

Update on Appalachian Regional Healthcare (ARH) RN Strike: Week 3

Background: 800 UAN RNs in Kentucky/West Virginia have been on strike now for 2 ½ weeks. ARH has 9 facilities across the two states (most facilities are in Kentucky). Strike issues center on patient care: staffing and mandatory overtime. Additionally, the nurses are standing up for no concessions in pension and healthcare. In support of the nurses, the following activities and recommendations are underway:



UAN Coordination and Support: UAN Executive Council member Sandy Falwell, RN (third from left), visited picket lines in both states during Week 1. UAN also sent an initial donation of \$5,000 to assist in strike support in both states.

Since Week 1, UAN has coordinated additional activities within the national union and in the larger national labor community.

UAN Staff: UAN organizer Terri Hogle is on the ground in Beckley, W. Va., providing assistance in organizing rallies, leafleting, shoring up picket lines and visiting elected officials such as county commissioners, as well as other community activities.

Paid Advertising: UAN ran print ads supporting the striking ARH nurses in papers in both states Oct. 15. UAN also has launched a two-week radio ad buy in Kentucky, with the possibility of more to come in W. Va.

Other Media/Communications: UAN facilitated coverage of the strike in the AFL-CIO blog (www.aflcio.org/blognews) and is working with AFL-CIO national media staff to generate press around the striking nurses in conjunction with AFL-CIO's Kentucky GOTV activities. UAN is developing flyers and other materials to be used by nurses in community activities.

Other unions: UAN secured a statement of support from Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts, which generated media coverage in Ky. and W. Va. Local union leaders have secured support from local Mine Workers to do hospital walk-throughs at different facilities in support of the nurses. UMWA has also been helpful in responding to UAN requests for research and information on ARH.

UAN also is coordinating national support from the Steelworkers, who represent other workers at ARH. USW will be running a newspaper ad in support of the striking nurses. UAN has received and distributed research and information from the Steelworkers on the hospital chain. UAN also has been in contact with SEIU to provide research on the union-busting firm being used, Yessin Associates, as well as possible financial and other assistance for striking nurses.

UAN has solicited for and circulated letters of support from locals in AFT, CWA, SEIU and RNs Working Together, among others.

UAN continues to solicit assistance from other unions, including letters of support, assistance from AFL-CIO state and central bodies, and appeals from national unions to local affiliates to help.

Developments on the Ground: The Letcher County (Ky.) Fiscal Court voted unanimously to adopt a resolution supporting the RNs in the strike. Court members said that ARH may lose up to nearly \$2 million in government funding if other counties take similar action and the hospital chain does not reach an agreement to settle with the nurses.

RNs in both states continue to leaflet, hold rallies, attend various public events and find other ways to reach out to their communities. Striking nurses have received positive coverage in a variety of media interviews. Local leaders in W. Va. have raised the strike issue by attending the public comment periods at Summers County Commissioners' meetings.

Strike Fund: Monies are being distributed to the locals for food, medicine, etc., equally, on an as-needed basis, with guidelines for usage of the money determined by the local units. Says ARH-Harlan President Sarah Hunley, RN: "I cannot begin to thank all of the states for their support. The response is overwhelming and humbling. I have never been as proud of my profession as I am today. We are fighting a giant (ARH) and need all of our union sisters and brothers. We ask that you keep us in your prayers."

Strike support can be sent, with checks made payable to the state nurses associations and designated for the strike fund (please note that nurses in the hospital system are represented by 2 Affiliates across 2 states), to:

**Kentucky Nurses Association
ATTN: Labor Program Director Dewey Parker
1400 South First St
Louisville, KY 40208**

**West Virginia Nurses Association
ATTN: E&GW Chair Rue Hairston, RN
PO Box 1946
Charleston, WV 25327**

Please see www.uannurse.org/media/news.html for a sampling of press coverage.