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Healthcare Workers at Rockville General Hospital Vote for "Voice to Assure Quality Care"

Service, environmental, maintenance and other vital support staff employed by Prospect Medical Holdings choose "union YES," pledge to collaborate with management for better patient outcomes

Vernon - The majority of a diverse group of healthcare professionals at Rockville General Hospital (RGH) today voted for union representation in a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)-supervised election. The outcome is a win for the bargaining unit of approximately 150 nursing assistants, maintainers, unit coordinators and others at the Prospect Medical Holdings, Inc.-owned acute care facility. Members of the organizing committee who spearheaded the union drive are looking ahead to first-ever negotiations with the for-profit company's local Eastern Connecticut Health Network (ECHN) management.

"Choosing 'Union YES' means we'll have a seat at the table with hospital administration," said Wendy Kurtzman, a phlebotomy lab aide in the RGH laboratory with 28 years experience with ECHN. "We've empowered ourselves to have a say where we didn't before. Now we can join with our hospital's nurses in advocating for those we care for. That makes this a win for our community, too," added Kurtzman, a member of the RGH Healthcare Workers United organizing committee.

Kurtzman's comments refer to the vote bringing the new unit into AFT Connecticut, which since 2010 has represented the registered nurses (RNs) at RGH. The labor federation also represents the RNs, technical professionals and other healthcare workers at the ECHN-managed Manchester Memorial Hospital. Today's union vote is the first since Prospect Medical Holdings in 2016 completed its acquisition of the previously independent non-profit health network.

"We wanted what's best not just for ourselves, but for our patients, too," said Tamika Gilhooly, a unit secretary in the RGH Emergency Room. "Having a union is about more than winning better wages and benefits; it's also about working together to assure the quality care our community needs and deserves. That's why we chose 'Union YES,'" added Gilhooly, a 29-year veteran ECHN employee who also serves on the RGH Healthcare Workers United organizing committee.

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Gilhooly's comments refer to the long-sought after process for improving working conditions she and her colleagues have secured as a result of choosing union representation. Collective bargaining rights provide the healthcare professionals the means for resolving workplace issues, in addition to achieving job security, gaining additional employment benefits and boosting their economic power. Members of the RGH Healthcare Workers United organizing committee will next focus efforts on assembling a negotiations team to represent the unit in contract talks with ECHN management.

"These hard-working folks understood that the 'U and I in Union' provides the strength to speak up for their patients," said AFT Connecticut President Jan Hochadel. "Studies have shown that when hospital staff are treated with respect and have a voice in their workplace, it improves the quality of care. That's why today's vote is as much a win for the community as it is for the healthcare workers who have united with us," added Hochadel.

Hochadel's comments refer to an Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) report on performance in hospital settings where caregivers and support staff have won collective bargaining rights. The authors of "Nurse Unions and Patient Outcomes," which Cornell University's Industrial and Labor Relations School (ILR) published in 2016, concluded that successful organizing drives yielded better care for patients.

AFT Connecticut, the largest union of acute care hospital workers in the state, represents approximately 550 nurses, technical professionals and support staff at Prospect Medical Holdings' facilities in Manchester and Vernon. For more information, visit www.aftct.org or follow the labor federation on Twitter at [@AFTCT](https://twitter.com/AFTCT) and on Facebook at [AFT Connecticut](https://www.facebook.com/AFTConnecticut).

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Links --

AFT Connecticut Video: "Rockville Hospital Healthcare Workers are Choosing "Union Yes!"

<https://youtu.be/o3VyD-QUY6c>

ILR Review: [Nurse Unions and Patient Outcomes](#)

<http://ilr.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/04/20/0019793916644251.abstract>