

New Contract at Bell Memorial Hospital

Members of Local 8293 in Ishpeming, Mich., last week signed a five-year agreement that raises wages and increases pension contributions.

The 115 members work at Bell Memorial Hospital as housekeeping staff, dietary, respiratory, lab and x-ray techs, admitting clerks, medical records technicians, maintenance workers and more.

Local President Wendy Wernholm said that while the process went fairly smoothly, there was a lot of preparation that went into the successful negotiations, including detailed bargaining surveys that helped the committee set their priorities.

“The surveys really helped us find out what direction to go in,” said Wernholm. “Our top two were wages and pensions, and we made good progress on those issues.”

In the end, the local got across-the-board wage increases in each year of the deal, totaling 8.75 percent. They also got a 10-cent-an-hour increase to the USW Pension Trust and a 10-cent increase to shift differentials.

Community engagement

Bell Memorial Hospital is located in a small town in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, but despite Michigan’s regressive right-to-work laws, the local has 100 percent union participation without a single freeloader.



Local 8293 bargaining committee: (left to right) Susan Kent, Lisa Pellonpaa, Christine Bertucci, and Wendy Wernholm

Wernholm credits the local’s widespread engagement as well as a relatively amiable relationship with the hospital management for this success.

The local prides itself for its dedication to giving back to the community, Wernholm said, and while this didn’t play an immediate role at the bargaining table, this work does help the local stay connected with each other and the surrounding community.

“We do a lot of work getting food for community organizations like the Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul, Goodwill, and others,” said Wernholm. “A lot of people give around the holidays, but we try to make our biggest donation after the first of the year when most places have their supplies depleted.”

“We’ve been doing this for the past several years, and we plan to keep going,” she said.

In the News:

Cigna-Express Scripts Deal Needs Congressional Oversight, House Democrat Says

Cigna’s plan to buy the pharmaceutical benefits management company Express Scripts may hit congressional roadblocks, writes Susannah Luthi for Modern Healthcare.

Cigna, a health insurance company operating in U.S. and international markets, announced last week that it plans to buy Express Scripts for \$52 billion. Now Frank Pallone, the ranking Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, is calling for a hearing on the proposal.

Pallone and others are concerned that while this consolidation in the health care market will bring significant profits for the insurer, it may harm consumers.

The USW represents workers at Express Scripts operations in five states.

To read the full article, click [here](#).

To read more about the merger, click [here](#).



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