

Nurses, hospital reach tentative agreement

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

St. Charles Medical Center Bend and their Oregon Nurses Association nurses union reached tentative agreement in the early hours of Saturday morning after two long, late nights of federal mediation on their contract, bringing to an end contract negotiations that have been going on since June 2018.

“This agreement is a win for our community’s health,” said local nurse leader and ONA bargaining unit chair David Hilderbrand RN. “I’m very proud of nurses and hospital administrators who came together to reach an agreement that puts patients first and gives us new tools to address shared concerns like staffing and practice standards... This is a promising step in our shared efforts to make sure high-quality, affordable health care is available to everyone in Central Oregon.”

As part of the tentative agreement, nurses have agreed to cancel the informational picket that was scheduled for January 21. The local nurse negotiating team is recommending a “yes” vote on the contract agreement. Nurses will schedule a vote to approve the tentative agreement in the coming weeks. All nurses are encouraged to vote; not voting will count as a no vote. If approved, the new agreement will be

effective immediately and run through December 31, 2022.

Darlene Arruda, who lives in Tollgate, has been an ICU nurse at the Bend hospital ever since moving to Sisters 17 years ago. Her nursing career spans 29 years, always working the night shift.

“Most people are very relieved that the negotiations are over,” Arruda said. “There has been tension in the work place as the negotiations dragged on.”

Arruda indicated she had a lot of faith in the negotiating team representing the nurses. She thought they understood what the nurses were asking for and doubted they would have settled for anything less.

Every nurse pays \$94 a month in union dues. Arruda said they deserve good representation. She also said this contract negotiation is the first time they have had representation by an attorney.

The tentative agreement is expected to: improve patient care by limiting floating between departments; create a shared governance structure to increase accountability around staffing and practice issues; give nurses an equal voice on unit practice committees to raise health care standards; offer variable cost-of-living increases to provide financial flexibility for the hospital while helping recruit and retain nurses; and support plans for new residency and fellowship programs to improve staffing and training for high-demand specialties.

Bill would regulate weed like alcohol

PORTLAND (AP) — A bill introduced by U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, a Democrat from Oregon, seeks to regulate marijuana like alcohol.

The bill introduced Wednesday would take marijuana off the federal controlled substances list and establish a nationally regulated industry overseen by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Blumenauer has long advocated legalizing marijuana at the federal level.

He authored a blueprint last year for his like-minded congress members on how to achieve that goal now that the House of Representatives has a Democratic majority.

The bill number for the so-called Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol Act is H.R. 420.

Furloughed employees can visit museum free

High Desert Museum will offer free admission to furloughed federal employees and their immediate family members for the duration of the government shutdown.

“During what is an undoubtedly challenging time for our public servants, we want to support our community and provide an opportunity to visit the museum. They do so much for us. We’d like to provide some partnership,” said Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D.

Federal employees are asked to bring a form of government ID or badge.

The Museum’s winter hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, including Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, January 21. A full slate of programs takes place every day, including Bird of Prey Encounter and Otter Encounter. Learn

more about regular programs at www.highdesertmuseum.org/daily-schedule.

The Museum exhibition *By Her Hand: Native American Women, Their Art, and the Photographs of Edward S. Curtis* will close after Sunday, January 20. On Saturday, January 26, the Museum will debut a 40-year retrospective of nationally renowned artist Rick Bartow in the exhibit *Rick Bartow: Things You Know But Cannot Explain*, which will be on display through April 7.

Other temporary exhibits now on display include *Animal Journeys: Navigating in Nature and Desert Mystic: The Paintings of John Simpkins*. More information on the Museum’s temporary and permanent exhibitions is available at highdesertmuseum.org/exhibitions.




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