



# NUHW NEWS AND VIEWS

Petaluma Valley • Santa Rosa Memorial  
Queen of the Valley • Redwood Memorial • St. Joseph Eureka

**FEBRUARY 2018**

## **PETALUMA VALLEY RNS VOTE TO FORM AN INDEPENDENT UNION**

On December 11 and 12, our Registered Nurses colleagues voted 93 percent in favor of forming the Staff Nurse Partnership, an independent union for RNs at PVH. They have not had a raise since June 2015 and have seen as much as 30 percent turnover in two years.

“We’re thrilled that our RN sisters and brothers have a voice again,” said Patti Barnett, Radiology Tech II. “Our registered nurses have been vocal and consistent at advocating for improved pay and working conditions needed to retain a high-quality workforce. We look forward to standing alongside our nurses to make our hospital a better place for patients and workers alike.”

## **PETALUMA VALLEY HOSPITAL’S FUTURE STILL UNCLEAR**

Despite protests from NUHW members, nurses, and even physicians, Providence St. Joseph continues to underinvest in Petaluma Valley Hospital. The company is also refusing to pay its fair share of a new medical records system for Paladin, the company slated to eventually take over operations of the hospital. As a result, Paladin has recently changed their offer to run PVH from a lease to a management agreement. The Health Care District is currently reviewing the new proposal.

It could still be a year or more before there is a transition from Providence St. Joseph to Paladin. We will continue to communicate with the Health Care District around the future of our hospital.

## **QUEEN OF THE VALLEY WORKERS WIN INJUNCTION, LOSE STAY — BUT THE FIGHT CONTINUES**

**Management continues to waste patient care dollars  
in a legal fight against their own workers**

On November 30, a federal judge handed Queen CEO Larry Coomes his third straight legal defeat, issuing an injunction compelling the Queen to immediately recognize our union and start good-faith contract negotiations. Management went to court and asked for the injunction to be stayed, meaning it would not go into effect. The court rejected the request almost immediately.

Workers then sat down with Queen management on December 7 and presented dozens of proposals for a new contract. But management only came to listen, not to bargain, so we were not able to reach any agreements. Simultaneously, Queen management continued their legal appeal, and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals put the injunction on hold shortly after our bargaining session. Coomes went immediately back to his old ways and refused to bargain again until forced by the legal system.

In response, Queen leaders moved a petition among their coworkers over the holidays, calling on management to bargain a fair contract, just like they did with us in Sonoma and Humboldt.



Workers also emailed Coomes to request a meeting to discuss their bargaining platform. After he refused to meet, 11 Queen leaders delivered the petitions to Coomes. First they went to his office, then when they learned he was at an offsite training, they got in their cars and drove there to try and meet him. After being told they’d “just missed him,” they headed back to the Queen to leave the petitions and a brief letter with his secretary.

Queen workers are well aware of management’s union-busting tactics. We’re prepared to roll up our sleeves and continue this fight until our union is recognized!

## **District Court order shows extreme behavior of Queen CEO Larry Coomes**

In 2016, the National Labor Relations Board requested only 29 injunctions. Of those, only four were granted. This shows just how extreme Queen management’s behavior has been. The judge also ordered Queen management to:

- Stop making unilateral changes to wages, benefits, and working conditions
- Begin bargaining within five business days and bargain in good faith without conditions

- Provide requested, relevant information
- Allow workers to have representation in investigatory meetings
- Upon request, rescind any and all unilateral changes to employment since our union was originally certified at Queen a year ago
- Hold a mandatory meeting for staff and read the order aloud; the judge even ordered a Board Agent to be present to make sure this happens!
- Within 15 business days of the November 30 order, provide evidence to the Court and Labor Board management has complied with the order

## Using COPE to win

Union members who have been to a bargaining session know firsthand that the boss doesn't raise wages and improve benefits without a fight. That's why we need to be strong as a union heading into contract negotiations. But we also need political allies who are ready to stand with us as we take on management.

How do we gain political allies? One way is through union members' voluntary donations and participation in our Committee on Political Education (COPE). Through COPE, we review candidates, vote on endorsements for candidates who share our values, then organize volunteer efforts, and financially support their campaigns.

At our annual Leadership Conference in October 2017, NUHW stewards voted 54 percent to endorse



Stewards from Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital with gubernatorial candidate Gavin Newsom.

Gavin Newsom for mayor, who is been a strong supporter of single-payer healthcare and improving mental health services.

In the next few months we will invite union members to participate in candidate interviews and vote on our union's endorsements in various races in Humboldt, Napa, and Sonoma counties [see sidebar]. We'll then work to get those candidates elected and build our relationships with them to help build our strength at the bargaining table in our next round of contract negotiations.

## SAVE THE DATE!

**2018 races and possible NUHW endorsements**

### Humboldt

Board of Supervisors  
Districts 4 & 5

**Saturday, March 11**

### Napa

Board of Supervisors  
Districts 1 & 3

**Saturday, February 17**

### Sonoma

Board of Supervisors  
Districts 2 & 4

**Thursday, February 22**

## Steward Spotlight

### KARI HELGESON

Radiology Technologist  
St. Joseph Eureka

**K**ari Helgeson can't remember a time when she didn't know how to swim.

She grew up in Loveland, Colorado, a small town 60 miles north of Denver. The area is dotted with lakes, including the town's crown jewel, Lake Loveland, a central community gathering spot where families picnic on the shore, children graduate from floaties to freestyle, and elders go for their daily exercise.

When Kari was a girl growing up in Loveland, students had to pass a basic swimming course in order to receive their high school diploma. Kari could have passed that course in elementary school. But it was at Loveland High, situated on the lake's northern shore, where Kari learned to see swimming as a team sport. She and her teammates competed not just to win their individual races, but to achieve a common goal, a team victory. It was her high school coach, Kevin Polansky, who instilled in her the importance of looking out for her teammates, standing up for them, encouraging them.

"My swim coach really instilled in me the importance of lifting each



other up," Kari said.

And those values have informed her life.

After graduating from Aims Community College in Greeley, Colorado, Kari became a radiology technologist in Phoenix.

"Radiology techs are such a big part of patient care," said Kari. "I really enjoy the investigative piece, fitting all the puzzle pieces together being creative with how we use x-ray. And through this, we get to save lives."

Kari had been serving the community at St. Joseph for nearly 15 years by the time her co-workers started talking about organizing with NUHW. She was initially skeptical about forming a union.

"I thought all unions did was strike," she said, "and I was concerned about patient care if that should happen. But then I learned that to improve our working conditions and patient care, we need to demand our rights."

But it wasn't until she took part in the bargaining process that Kari fully understood the importance of her union work.

"Management showed their true colors," she said. The demanded takeaways without fully grasping the impact on caregivers of patients. Kari and her fellow caregivers each did their part to confront management and win a good contract.

"One voice can make a difference," Kari says. "We can take action, we can educate others, and we can show people that they can make a difference, no matter what."

Kari's community spirit is in evidence outside the hospital walls, too.

For more than a decade, Kari has

volunteered at various music festivals, including the Kate Wolf Music Festival at Black Oak Ranch in Mendocino County. It's not so much the music that keeps her coming back year after year, it's working with the Armadillo Crew, a band of volunteers who work to keep lost and abandoned animals safe throughout the event.

"They're my crew mates," Kari said. "It's a like a camping reunion every year."

For the past six years, Kari has been taking part in another annual event, the Humboldt County Kinetic Grand Championship, the "triathlon of the art world," which will celebrate its 50th anniversary when it takes over Humboldt Bay on Memorial Day weekend. Kari is a proud member of Team FunGuy, which earned an "ace" in both 2016 and 2017, a coveted designation conferred only on teams that have completely followed the race's rules.

The frenetic three-day, 42-mile race combines art, engineering, and cycling in a high-spirited event that sees large, human-powered art vehicles traversing land and water to reach the finish line. Each team consists of one or more pilots who operate the vehicle and a corresponding number of pit crew members to keep it running. Kari is a proud "peon" — one of fifty team members who support the effort from the sidelines by doing whatever is needed, from cheering to using homemade trinkets to good-naturedly bribe judges, spectators, and rival teams.

It's a little bit like high school swimming: "You join for the promise of glory," Kari said, "but you stick around for the camaraderie."