



NUHW NEWS AND VIEWS

Visiting Nurse Association of Santa Cruz

DECEMBER 2021



STEWARD SPOTLIGHT CELESTE GUERRERO

When she was in high school, Celeste Guerrero applied for an AFL-CIO scholarship where she had to write an essay about labor unions.

“I had a hard time writing because I didn’t know anything,” Celeste remembered.

The physical therapist knows a lot more about it after seven years as part of the Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice of Santa Cruz.

Celeste came onboard six months after medical social workers and physical, occupational, and speech therapists voted to join NUHW and were negotiating a first contract with the Sutter Health affiliate.

“I was sort of supporting from the fringes,” said Celeste. “I sat in on three different meetings, just

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NUHW MEMBERS DEMAND PROPER MILEAGE AND WORK HOUR TRACKING



As healthcare workers who provide home care to patients throughout Santa Cruz County, NUHW members at Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice of Santa Cruz are constantly on the road.

Properly tracking that mileage is one of the issues they’re currently trying to resolve during a labor-management meeting.

There seems to be some confusion in how people track their mileage, and there’s even been instances where employees are called into office for investigative meetings where they are accused of “fudging” their mileage. Clear guidelines would avoid such issues.

Another problem has been the need for staff to work eight hours a day, with work schedules based on seniority. However, the scheduling department has been giving more hours to newer therapists.

NUHW members will bring ideas to management on how to resolve these problems.

GET READY FOR THE NEW YEAR

Now that it’s getting close to the end of the year, we need to plan ahead for next year’s battles. There are many issues that we will need to resolve and that effort requires everyone’s input and support.

Talk to your shop steward or union representative to see how you can help make a difference.

AROUND THE UNION



- Salinas Valley Memorial workers ratified a new contract that includes a 16% wage increase and a \$500 bonus for all NUHW members, improved education benefits and an expanded incentive program.
- In solidarity with striking Kaiser Permanente engineers and outrage over Kaiser's chronic underfunding of behavioral health care, NUHW members held a one-day strike across Northern California on Nov. 19.
- Wellpath reimbursed NUHW members at Santa Rita Jail in Alameda County a combined \$44,900 after they paid for a disability benefit not extended to California residents.



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BETTER COMMUNICATION ABOUT VACATIONS



When Sutter VNA workers go on vacation, their patients must be handed over to another caregiver for the healthcare service to continue uninterrupted.

For this to happen, there must be a process for co-workers to receive those notifications so they can include new patients in their route. But in many instances, workers do not have enough notice about when to expect new patients.

NUHW members are drafting best practices to craft a written protocol on how to notify workers, because management hasn't created an efficient system. We will be negotiating with management over those proposals.

STEWARD SPOTLIGHT **CELESTE GUERRERO** *continued from front*

sort of listening," she said.

During the next five years she became a strong union supporter and two years ago she took the next step and became one of four stewards at the facility.

"I've learned that it's a delicate balance trying to advocate for the members but at the same time working with management. It's a tough balance. I'm still learning," Celeste said.

It's a role that brings challenges and rewards.

"It's rewarding to try to work through various issues that come up with salary and seniority and try to improve the working conditions for coworkers," she said.

"It's also challenging in this current climate because we do so much more remotely. It's hard to connect with members," Celeste added. "It's harder to maintain that cohesion that you need with the union."

To improve that cohesion, Celeste recently hosted several co-workers at her home.

It was a way to meet face-to-face after 18 months of health crisis, meet new members, and instill in them the importance of being an active part of a union.

"I tell them it's about their livelihoods and it's important because without one, things will go backwards," she said

Some people were introducing themselves after having only online connections. Others were reconnecting and discussing issues impacting their work.

"It drummed up some enthusiasm," Celeste said. "The ones that were there got excited about the union."