



# NUHW NEWS AND VIEWS

## Kaiser Optical

**APRIL 2019**

### UPDATE ON TRACERS

There has been some controversy lately about tracers! The tracers themselves are not the issue, but rather the way that optical management chose to roll them out.

When pilots were done in Union City and Pleasanton, all opticians received hands-on training on the equipment. After using the new equipment, these opticians see its benefits and are fairly comfortable using it.



Nonetheless, our stewards at these sites encouraged management to conduct a comprehensive training on the tracers and get input from all staff before purchasing them for all branches.

Instead of listening, management unceremoniously delivered the new equipment to all branches without giving notice or soliciting input from staff. The rollout was also uneven, with some branches receiving full training for all staff and others receiving mal training for only one worker. Nor did management give any consideration to changes in workflows, impacts on customer care and wait times, or availability of tools and equipment required for mounting the tracers. The lack of training has led to many avoidable mistakes and unacceptable customer wait times.

**Continued on back**

### OPTICAL BARGAINING COMMITTEE ELECTED

After completing region-wide secret ballot elections between February 13 and 28, during every shift in the Richmond Lab and at every Optical branch, the following individuals have been elected to your Bargaining Committee:

Sonia Askew Lead Optical Dispenser South Sacramento	Toni Gianti Optical Dispenser Antioch Sand Creek	Otto Pimentel Contact Lens Fitter Modesto
Tony Baltrons, Jr. Journeyman, Optical Lab Bench Department	Demeka Hudson Optical Dispenser Fremont	Elvia Plata Optical Dispenser Fresno
Shahidah Williams Bell Journeyman Optical Lab Surface Department	Sonia Minor Contact Lens Fitter Martinez	Laura Stewart Optical Dispenser Santa Clara
Christian Del Rosario Journeyman Optical Lab Bench Department	Jeffrey Parker Journeyman Optical Lab Stock Departmen	Gloria Villaseñor Optical Dispenser Union City
		Delisa Willis Optical Dispenser Walnut Creek



*Our Optical Bargaining Committee! Clockwise from the left: Christian Del Rosario, Sonia Askew, Demeka Hudson, Shahidah Bell, Tony Baltrons, Jr, Gloria Villaseñor, Sonia Minor, Elvia Plata. Not pictured: Toni Gianti, Jeff Parker, Otto Pimentel, Laura Stewart, Delisa Willis.*

### BARGAINING SURVEY RESULTS AND BARGAINING PLATFORM

More than 66 percent of our Optical members completed the bargaining survey in February. The next step is for our newly-elected bargaining committee to review the results of our bargaining survey and develop a bargaining platform. This platform will lay out our goals for bargaining, which will be starting this summer. Once the bargaining platform is ready, your stewards and organizers will circulate it to every member. Please sign to give your approval and help show we are committed to doing whatever it takes to win a great contract!

## UPDATE ON TRACERS

### Continued from front

We have been pushing Kaiser to provide adequate training to everyone and they seem to be listening, as more opticians are being trained. It is important to understand that each individual optician has discretion about when to use the tracer, and does not have to use the tracer:

- If not properly trained;
- When there is not proper equipment to edge and mount the frames;
- When alone in the branch, or the branch is so busy that would not be appropriate to be off the floor for the time needed to use the tracer.

Our stewards are continuing to assess the impact of the tracers on the workload in the branches and also the impact on workers in the Lab, such as in the Stock Department. We also recognize the need to have language on training in the contract, and our bargaining committee will determine how to add this to our proposals.

## UPDATE ON VACATION REQUESTS AND PICKS & EVES

As may know, this year Optical Management implemented a change to the practice of approving vacation picks and holiday eves. They then changed the turnaround timeframe and the process for approving vacation requests made after the vacation picks calendar is complete. Management did not meet its legal obligation to bargain with the union before making these changes.



In response, our stewards and organizers have been filing grievances in each branch where any of the following practices is a change: 1) Management has not approved the most senior employee(s) to have both Eves off; 2) Management is not allowing half of employees to be off on Christmas Eve and half off on New Years Eve, or 3) An employee's "post-pick" vacation request for a day still available on the calendar is not approved within a short timeframe.

We also requested to bargain region-wide regarding this third item, changes to the vacation approval time, and have had one meeting so far. We are considering filing an Unfair Labor Practice charge with the NLRB because they made this unilateral change without bargaining.

In the Lab, our stewards bargained with Management and organized a vote of all members to allow any employee in any Department or shift to request and be granted Christmas Eve as paid time off, so long as the employee has enough paid time off accrued. In exchange, no additional time off requests for New Years Eve, beyond those employees granted the time off as part of their vacation picks, will be approved. From initial polling, it is likely the Lab will still remain open on Christmas Eve, as some are electing to work both.

## STEWARDS CORNER — WHY DO WE NEED STRONG STEWARDS?



At the March 2018 Steward Council meeting, NUHW Organizer Peter Brogan sat down with four long time stewards to discuss why they became stewards and why it is vital to have a strong

steward in every branch and every department/shift at the Optical Lab. Below is an edited version of the third conversation in this series, with long-time steward Michael Nelson, who will be retiring in July of 2019.

### How long have you worked at Kaiser and been a steward?

*I've been at Kaiser since 1976, 42 years in July, and became a steward about two years after I started working here. I currently work in Stockton.*

### Why did you become a steward way back when, and why have you stuck with it?

*I was fired on the 91st day of my employment with Kaiser. I was hired on August 19 and fired on October 19. There was only one black person at Kaiser's Optical Lab in Berkeley back then. They were only hiring black people for temporary positions. Well, I got in and they fired me on the 91st day. I got my job back through a grievance and really saw what a union can do. I became a steward to stand up to disrespectful yes-men who were managers and fight for members.*

### Why do you think it is important to have a steward in all the branches and at the lab?

*Without stewards — and members backing them up — management can do anything it wants. They can find gray areas in a contract and use that to push an agenda that might be terrible*

*for workers and patients. Not having stewards creates friction and confusion between branches, and that's exactly what management wants. If you look at the new managers being brought in, they're all from Walmart or Costco, non-union or anti-union companies. When you have a steward in each branch, you can look for answers and support from your fellow stewards when managers give you incomplete or wrong information.*

### What advice would you give to anyone thinking of becoming a steward?

*Keep your calm. Management is going to do things that make you angry. They want you emotional. Keep calm and know your contract. You will earn the respect and support of your members, which helps hold management accountable. And if you don't have an answer, take a second, make a call, and get the information you need.*

**NUHW**  
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HEALTHCARE WORKERS

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