



NUHW NEWS AND VIEWS

Seton Medical Center • Seton Coastside

MAY 2017

Members build political power, meet with elected leader

More than 15 members organized an April 21 meeting with San Mateo County Supervisor David Canepa at Seton Medical Center to ask for his support in holding management accountable (see picture at bottom right).

In his current role and previously as vice mayor of Daly City, Canepa has been a strong advocate for us and understands our issues. In our last contract fight, together with San Francisco Supervisor Jane Kim, he facilitated a successful town hall meeting, which shed light on the cost-cutting measures of the New York hedge fund BlueMountain. The town hall was instrumental, in conjunction with members' collective action, in us winning a strong contract.

We explained to Canepa and his aide that only a few months after we ratified our contract, management has tried to implement changes without notifying the union — canceling staff, terminating employees without just cause or progressive discipline, and a multitude of other bad practices. Management turnover has left departments without leadership, and in many cases, forced frontline caregivers to do the jobs of managers. Poor management and unstable leadership have adversely affected members' livelihoods and the quality of patient care we're able to provide.

Canepa agreed with us that BlueMountain-Verity's duty is

continued on reverse

STEWARD SPOTLIGHT

KIMBERLY BRACKETT

Senior Surgical Technician

As a San Francisco native and now Brentwood resident, Kimberly Brackett has taken many trips to Sacramento in her lifetime. But her trip on April 26 was different. For the first time, Kimberly went to Sacramento as an activist, attending her first rally and marching to the Capitol.

Kimberly rallied with fellow NUHW leaders and hundreds of other community activists to advocate for Senate Bill 562, the Healthy California Act, which would create a universal healthcare system for all Californians.

"I was so nervous! I didn't know what to expect," said Kimberly. "I was just soaking it all in and even talked to a reporter for the first time! When I stepped up to be a steward, I wanted to get more involved in the workplace, as well as in the community. I'm usually very shy, but I wanted to practice being more comfortable out there fighting for change, to embolden our members to be active as well."

Kimberly has always wanted to work directly with people to make an impact in their lives. Since she was young, she wanted to become a nurse. Kimberly gave birth to her son while she was in college, which halted her pursuit of a nursing degree. When she discovered the surgical tech program, it felt like the perfect fit — a mix of patient care, technical skills, and precision.

Kimberly has been a surgical technician at Seton for more than 15 years and loves her work. For most of her tenure, she knew that there was a union at Seton, but when her son was young, she didn't feel she had the time or energy to engage in union activism. She also didn't know exactly what the union did; the old union never seemed visible or accessible to her. But after seeing how our unity achieved a solid contract in the last round of negotiations, Kimberly was intrigued and excited about the possibility of a

continued on reverse



Kimberly, front right, with other NUHW leaders at the SB 562 rally in Sacramento.



San Mateo Supervisor David Canepa, center, with NUHW leaders at Seton.

Members build political power

continued from front

to serve patients in the community, not to make a profit. But that's not the duty BlueMountain-Verity has upheld — it continues to decrease staff in an attempt to increase its bottom line.

Canepa committed to contacting CEO John Ferrelli to remind him that BlueMountain-Verity must do better in prioritizing patient care and its caregivers and that Seton must continue to serve the community.

David Canepa's willingness to advocate on our behalf resulted from years of us building and maintaining a relationship with him. As a union, we must continue to build positive relationships with our elected allies to improve our community and hold management accountable to its patients, not its New York shareholders.

PRINT CONTRACTS NOW AVAILABLE!

Please contact your steward or Laura Watson to receive a copy. You may also download the contract on our website, **NUHW.org**.



Show your NUHW pride! Check out our store at **NUHW.org**.

continued from front, Kimberly Brackett

better workplace with an active union. And that was one of Kimberly's main motivations in becoming an NUHW steward a year ago — activating members at Seton to build a better workplace together.

Because Kimberly loves her day-to-day work as a surgical tech, over the years she has tolerated many poor practices in her department, from shift cancellations, disrespectful behavior, limited career progress, to even bullying. But since becoming a steward, Kimberly no longer feels that she has to accept that kind of working environment.

Kimberly was driven to organize her co-workers in response to management's refusal to offer much-needed heart procedure training for surgical techs. Many surgical techs were seeking opportunities to increase their skills and add the heart specialty to their skill set. Instead of developing capacity internally, management insisted on outside hiring and creating a new position with a pay rate that's more than 30 percent higher than the rate of a surgical tech. Kimberly was frustrated by management's dismissal of members' concerns. These surgical techs are already familiar with the facility, and are eager and qualified to do the job. Why are they not given the chance?

Over many months, Kimberly and her co-workers negotiated with management to develop a new surgical tech career ladder that provides skills-building and more systematized career progress. The new career ladder decreased the amount of time required to advance from a Tech 1 to Tech 2, and from a Tech 2 and Senior Tech. The ladder also ensures that techs who are interested in scrubbing for heart procedures would have the opportunity. Senior techs received a 3 percent wage increase, and those who work on heart procedures received a wage increase of 5 to 15 percent. Management backed down from their initial proposal of creating a new position solely for heart.

"I feel great about the resolution," said Kimberly. "We went back and forth for many months. I'm very interested in scrubbing for heart, but I know it's not something for everyone. But I don't want to limit anyone's progress. So for anyone who comes after me, if they want the chance to try for heart, they would have that opportunity. Sitting at the table can be very tiresome, but I feel that the end result was fair and perfect."

The creation of a new surgical tech career ladder showed Kimberly what is possible when members get involved in their workplace. But she also realizes that an active union membership can become more powerful when we're engaged beyond the workplace.

"Now that my son is just two years shy of voting age, and given the current political climate, I want to model for my son how change is made," said Kimberly. "I want to show him that he too can make change."

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Stewards Council meetings are every third Wednesday of the month in DePaul Auditorium

NUHW-Seton Joint Labor Management and Patient Care Committee every fourth Thursday, 1 to 3 p.m. in HR

NUHW-Coastside Joint Labor Management and Patient Care Committee every third Monday, 1 to 3 p.m. in Coastside Solarium

If you are interested in being a steward or serve on a committee, contact Laura Watson.

For more information, please contact NUHW Organizer Laura Watson at (510) 220-4578 or lwatson@nuhw.org.

