



# The Flame

Lighting the Way for Quality Health Care

April 2012



Linda McDonald, RN  
President

## Tax Inequity and Tax Fairness

It is time to change tax inequity and fight for tax fairness. In November at the 2011 Convention

the UNAP leaders passed a resolution on "Progressive Taxation".

The UNAP's focus was to support a policy of progressive taxation, meaning that wealthy individuals and corporations pay their fair share of state and federal taxes. The UNAP is working in coalition with other labor organizations and community groups to support a fair taxation system.

For too long our country and state have implemented tax policies that have drastically favored our wealthiest citizens and corporations. The tax breaks for the wealthy that were supposed to create jobs and stimulate the economy have not worked. It is time to change this inequity and fight for tax fairness. On the RI state level, legislation has been introduced advocating for a tax policy that will take the burden off of the middle class and ensure the most privileged Rhode Islanders are

paying their fair share. There is overwhelming support of this bill from both the Senate and House legislators.

On the federal level RI Senator Sheldon Whitehouse has taken the lead and introduced legislation known as the "Buffett Rule". Whitehouse's bill, the "Paying a Fair Share Act" currently has 13 co-sponsors. The Senate debate started on tax day April 16. Fifty one Senators voted for passage, Senate Republicans chose to filibuster the bill and the fight for tax fairness goes on.

### ACA Under Attack

As healthcare workers we should be keeping a close eye on the decision that the Supreme Court will make on "The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act". There has already been positive implementation of parts of the ACA.

From a position paper from Senator Whitehouse, "a central pillar of the recently enacted ACA is the individual mandate. Replacing the individual mandate would significantly erode coverage gains and raise premiums for healthcare consumers".

### Thank you to Congressman Cicilline

I want to recognize and thank Congressman David Cicilline for his tireless commitment to the protection of jobs at LMC and the REHAB Hospital. He has been out front with his support. Congressman Cicilline organized a press conference, participated in community coalitions and spoke at the most recent public hearings. In Washington his record shows that his commitment and support for labor and working families has been a priority.



Seven Hills UNAP local members and supporters at the State House and at Seven Hills protest cuts.

(see story inside)





## Seven Hills Engages in Successful One Day Strike

After the Employer declared impasse and informed the Union that it would impose severe cuts in pay and benefits effective February 15<sup>th</sup>, the Local Union called a one day strike. The one day strike brought wide spread support from the greater labor union community. The Employer never implemented the cuts. Instead the Employer decided it would either fight

### Who is the UNAP?

The UNAP represents over 5,500 nurses, therapists, technologists, support staff and others who work at:

Copley Hospital (VT)  
 Fatima Hospital  
 Visiting Nurse Home Care  
 Health Care & Rehabilitation Services of SE Vermont  
 Homestead Group  
 Kent Hospital  
 Landmark Medical Center  
 Memorial Hospital  
 Putnam School District (CT)  
 Rehabilitation Hospital of RI  
 Retreat Healthcare (VT)  
 Rhode Island Hospital  
 RI Community Living & Support Services  
 RI Dept of Human Services  
 RI Veterans' Home  
 URI, CCRI, RIC Health Services  
 Westerly Hospital  
 Youth Services (VT)  
 Zambarano Hospital

along side other providers, families, participants and all employees, union and non-union, to restore funding so that cuts in pay and benefits would not be necessary to break even. Or it would no longer operate.

With pay and benefits maintained at current levels, the Union has returned to fight the

heartless and shameful \$24 million in budget cuts orchestrated by House Finance Chairman Helio Mello and Speaker Gordon Fox from last year's budget. The current budget submitted by Governor Chafee failed to restore even one penny in cuts. The repeated tax cuts to corporations and the wealthy by the House leadership have been paid for by cuts in programs to the developmentally disabled. It is only fair to ask Governor Chafee, Speaker Fox and Chairman Mello why they are taking from the most vulnerable, the developmentally disabled, to fund tax breaks for the wealthy.

## Brattleboro Retreat Prepared and Organized for Negotiating

Success at the bargaining table is a function of preparation and organization. The Executive Board of the Brattleboro Retreat has taken the unprecedented action of preparing and organizing for bargaining over ten months in advance of the contract expiration date (October 12, 2012). The Union has already surveyed members, begun necessary research, identified bargaining priorities and started efforts at internal and external organizing. Most important, local leaders are working hard to build membership awareness and support.

The plan is for the set of proposals to be presented for final approval by the membership in June with the commencement of negotiations shortly thereafter. After decades of severe budget restrictions and financial deterioration, the Brattleboro Retreat has enjoyed a strong financial resurgence. Over the last couple of years the Retreat has expanded existing programs and returned to financial health. The Union looks forward to negotiations with the goal of sharing in the good fortune and making the gains that all of the members have earned and rightfully deserve.

## Office Staff at Visiting Nurse Home Care Win UNAP Membership

Office and clerical staff at the Visiting

Nurse Home Care, formerly the Visiting Nurse Service of Greater Rhode Island, signed cards seeking union representation in March. Their election was held on April 19<sup>th</sup> and they won. Congratulations! The nurses have been organized since 1974. Home Care Aides organized their union in 1996. The union welcomes our new members.

## RI Hospital Focus on Quality and Safety

Local 5098 representatives meet every month with representatives from Rhode Island Hospital Management to discuss Labor/Management Issues. Part of that meeting is to discuss relevant and recent topics that impact all employees at the hospital.

Due to the importance of quality & safety we negotiated in this most recent contract to devote an entire segment of the labor management forum to discuss issues relating to patient safety. Members of Local 5098 have brought up many issues that they believe are important patient safety concerns. The results of these initiatives from union members has been successful. Some of the changes that have resulted from our involvement include:

1. a new policy requiring an x-ray of patients when they come in with PIC Lines before the treatment proceeds.
2. monitors have been repositioned on Bridge 6 to afford the nurses with a centralized monitor station and
3. a change in chemo protocol which ensure sufficient staff to be present when chemo medications are administered.

As a result the staff is having a greater impact on patient safety which is a win for everyone. We are also encouraged by the fact that other members are now coming forward with patient safety issues in their areas. By being involved, you can make a difference. The locals participation in the labor management forum has given us a stronger voice at the Hospital.

## RI Hospital Union Accessibility

Being accessible to the members of local 5098 has been our number one initiative which has been accomplished with our pizza and breakfast socials. President Helene Macedo, Field Rep Joe Iadevaia and members of the Executive Board attend to answer member questions. These socials have taken place early morning, afternoon, evening and nights in order to be available to meet the various shifts of our members.

## Westerly Locals Play Active Role in Receivership

The Union at the Westerly Hospital is active in protecting the integrity of their contracts since the Hospital went into receivership in early December. The Union is also working to make sure that when the Hospital exits receivership, it remains a full service community hospital. Our union learned a lot about receivership when Landmark Medical Center and Rehabilitation Hospital of Rhode Island went into receivership almost four years ago. There, like in Westerly, the Union played a vital, active and positive role.

The Special Master has set the end of June for the deadline to receive letters of interest from acquiring entities. The goal is to choose the top bidder by the end of August with final regulatory approval secured before the end of the year.

## UNAP, Local 5067 (Landmark and RHRI) Works Hard to Finalize Deal with Steward Healthcare Systems

Local 5067 continues to work tirelessly to bring the Steward deal to a close. In February of 2012, the Local held a press conference with, among others, U.S. Congressman David Cicilline and Woonsocket Mayor Leo Fontaine pressing the Department of Health and the Attorney General's Office to speed up the regulatory review process so Steward can buy Landmark and RHRI complete. Since then, the regulators have done exactly that. The Local appeared in Providence Superior Court recently to support changes to Steward's asset purchase agreement

## UNAP in the Spotlight



**Elizabeth Furtado, RN  
VP of UNAP Executive Council**

I have worked at Memorial Hospital for 9 years. My first year as a nurse intern, the rest as an RN. I started on Surgical Place, a med-surg unit with concentration of post op patients, however in 2009 this unit closed and I moved to a med-surg unit that handles ortho, stroke, & respiratory case types. Both units displayed varying degrees of difficulty but the most challenging is just working the

that will keep the deal on track. The Local has also been lobbying for a change to the Hospital Conversion Act, which will help bring the Steward deal to a successful conclusion. The legislation the UNAP is supporting was approved by the State Senate and is now in the House for consideration.

## UNAP, Local 5051 (HCRS), Negotiates New Contract

The contract is a 3 year deal, January 1, 2012-December 31, 2014. It includes 7% in wage increases over the life of the contract. No change in the employee premium share for medical or dental coverage. Introduction of employer funded Wellness HRA to defray out-of-pocket expenses associated w/ plan deductibles. An additional holiday. Increase in money available for employee training and professional development. Increase in mileage reimbursement rate. Improvements in clinical supervision.

“swing shift” which I have done the entire time.

I still remember my first year as a nurse intern, it was a contract year. I enjoyed listening to the members speak about what was going on with negotiations & I knew that in a matter of time, I would be one of them. So it was, I became a member in 2004, shortly after I became a unit rep for Local 5082 MHRI & enjoyed that role for 4 years but in 2008, I was nominated for VP @ large on the Executive Board of Local 5082 & currently hold office of VP of Nursing on that board. It was all this activity that opened my eyes to the UNAP “mothership,” so in 2009 & again in 2011, I was thankfully elected to my role as the VP of UNAP Executive Council. It is challenging at times but also rewarding & it is always a learning experience, one that I look forward to sharing with all of you.

In Unity, Elizabeth

Training for new clinical programs, policies, procedures and/or technology at employer's expense. New language for dispute resolution regarding workplace issues that do not rise to the level of grievances.

## Kent Local Monitors Staffing

In response to member concerns about staffing levels, the Kent local union has formed a committee on staffing. The purpose of the committee is to monitor the staffing practices of the hospital and the units - especially to address sudden increases in census, endless moving of patients, and the serious need for rooms to relieve ER admitted patients. The nursing administration has been cooperative in providing access to information. The goal is to obtain documentation over the course of several months and use the documentation as the factual basis to verify member concerns and identify solutions. *(continued on back)*

## Registered Nurses Requirements for Criminal Background Checks

The new law requires any new nurse who is seeking to obtain a license as well as any nurse who is previously licensed and seeking new employment must do the following:

You must fill out a Background Check Form that includes fingerprints. The total cost is \$40.00. Check or money order only are accepted. Where to Go - BCI Division of the RI Attorney General's Office @ 150 South Main Street, Providence, RI. The hours are 8:30 AM – 4:15 PM. This impacts nurses hired after February 1, 2012 or those nurses seeking new employment elsewhere. Note: Some nursing facilities have expanded that requirement back to 2011.

### E-mail Addresses Requested

The United Nurses and Allied Professionals, is looking to expand our data base of email addresses. If you would like to share your e-mail address with us, please contact Betty Wheeler at (401) 831-3647 or you can e-mail her at [bwheeler@unap.org](mailto:bwheeler@unap.org).

At some point we will offer electronic newsletters for those of you that prefer communication electronically. Additionally there are many updates that are time sensitive and only go out electronically. One more point: there will be less paper to dispose of and less trees disposed of by way of paper.

## Around the Locals (continued)

### UNAP, Local 5082 (Memorial Hospital of RI)

Local 5082 will commence negotiations for a new contract this May. Bargaining will continue well into the summer. The current 3-year contract expires on August 12, 2012.

### UNAP Local 5110 Our Lady of Fatima

Over the last few years changes at Our Lady of Fatima Hospital in North Providence have been substantial. Those changes started with the new affiliation with Roger Williams Hospital. A Patient/Family Centered model of care was adopted for all the medical/surgical units. The model included a conversion to all 12 hour shifts. The hospital refocused its goals on patient satisfaction and quality care. We now have better staffing ratios with the goal of 5:1 nurse patient ratio 24 hours a day for 7 days a week and better care. Due to the staff commitment to move forward and provide better care, Our Lady of Fatima is in a much better place than it was before these changes were made. This was a collaborative effort by the hospital and the union. We are now in a better position to move forward and meet the needs of our patients and create a more secure future for our members.

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