

MAY 2006



AFGE
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The **SENTINEL**

AFGE LOCAL 933 NEWS

American Federation of Government Employees

www.AFGE933.com

WORKING HARD TO KEEP YOU INFORMED

We all share a mutual interest in making life at the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center a pleasant experience. Life as we know it is that something in space & time that we occupy. From the inside one may call that molded peculiarity a of being "me, myself, or maybe I". Those on the outside call it "Joe, Sue, or Mr. or Mrs. Somebody. With our souls and hearts beating, this piece of flesh that we see as life has a whole different meaning at the front side of life when we are born vs. the end of life when we are getting old. Even the ugliest babies are said to be cute by the mother's. People all over the world remind us to respect our elders, just because. And no one will argue with that approach for dealing with the aged because we must all make that passage ourselves. I went to Barbara Simpson-Perry's retirement a few weeks ago and saw people who I had not seen in years. The experience really caused me to realize just how old I was. Looking into the crowd of retired beings brought back the years. I saw people who worked and retired from the old Allen Park facility in the late 80's. Mrs. Simpson-Perry and Barbara Lewis are amongst our most recent retirees who have waited their turn in line to exit the employment line. I hope that we are all mindful in that our paths will again intersect at some point. While we still have beating hearts it is not too late to find new and creative ways to get along with each other. In our January 2006 monthly membership meeting held in the auditorium, I made the suggestion that Mr. Chet Brazill, Mr. William Scott, and Mrs. Savannah Jackson sit down and work out the past differences. I also suggested that maybe they could throw a barbecue for the union employees. Well, Mr. Brazill has stepped in to assist with the barbecue fundraiser, and purchased over \$500.00 worth of meat for the AFGE fundraiser.

Cassandra Webb donated a microwave oven; Tonya Rogers donated two 8 x 10 portraits packages as part of a raffle, just because they felt that it was the right thing to do. Marlene L. Garland-Hill -the people who administer the AFGE's Colonial insurance program paid the full cost of our last union event when the Mr. John Gage, President of AFGE National came to local 933 in April 2006. We all realize that we need somebody, thank you for stepping up to the plate.

From the President

Welcome New Union Members
Donald Hughes, Sylvia Riley, Maia Bragg, Stephen Lent, Byron Washington, Kelly Barkley, Sheral Fenn, Deya Abdelbaki, Paula Kaberline, Dennis McDonald, Otherine Basley, Danuta Zielkowski, Shirley Beckford, and Bonita Rodgers.

John Gage Visits our Local
The National President's visit to Local 933 on April 27, 2006 was a success. He met with the Executive Board before attending a reception in his honor. Gage later spoke at the membership meeting where he answered questioned from the membership. Members who attended got a chance to meet Gage and other union affiliates in attendance. You can find photo slideshows of the event on our website at www.afge933.com. Also there are a few video excerpts of him during his talk to the local during its meeting.



Quotable Quotes
"Teach me and I'll forget; show me and I'll remember; involve me and I'll understand..."
Donated by "Smiles"

Sharing Your News
James Shaw a long time employee and union member has a son (James Shaw) who has received a prestigious Diversity Scholarship to attend SDSU. Young James Shaw was honored along with nine other individuals in San Diego, California. Among the attendees were Dave Winfield, Major League Hall of Famer, Buck O'Neil Negro American League Champion, and Dr. Stephen Weber President SDSU. James is pictured here in the center with a highlight



Veterans affairs nurses & AFGE to join group to advocate for increased staffing and improved patient care.

New Group to Help Nurses Gain Voice in Fixing Health Care System.

(WASHINGTON)—Chronic under-funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), insufficient staffing levels, poor compensation and mandatory overtime are just a few of the issues causing a patient care crisis within the VA says the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the union representing VA nurses. To confront the growing crisis, AFGE recently joined RNs Working Together, a coalition of AFL-CIO unions tasked with coordinating, organizing and bargaining activities to improve patient care nationally and give nurses a strong voice in fixing health care systems in the public and private sectors. "As VA nurses struggle to care for the nation's veterans, this new structure will allow unions to pool our resources, leading to more aggressive legislative, political and bargaining activities that will benefit nurses and challenge the way the government and the health care industry treat some of its most valuable resources," says AFGE National Vice President Jane Nygaard. RNs Working Together is an Industrial Coordinating Committee (ICC), a new structure that is designed to foster common strategies and practices for unions within a given industry. Unions that agree to join ICCs will receive additional support from the labor federation. AFL-CIO unions that do not join the ICC will be prohibited from organizing in that industry. "VA nurses constantly tell us that low staffing levels top their list of concerns," says Nygaard. "VA nurses are being forced to take care of too many patients at one time. If you talk to nurses around the country, most will tell you that understaffing is driving nurses out of the profession and having a negative impact on the quality of patient care." VA nurses are especially concerned about staffing levels due to the growing number of injured veterans returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan and the needs of a growing older veterans population. Despite this, the administration's fiscal 2007 budget contains no boost in nursing home funding and actually includes a 13 percent funding cut for veterans' programs by the year 2011.

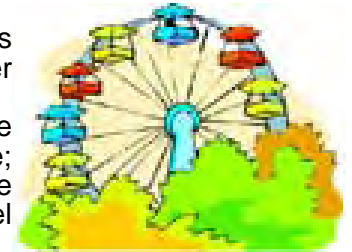
Once again the administration has proposed a smoke and mirrors budget' says Nygaard. The new budget is based on unproven management efficiencies' overly optimistic collection rates, and dead-on-arrival proposals for increased drug co-pays and enrollment fees. Our veterans deserve better." Additionally, recent studies have revealed a clear link between staffing shortages, overworked nurses and patient care. According to a University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing study, 20,000 people die each year because they checked into a hospital with overworked nurses. The study also found that Americans scheduled for routine surgeries run a 31 percent greater risk of dying if they are admitted to a hospital with a severe shortage of nurses. Staffing shortages also are leading to more mandatory overtime for already overworked nurses, high turnover rates and recruiting problems. "Increasing the pay for nurses would go a long way toward increased recruiting and retention," says Nygaard. -- continue --

"However, when the administration refuses to properly fund the VA, we are back to square one and that means that veterans won't get the care they need or deserve. VA nurses are extremely concerned about the persistent wear and tear on the VA health care system which both parallels and affects all U.S. health care systems. If something isn't done soon both the public and private sector systems will be broken beyond repair and this country can't afford to let that happen. "The eight unions that comprise RNs Working Together are AFGE United American Nurses, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, American Federation of Teachers, Communications Workers of America, United Steelworkers, Office and Professional Employees International Union, and United Auto Workers.

Curbing Expenses at Theme Parks

Amusement and theme parks provide great family outings, but tickets for the whole family can run to several hundred dollars. Here are some ways to reduce the cost:

- Check out the park's website because many offer discounts and coupons.
- Call or visit the website of the local chamber of commerce; it may offer discounts to the park and attractive travel packages with local hotels.
- Look for park coupons on grocery store items (soda and cereal makers are the two most common) and those offered by fast food chains.
- Check your memberships. Wholesale clubs, like Costco and BJ's, sometimes offer park discounts, as well as groups like AAA and credit unions. Did you know that AFGE also offers selected discounts?
- Consider buying annual passes if your family plans to visit a particular park more than once. Typically, these pay for themselves within two visits.
- Pack your own sunscreen, film, and bottled water because these summer staples will cost much more inside the park.
- Eat a sit-down lunch and choose concession food for dinner because lunch entrees are typically less expensive than dinner menus.
- Give your children their allowance (or a set amount of cash) at the start of the day to buy souvenirs. It will help them learn to budget and lower the risk of expensive impulse buys.



“To relate to; be concerned with; to consider worthy of or to refrain from obtruding upon” is the dictionary’s definition of respect. One would have to wonder if this is the rule of thumb being followed by some in management with its employees. When we look at the big picture, employees are “kept in line” with policies, regulations, and titles (some supervisors and service chiefs). These policies and rules are strongly enforced by individuals with superior titles, yet who is enforcing the so-called rules of the game on disrespectful supervisors and service chiefs in this facility? Of course the Union is set in place to handle grievances, arbitrations, and violations of the Master & Local Agreements and policies. Management even has a problem at times with respect towards the Union. So who wins? Absolutely no one! I know that some of this may be difficult to swallow but hey, for those of you that are having a hard time with it, FYI it is just an editorial. Some individuals in management positions in this facility love to abuse what they consider Positional Power by sending tasteless emails / voice mails to employees (Personal Wars), getting into loud out of control arguments with employees (Verbal Combat), setting up strategic plans to get rid of employees (Trojan Horse Effect), and using backdoor tactics to pit one employee against another who they might not personally like (Divide and Conquer). Some need to be reminded that managerial positions are to “manage” people, not just and ensuring the necessary work gets completed. Hence a prerequisite of your position is to be a “people person”, to motivate & get along with, and to promote & foster better conducive feelings & a productive mental & emotional environment. Those performing the necessary duties are your most valuable asset; not your slave or someone to take out your personality issues upon. If you can’t handle it personally, or don’t have “all” the attributes your position requires, or you can’t leave your personality at home; find another job more suited to your personality. Oh, and I thought we were all here for the veterans. What we all need to realize is that everyone is here to do a job.

Supervisors, service chiefs, and managers can control the tone of the working environment by extending more respect towards the employees. Employees are actual people. R-E-S-P-E-C-T, RESPECT!!!

Have a Comment or Issue of Relevance You’d Like to Share?

If you do, send it to the News Editor, Yvonne Jackson in the union office and maybe we can use it. We can keep it anonymous or give your name.

WHAT’S SO SPECIAL ABOUT MAY ?

- May 4, 1494 - During his second journey of exploration in the New World, Christopher Columbus discovered Jamaica.
- May 6, 1937 - The German airship Hindenburg burst into flames at 7:20 p.m. as it neared the mooring mast at Lakehurst, New Jersey, following a trans-Atlantic voyage.
- Birthday - Explorer Robert E. Peary (1856-1920) was born in Cresson, Pennsylvania. He organized and led eight Arctic expeditions and reached the North Pole on April 6, 1909. In another expedition, he proved Greenland is an island. He also proved the polar ice cap extends beyond 82° north latitude, and discovered the Melville meteorite.
- May 7, 1915 - The British passenger ship Lusitania carrying 2,000 passengers was torpedoed by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland, losing 1,198 of its 1,924 passengers, including 114 Americans. The attack hastened neutral America’s entry into World War I.
- May 10, 1869 - The newly constructed tracks of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railways were first linked at Promontory Point, Utah.
- May 11, 1862 - To prevent its capture by Union forces advancing in Virginia, the Confederate Ironclad Merrimac was destroyed by the Confederate Navy.
- May 13, 1846 - At the request of President James K. Polk, Congress declared war on Mexico. The controversial struggle eventually cost the lives of 11,300 U.S. soldiers and resulted in the annexation of lands that became parts of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California, Utah and Colorado.
- May 13, 1981 - Pope John Paul II was shot twice at close range while riding in an open automobile in St. Peter’s Square in Rome.
- May 14, 1607 - The first permanent English settlement in America was established at Jamestown, Virginia,
- May 14, 1804 - Meriwether Lewis and William Clark departed St. Louis on their expedition to explore the Northwest.
- May 14, 1796 - Smallpox vaccine was developed by Dr. Edward Jenner, a physician in rural England. He coined the term vaccination for the new procedure of injecting a milder form of the disease into a healthy persons resulting in immunity.
- Birthday - German physicist Gabriel Fahrenheit (1686-1736) was born in Danzig, Germany. He introduced the use of mercury in thermometers and greatly improved their accuracy.
- May 18, 1980 - Mount St. Helens volcano erupted in southwestern Washington State spewing steam and ash over 11 miles up into the sky.
- May 19, 1930 - The 27th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, prohibiting Congress from giving itself pay raises.
- May 20, 1927 - Charles Lindbergh, a 25-year-old aviator, took off from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, in the Spirit of St. Louis attempting to win a \$25,000 prize for the first solo nonstop flight between New York City and Paris.
- May 25 - Memorial Day in the U.S., also called Decoration Day for the tradition of decorating soldiers’ graves with flowers. The observance dates from Civil War years, first observance on May 5, 1865.

WORD SEARCH HOSPITAL SERVICES

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