TCH Nurses Win New Contract!

On Thursday, Feb. 1, our ONA Tuality Community Hospital bargaining team reached a tentative agreement with the hospital for a new contract through March of 2020, pending our ratification vote.

There are many wins to discuss, but the biggest breakthrough was Break Relief Nurses in all impatient units on all shifts! The first of its kind in the state of Oregon!

Our top priority is quality patient care, and better staffing is the best way for us to improve the care we provide. A key component is having enough staff to ensure nurses can take their rest and meal breaks. In the ONA pre-bargaining survey, only 21% of nurses reported being able to consistently take uninterrupted rest breaks, with the remainder of nurses stating that breaks were possible only sometimes, rarely, or never during the majority of their shifts.

Studies—and our personal experiences—demonstrate that rested nurses are safer, more effective, and have higher job satisfaction. It’s clear that breaks are a critical component of improving patient outcomes and retaining great nurses.

We’ve known for a long time that the buddy system does not work; we will not sacrifice immediate patient care needs nor are we willing to double a co-worker’s load. We think it is administration’s responsibility to ensure adequate staffing so that we can safely take breaks—the onus to take a break can no longer be put on nurses’ backs. The best way the guarantee consistent, uninterrupted breaks is allocating a nurse whose sole responsibility is covering the patient load of breaking nurses.

Your ONA bargaining team made a proposal for dedicated Break Relief Nurses, and demonstrated our collective support throughout the hospital. We made it clear that Tuality nurses stood united for breaks, and we won!

We will work with management to ensure the program works, but the contract guarantees that we get all rest and meal breaks—and that’s what matters.

The hospital also agreed to work on level loading in departments not included (PACU, Day Surgery, TOPS, OR, and Cath Lab) to ensure break coverage.

And Break Relief Nurses will receive a $3 differential.

Other major wins:
• A 2% wage increases upon ratification, and 2.5% in 2019
• A new Labor Management Committee which gives us a stronger voice in workplace issues
• Guaranteed education leave (2000 hours) which includes Per Diems for the first time
• Nurses taking a 10 hour work break are no longer required to use PLH
• Ability to schedule vacations a year in advance
• Short Shift Incentive is will be available to all units, including ED and Per Diems (who work 24 hours in that pay period)
• Clearer Low Census Language
• Travelers will be Low Censused before Per Diems
• Many decisions which used to be the sole discretion of the Chief Clinical Officer are now unit based
• The ability to cash out PLH in an emergency
• Bereavement Leave extended to include more family members
• Resource Nurses now have a defined role
• Surgical Services will be eligible for overtime even if Evening or Night shifts are created
• Nurses can now work consecutive weekends if they choose
• Ability to make up hours in a holiday week if your department is impacted
• Nurses for whom standby is required will now be paid $5 an hour
• “Ghost steps” added to the scale so that new hires don’t have to wait as long at three years to get a wage increase via a step.
• Evening, Night, and Weekend shifts are now defined
• Night shift is now defined as beginning at 9 p.m.
• Relief Charge Nurses will get a $2.25 differential
• Nurses are eligible for a pay review after their first 90 days
• Resource Nurses are eligible for certification pay
• Certification Bonuses are now $1,800 a year for full time, $900 for part time
• Our contract will expire on March 31, 2020—at the same time as OHSU, allowing us to unite and fight together, which will make us stronger

There will be meetings and ratification votes soon. Stay tuned in the next few days for more information.