

A big step forward for safe staffing levels in nursing homes

by Judy Byers. Judy works at Evergreen Windsor Manor, a nursing home in Salem.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

SEIU members who work in nursing homes see the effect of unsafe staffing levels on residents and staff every day. Last summer, SEIU nursing home members decided overwhelmingly that this was the most important issue we could work on. Our union decided to bring this forward with a ballot measure and that effort raised the awareness of elected officials and the public. Many officials recognized the need to look at nursing home staffing levels, including Governor Kulongoski.

Governor Kulongoski thought that there might be a way that our union, the nursing home industry and his office could work together to find a solution. He formed a Commission that included representatives from our union (Carlotta Davison, a Certified Nurse's Aide from Pendleton, and Leslie Frane, our Executive Director); the nursing home industry; the legislature; advocates for seniors and people with disabilities; and the Governor's office.

Carlotta Davison and Leslie Frane represented all of us workers on the Commission. Carlotta did an awesome job of telling the Commission what a nursing home worker really does and how hard it is to not be able to meet our residents' needs. Residents need nursing home workers to be there for them - to hold their hand, read a book or a Bible scripture. In between this, they need us to take them to the commode, serve them juice, and move them. And often, we're taking care of nine other residents at the same time.

When our union took on this fight, I wanted to be a part of it. I got involved because of an incident where my sister-in-law Carol, who is a Nurse's Aide, was left in charge of 25 residents because two co-workers were sick. The residents felt abandoned and Carol was upset that she couldn't do her job properly.

THE COMMISSION AGREES MORE HOURS NEEDED

The Commission has recommended that CNA hours per resident per day be increased from 1.65 to 2.46 hours. This will result in a

smaller resident-to-CNA ratio for every shift. It means CNAs will be more able to give care to residents.

These residents are our heritage - our mothers, fathers, and our grandparents. These are human beings we're treating. They're not numbers. One day most of us will need some kind of nursing home care. It could be something unexpected like an accident or fall. We want CNAs to be there to take care of us. Safe staffing levels mean we can provide care safely and have personal time with each resident so they feel valued.

I feel good about this. I know it won't happen overnight but I hope it happens by the time I need nursing home care. With all of us standing together and supporting safe staffing levels, I feel positive that it will change. ■



Next Steps: Funding is key to getting safe staffing levels. We will need to mount a powerful campaign at the State Capitol this winter and spring so that funding for Medicaid reimbursements is in the budget. We'll also need to work with legislators to pass a law that incorporates the Commission's recommendations and changes minimum staffing levels in Oregon's nursing homes.

“ They recognize my walk and smile. Knowing I will stop, reassure, provide comfort. Depending on what's needed, I bring hope, wipes, relief, Kleenex. Small things. Priceless. That's what a CNA does. ”

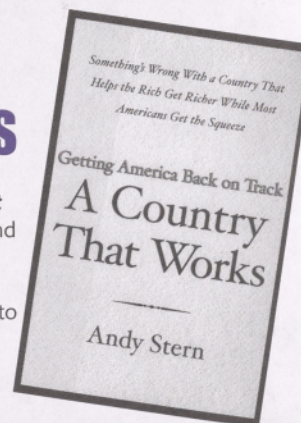
Rosanne Lesueur
Certified Nurse's Aide (CNA), Porthaven Care Center in Portland



Members meet with our international union President Andy Stern to share ideas about what's happening in America and how we can turn it around.

Andy Stern shares thoughts from his new book "A Country that Works" with members

SEIU International President, Andy Stern, was recently in Portland to promote his new book **A Country that Works**. He met with members to talk about what's wrong in America today - why we are working longer and harder and losing ground. In the book, Andy shares much of his personal story, talks about *Change to Win* and why we took the radical step of breaking away from the AFL-CIO, and shares his ideas on what we can do to get America back on track. After dinner and discussion, members joined Andy in making phone calls to help elect worker-friendly legislators. To get a copy of Andy's book, go to www.acountrythatworks.com.



SEIU members endorse...

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3	Howard Owens	Cave Junction, Grants Pass
5	Peter Buckley	Ashland, Jacksonville, Medford, Phoenix, Talent
6	Mike Moran	Medford
8	Paul Holvey	Eugene, Veneta
9	Arnie Roblan	Coos Bay, Dunes City, Florence, Lakeside, North Bend, Reedsport
10	Jean Cowan	Blatchley, Depoe Bay, Elmira, Lincoln City, Mapleton, Newport, Siletz, Toledo, Waldport, Yachats
11	Phil Barnhart	Brownsville, Coburg, Creswell, Eugene, Sodaville, Springfield
12	Elizabeth Terry Beyer	Springfield
14	Chris Edwards	Eugene, Junction City
16	Sara Gelser	Corvallis
17	Dan Thackaberry	Eastern Marion Co., Lebanon, Sweet Home
18	Jim Gilbert	Silverton and Molalla
19	Brian Grisham	Aumsville, Salem, Turner
20	Connie Garcia	Independence, Monmouth, West Salem
21	Brian L Clem	Salem
22	Betty Komp	Brooks, Gervais, Salem, Woodburn
23	Jason Brown	Dallas; western Polk and Benton Counties
24	Sal Peralta	McMinnville
25	Chuck Lee	Keizer, Newberg, St Paul
26	Lee Coleman	Gaston, Sherwood, Wilsonville
27	Tobias Read	Beaverton, Portland
29	Chuck Riley	Cornelius, Forest Grove, Hillsboro
30	David Edwards	Cornelius, Hillsboro, North Plains
31	Brad Witt	Astoria, Clatskanie, Columbia City, Prescott, Ranier, Scappoose, St Helens, Verononia
33	Mitch Greenlick	Beaverton, Portland
34	Suzanne Bonamici	Beaverton
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36	Mary Nolan	Portland
37	Bev Backa	Durham, Rivergrove, Tualatin, West Linn, King City, Lake Oswego
39	Mike Caudle	Canby and Oregon City
40	Dave Hunt	Gladstone, Johnson City
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45	Jackie Dingfelder	Maywood Park, Portland
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52	Suzanne Van Orman	Hood River, Sandy
57	Tonia St. Germain	La Grande, Elgin, Heppner
59	Jim Gilbertson	The Dalles, Madras, and John Day

ELECTION NOTICE: District 3N Assistant District Director
Nominations open October 23, 2006. Close November 16, 2006, 5 pm at Salem HQ. Contact Bobbie Muncrief.