Many of us know Corey Mertz. He was raised in Salem and has been part of our local community here in McMinnville for 22 years. And in that time he’s been a nurse for 21 years, over 20 of them at WVMC. When he was 12 he spent three days in the hospital while having his appendix removed. This experience fascinated him and drew his young mind in. It wasn’t long after that he began setting up medical equipment in patient’s homes and then ultimately enlisted in the Navy as a hospital corpsman, working in hospitals for nearly the entirety of his military service. When not at work, you can find him busy on his hobby farm with his best friend and girlfriend and her son.

Corey started his RN career at WVMC working on Med/Surg for four and a half years, acting as evening charge for one year of that time. Not one to sit still, Corey has held many roles, including RN Short Stay/Endoscopy, WVMC’s first bedside PICC nurse, and trainer for PICC/IV therapy. He finds being a nurse very rewarding. He thrives when working with patients to comfort and alleviate their anxieties with compassion and a healthy dose of humor.

But providing care has become difficult. The “more with less” corporate mentality can be very challenging and taxing on providing excellent patient care. He feels the intense focus on productivity and trying to provide healthcare to our community with the minimum amount of staffing is having a negative impact on safety and patient satisfaction. Couple that with the constant degradation of our benefits and the attitude that our WVMC staff is expendable leads to a much larger staff turnover than in years past causing a less experienced healthcare team providing care to our community.

So when asked about the upcoming vote, here’s what Corey had to share:

“I’m voting yes because I believe we can change the tide. We can turn WVMC back to the great place to work and receive excellent, experienced care it once was. I believe unionization will improve all aspects of employment, including pay and benefits. It will allow us to have more input into decisions that impact things like education, staffing, and our ability to provide safe patient care. I encourage my colleagues to vote yes. We are all aware things keep getting worse at WVMC for employees and patients alike. We need to vote yes so we can again have a voice. When nurses are united, we have a major role in making our hospital a wonderful place to work and a place we can be proud of once again.”

Election Scheduled: Vote YES on Dec. 18

We have an election day scheduled! All nurses who perform patient care are eligible to vote including charge nurses, OR team leads and house supervisors. We believe that everyone should have the right to vote and make their voice heard. Please plan to vote on the Dec. 18 at one of the below times. The vote will be by secret ballot and counted up after the final polling time closes. We encourage you to come hear the results and celebrate our victory!

The election will be on Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019 in Classrooms A and C at WVMC at the following times: 600-800; 1130-1330; and 1800-2000.

Questions or want more information about ONA - contact Elizabeth Gemeroy Gemeroy@OregonRN.org
Fall 2019: Willamette Valley Medical Center Ranked Worst in Oregon for Hospital Safety

According to an independent review conducted by industry watchdog Leapfrog Group in Fall 2019, Willamette Valley Medical Center (WVMC) received the lowest safety grade of any hospital in Oregon.\(^1\) WVMC had previously been an A-rated hospital from Fall 2016 to Spring 2018, but quality of care appears to have declined sharply after LifePoint took over the hospital in November 2018. It should be noted that in previous years, WVMC has used Leapfrog ratings as evidence of their great work.

According to Leapfrog’s Fall 2019 hospital safety grade, WVMC scored below average on several key safety indicators, including:

- Surgical complications resulting in collapsed lung;
- Safe ordering and administration of pharmaceuticals;
- Handwashing;
- Effective leadership and staff culture to prevent errors;
- Enough qualified nurses; and
- ICU staffing.\(^2\)

Notably, WVMC received the lowest possible score (5 out of 100) in “doctors order medications through a computer,” “safe medication administration,” and “specially trained doctors care for ICU patients.” WVMC also scored a dismal 29.41 out of 100 for “enough qualified nurses,” compared to the average hospital’s score of 97.91.

The bulk of WVMC’s issues fall within Leapfrog’s sections on error prevention and proper staffing. Many of these indicators, including handwashing, ICU staffing, and medical error rates, can reflect an overworked and understaffed healthcare team. Leapfrog’s data supports what nurses already know: improper staffing conditions are dangerous for hospital workers, patients, and the community.

Fall 2018: Quality of Care Worsens After LifePoint Takeover

A look at WVMC’s previous safety grades sheds some light on LifePoint’s influence on this hospital’s quality of care. WVMC was previously a subsidiary of Capella Healthcare Inc., until May 2016, when Capella merged with RegionalCare Hospital Partners Inc. to become RCCH Healthcare Partners.\(^3\) RCCH merged again with LifePoint Health in November 2018, and the hospital’s quality of care declined precipitously.\(^4\)

WVMC, which had consistently been an A-rated hospital under RCCH management, received a C grade immediately after LifePoint took over in Fall 2018. Quality of care has continued to deteriorate, and in Fall 2019, WVMC received a D, the lowest grade of any hospital in Oregon. All other Oregon hospitals reviewed by Leapfrog that grading cycle received a C or higher.\(^5\)

WVMC’s previous Leapfrog safety grades:\(^6\)
Unity Nurses Pushed Back Against Solicitation Policy

Six months ago, nine nurses at Legacy Unity Center met with their CNO to share why an overwhelming majority of nurses were ready to vote "YES" and join ONA. In the weeks between this meeting and the nurses union election, Legacy managers decided to enforce their solicitation policy in a discriminatory manner.

Just like us, Unity nurses were allowed to have non-work related items (e.g., newspapers, magazines and potluck sign-up sheets) in the break room. Managers had never mentioned any of these items breaking the solicitation policy, but shortly after nurses announced their intention to form a union, managers barred nurses from having union newsletters or stickers in their break rooms and would throw away or shred these items.

Since this was discriminatory enforcement of the solicitation policy, several nurses went to the Portland NLRB office to testify with a federal NLRB agent and filed an unfair labor practice (ULP). A ULP refers to certain actions taken by employers that violate the National Labor Relations Act. Such acts are investigated by the NLRB. The NLRB agreed that this enforcement was not legal and ordered Unity Center to inform nurses of their right to have union newsletters and stickers in the break room.

Election Scheduled: Vote YES on Dec. 18

When: Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019

Where: Classrooms A and C at WVMC

600-800
1130-1330; and
1800-2000
Nurse Solidarity: ONA at Providence Portland Medical Center

Sue Phillips is a proud ONA member and works in the neurosurgery, comprehensive stroke unit at Providence Portland Medical Center (PPMC). She’s also elected director on ONA’s Board of Directors and has volunteered to serve on the PPMC nurse bargaining team nine times to negotiate and improve working conditions, hours, benefits and wages.

Earlier this year, PPMC’s nurse-elected bargaining team helped bargain and ratify a contract for more than 1,150 nurses, resulting in a 10.25% wage increase over 4 years, a new differential for float pool nurses, and increases to per diem and standby differentials, as well as mandatory day off caps. Click Here for the PPMC bargaining unit webpage or go to www.OregonRN.org

Sue became a nurse because she loves people. She grew up caring for her Aunt Margaret who had cerebral palsy. That experience inspired Sue to become a nurse to advocate for and protect people who are marginalized and to ensure those patients have their voices heard. When she’s not working, Sue enjoys taking long walks at the off-leash dog park.

Sue says to Willamette Valley Medical Center nurses:

“There is strength and power in numbers. A collective voice will be more effective for advocating for patients, nurses, and our communities. It’s true that the hospital may not listen to just me or just you—but they will listen to hundreds of us. My union and collective bargaining agreement guarantee nurses a voice and direct input in our

Willamette Valley Medical Center: Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade (continued from Page 2)

Footnotes:
3. https://www.ahd.com/free_profile.php?hcfa_id=08d502822e25cefc71182b00ddd8a646&ek=eab77e8bb1c32a417b3181ff73ea5539f