130 New Members at Oak Valley Care Center

The employees at the Oak Valley Care Center in Oakdale, Calif., voted to join the USW on December 11 and 12. For many of the employees, the victory was a long time coming—they faced an aggressive anti-union campaign in 2010 and lost a tough election. This time around, the 113-person nursing home unit was comprised of LVNs, CNAs, Environmental Services, Food Services, patient advocates, Clinical Care, Social Services and staffing coordinators. They voted over 2-to-1 in favor of union representation. The 20 RNs who also work in the Care Center won recognition through card check in November. Both groups are employees of Oak Valley Hospital District (OVHD), a public entity, and will be combined into a single bargaining unit.

The Oak Valley Hospital employees working across the street from the Oak Valley Care Center won their election in 2010 and are members of TEMSA/USW Local 12911. The addition of the 130-plus new members from the Oak Valley Care Center brings the local’s total membership within the Oak Valley Hospital District to just over 300. Congratulations to our new members led by a dedicated in-house committee that kept their eye on the prize for over four years and to Local 12911 President Bob Easter and Vice-President Lee Almeida.

West Liberty Nursing Home workers win wall-to-wall unit and first contract in record time

A little over a year ago, employees kicked off their organizing campaign with 65% of the bargaining unit signing membership cards to pledge their interest in forming a union at their very first organizing meeting. From day one of the organizing drive to the day they ratified their first contract, the membership gained strength and collectively told the employer that their primary issue was a demand for respect.

Members won their union and first contract in record time with a CBA that includes meaningful improvement to wages and benefits, but more importantly, a means to challenge the company’s poor treatment of employees though a Grievance and Arbitration Procedure.

Organizers say that despite endless employer challenges, which included captive audience meetings, threatening presentations, and divisive techniques, members still united under one goal: for their wall-to-wall unit to become United Steelworkers.

New OSHA resource aims to help reduce injuries among workers in the nursing home and residential care industries

WASHINGTON — The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has developed Safe Patient Handling: Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders in Nursing Homes, a new brochure that addresses the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders among nursing home and residential care workers.

“Musculoskeletal injuries are the single biggest worker injury in the healthcare sector,” said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. “This new resource will help make employers and workers aware of the activities that pose the greatest hazards to workers who care for residents in nursing homes and residential care industries and what can be done to decrease risks to these workers.”

Healthcare workers experience some of the highest rates of non-fatal workplace injuries and illnesses of any industry sector. In 2012, injuries and illnesses reported for nursing and residential care workers were nearly twice the number of those reported for construction workers, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics. Injuries include muscle strains, low back and rotator cuff injuries and tendinitis. This brochure explains how implementing a safe patient handling program can reduce or prevent the number and severity of these musculoskeletal hazards.
Somerset nurses join union despite Robert Wood Johnson opposition

SOMERVILLE – About 430 nurses at the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital campus in this borough will join the labor union already representing the 1,400 nurses at the hospital’s New Brunswick campus.

The registered nurses in Somerville voted Thursday and Friday, 204 to 170, in favor of joining the United Steelworkers, rejecting the hospital’s campaign to oppose unionizing.

A spokesman for the hospital said Monday that the workers’ vote is expected to be certified by the National Labor Relations Board after a week.

The nurses become the first organized bargaining unit at the Somerville hospital since the Somerset Medical Center merged with the New Brunswick-based hospital in June.

Despite the merger, union officials decided to pursue a vote instead of trying to make a legal case that the Somerville nurses should be able to join their New Brunswick colleagues without an election.

“We look forward to getting to the bargaining table as soon as possible,” union representative Del Vitale said. “This win is important for the community that the hospital serves. The registered nurses will have more power to advocate for patients, ensuring quality care.”

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Executive Vice President Vincent D. Joseph said hospital officials “acknowledge and respect the right of our nursing staff to decide on whether or not union representation is in their best long- and short-term interest.”

“We will do everything we can to continue to make the hospital the best possible workplace it can be,” he said. “Working together, collegially with all of our health care professionals, we will continue to advance our health care mission within the greater Somerset community.”

United Steelworkers said the hospital hired an anti-union public relations firm, Kulture, in an effort to dissuade the nurses from voting in favor of organizing. A hospital spokesman would not say how much the nonprofit spent on the campaign.

PACU Nurse Rhoda Gestosani says, “I did not vote ‘Yes’ ten years ago when we attempted to form a union. I trusted that the nurses’ individual voices would be heard and respected as long as we had the courage and dignity to say what was important to us. Well, it has been 10 years, and we are worse off now than we were then. It is time to have ONE voice so that RNs can truly be heard!”

Free CDC Ebola Protocol Training Available

The USW Tony Mazzocchi Center for Health, Safety and Environment Education has developed a 2- and 4-hour Ebola Awareness training. Upon completion of the class you will be able to define Ebola and how it is transmitted; list three rights workers have when working with Ebola cases; define the “Hierarchy of Controls” and give examples of each concerning Ebola; list effective PPE for your work; demonstrate proper PPE donning/doffing; and define a Trained Observer. The training follows the CDC protocol for Ebola and infectious diseases.

The training can be provided at no cost to your employer or local union. Please contact Nancy Lessin at trainingrequests@uswmc.org.