Welcome Letter from the President of ONA

Dear Allied Health Workers of St. Alphonsus - Baker City,

I want you to know how excited I am that you have won your campaign to be the first ever organized allied health workers in the Oregon Nurses Association.

I believe that by organizing you have collectively mobilized your voices and will lift up allied health workers throughout Oregon.

While you still have some work ahead of you to land your first contract, be assured that you have the full support of myself and all of ONA to make this contract a success.

In Solidarity,

Lynda Pond
President
Oregon Nurses Association

Union Vote Means Two New Protections at Work

Our recent vote to join Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) means we now benefit from two significant protections that all unionized workers are entitled to under the law: Weingarten rights and status quo.

Weingarten Rights: Weingarten rights guarantee an employee the right to union representation during an investigatory interview. These rights, which were established by the Supreme Court in 1975, automatically apply to all workers who are represented by a union but you have to invoke them. A supervisor is under no obligation to inform you of these rights (and, they often won’t).

If you find yourself being called in for an investigatory or disciplinary meeting, invoke your rights! Say “If this discussion could lead to my being disciplined, I request that a union representative be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions.” Then contact ONA. The employer is obliged to reschedule the meeting for a time when you can have ONA representation present — either in person or by phone.

While it’s not required, having an ONA representative with you during these types of meetings helps ensure that your rights are respected, that you are treated fairly, and that you’ve got an advocate in your corner.

Status Quo: Many of us have experienced hospital administration arbitrarily changing things at work. Now that we have voted in our union, the rule of "Status Quo" is in effect. That means any current policy or process remains in play until we negotiate and vote to accept our own ONA contract. If management makes any unilateral change to our wages, hours or other terms and conditions of employment without negotiating in good faith with us, it is an unfair labor practice. This a huge difference from what we had before!
What's Next for our ONA Bargaining Unit?

In coming weeks, we will work with our ONA staff person, Ateusa Salemi, to survey our membership, prioritize issues, request information from the employer, examine comparable wage and benefit information from similar classifications at other unionized hospitals, and draft contract proposals to bring to the negotiating table.

Along with preparing for negotiations, we’ve got some other important work to do in setting up our new union, including:

◆ **Adopting bargaining unit bylaws.** ONA bylaws typically include guidelines for how many officers we have, terms of office and rules for voting. Ateusa will work with us to ensure our bylaws are in compliance with ONA’s statewide protocols.

◆ **Nominating, electing and training our ONA negotiating team.** We will select representatives from among our group to negotiate on our behalf during contract bargaining. In choosing candidates, we’ll want to make sure different departments, shifts and classifications are represented. Our bargaining team members have a responsibility to represent all of us — not just themselves or the people they work most closely with.

◆ **Surveying our bargaining unit.** We’ve talked a lot among ourselves about the things we’d like to see addressed in our ONA contract. An official survey will help to ensure our ONA team has concrete data and a list of priorities to guide them through the process.

In union contract negotiations, our leverage is in our ability to stick together as workers. Each of us has a responsibility to participate in the ONA negotiation survey so that our ONA team knows what we want and how to prioritize those issues. Our bargaining team will share draft proposals and priorities with us before negotiations begin. Our team will also give us updates on negotiations after each bargaining session to keep everyone in the loop.

When we as workers show visible interest and support for our bargaining team, it provides us with the leverage necessary to accomplish our collective goals. As bargaining continues, our team may ask us to show solidarity and support by coming to observe bargaining sessions, wearing buttons or stickers, attending meetings, or signing petitions in support of specific issues. They’ll also need us to give feedback and help with making tough decisions as we go forward.

More information about these next steps will be coming soon. In the meantime, if you have questions or concerns, please contact Ateusa Salemi at ONA: salemi@oregonrn.org