NNU members are in the final stretch of the special election to fill the vacant Ward 5 City Council seat. With the election less than a week away on May 15th, NNU members will now focus their efforts on maximizing turnout among McDuffie supporters. NNU members have conducted 4 Saturday morning canvasses, 2 days of voter contact at the Brookland Metro Station, a night of phone banking, 4 separate mailings to thousands of Ward 5 voters featuring many Ward 5 RNs from Hospital Center, and created a Nurses for McDuffie Facebook site that has reached over 150,000 people.

“Nurses are eager to heal Ward 5,” said Funmi Oshin, RN from 2f. “We spend a significant amount of our work lives in the Ward and we want to help foster the healthiest environment for our neighbors; nurses know that Kenyan McDuffie will help us address the most pressing issues in the Ward,” added Oshin.

“I am proud that my fellow nurses and I have taken this leap into District politics,” says Tarly Hermosisima from the Cancer Institute and a Ward 5 resident. “Many nurses wonder why we are involved in politics but when I explain to them the kind of pro-patient legislation that we can pass with a nurse friendly council, they immediately get it,” added Hermosisima.

While the Ward 5 campaign is essentially over, NNUs involvement in local politics is just beginning. “NNU and MWHC nurses specifically, have become a force to be reckoned with; our community trusts us and our endorsement means a lot, nurses can make or break a campaign because the community knows that we are looking out for their best interests,” said Stephen Frum, Chief Shop Steward.

NNU members continue to spread the message about Kenyan McDuffie in Ward 5.
On Friday, May 11th, the PPPSC delivered dozens of Assignment Despite Objection (ADO) forms to the Chief Nurse Executive. Over 50 unsafe situations were documented in just two months since the new ADO form has been adopted. The vast majority of the ADOs were submitted by nurses working in the medical/surgical units. The ADOs in this division revealed:

- Management has been violating the matrix that was agreed to in May of 2011.
- A systemic lack of support from managers and clinical care facilitators. Managers and CCFs do not step up and help staff nurses.
- Resource nurses are assigned a heavy patient load making it very difficult to provide assistance to other nurses.
- Ancillary staff such as unit clerks and an adequate number of PCTs are often not present on the units. This leaves RNs to juggle nursing and non-nursing duties.
- Nurses are pulled to other units leaving their home unit short-staffed.

The ADOs received in cardiac services revealed an even more disturbing trend:

- When confronted with unsafe staffing, a manager decided to bring in cupcakes instead of working or finding an extra nurse. (How heart healthy!)
- Nurses were unable to take a meal break.
- Resource nurses take a patient assignment.

The PPPSC has requested responses to these and other situations that were documented in the ADOs. Nurses are reminded to continue filling out ADOs in order to protect their licenses. While the ADOs should be presented to management at the time of the unsafe assignment or situation, all ADOs will be forwarded to management for a written response on an on-going and monthly basis. If your manager refuses to sign the ADO form, thereby, ignoring your staffing concern, RNs should make a notation on the ADO and submit it to the NNU office.

Upcoming Events

June 15, 2012
Continuing Education - Workplace Violence Prevention from 9am-4pm at the Doubletree Silver Spring. Register soon as space is limited.

July 24, 2012
“WE CAN END AIDS” march for economic justice and human rights at 12 noon in Washington. Buses will transport RNs from Washington Hospital Cen-

Nurses win in arbitration; management continues to waste health care resources on expensive Jones Day attorneys

Nurses learned last week that another nurse who was unjustly terminated was ordered to return to work as a result of an arbitrator’s award. Yvonne Vega will return to her weekend position on 2NW as a result of arbitrator Roger Kaplan’s ruling. Yvonne has worked at Washington Hospital Center for 12 years and is an extremely skilled oncology nurse.

This case highlighted the stark contrast between the priorities of staff nurses and the priorities of management. While staff nurses regularly do more with scarce resources, management seems to find the resources necessary to pay for their pet projects like new signage for branding purposes or their expensive Jones Day attorneys. Vega’s arbitration was held at the office of Jones Day which is one of the closest buildings to the U.S. Capitol. The office features marble table tops and cutting edge architecture that merges a historical building and a contemporary structure. This seems like an odd choice of law firm and arbitration venue for an inner city safety net hospital.

The contrast in priorities continued to manifest itself during the hearing. Management chose to expend resources on two lawyers from the firm; one partner and one associate to fight an experienced caregiver for cancer patients. While management literally poured thousands of dollars into a hearing, nurses made several efforts to avoid a hearing and avoid further expenditures. These offers were rejected by management, instead preferring to expend health care dollars to achieve a result that could have been accepted by voluntary means.