentations, the union is making sure that nurses understand that they have the right to have a union representative present at any investigatory or disciplinary meeting that involves them. A nurse may also interrupt any meeting that becomes a disciplinary or investigatory meeting to ask

for a union representative. If this right is denied, the nurse must report this to the union.

The union plans to visit all units, so if we have not yet been to your unit, please be assured that we will be coming (see contract article 3.2 e). To date, we have visited nearly 75 percent of the units. If you have any comments or questions regarding this matter, feel free to contact me at extension 7121, Monday–Friday between the hours of 3 p.m. and 11 p.m.

As recording secretary, I would also like to remind you that any member of Nurses United in good standing may request to review the minutes of NU executive board meetings or general membership meetings. Please contact me in advance to set up a time and place to review the minutes. ■

Shop Steward Report

Stephen Frum, RN, Chief Shop Steward

Nurses United has 30 shop stewards – 21 elected stewards and 9 elected officers/board members who also function as shop stewards at Washington Hospital Center. Spread throughout the hospital, these shop stewards function as the day-to-day eyes, ears, voice, and organizers of the union. They are members who have chosen to take on a leadership role in our union.

Following the settlement of the 2004 collective bargaining agreement (CBA) contract, a major goal of Nurses United was to create a functioning shop steward system. Under the previous union, the work of the union had been done mostly by one paid staff union employee. This had the effect of decreasing involvement by members, shop stewards, and officers in the day-to-day functioning of the union. The leadership of Nurses United, reflecting the wishes of the membership, sought to change this by promoting shop stewards to carry out the work of the union. Research has shown that involving multiple member-leaders results in a stronger union.

To accomplish the goal of creating a well-functioning group of stewards, the Executive Committee of Nurses United has allocated resources and time to shop steward development. The Shop Steward Committee holds regular meetings in which activities are planned, issues are discussed, and training is conducted. The union also subscribes to a publication, sent to all shop stewards, entitled Steward Update. Also, in March 2005, we held a two-day training retreat that was attended by over 90 percent of our shop stewards. Speakers at this retreat included an arbitrator, a professional labor advocate, and a labor attorney, who all presented material based on their specialty. Stewards are in frequent contact with each other. Because of the need for close and regular communication among the stewards, a confidential LISTSERV e-mail discussion group is being planned for the near future to enhance communication between the shop stewards and officers.

Shop stewards have also been busy in their role on the nursing units. Stewards are called by members to represent them in meetings with management. Stewards help interpret and enforce the

contract on the job. Stewards demonstrate what it means to “work union” by showing solidarity with co-workers, other nurses, and external groups. Stewards are go-to people.

Spread throughout the hospital, shop stewards function as the day-to-day eyes, ears, voice, and organizers of the union. They are members who have chosen to take on a leadership role in our union.

The union has achieved many successes without filing grievances, by utilizing interest-based discussions with management and thereby preventing disciplinary actions from occurring. Stewards have been successful in winning workplace changes and improvements for nurses. Stewards have also brought problems to the attention of Nurses United Executive Committee members so that they can be discussed at the Labor Management Consultation Committee meetings.

If the union and management cannot reach a suitable resolution for a member, following the grievance procedures of the contract becomes an important duty for stewards. Stewards have filed several grievances this year. Although a few had to be dropped due to lack of evidence, others have been favorably settled for the NU members. We continue to work on others that remain outstanding.

Please contact your steward with any questions or concerns that you may have. We look forward to hearing from you and allowing the union to work for you. ■

A Special Appeal from Nurses United

Dottie Hararas, RN, Nurses United President

Nurses United extends its deepest sympathies to those who lost loved ones in the devastating level 4 hurricane that recently roared through the Gulf Coast region and to the many families who have suffered such tremendous loss by having their lives and livelihoods totally disrupted and destroyed. We ask that all members of Nurses United search their hearts and consider

sending donations to the charity of their choice to help in the relief effort. No donation is too small.

Soon, we hope to send a donation directly from Nurses United funds. And since the needs are of such epic proportions and will be continuing for many months and possibility years to come, our hope will be to plan to send regular donations as long as the need exists. ■

Continuing Education Units

Patty Ronayne, RN, Nurses United Board Member

Several months ago, the D.C. Board of Nursing announced that RN licensure renewal in D.C. for the year 2006 would require continuing education units (CEUs). The requirement stipulates that all currently active RNs in D.C. must complete 24 hours of CEUs before renewing their license in '06.

Several states require CEUs for continued licensure, and some specialty organizations (e.g., CCRN) have continuing education requirements for license renewal as well.

Some ways to acquire CEUs include all-day conferences, online instruction, CEU offerings available through Nursing Spectrum, and other certifications (e.g., ACLS, CCRN reviews, etc.).

Article 15.4 in the current union contract (collective bargaining agreement), entitled "Educational Leave and Conference Attendance" (pp. 55-56), provides for 36 hours of paid leave each year for full-time nurses and 18 hours of paid leave for part-time nurses to attend or present at a conference in their clinical practice area. You must give reasonable advanced notice to your manager so that your time off

can be arranged. The contract also provides for two days' unpaid leave annually to attend or present at a conference. You may choose to use paid days off (PDOs) for this purpose if you wish.

Article 15.3 (p. 54) discusses educational grants. These grants are money the hospital provides to nurses to attend conferences that will strengthen their skills and knowledge. Per this section, application for funds should be made prior to the conference. You need to apply far enough in advance to receive the payment and forward it with your registration for the conference. The amount available per nurse increases with seniority.

Don't be short on CEUs when your license renewal comes due. Use your 36-hour paid leave and educational grant allotment to meet the new D.C. license requirement.

Two dedicated and longtime union members sit on the Educational Grants Committee: Annie Seymour, RN, Cancer Institute, and Valerie Braden, RN, Main OR. If you have questions about the educational grants program, please let us know. ■

Get Involved – Help Keep the Union Strong

Patty Ronayne, RN, Nurses United Board Member

In early 2003, more than two-and-a-half years ago, clinical professional RNs at Washington Hospital Center initiated something new: Nurses United of the National Capital Region. We organized ourselves and stood together in a successful effort to improve conditions for ourselves and our patients. We accomplished this by trusting and supporting each other during uncertain times. While we were forging a new union, we also developed a new relationship with nursing and hospital management and now approach issues and solutions using interest-based bargaining and principles.

Today NU's elected leadership continues to strive to improve our working environment, through, among other things, timely and efficient representation of nurses who call on the union to assist them in meetings with management.

The union leadership also has a strong presence on many important committees; we attend meetings and work with individual nurses on issues of interest and concern to them. We strive to continue to make positive changes for nurses and their patients at WHC.

Every staff nurse can be involved. Knowledge is power, so empower yourself.

Get involved! How?

- Be an effective unit contact by making sure your unit is informed of current issues.
- Be seen at general membership meetings.
- Be the nurse who communicates your unit issues at membership meetings.
- Be a go-to person.
- Be certain to use your ADO forms for problems that occur on your unit.
- Be proactive – know or learn how to resolve problems or where to find the solutions.
- Be a positive contributor to the forward movement of Nurses United.

Be involved – it is a worthwhile goal. It doesn't take much time, the rewards are significant, and our union will be stronger because of it. If you want to be more involved, call us at 301-588-8851 or e-mail Nurses United at nursesunitedorg@aol.com. ■

On-the-Job Injuries

Patty Ronayne, RN, Nurses United Board Member

It is something we hope never happens to any of us, but in the real world, it can and does happen ... an injury occurs on the job. What do we do if it happens?

1. Report the occurrence to your manager.
2. Make certain that a Form 736 is completed and submitted to Occupational Health. The form is available on all units and replaces the old accident/illness forms.
3. Make certain the form is taken to Occupational Health, which is open 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Monday–Friday.
4. If the office is closed (after hours and weekends) and you need treatment right away, go to the emergency room with a Form 736 and take care of your immediate needs. Make certain that the completed form is taken to Occupational Health when the office opens the following business day so the form can be filed there for appropriate follow-up.
5. If your injury is deemed a workers' compensation case, you will be issued a claim number by Occupational Health.
6. Continue to maintain regular contact with Occupational Health and Managed Disability (the two offices are next to each other on the first floor of East Building) and follow their instructions. You will be assisted with the specific requirements relating to your case.
7. Make copies of *all* documents and forms that you submit or are given.
8. Keep an exact record of dates, times, names, and titles of people with whom you speak regarding your injury.

Occupational Health and Managed Disability want to assist you. The directors of both departments are RNs and understand the process – they know what forms need to be filed, for example.

If you follow these simple steps, things should go smoothly for you. If you need advice from the union during the above process, call us. ■

Preview of Things to Come

Rebecca “Becky” Rodriguez, RN

A group of Nurses United members has approached the NU leadership to discuss the possibility of sponsoring our own blood donation drive. If this plan is implemented, we will need your help.

Once the plan is approved, Nurses United would embark on a blood donation campaign to help address the current blood shortage. As an organization, we can demonstrate our support for a lifesaving and heartwarming cause.

Executive Committee Board Meetings

Patty Ronayne, RN, Nurses United Board Member

Nurses United's Executive Committee board members have been meeting regularly every month for the last two years. As called for in the NU bylaws and constitution, the Executive Committee carries on the work of the union between meetings of the general membership.

Generally, the board meetings are convened in the Silver Spring union office, although occasionally they are held in the satellite union office in the East Building. An agenda is prepared in advance by the NU president and includes issues raised by the general membership as well as by board members. Official minutes are taken by the NU recording secretary, who secures them and keeps them in the union's official files.

All business during these meetings is conducted with a quorum present. The board accomplishes a great deal and has extremely productive meetings. Our discussion

topics include committee and subcommittee reports and their ongoing work; issues pertinent to nurses at Washington Hospital Center; reports on disciplines, grievances, and pending arbitrations; and projects assigned to various board members that need to be completed. We also discuss contract issues and interpretations, as each officer and board member acts as a shop steward, assisting nurses throughout the hospital with matters that require union input and resolution.

Any Nurses United member in good standing is invited to review the minutes of any meeting conducted. The member should contact the recording secretary, Marie Edelen, RN, 2G, to set up an appointment to review the minutes (see accompanying article entitled “Notes from the Recording Secretary”). ■

*Any Nurses United member
in good standing is invited
to review the minutes of
any meeting conducted.*

We all know that life is precious and that we nurses are life changers. A donation of blood is a matter of life and death, something with which we are all familiar. Please consider the impact this donation could have on so many lives.

As plans emerge for a first-ever Nurses United blood drive, watch for more details.

Together we can move mountains! ■

Office News You Can Use

Patty Ronayne, RN, Nurses United Board Member

Nurses United now has regular coverage at our Silver Spring office.

Board members will be present at the office Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, for four selected hours between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. each day. A schedule of coverage is presently being prepared. It may take a few weeks to arrange coverage for all the days, but it is our goal to be there each day during the week. Our main phone number is 301-588-8851. If the line is busy, please leave us a message or call back. Our fax number is still 301-588-8854.

The East Building satellite union office on the Washington Hospital Center campus is utilized by NU officers and shop stewards who need to meet with nurses in a private setting to discuss work issues that affect them. Although that office does not have regular coverage, you can call there any time to leave a message. That number is 202-877-6603. Your call will be returned promptly. ■

ADO Forms and the QPCC

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The mission of the QPCC is described in article 31.2 of the collective bargaining agreement. The QPCC was developed to “serve as a forum to discuss and address issues concerning quality patient care, such as acuity levels, delivery of care, equipment, appropriate staffing levels, and other patient care issues.”

Members of the QPCC recently compiled a comprehensive report based on ADO forms submitted over the last few years. They formulated suggestions for resolving chronic unit problems and presented their findings to the Washington Hospital Center president, Mr. J. Caldas, and the WHC vice president for nursing, Ms. Sandy Marshall. We are now waiting for the implementation of these suggestions and the resolution of these chronic issues.

We are grateful for the dedicated work of QPCC union members Mary Smith, RN, NICU; Dru Gist, RN, 3G; Marelyn McFarland, RN, 3C; and Pat Reidy, RN, 4G – all of whom spent many hours on this vital project. We also acknowledge the management members on the committee for their important contributions; they worked in a professional and collaborative setting on the issues presented to the QPCC. The elected Nurses United officer acting as QPCC liaison is Nadine Dery, RN, 2G. We appreciate her continued work and research on these issues. ■



**Nurses United of the
National Capital Region**
8737 Colesville Road, Suite 950
Silver Spring, MD 20910