

# Danbury & New Milford Federation of Healthcare Technical Employees

November 5, 2015 ■

## THE POWER OF BARGAINING

### WCHN Health Insurance \$cam?

Contract negotiations uncover shocking news: WCHN has pocketed profits on our high health insurance fees **TECHS AND THERAPISTS** were at the bargaining table on Oct. 8, focused on health insurance.

We brought our AFT insurance consultant who has pored through information which the hospital had to provide about our health insurance. The picture we got was very unsettling for all WCHN employees.

WCHN creates its own rate for premiums and then charges us an average premium share of 28 percent. When we looked at how much it's spending vs. how much it has collected, we found that in some years, management only spent 60 percent of the money collected from all of us.

Last year WCHN paid out 80 percent of the premiums it collected which means WCHN kept \$2.1 million. A good portion of that \$2.1 million came from our pockets. We were overcharged by about \$400,000, which equals \$1,500 plus per worker per year.



AFT CT negotiator explains details of WCHN's health insurance scam to union members who crowded into the session.

#### WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

What will happen next month when WCHN wants to change our insurer, and raise our premiums?

Last year, techs and therapists lived at the mercy of management. This year, our new union is fighting this battle at the negotiating table. But even today, WCHN is saying,

"Trust us. We will pick the best insurance for you and set the monthly charge." We do not accept that approach any more. Changes are coming. With the new plan, WCHN wants to raise our co-pays and deductibles. This could cost each of us hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of dollars next year. Come to bargaining and show WCHN

that you personally, and our union, will not tolerate these punishing hikes.

## Negotiations Nov. 6: The drama of push and pull

Contract bargaining can be dramatic, if you know what to look for. At each session, the union and WCNH take turns speaking first; whoever opens the session will set the tone for the evening.

When our negotiating committee opens the session, we share our vision of superior hospitals where people go to heal and to work. We make proposals which would:

- allow hands-on professionals to address short staffing ;
- create a fair wage system which would keep techs and therapists at our hospital;
- address quality of life issues like call pay & scheduling.

When WCHN goes first, its lawyer draws a picture of the future that's just like the present - as if we'd never won a union election. According to management, "Everything at the hospital is fine. Stop complaining." To WCHN, staffing and wage anomalies are insignificant and unrelated to its real problems with recruitment, retention and, of course, serving our patients.

WCHN thinks the best way to address concerns about our

quality-of-life issues is to hang on to the status quo: that is, keep call pay and differentials low, and leave it to managers to make decisions about scheduling.

The beauty of union negotiations is that, by law, the two sides must grapple with each other. That's where the drama is.

This Friday night, Nov. 6, at Ethan Allen hotel, WCHN will open the session. Then we'll respond with our comprehensive demands to focus on what matters - patient care and issues that affect our families.

When 30 or 40 of us are in the room, managers are forced to deal with what the negotiators are saying. They won't say "it doesn't matter" to our faces.

As one of our teammates said, "They can't push us around when we are right there, staring at them."

**"They can't push us around when we are right there, staring at them."**

***Be a witness this Friday night, Nov. 6 at 5:00 p.m., at the Ethan Allen hotel***

## A Sunday Vigil for Patient Care Is Front Page News

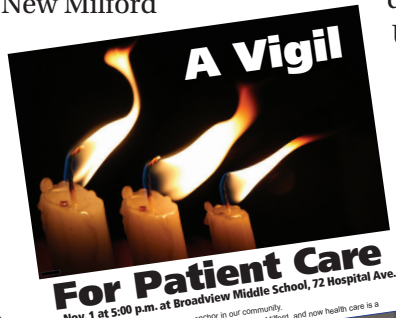
Last Sunday, Nov. 1, a large and lively crowd of community activists, labor and political leaders, and hospital staff from Danbury and New Milford came together on short notice to speak and hold candles at sunset on a hillside near Danbury Hospital -- all to send a message to WCHN: Hope and solidarity will warm us 'til our needs, and those of our patients, are met by the corporation that now runs our hospitals.

Workers had a lot to say, as reported by the Danbury News-Times, which placed the story prominently on its front page. "All we're asking for

is a fair contract that's about the patient care and employees," said Anna Costa Lloyd, a vascular technician. Mary Consoli, president of the Danbury Nurses Union, was more pointed.

"This is a direct result of hospital cost-cutting," she said. "They want us to do more with less." And U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal was eloquent: "Without these people, all that equipment, all that brick and mortar doesn't account for anything," he said.

The vigil was held by Danbury Rising, a coalition of community and faith organizations and civic leaders.



We count on high quality healthcare as an anchor in our community. But extreme income inequality has come to Danbury and New Milford, and now health care is a quality of the issue for all of us. Since Western Connecticut Health Network acquired Danbury and New Milford Hospitals, the hospital environment has changed from a community-oriented place of healing to a business-driven enterprise where success is measured by profits. Executive salaries have sky-rocketed into the millions, while the take-home pay of hands-on bedside staff has been slashed. Hospital workers are suffering, and forming a union to make a fair



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## WCHN Health Care Workers Speak Out Tears and Applause at Community Forum

A wide swath of the Danbury community turned out at New Hope Baptist Church to hear emotional testimony from hospital workers who described the joy of caring for people in times of need, and the grief of working in an environment where patients come last, not first.



Nervil White, Liz White, Anna Princiotti, Jessica Ellul, Stan Wilk, Anna Costa Lloyd & Joe Fawley

Attendees included community and faith leaders, fellow union supporters from the United Electrical Workers (UE) and Service Employees International (SEIU), and an impressive number of elected officials

The speakers briefly mentioned "the nosedive" since WCHN took over and then shared their vision for a more respectful workplace.

Nerval White spoke first of his wish to return to a team concept at Danbury Hospital: "Everyone is necessary to get that patient healthy and send him home."

Liz White noted that teamwork requires safe staffing. "Now it's extremely frustrating when we can't help a patient with a simple task, like getting a drink of water, because we have ten more patients who also need us." She reminisced about finding the time to "simply listen to a patient because it's a holiday and no one visits, or to hold their hand when they're dying."

**"We're expected to treat our VIPs special, to get there fast. Well, I want all our patients to feel like VIPs."**

CNA Anna Princiotti

the hospital's anti-union campaign last spring. "Union busters were given free range," she said, "pulling us out of patients' rooms, saying, 'What I have to tell you is more important than what you're doing.'"

Stanley Wilk, a multi-assistant, said he'd like to return to the philosophy of former hospital leader, Frank Kelly. "We don't need a 9 percent profit in a non-profit hospital," Wilk said. "Patients come first."

Anna Costa Lloyd said she looks forward to the day when "all patients will know they are not just a number, and employees will know they're each an important piece of the puzzle." Joe Fawley, a former Marine medic, described a helicopter rescue of an injured child. "Everyone had a hand in saving that child," he said. "We have people with heart. This is not something learned in college. Their No. 1 priority isn't money." Our hospital, he said, "is not a business."

Jessica Ellul, an oncology unit coordinator, agreed. "Our patients on 11 East need a lot of emotional support. We used to sit and cry with them when they received a devastating diagnosis. There's no longer time for that." Ellul was angry about