Preparing for Contract Bargaining

Our lives are full—at times, too full—of demands from many places: work, family, friends ... for many of us, this list can seem endless and chaos rules. I understand this, as my life fits very nicely into the definition of chaos. Finding moments of calm can be a challenge. With this understanding, I come to all of you with an “ask.”

An ask is an organizing term that means, “something needs to be done; what part of it are you able to do?” The thing which needs to be done is contract bargaining in 2012 and my ask to all of you is for help with this enormous challenge.

We, the Union, have a dedicated staff who work on our behalf every day to defend our contracts and help us to make Kaiser Permanente a better place to work and to give and receive care. Those same contracts this staff defends will be under attack during upcoming negotiations. The staff cannot keep those contracts whole; only all of us can accomplish that for ourselves. Our actions, the work of all 3,000 of us during negotiations, will be what makes our workplace a healthy one with true work/life balance.

The Presidents and Vice Presidents of all of our Bargaining Units are beginning to make phone calls, send emails and hold meetings to solidify bargaining teams for each unit. We need more than bargaining teams, however, to make strong contracts which meet our life needs. We, each of us, are the Union, and we need every member of each unit working together to support the members of the teams we will choose to represent us. There are many ways for us all to support the bargaining teams. Most of them are small but important tasks (attending a meeting, sharing information, passing out flyers/surveys, calling co-workers about an issue/meeting).

My ask of you is to contact the President/Vice President of your Bargaining Unit, or your Steward, and offer your support. The closer we get to having all 3,000 OFNHP members working on this contract negotiation, the stronger our contracts will be. There is an active Steward list available on our website. The names of all of the bargaining unit officers along with their worksites are also listed on www.OFNHP.org. You can also call the OFNHP office at 503.657.9974 and your message will be given to your bargaining unit officers.

My thanks to all of you for making OFNHP stronger and a vital part of all of our lives.

In Solidarity,
Elex Tenney
OFNHP Executive Vice President
etenney@ofnhp.org
503.887.5781
As most of our members know, Kaiser Sunnyside hospital has been undergoing a tumultuous hospital reorganization. The entire process has been difficult and rife with frustrations—making Sunnyside a challenging place to give and receive quality patient care.

At the end of June, however, Coalition union leaders and KSMC management signed an agreement to enter into a Partnership process called Issue Resolution. Management agreed not to implement new RIFs and to halt the joint staffing process, and the unions agreed to suspend our protest actions.

Although this agreement doesn’t solve all of the problems at the hospital, we see it as a tremendous step forward. The Issue Resolution process is a TRUE Partnership process, and its explicit goal is reaching consensus.

**What is the Difference Between Joint Staffing and Issue Resolution?**

From the Labor perspective, joint staffing has been defined as management telling us what decision they made, then allowing Labor to help implement it within a dictated deadline. That is not true Partnership. The Issue Resolution process, by contrast, is focused on coming to consensus not just on how decisions are implemented, but on reaching those decisions themselves. If we do not achieve consensus regionally, we have the ability to escalate the process for review at a national level.

**What is the Issue Resolution Timeline?**

The process formally began on July 7, with a meeting of leaders from labor, management and the doctors group. At that meeting, participants had one task: identifying and organizing the issues. This is one of the most complex and difficult parts of Issue Resolution, but it is key to the process’s success. To begin, nothing is off the table for initial discussion. During that meeting, we worked to identify and agree on the issues that our Issue Resolution process will address. From there, we will be able to chart a course for the rest of the process.

**What are the Parameters of this Agreement?**

The agreement we have signed with management does not roll back changes that have already been agreed to and implemented, including the closure of CVM. It does, however, stop RIFs that have been discussed but not yet formalized, such as rumored RIFs in the Float Pool.

We look forward to working diligently with management and the doctors group to invest in the Partnership and resolve our differences.
PRO Bargaining Unit's New Leaders

Kristen Perry
President, Professionals Bargaining Unit
Physician Assistant
Cardiology, MTT

Thanks for this opportunity to introduce myself. I have been a Physician Assistant for 26 years and have worked in various settings including private practice, the Veterans’ hospital, and—for the last 15 years—Kaiser Permanente.

Over these 15 years, I have seen the erosion of true Partnership in our workplace. It is my strong feeling that as professionals, we have a unique eye into what constitutes good patient care. Our patients depend on us for excellent care and it is our responsibility to see that excellence through.

I’m excited to serve in this position, and took it on with a vision of helping us unite as a group. Together, we can address our concerns, make suggestions to improve patient care, and rebuild the Partnership principles and processes.

Sherwin and I cannot do this without participation from our bargaining unit. Now is the time for each of you to start thinking about issues that will need to be presented at the bargaining table. We are committed to representing the PROs and look forward to working with each of our groups.

Sherwin Moscow
Vice President, Professionals Bargaining Unit
Chemical Dependency Counselor
Addiction Medicine, CPK

I will soon be celebrating my 28th anniversary at Kaiser. I have had the good fortune of working in a department where the ideals of Partnership are widely respected and executed. From this experience, I know that this type of work environment is possible to achieve.

Having said this, I know that Partnership principles are not uniformly applied and adhered to. The related article in this newsletter about my friends and colleagues in the Mental Health Department provides an example of both significant challenges and opportunities. It is one of my primary goals over the next two years to help our bargaining unit’s disciplines move closer to the reality of true Partnership.

Shortly, we will be entering contract negotiations. Kristen and I are committed to having fair and proportionate representation of our disciplines at the bargaining table. We will be inviting all PRO stewards for a get-together in September, to set up a framework of discovering what are the issues, who will be at the table, and how can we ensure prompt and accurate communication between the Bargaining Team and our membership.

It will be a pleasure to serve you. I believe the vast majority of people in our organization are committed to Kaiser’s growth and prosperity, and having that common goal creates the best foundation for success.
Mental Health Department Struggling with Reorganization

Region-wide, our Mental Health professionals are working through a difficult situation. In order to meet a demand for more new patient visits (to minimize outside referrals), the clinical director was pressured to reorganize the department including the creation of a new “intake specialist” position. But in the rush to make the change, Partnership was pushed aside when making decisions about the position and how it would be implemented.

When management announced a plan to have all 111 members of the department re-bid their jobs to expedite this change, our union members organized. They began meeting regularly and decided to submit a Cease and Desist, demanding that management stop any plans to implement changes as part of a departmental reorganization until specific criteria were met. They were further prepared to file a request for Issue Resolution through the Coalition of Unions.

On June 30, representatives from Labor and management met to review the situation and discuss next steps. Labor agreed to suspend the request for Issue Resolution, if management agreed to a plan to put the Mental Health redesign back on track—including reviewing the charters of all three workgroups and refocusing the implementation committee. There will be no further implementation of the intake specialist position until a transition team can assure that Labor is a full and equal partner. Members Deborah Duboff, Dave Charlton, Martha Wilson, and Jonathan May have been crucial to this effort’s success. With Internal Organizer Sharon Culley, they will continue to hold facilitated meetings with management to work through this issue and review progress on the agreements.

Any member of the department can dial in to a regular weekly conference call for the latest updates. Contact Internal Organizer Sharon Culley at 503.657.9974 x102 or sharon@ofnhp.org.

Outpatient RNs: Is Management Responding to Your Vacation Requests in a Timely Manner?

In the RN Bargaining Unit, we are hearing from many outpatient RNs who are not having their time-off requests answered in a timely manner. According to the RN contract, management MUST respond within 10 working days to a properly submitted request.

Additionally, we are finding that because many of our RNs have very high seniority levels, staffing levels are often insufficient to properly cover all leave requests. All employees need to be able to take their proper amounts of vacation—not only do you need and deserve the time off, but we also don’t want you to risk losing the time you earn!

We are making some progress on this. OB/GYN RNs won a class action grievance for this issue, and in the North service area, we working with management to identify adequate staffing levels and negotiate agreements that allow for equitable time off with backfill. We know this is a problem in other service areas and departments, but we need to hear from you!

Please review Article 11H., Outpatient Staffing Rules. Is management responding to your requests in a timely manner? Is there adequate staffing to allow for equitable time off at your location? Please let us know. Contact Internal Organizer Jocelyn Pitman at 503.657.9974 x108 or jpitman@ofnhp.org.
Are You Interested in Working at Kaiser Permanente's New Westside Facilities?

As work on Kaiser Permanente Westside Medical Center (KWMC) continues, we are proud to be leveraging the Labor-Management Partnership to create an estimated 1,100–1,200 new jobs in the Portland Metro area. All of the Coalition unions are strong partners with Kaiser management and physicians for the planning and execution of all aspects of creating a new hospital and specialty medical care office.

Staffing Plan
The staffing plan for the hospital’s union jobs starts with current employees. Those currently working in the NW Region will have the opportunity to consider transferring to KWMC in all areas of work, before the search is opened to the public. Once transferring staff are identified, inpatient opportunities will be created at KSMC and outpatient opportunities will be created at ambulatory clinics throughout the region.

Timeline
Beginning this month, Steward Councils will receive communications about recruitment (including plans for handling transfers and hiring) at least quarterly, to cover the latest information and ensure that staff is informed of progress and opportunities in a timely manner.
- By summer's end, the recruitment team will have a hiring timeline for each clinical area.
- Most hiring will begin in early 2012 and continue until opening.
- The specialty care medical office at Westside is anticipated to open November 2012, with the full hospital opening December 2012. This schedule may be adjusted as opening nears.

Take the Employee Interest Survey
The first step in the recruiting process will be an employee interest survey. This Survey Monkey survey will help the recruiting team gauge current employees’ interest in transferring and which job categories are in demand, while also allowing respondents to maintain confidentiality. The survey will be distributed over email (Lotus Notes) in August. At the August Steward Councils, more information and directions will be provided. Once the responses are gathered and sorted, the recruiting team will give clearer timeline updates for hiring of each job category.

Update Your Profile Online
Hiring for all positions will be done via the online recruiting system. If you’re interested in working at Westside, or transferring to another location or position during the transition, make sure your profile and resume are up-to-date on MY HR/KP Careers. If you have any problems or questions, contact HR for assistance or look for directions in Newswire. During the hiring process for union positions, contracts and negotiated agreements will be followed.

Websites for More Information
An internal KWMC website, http://internal.or.kp.org/kwmc/, has been created for current KP staff. The website provides a variety of details about KWMC, including information about construction, services at KWMC, positive impacts on the community, and hiring. The internal KWMC website is updated at least monthly with current information. An external hospital services website is currently being developed and is scheduled to launch by Fall 2011. The external website will contain information for the general public and Kaiser members about hospital services at both KWMC and KSMC.
Summer Social at The Oregon Garden Was Great Fun for Members and Families