



# The Flame

Lighting the Way for Quality Health Care

July 2015

The Patient Safety Act: *Why We Need It & What It Does*

## The Patient Safety Act

**Linda McDonald, RN**  
**UNAP President**



The fact is clear  
“Nurses are being pushed beyond the limit and being forced to treat too many patients at one time....and patients are feel-

ing the impact.”

Guided by tightening budgets and misplaced priorities, the numbers of patients assigned to a Registered Nurse is changing, forcing a crisis of care in our hospitals.

The “Patient Safety Act” (PSA) is based on the fact that the most important variable impacting the safety of our patients is the number of patients assigned to a nurse at one time.

The legislation is simple and straight forward. It sets a maximum number of patients a nurse may treat at one time to provide quality care and safety of those patients.

Every year, nurses file hundreds of complaints with hospital administrators and managers

**Victory at the Polls at Fatima**  
CNAs, secretaries, phlebotomists, couriers, kitchen, environmental employees and more voted 221 to 76 to join the UNAP. The employees were helped by registered nurses who joined in to encourage their coworkers to stay strong as they faced unrelenting anti-union rhetoric from top administrators and managers.

highlighting potentially unsafe staffing levels. These complaints go largely ignored, and nurses are continually pushed beyond the limit. Research published over the past decade clearly shows :

- There is a strong and consistent link between nurse staffing levels and patient outcomes.
- Appropriate staffing reduces re- admissions, reduces infections & errors
- Safe RN staffing reduces costs.

Setting maximum limits is the right thing to do.

The UNAP is committed to the “PSA”. As with the battle to ban mandatory overtime (MOT) we will stay steadfast in the pursuit of this legislation. Our bill is sponsored by Representative Ray Gallison and Senator Josh Miller. Both understand the value of safe limits. We thank them for their support.

Standing up for RI patients means fighting for safer hospitals. It is time to pass the” Patient Safety Act.”

Below, Fatima registered nurses & new union members celebrate their victory.

**UNAP members rally at the State House for safe staffing.**





## Negotiations Update

### Negotiations in Summer of 2015 Cover Over Half of the UNAP Membership

Hospital negotiations covering more than half of the entire UNAP membership with expiration dates by June 30th and negotiations for over 500 new members negotiating first contracts have been under way. Negotiations began for over 400 service workers for their first contract at Fatima Hospital on June 29th. Approximately 100 environmental employees at Kent Hospital are also in the process of negotiating their first contract.

Two Care New England facilities, Memorial Hospital and Kent Hospital have June 2015 expiration dates. The Kent Local is considering an extension of the current contract for an additional six months through December 2015 but has yet to reach a final decision.

### Fatima Service Workers Begin Fight for a Contract

Four hundred service staff at Fatima Hospital in North Providence began negotiations for their first Union contract on Monday, June 29th. Their negotiations will be with the new owners of the hospital, a West Coast based for profit company, Prospect Charter CARE. The negotiations will not be easy given the issues that are at stake.

The service workers at Fatima have suffered major cuts in their compensation and benefits over the past few years, losing their annual seniority based wage increase, getting an abysmal health insurance plan, and actually suffering

pay cuts a few years ago. That is why they voted so decisively to Unionize in the election held back in April. The service workers won that election by a decisive margin of 3 to 1 despite a lengthy anti-Union campaign run by Prospect. Now Prospect seems intent on trying to push back the workers in "Round 2", the negotiations for their first Union contract. So far Prospect's representatives have limited their availability for negotiation meetings, and have been less than responsive to the Union's contract demands. However, management faces a Union bargaining team that has the solid support of their co-workers. Given that, Prospect shouldn't kid themselves thinking they can stop the service workers at Fatima from winning back the things that were taken from them in the past.

### UNAP, Local 5082, Agrees to Six Month Contract Extension

Local 5082 of the UNAP at Memorial Hospital of RI has agreed to a six (6) month contract extension with Care New England (CNE). Their contract, which was set to expire on June 14, 2015, has been extended through December 31, 2015. The Local, however, plans to work on making a comprehensive set of contract proposals to CNE well before the December 31st deadline in order to bring its contract up to the same level as the contract at Kent County Hospital, another CNE Hospital. In that regard, Local 5082 has been coordinating with its sister Local, Local 5008, at Kent.

### Local 5098 RI Hospital

Contract negotiations are in full gear with RI Hospital demanding reductions to the health insurance and retirement, as well as a pay freeze, all while continuing to chronically understaff. The membership voted overwhelmingly to authorize the negotiating committee to issue a 10-day strike notice, if they believed it necessary to achieve a fair and equitable contract. On July 9 over 800 members came together for an informational picket sending a strong message to the Hospital administration to invest in staffing and stop demanding give-backs. The local also announced its media campaign, including TV and radio commercials targeting

Lifespan's recent lavish advertising campaign.

### Kent Hospital RNs, CNAs, OR Staff to Vote Contract Extension

UNAP members of Local 5008 will vote on July 30th whether to agree to extend their contract with Kent Hospital.

### Westerly Hospital Members Share \$300,000 Pension Settlement

On June 3, 2015, Westerly Hospital members filed into a very unique membership meeting- one in which members could pick up a check for their portion of a \$300,000 pension settlement won for them by their Union. When The Westerly Hospital went into receivership in December of 2014, the Employer stopped funding the pension. The Union's position was that the pension had to continue to be funded by the hospital until a purchasing hospital officially assumed ownership. The Union's argument was based on the premise that the Union contract remained in effect from December 2014 throughout the receivership until the new ownership assumed control over the hospital in August of 2015. The UNAP's General Counsel, Christopher Callaci, entered a claim on behalf of members covered by the pension.

The dispute was settled for \$300,000. The Union hired pension experts to determine each member's share of the total amount. Needless to say that attendance at the membership meeting was high and members left very happy- and richer.

### VNS Local Settles Weather Arbitration

The union contract at the Visiting Nurse Home Care requires the employer to pay field staff (nurses and home care aides) for hours missed when the Agency is closed due to inclement weather. Despite the fact that the office was closed, driving bans were in effect in the service area, parking bans meant there was no place to park and that January 27th blizzard was one of the worst blizzards in history, the employer refused to pay for lost time arguing the Agency wasn't closed. Before the arbitration date the Agency agreed to pay effected staff.

*(Local Reports Continue Next Page)*

## Landmark

Workers at Landmark have faced a lot of challenges since the new ownership took over. The company, Prime, forced through changes in pensions and other benefits, as well as ending longevity increases. Now Prime is delaying the payment of their matching contribution into the 401K accounts of the UNAP local 5067 – a payment that should have been paid months ago!

Prime, a for profit company that owns hospitals around the country, assumed control of Landmark Hospital in late 2013 after the hospital had been placed in receivership some years back. The price of keeping the hospital open required a number of concessions by the membership. However, the agreement with Prime was that the company would match employee 401K contributions, and at this time that has not been done.

Local 5067 are now in the process of developing a pressure campaign to force Prime to honor their commitments, beginning with a petition demanding that Prime do just that in regard to their 401K accounts.

## Violence at Seven Hills Rhode Island

Over the last several months UNAP representing employees at Seven Hills RI has filed safety grievances on behalf of the entire membership. UNAP members have been assaulted and threatened in the workplace by clients. The union has demanded the remedy that the employer evaluate prospective clients adequately, train staff to deal with the many challenging and changing clientele and compensate employees for lost time.

## Local 5019 State Nurses

The Union voted to accept the four year contract (2013-2014) negotiated by the parties which included three raises totaling 6% from 2014-2016, with a wage re-opener in the last year of the contract. The deal also included an upgrade to the bereavement leave and restrictions on use of the three day rule.

## UNAP's Annual CEU Program Drew Hundreds

Hundreds of UNAP members attended the CEU program *Safeguarding Your Livelihood* featuring Edith Brous nursing attorney on May 21st. Registration was free for UNAP members.

## Highlight UNAP Leadership



I have been an RN for 46 years- 19 years in Florida, 27 years in Vermont with the last 16 at Copley Hospital in Morrisville, Vermont. I have worn many hats- inpatient staff nurse, nurse manager(twice), nursing supervisor, outpatient staff nurse(currently). It is the only job I ever wanted or held. Copley is the only union hospital I ever worked in and I started here the year after the RNs voted to organize and even spent one month on strike in order to get a contract! I am so grateful to those nurses who stood strong and fought for their beliefs- to be recognized, respected and given a voice in our workplace.

I have been an active member of our Executive Council since 1999, and President for 5 years. It is important to me that we continue the work the original organizers started- protecting fair working conditions, promoting quality/safe patient care and maintaining our voice as an essential part of the hospital culture. It is also important that as new staff are hired, they learn what we have gained because we are the Union and how very necessary they are to our strength and our voice.

## 2015 Joan Medberry Scholarship Winners

Joyce LaTorre, RN is a UNAP member of Fatima Hospital Local 5110. She is currently enrolled in the University of Rhode Island Nurse Practitioner Graduate Program. Joyce is also a volunteer for Providence Teen Challenge, which is a 15 month resident treatment program.



Joyce LaTorre

Britney Levitre, daughter of Pamela Levitre (a member of Seven Hills RI Local 5068) will be studying Pre-Veterinary Medicine. She is also active in karate, tennis and the Environmental Science Club.

Christopher Vanasse



Jade Lussier is currently attending CCRI to complete her general education requirements while making a decision to attend Rhode Island College or the University of Rhode Island.

Christopher Vanasse, son of Nancy Vanasse (Kent Hospital Local 5008) will be attending Stetson University working toward a degree in Sport Business. Christopher has volunteered at Kent Hospital as well as Judy's Kindness Kitchen, spring clean-ups and bone marrow drives.

## Save The Date UNAP Convention

November 2, 2015 at the Omni Hotel in Providence.

Morning workshop topic to be announced.



## United Nurses & Allied Professionals

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On July 9th over 800 UNAP members from Rhode Island Hospital, supporters from the community and other union members picket outside of Rhode Island Hospital.



### UNAP Brings the Patient Safety Act to the Student Nurses Association Convention

In March UNAP President Linda McDonald, UNAP President at RI Hospital Helene Macedo, UNAP Vice President at Memorial Hospital Liz Furtado and other UNAP registered nurses attended the Student Nurses Association Convention to advocate for the Patient Safety Act. Hundreds of student nurses sent RI legislators post cards urging them to support safe staffing in Rhode Island Hospitals.



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