



# UMPNC News

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***"Internal organizing activates the broad membership in causes that benefit our whole profession."***

For web links to your local, state and national union organizations, turn to page four.

***"I went to the microphone...I read the resolution, and asked that action be taken."***

## Connecting with You: A Message from the UMPNC Chair

This newsletter is an outcome of the Strategic Planning retreat jointly organized by the Michigan Nurses Association (MNA) and your local elected Leadership.

One of the purposes of this newsletter is to move the UMPNC toward an internal mobilizing model, rather than just a union that provides good service to its members. While good service is a necessary component of an effective union, that alone is not enough. Internal organizing activates the broad membership in causes that benefit our whole profession. For example, when UMPNC members join with other MNA members to implement the Safe Patient Care legislation, all RN's in our state can be assured that there will be adequate nursing resources to meet patient care needs and that RN's will not be subjected to mandatory overtime.

Also, when the UMPNC and MNA join with the United American Nurses (UAN) and other progressive unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) to pass the federal legislation, Safe Patient Handling, all health care workers can be assured that they will no longer be exposed to being injured in the workplace when patients are lifted or transferred.

We look forward to the publication of your newsletter being a democratic vehicle in mobilizing the 3,700 UMPNC members!

**John Armelagos, UMPNC Chair; MNA Secretary**

## Be a Delegate...Are you Kidding?

What was I thinking? What had brought me to this place, the floor of the House of Delegates of the Michigan Nurses Association? I was one of nearly one hundred and fifty nurses, all elected as Delegates to represent our colleagues, who came together to manage the business of our state-level professional nursing organization. There was a sea of tables and chairs, arranged in rows and occupied by nurses from all over the state.

I looked around me. I began to discern the faces of individual nurses. Many were staff nurses, just like me, who I had worked with on projects or seen around the hospital. Leaders. Mentors. The previous evening, at a meeting of nurses from my region, I had found myself volunteering to stand in the House of Delegates and present a resolution that we had crafted. Might as well jump in with both feet. I didn't know anything about parliamentary procedure. I went to the microphone...I read the resolution, and asked that action be taken. Did I want the action to be taken by the Delegates or the Board, asked the President? Yikes...I turned to the colleagues around me, asking for their guidance, I stood at the microphone and conveyed the response, then returned to my seat for the vote. The resolution passed!

That was a few conventions ago, but that opportunity reassured me that I could do it. I could be the voice of my fellow staff nurses. I don't have to know everything—every

## Be a Delegate...Are you Kidding? (continued)

day I encounter seasoned nurses and nurses fresh from school with new perspectives. They help me to see and consider the many facets of nursing issues (and sometimes the nuances of parliamentary procedure). At the convention, there are nurses from all over the state, putting their minds together to grapple with nursing issues, the stuff we deal with every day, in the interest of making Michigan a great state to give and receive nursing care. As a Delegate, YOU can be a voice for nurses in Michigan. All you have to do is jump in!

Sandy Raymond, Level "C" R.N. and Delegate

**For further information or to run for delegate**, please contact Sandy Raymond @ (734) 416 1805 or E-mail: [skraymond@umich.edu](mailto:skraymond@umich.edu) **no later than March 9, 2007.**

*"When asked what she likes most about being a rep, Katie states, "helping employees problem solve in the workplace..... I like to use this as a time to educate people about the Agreement."*



## Your Union Representatives at Work

*Each newsletter, we will feature one of your elected representatives. This edition features **Katie Oppenheim**, Area Representative for Peds/Perinatal/Psychiatry.*

A staff nurse in the Birthing Center for the past 13 years, Katie Oppenheim was first elected over 4 years ago, and is currently serving her 2<sup>nd</sup> term. Katie's work as Area Rep takes her to numerous places within PPP where she advocates for nurses in a variety of situations. When asked what she likes most about being a rep, Katie states, "helping employees problem solve in the workplace." When representing employees, she goes on to say, "I like to use this as a time to educate people about the Agreement." For example, at attendance problem solving meetings Katie has helped numerous employees learn about the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and how it can benefit them. In reflecting on her 4 years as a rep, Katie states "As I have gained more and more experience and more and more knowledge about the Agreement, I have been able to bring about resolution of even some very difficult situations."

Besides taking care of Birthing Center patients for 30+ hours/week, Katie responds to many phone, email, and in-person questions of staff and managers alike. She made it a point to attend at least one Workload Review Committee meeting on each PPP unit, engaging staff around the Agreement at a very "local level". Again, says Katie, "this has helped people to better understand and use the Agreement toward creative solutions to their workload issues, while still staying within the intent of the Agreement."

Katie further educates others at annual Workload Review Committee Education Days and the bi-monthly Charge Nurse Workshops. She is a member of the Nurse Retention Team, and the Professional Development Framework Central Committee. She has been instrumental in the implementation of the Agreement through her work on the Joint Implementation Team. Katie served on the first table of the 2004 bargaining team, and will do so again in 2008.

To find an online copy of the Agreement go to:  
<http://www.umpnc.org/>

Katie's deep understanding, commitment, and passion for this work is further evidenced by her long tenure on the Michigan Nurses Association E & GW Board for 8 years, Board of Directors for 6 years, and her service as Delegate to the United American Nurses since UAN first began. Katie received the well deserved honor of being named "MNA Political Activist" for 2005 by the MNA.

"I think that we have to look at several things for our profession", says Katie. "We have to ensure that nurses are safe and that there are enough of us. Through legislation, through collective bargaining, and through organizing other nurses, we will be best able to ensure these things. Only we can make this happen."

*Thank you, Katie, for all you do for PPP nurses, for UMHS nurses, and for all in the profession of nursing!*



## Safe Patient Handling Legislation

**Have you ever left work with a dull ache in your lower back, and began your next shift with continuing discomfort or pain?** *Most of us have experienced such pain at one time or another, and many of us experience chronic pain.*

**Have you ever finished your initial patient assessments and determined that your assignment included all dependent patients, several of them overweight?**

*Increasingly, our patients are "total care" with obesity aggravating an already difficult situation.*

**Are YOU or do you know a nurse whose career was short-circuited by a debilitating musculoskeletal injury?**

*Without thinking twice, we would all likely answer in the affirmative!*

**If you answered YES to any or all of these questions, then READ ON!**

Representative John Conyers (D-MI) introduced new legislation entitled "The Nurse and Patient Safety & Protection Act of 2006" (H.R. 6182). Nurses across the country must get "on board" with this innovative bill that would protect nurses by:

- Establishing a Federal Safe Patient Handling Standard to be administered by OSHA that would eliminate manual lifting of patients by nurses and require hospitals to provide safe patient lift mechanical devices
- Requiring hospitals to implement a safe patient handling plan within one year of the bill's enactment that is consistent with the federal standard & that protects patient safety and nurses' health
- Requiring the posting of information on the federal standard and unscheduled audits to ensure compliance
- Including strong whistleblower and refusal of assignment protections for nurses who speak out against non-compliance

**For more information on this important issue visit:**

<http://www.UANNurse.org>

The Michigan Nurses Association, as well as the United American Nurses, are pleased to be working with Rep. Conyers on this piece of legislation. Let us join together with nurses from Michigan and across the country to educate members of Congress, our professional colleagues, and the general public about the devastating effects of unsafe lifting on nurses. Let us address this issue with commitment and as a collective body-- local, state, and national. Together we will work to insure our safety, as well as the future of our profession!

## Voice Your Issues; Act with Knowledge Workload Committee Education '07

***"...Workload Review Committees bring nursing and management together to constructively and collaboratively address workload issues toward the goals of quality patient care and nurse satisfaction."***

Workload Review Committees (WRC) provide a contractually agreed upon way for nurses to have a voice in their workplace! First written into our Agreement in the early 90s, Workload Review Committees bring nursing and management together to constructively and collaboratively address workload issues toward the goals of quality patient care and nurse satisfaction.

The more knowledgeable & skilled the members, the more effective unit workload committees can be in playing their influential role toward better staffing & related issues. To know the boundaries for discussion; to utilize data to create data-driven decisions; and to maximize their time and energy spent in meetings, WRC members need to utilize their professional critical thinking skills. An annual orientation jointly

*“Throughout the day, each participant will be able to use a little device—very much like a TV remote--to register their views in response to questions that ask them to think critically.”*

### **Voice Your Issues; Act with Knowledge, WRC Education '07 (cont.)**

developed by UMPNC and Nursing Services is provided for members new to their WRC, as well as identified Chairs. Topics include the contractual language around “workload”; available data sources and how to use them; running effective meetings; and the interest-based problem-solving process recommended as the model to use for working through workload issues.

Action learning is the key. Since participants learn not by hearing lectures, but by doing, the design of the sessions has become increasingly interactive. This year, participants will get an assist from technology in order to engage with the content and with each other. Throughout the day, each participant will be able to use a little device—very much like a TV remote--to register their views in response to questions that ask them to think critically. The day will culminate in a total-immersion experience of simulating a WRC which is confronting challenging issues. Multiple concurrent tables of participants, each acting as a WRC, will apply everything they've learned over the day to solve problems and get a “feel” for the entire process.

### **Member’s Questions**

**This is your area!** The UMPNC Leadership would like to have member’s submit questions, comments, concerns to Lisa Sylvest, UMPNC Secretary: [lsherwoo@umich.edu](mailto:lsherwoo@umich.edu) and we will attempt to answer them in this quarterly newsletter. If it is something of a timely nature, of course, one of your Reps will get back to you as soon as possible!

Here is an example of something people might wonder about...***I’m a permanent night nurse – why do I sometimes have to work the day shift on a holiday?***

The important thing to keep in mind about this issue is that holidays are all about SENIORITY, regardless of shift. That has been determined by contract language, which has been consistently given a positive vote for many years. As the demographics of our membership change – I am taking more and more questions on this issue. There will be a pre-negotiation’s survey sent out to all UMPNC members this fall and I would encourage you to take the time to fill it out so that your Leadership Team can best represent your interests at the Bargaining Table beginning in January 2008.

The Sequence for Schedule Development on the holidays themselves is found in paragraph 370, page 138 of your Agreement or at the online Agreement found at [www.umpnc.org](http://www.umpnc.org). It is helpful to read a-d in this paragraph, in order to get the full scope of the language. All employees assigned to a straight shift will be scheduled on their straight shift *unless* it would disadvantage a higher senior nurse whose turn it was to have the holiday off...

So, there you have it. I would encourage all of you to submit other topics! In solidarity, Katie Oppenheim, BSN, RN, Area Rep, Peds/Perinatal/Psych.

For more information visit:

Your local:

<http://www.umpnc.org/>

Your state:

<http://www.minurses.org/>

Your national:

<http://www.uannurse.org/index.html>

Other member resources visit:

<http://www.unionplus.org/>

### **Special thanks to this issue’s contributors:**

John Armelagos  
Lynn Hamilton  
Karen Matthews  
Stephanie Minerath  
Katie Oppenheim  
Sandy Raymond

UMPNC  
117 E. Ann Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
Phone (734) 663 5657  
Fax (734) 663 0212  
Web [www.umpnc.org](http://www.umpnc.org)

### **On the UMPNC Calendar**

Annual Membership Meeting	Feb 28
Michigan Nurses March	Mar 6
MNA Board of Directors	Mar 6, April 17
Joint Implementation Team (JIT)	Mar 13, 27, April 10, 24
UMPNC Leadership Meeting	Mar 13, April 10, May 8
UAN National Labor Assembly	Mar 21, 22
Workload Review Committee Orientation	Mar 1 & 28 (24:7 OR/Procedures) Mar 7 & 13 (Ambulatory Care)
Charge Nurse Education	April 12