

# REGION ONE NURSE

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THE VOICE OF NURSES IN WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 2010

## MERCY RNS IN HAITI



Mercy RN Dave Powers on a break while volunteering in Haiti

Mercy Medical Center RNs, Aimee Demaris and Dave Powers both had long thought they would like to spend time as volunteer nurses in a foreign country. After the earth quake in Haiti, they got that opportunity. As word spread throughout the hospital that a one week trip was planned Powers decided he had to go. "I had always wanted to make a trip like this and the need seemed so great that I figured out a way to make it happen. Because the trip was put together on short notice, I had to figure out a way to cover my shifts in the Emergency Room and I was so proud of the way my fellow nurses stepped up with 4, 6, or 8 hour blocks to cover my time," said Powers.

Immediately after the earthquake Demaris

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## Region One Film Night: A Banner Success

By Gail Bean, RN, Vice Chair Region One

Region One's first "Pizza, Popcorn and Movie" night held in the new Region One office and conference area was a banner success, and it wasn't just a coincidence that the film of the evening was titled "With Babies and Banners." Over 30 people ventured out on a snowy February evening to view this documentary of the heroic actions of women supporting the efforts which led to the victory of the Great General Motors Sit-Down Strike in Flint, Michigan in 1937. The audience was comprised of MNA members, MNA staff, and students from the UMass-Amherst Labor Studies program. Family members, including two young children, filled out the audience.

Filmed in 1977, 40 years after the GM strike, the documentary features interviews with women who had been members of the Women's Emergency Brigade, a strike support organization, proudly wearing their red berets and arm

bands with "WEB" embroidered on them. Each one recounted the various activities they and the other wives, sisters and mothers had engaged in to support the men on strike. Their actions included leaving their homes to work in restaurants cooking food, delivering it through the factory windows to the men inside, and starting day cares to care for the children of the women who were involved in these actions. But the most impressive actions were the picket lines formed by these women which were captured on actual news reel footage. Women picketed outside the factories carrying the American flag, union banners and often with their children in tow. These were actions unheard of back in the 1930's!

There were several disturbing scenes in the film, which showed some of the actions General Motors took to try to force an end to the strike. The first was where the heat was turned off in

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## HEALTHCARE PANEL LED BY REGION ONE ACTIVISTS

By Patricia Healey, RN

Members of MNA Region One participated in discussions and workshops at the Western Mass Jobs With Justice Conference (WMJWJ) on March 6th at Holyoke Community College. WMJWJ is a coalition of labor unions, community, businesses, student and faith based organizations, who work together to improve the standard of living for workers, fight for job security, protect workers' right to organize and mutually support community initiatives to protect the health and welfare of working people. Although JWWJ is a national organization, the Western Mass chapter has over sixty member organizations including: Collective Copies, Clean Water Action, Franklin-Hampshire Health Care Coalition, IBEW 2324, MNA, Mass Senior Action, Odyssey Bookshop, Peoples Pint, Springfield Health Disparities Project, SEIU 1199, UAW 2322, National Writers Union, and Springfield Teachers Union.

JWWJ coalition members have supported MNA nurses in many contract fights, joining us on our picket lines and also at the State House in Boston to lobby around nursing and health care issues as well as on the Workers Rights Board. Members of the above mentioned organizations and MNA nurses participated in workshops focused on Health Care, Education, Green Jobs and the Economy, and Unemployment, looking for ways to build stronger alliances within our communities. The Health Care panel, which I chaired, had about twenty participants including nurses from Holyoke,



Patricia Healey speaks at the Western Mass Jobs with Justice Membership Conference Workshop on Healthcare.

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A photograph of a blue bus with a large advertisement for the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) and New England Nurses Association (NENA). The ad features the text "MNA • NENA" in large white letters, followed by "Your Practice... Your Power!" and "MASSACHUSETTS NURSES ASSOCIATION • NEW ENGLAND NURSES ASSOCIATION". Below this, the websites "www.massnurses.org" and "www.nenurses.org" are listed. The bus is parked on a city street at night, with various storefronts visible in the background, including "NORTH STATION LIQUORS" and "PENAI".

**Don't Miss the Bus!**

**Come to the State House on March 31st and speak to your elected officials.  
Let them know that a nurse is not a punching bag!**

**Prevent the  
Violence**

**Punish the  
Offenders**

**Manage  
Chronic  
Risks**

Get on the bus on Wednesday, March 31, 2010. Call Region One Community Organizer Leo Maley for details: 781-520-1483 or [lmaley@mnarn.org](mailto:lmaley@mnarn.org)



## MERCY CONTRACT RATIFIED!



The Mercy Medical Center bargaining unit recently ratified a two-year contract. Under the agreement the RNs gained a reasonable across the board wage increase that will be retroactive to January 1, 2010, a boost in evening differential and some beneficial language improvements. According to unit Chair, Steve Mikelis, RN, the evening shift increase was very important. "For many years we have had a very good differential for the night shift but the evening differential has lagged behind. Our members clearly told us that an increase in this area was extremely important. This contract provides an important first step in improving the evening shift differential."

During the negotiations Mercy Medical claimed they were not doing well financially although their filings with the state Division of Health Care Financing showed a profit of more than \$9 million in the last reported nine month period. In the end, the nurses gained a respectable across the board wage increase in each year of the two-year

contract. "When we started negotiations the hospital was all doom and gloom about their finances. After we showed them state reports, they claimed they couldn't afford more than a 0.5 percent wage increase because they had no idea how things would go after health care reform passed in Washington. We kept pushing and ended up with a good increase compared to other settlements across the state," said unit Grievance Chair, David Powers, RN.

The nurses also gained a contract provision that guarantees eight hours of rest time after sixteen hours of work or on-call time. "All in all we feel good about this contract," said Mikelis. "We were able to make decent financial improvements along with language to improve parking lot safety and the ability to donate our earned time to fellow members because of illness or emergencies." ■



(Left to right) Christine Pontus, MNA Health and Safety Division, Joan Johnston, MNA Health and Safety Division, Lisa Santos, RN and Kate Earney-Will, RN.

## LETTER FROM THE REGION ONE CHAIR

By Christine Folsom, RN, Chair Region 1



I was talking recently with someone I had just met. We had a lot of life experiences in common and we were enjoying the conversation. That is until I told him that I was a member of a union. He then told me that unions are insu-

lated from and responsible for all the economic hardships the country is now experiencing.

Soon after that conversation I attended Region One's first movie night. The film, "With Babies and Banners," is an account of the women who supported the historic 1936-37 sit-down strike of GM workers in Flint, Michigan. Dangerous work conditions and low pay drove the GM workers to strike. Strike supporters were beaten and tear gassed. Workers and their families faced hunger and economic insecurity. Their suffering, their courage, and their eventual strike victory brought me to tears.

The GM workers' struggles and those of other workers like

them have given us safer working conditions, a living wage, and a seat at the table with management. We must never take for granted what they accomplished for themselves—and for us.

What we do as union members benefits our patients and our communities, not just ourselves. We have the honor and the duty to carry on the legacy of the brave women and men who came before us.

There are lots of opportunities for participation coming up. Take advantage of the interesting and varied educational program offerings. Check out the Region One Labor School. Get on the bus to the State House for the March 31 MNA Lobby Day. Or call or E-mail your legislators in support of our legislation on workplace violence. Join nurses from around the country in Washington, DC, in early May. Come and enjoy our next Region One movie night on May 27. (Family and friends are welcome.) Take part in our annual Region One retreat on June 23.

Get to know your union. There are many ways to be involved. You have a lot to be proud of. And the next generation of nurses will one day thank you. ■

## Region One Film Night: A Banner Success

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First ever Region One Labor Film! This event was attended by Region 1 members, staff, family, friends, and UMass Labor Center graduate students and faculty. The film, "With Babies and Banners", and was well received. If you missed the first one, join us on May 27th for the next film night. See below for details.

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the factory (it was the dead of winter-January) in an effort to freeze the men out. The next was the use of tear gas thrown into one of the factories. Fortunately the women who were picketing outside were able to use their banner sticks to break the windows allowing the gas to escape. Probably the most disturbing part was when the National Guard rolled in with its machine guns, aiming them at the factory in a last ditch threat to force the men out. But they remained. General Motors finally gave in and the first agreement was reached with the United Auto Workers union on February 11, 1937.

Depicting the horrible working conditions of the time, one woman reflected on her first day at work. When she arrived at her cutting press machine she found the amputated fingers of the woman who had worked at the machine during the day shift. This was just one recounting of the horrible working conditions that our fore-fathers and mothers were exposed to. Having a relative who was able to retire from cutting paper for envelopes

in an area factory with all his fingers intact, I am very grateful to the work of these pioneers in fighting to improve working conditions in America.

To hear the strength and pride in these women's voices recounting these events was both inspirational and humbling. As nurses we have so much respect and power that if we put our collective voices together as these women did over 60 years ago we will be able to achieve our goals for improving our own working conditions that directly impact on the patients for whom we care.

On behalf of Region One I would like to extend a heartfelt "Thank you" to Sandra Hottin, RN, who had the brainstorm for this event. Sandra works at Mercy Hospital and is a MNA Regional Director and MNA Board member. A big "thank you" goes to Joe Twarog, MNA Associate Director of Labor Education, and Heather LaPenn, Region One Office Manager, for organizing this event! I hope you will join us on May 27 for the next Region One "Pizza, Popcorn & Movie" event. ■

## Region One Film Night presents They Can't Break Our Union



**THEY CAN'T BREAK OUR UNION** chronicles the experiences of 68 members of United Auto Workers Local 430 on strike at Sterling Radiator, an industrial radiator plant in Westfield, Massachusetts. When the employees went out on strike, they thought it would be a typical contract dispute. However, it soon became apparent that the company was out to break their union by permanently hiring replacement workers.

Through interviews with the strikers, their families, and union officials, the video examines the conditions which led to the walkout, the consequences of the long strike on family life, and the personal resolve and commitment of those involved in the strike. The documentary culminates with a dramatic act of civil disobedience, in which 91 union members and community supporters are arrested for blockading a bus delivering strikebreakers to the plant.

Learn more about the film at <http://www.turningtide.com/TCBOU.htm>

**PIZZA, POPCORN, AND MOVIE, ON THE SEMI-BIG  
SCREEN AT REGION 1!**

**241 KING STREET SUITE 226**

**THURSDAY, MAY 27, 2010**

**BRING YOUR CO-WORKERS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY.  
CHILDREN WELCOME!**

**RSVP TO LET US KNOW YOUR COMING:**

**413-584-4607 OR REGION1@MNARN.ORG**

**5:30 PIZZA, 6:00-7:00 FILM**

**7:00 A SURPRISE GUEST SPEAKER WILL LEAD THE  
POST-FILM DISCUSSION!**





The hospital tents in Milot

(Continued from page 1)

started making calls, "I called the MNA, the NNU Rapid Response team and anyone else I could think of and got put on lists. Then out of the blue my

supervisor told me she knew of a team being put together, and a few days later I was on a plane with Dave Powers and other health care professionals from the Springfield area." The Mercy RNs found themselves on a large private corporate jet headed for Port Au Prince. The luxury plane not only brought medical personnel but many of the medical supplies they would need. Soon they arrived in Milot, a town in northern Haiti. They settled in to work in a local 60 bed hospital. "The Milot Hospital has 60 beds but we were caring for 360 patients. Many of the patients had come from Port Au Prince or were flown in by helicopter from hospital ships where they were operating, stabilizing and then sending to us," said Powers. There were tents set up around the hospital to house the patients. Most of the tents held 35 patients and about 35 family members.

"I'm an ER nurse but since we got there two weeks after the earthquake most of the work I did was providing nursing care for orthopedics and amputation rehabilitation. Everybody just jumped in and did whatever was necessary. Often doctors would be doing patient care because that was what was necessary. We worked 14 hours a day but the time flew and it was great to have that spirit of teamwork, and that extended to the

patients and their families, who would work with us, and at time, whole tents would be singing together," said Powers.

Demaris is an ICU nurse and soon found herself working in ICU in the Haitian hospital, "My experience is in adult care but there was a need for an experienced RN in the Pedi ICU so I ended up there. It was a wonderful experience. A lot of what I did was teaching the families so they would be able to care for their loved ones, in terms of anything from wound care to rehab exercises. At time when I felt overwhelmed, it would be the families who would comfort me."

Both said they would return given the opportunity and that

they learned a lot about health care both here and in Haiti. "Every day we were there,



Mercy RN Aimee Demaris with a patient

things got better organized and the spirit of the people seemed to grow," said Powers. Said Demaris, "Here when we need something for our patients we go to the cabinet and get it. There we were using water bottles for traction. Perhaps the most impressive thing was the wonderful spirit of the Haitian people. Hopefully they can build a stronger country out of this disaster." ■

### OFFICERS

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**Vice Chair, Gail Bean** West. Mass. Hospital

**Secretary, Irene Patch** Holyoke Soldier's Home

**Treasurer, Diane Michael** Providence Hospital

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**Christine Carbin-O'Brien** Baystate VNA South

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**Sally Surgen** Cooley Dickinson Hospital

**Ann Lewin** Baystate Franklin Medical Center

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**Paul Dubin, Sharon Cygan** Noble Hospital

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**Gail Bean** Western Mass Hospital

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**Carol Konrad** UNIT 7-Holyoke Soldiers Home

**Helen Norris** UNIT 7-Medicaid/Long Term Care

**Nancy Haberstroh-Knaus** UNIT 7-Monson Developmental Center

**Mary Turner** UNIT 7-Pittsfield Public Health

**Sherry Ferrier** UNIT 7-Western Mass. Hospital DPH

## REGIONAL COUNCIL 1

## 2010 MNA ANNUAL AWARDS SEND IN YOUR NOMINATION TODAY!



Award winner Mark Garmalo, with the Baystate Franklin Medical Center Committee members at last year's Awards Dinner.

**Y**ou know nurses who have made a difference. You can identify individual contributions that go beyond the ordinary. You recognize excellence in nursing practice, education, research and service.

Now it's your turn to make a difference! Nominate a nurse for a 2010 MNA Annual Award. Help give MNA the opportunity to reward and applaud outstanding nurses. Awards will be presented at the Annual Awards Dinner at the MNA Convention in October.

The awards are as follows: Doris Gagne Addictions Nursing Award; Elaine Cooney Labor Relations Award; Judith Shindul Rothschild Leadership Award; Kathryn McGinn Cutler Advocate for Health and Safety Award; MNA Excellence in Nursing Practice Award; MNA Human Needs Service Award; MNA Advocate For Nursing Award; MNA Image of the Professional Nurse Award; MNA Bargaining Unit Rookie of the Year Award; MNA Nursing Education Award; MNA Research Award.

To receive nomination papers and or information for any awards, contact Liz Chmielinski at MNA, 340 Turnpike St, Canton Ma; or call her at 781-830-5719-

**The deadline for nominations is May 12, 2010! For more info please visit: [www.massnurses.org/aboutmna/awards](http://www.massnurses.org/aboutmna/awards) ■**

## NATIONAL NURSES UNITED TO GATHER IN WASHINGTON IN MAY

*By Patricia Healey, RN* During Nurses Week, May 10-12, Massachusetts Nurses will travel to Washington DC to take a stand on Health Care For All, Nurse Ratios and the Employee Free Choice Act, the three most important nursing bills before Congress. The National Nurses United has been organizing nurses across America to join together on Nurses Day, and speak out about these issues loud enough so that our legislators will hear us! Now that we have a national organization with the

resources needed to take a stand on issues that are important to nurses and our patients, its time to use our strong voice where the health care decisions are being made--in Washington DC!. Hop on board, and join your colleagues from across the nation! Call today to and reserve your seat on the bus! Don't wait---Call today! For more information, contact Region One Community Organizer Leo Maley at 781-520-1483 or [lmaley@mnarn.org](mailto:lmaley@mnarn.org)

## National Nurses United Rally and Lobby Event

Celebrate Nurses Week with colleagues from across the country at this unity event.

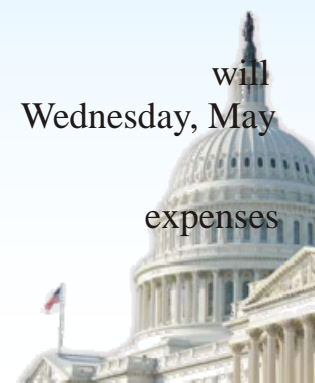
**Where:** Washington, DC.

**When:** May 10, 11, and 12, 2010.

**For more information or to reserve a space for this trip please call Leo Maley at 781-520-1483.**

- MNA will coordinate buses and hotel reservations for members to travel to Washington to participate in this event.
- Buses will leave Massachusetts early on Monday, May 10 and return after the rally and lobbying on Wednesday, May 12.
- All meals, hotel and travel expenses are paid for by the MNA.

*See you there!*





(Continued from page 2)

Springfield, Greenfield, Hadley and Northampton. Participants enthusiastically discussed the current health care bill in Congress, the Medicare for All movement, health care disparities facing urban minority citizens, as well as the local unions' contract fights to preserve health insurance for their members. Members reached consensus on organizing strategies, such as supporting "single payer" efforts, preserving union benefits, engaging union members to talk to their legislators, and organizing a national march on Washington.

For more information about Western Mass. Jobs With Justice activities and coalition members visit [wmjwj.org](http://wmjwj.org) ■

Sandra Hottin, RN and Christine Folsom, RN, Region One Chair, contribute to the discussion on healthcare at the WMJWJ conference.



## TRACK 4 COMPUTER TRAINING

This track includes 6 classes, held on Wednesday evenings from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

April 7, 2010 Excel  
April 14, '10 Excel  
April 28, '10 Excel  
May 5, '10 Word  
May 19, '10 Word  
May 26, '10 TBA

Laptops are provided

Please Remember: Scents may trigger responses in those with chemical sensitivities. Please avoid smoking or using scented personal products when you attend this meeting. Thank you for your consideration.

Is this you?



**CLASSES ARE HELD AT  
241 KING ST, STE 226  
NORTHAMPTON**

**FREE**

To Register 413-584-4607  
or [region1@mnarn.org](mailto:region1@mnarn.org)

## Unity leads to victory at Providence Hospital in Holyoke

**O**n Dec. 23, 2009, shock waves ran through the tight knit group of staff working at Providence Behavioral Health Hospital in Holyoke, as hospital management unexpectedly fired two well-respected nurses from the 61-bed psychiatric hospital.

Described as the "glue that holds the unit together," the sudden terminations of these nurses had a devastating effect on the unit and the hospital as a whole. Jean Travis, one of the fired RNs, said the terminations came out of nowhere. "I have been an RN for 36 years and 15 of those years have been spent caring for patients at Providence," said Travis. "Then, after all this time of stellar evaluations and a great record, I am fired out of the blue just days before Christmas. It was unbelievable."

**"Seeing all the MNA members and other hospital workers standing behind us we were confident we would get our jobs back"**

Two days before Christmas and in response to the unjust terminations, the MNA filed grievances, submitted information requests and held meetings with hospital staff. During this process the nurses and the mental health workers at the facility, who are represented by the UAW, wore red and black pins that read "Rehire the Fired Nurses" as a way of showing support for their beleaguered colleagues.

"Seeing all the MNA members and other hospital workers standing behind us we were confident we would get our jobs back," said Cindy Pleau, RN and the other nurse who was fired.

Thanks to the unity of their colleagues and the hard work of the MNA staff and the MNA committee at Providence, both Travis and Pleau returned to their positions less than one month after their unjust termination. "It was a unique set of circumstances and bringing them back was the right thing for the hospital to do," said Andrea Fox, RN the MNA associate director who represents Providence Hospital.



The two temporarily terminated nurses, (from left) Jean Travis and Cindy Pleau, celebrated with Providence committee members Jeannette Bilo-deau, Danny DiRocco, Cindy Chaplin, Diane Michael, Marilyn Hernandez, Etienne Debaudringhien and Diane Sampson. Not pictured is Denny Glidden, bargaining unit co-chair.

On Jan. 29 Travis and Pleau attended a "welcome back" party—an occasion that was originally meant to be an "in support of the nurses" party. The bargaining unit purposely scheduled the nurses' celebration for the same night as the hospital's "official" holiday gathering, and the unit was honored when the majority of floor staff chose to join in the nurses' festivities rather than management's.

Three months post, unit co-chair Diane Michael is looking for the lesson learned. "Hopefully hospital administration will use due diligence before they decide to fire nurses in the future," she said. ■

**MNA<sup>SM</sup>**  
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**WE'RE ON THE WEB**

[WWW.MASSNURSES.ORG](http://WWW.MASSNURSES.ORG)  
[WWW.MASSNURSES.ORG/REGION1](http://WWW.MASSNURSES.ORG/REGION1)

**Regional Council One** of the MNA is a unit of the MNA. The Regional Council supports the MNA bargaining units, the Massachusetts Nurses Foundation and the MNA PAC in promoting the primary functions of education, political organizing, democratic member involvement and support for collective bargaining. The Regional Council also promotes education for professional activities, regional coalitions of MNA bargaining units and general members interested in advocacy. The Regional Council is accountable to the regional membership and the MNA Board of Directors and acts in accordance with general MNA policies and bylaws.

The Regional Council meets every second Monday of the month in the Region One office. Region One has several committees that we invite members to join: Education, Finance, Health and Safety, History, Legislative, Newsletter, and Scholarship Committees. Let your voice be heard, join us!

Call the Region One office for more information: 413-584-4607.

REGION ONE NURSE is published 3 times a year by Regional Council One. It is a publication made available to MNA Region One members to inform, and meet member needs by providing information on nursing, health care, and labor issues. We invite our members to submit writings to the newsletter, especially through the editorial voice. A strong democratic union requires an informed membership. All submissions are subject to editing and none will be returned. For more information contact the Region One office at 413-584-4607 or email: [region1@mnarn.org](mailto:region1@mnarn.org)

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