

# The Professionals Guild of Ohio



## PGO UNION NEWS

April 2009

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Published by

Professionals Guild  
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Columbus, Ohio 43205

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*Produced and printed in-  
house by members of UFCW  
1059*

### **Lucas VSC Settles**

PGO Council 6 and Lucas County Veterans Service Commission (VSC) recently finished negotiating wages for 2009. Local representatives *Jana Oyerbides* and *Sonya Jenkins* served on PGO's bargaining team with *John Campbell-Orde* who was PGO's chief negotiator. Jana and Sonya did an excellent job representing the bargaining unit. Be sure to pat them on the back if you see them!

The economic and political climate made negotiations very difficult. VSC proposed that there be no wage increases. PGO and VSC requested the assistance of a mediator, but even during mediation VSC insisted that there be no wage increases. PGO and VSC then went through the "fact-finding" process. The fact-finder recommended that the bargaining unit receive a 1.5% wage increase for 2009.

The bargaining unit rejected the fact-finder's recommendation on the grounds that VSC had the funding to provide an appropriate wage increase. After the fact-finder's recommendation was rejected, PGO and VSC resumed negotiations. Shortly thereafter PGO and VSC agreed that bargaining unit members would receive not only a 1.5% wage increase,

but also a \$250 lump sum payment. The agreement was submitted to the County Commissioners, and subsequently became effective by operation of law.

### *PGO Plans State Union Election*

PGO officers and staff are putting a plan together for our fast approaching election of state union officers. PGO Treasurer, *Donna Andrews* and PGO Organizing Director *Christine Doerfler* recently attended a U.S. Department of Labor seminar on union elections. The information received at this conference will be used to ensure that our election complies with all legal and PGO Constitutional requirements. But above all, we will do everything we can to make sure that our election is fair.

Now, more than ever, it is imperative that the PGO office has correct information about who our members are and where our members live. In the coming weeks we will be updating our membership list and database of home addresses. Please contact our office if you're unsure of your membership status. And, if you've never received any mail from the PGO or if you have recently moved, please call to make sure we have your home address.

**Voice of a PGO Update Leader**

*By Christine Doerfler, PGO Organizing Director*

Gregg Frye is the president of PGO Council 17 at the Clark County MRDD. He helped organize this council in 2000 and has served as its president for the last six years.

**Gregg, how long have you worked at Clark MRDD? Explain what is it is that you do at this agency?**

*I am a Registered Nurse and have been with the agency 14 years. For 13-1/2 I worked at one of the MRDD Adult Workshops. Currently I have been assigned to work at the Cottages, which resemble nursing homes to some degree. I perform whatever the needs of the residents are.*

**Describe the reasons that the RNs and LPNs chose to organize a union.**

*The impetus came from the cottages. The nurses saw a fellow nurse being treated in what they thought was an unfair manner, so they wanted more protection, hence the PGO.*

**Does the nursing staff have any regrets about organizing a union?**

*On the whole, I don't think so. There have been some minor issues but I think most of them realize the benefits of the union.*

**As Union President, what struggles are you faced with on a day to day basis? Give our readers an example.**

*This is a small unit so I really can't say it is a struggle. Mostly I am the go-to person for questions that may involve the union, but I have a couple of Nurses who can be counted on to help with any situations.*

**How can the PGO improve in helping you in your role as President?**

*I can't think of anything specific. I have been pleased with all the assistance from the PGO staff. A special thank you goes to **Amy Whitehair** for all her work with us, especially during this last drawn out contract negotiations.*

**What is something about you that would surprise your co-workers?**

*Oh there could be many things...but in general it would probably be the wide eclectic range of interests and activities I have. Between my wife and I, we have*



**Gregg Frye, Council 17 President**

*about 120 cats-but 100 of them are at our local Animal Welfare League. (they sterilize and don't euthanize!)*

**What are some of the best attributes to union membership in your opinion?**

*Strength in unity and numbers. Better communications among members as well as between the union and management. One has a good source of accurate legal information when it is needed. And I think it can make management more carefully consider any actions it wants to take with union members.*

**In your opinion, how do you think unions could reach the unorganized workers in this country?**

*I think they have some very high hurdles to get over. The mass media, big business and most of the government are hostile to unions. Some unions have been very corrupt and it makes some people apprehensive not for necessarily correct reasons though. Maybe all the various unions should form a mega union...unlikely to happen but I'm just saying...it would help to remind labor and management that the working conditions they have today are due to unions and that says a lot.*

**If you had just one thing you would like to say to your membership and the other PGO members across the state, what would it be?**

*This country is in for some tough times and already some unions are suffering because of that. So I guess we should all be on the lookout for our best interests as it is obvious the powers that be sure haven't and aren't going to.*

## **Clark MRDD Nurses Receive Conciliation Report**

On March 27, 2009, PGO Council 17, Clark County Board of MRDD received the conciliation report concluding successor contract negotiations that have been going on since July 2008. Because the bargaining unit is comprised exclusively of nurses, the parties were statutorily required to go to binding conciliation after the fact finding report was unanimously rejected by the Union.

Hours of Work & Overtime, Holidays and Wages were the three articles before the conciliator. The issues in Hours of Work & Overtime regarded the calculation of overtime and electronic time keeping. The Union proposed current contract language for overtime which states that employees will be paid overtime for more than eight hours in a day and 80 hours in a pay period. The conciliator, however, ruled in favor of the employer on this article. The conciliator referred to the country's recession's negative impact on the Employer. The conciliator said that the employer's proposal would give the employer a better ability to bring down costs and restructure for greater efficiency. Now the parties must negotiate a change in overtime calculation to overtime paid for hours worked in excess of forty hours actually worked in a week, if a change in scheduling is required during the life of the agreement due to changing work load and operations.

The conciliator ruled for the Union on the Holiday article. The issue in the Holiday article was the definition of "applicable rate of pay." The employer sought to eliminate its practice of paying bargaining unit employees at the rate of time and one half for holiday hours worked in addition to their regular straight time pay. As a basis for the decision, the conciliator referred to the past practice of prior agreements and the employer's collective bargaining agreement with another union.

In regard to the Wages article, the conciliator ruled for the Union on the issue of wage increases and for the employer on the issue of shift differential. The Union proposed a 2.75% wage increase in each year of the contract and the Employer proposed a 2.25% increase. For shift differential, the Union had proposed that shift differential be given for all hours worked on a Saturday and Sunday. The employer proposed current contract language of shift differential only for hours worked between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

The Union negotiation team members were *Gregg Fry*, *Joyce Eichelberger* and *Nanette Moss* and *Amy Whitehair* as Chief Negotiator. Thank you Union members for your hard work.

## **Hamilton ESC Contract Ratified**

On March 12, 2009, Council 4, Hamilton County Educational Service Center, bargaining unit employees voted to accept the tentative agreement for a successor three year contract. The contract negotiations was a long, hard fought battle that ended in fact-finding being scheduled for February 24th. The day of fact-finding, the employer agreed to accept the Union's last counter proposals.

Throughout negotiations, the employer fought to take away ten vacation days from the majority of bargaining unit employees. The employer's only offer in return for eliminating the ten vacation days was a one time cash payout for one year's worth of the ten vacation days. The Union stood strong and refused to make such a huge concession.

In addition to maintaining the amount of vacation leave, the Union also gained two additional paid holidays and a two percent retroactive wage increase for the first year of the contract with a wage reopener in contract year two and three.

Thank you Union negotiation team members, *Debbie Clyde* and *Teri Densford*, for a job well done.



## **Lucas CTF Gets New Contract**

On March 19, 2009, PGO Council 15 president **Danny Ehle** and chief negotiator **Chuck De Grove** met with Lucas County Court Administrator Jean Atkin to sign a contract covering corrections officers at the Lucas County Correctional Treatment Facility. The signatures marked the end of a two-year struggle over whether these employees had the legal right to collective bargaining.

The union bargaining committee included, besides De Grove and Ehle, corrections officers **Ryan Dobrak** and **Lott Smith**. In a time when the state is cutting wages for corrections officers, the union still managed to obtain small raises and bonuses for its members. Previous negotiations on health care provided a continuation of one of the best benefit packages in the state at no cost to employees.

The new contract also includes improvements in grievance procedures, uniform allowances, seniority based layoff provisions, disciplinary procedures, protections against overtime opportunities being given to other employees, an extra day's pay or a paid day off for employees who do not use sick leave during any quarter.

Additionally, an Employee Assistance Program (for employees with substance abuse, financial, mental health needs, etc.), which had been previously dropped was restored. And, a prohibition against subcontracting the corrections officers work was included in the contract.

The contract was unanimously ratified by the membership.

## **PGO Council Officer Elections in Progress**

The PGO has many councils that require an election of local officers to be conducted every odd numbered year, per each council's constitution. We will be reporting the outcome of these elections in this and future issues of the *PGO Union News*.

**Council 18, Henry County Job and Family Services** held their election on March 4, 2009. Congratulations to **Ruth Hershberger** who was elected president and **Jennifer Rowe** who was elected council steward.

**Council 3, Cuyahoga Falls Library** held their election on March 13, 2009. We are pleased to announce the following elected to office: **Barbara Holdren**—president; **Kathy Jacobs**—vice-president; **Amy Walker**—secretary-treasurer; **Dave Parvin**—professionals steward; and, **Donna Imoff**—para-professionals steward.

**Council 7, Butler County MRDD** conducted its election on April 2, 2009. The following officers will take office next month: **Anita Sparrow**—president; **Kelly Ray**—vice president; **Milan Whitehead**—secretary-treasurer; and, **Bill Worrell**—delegate to the PGO Executive Board.

**Council 10, Greene County Children Services** held its election April 3, 2009. Officers who will resume office next month are **Chad King**—president, **Nichole Larson**—vice president, **Melissa Baughn**—secretary-treasurer and **Connie Lowe**—delegate to the PGO Executive Board.

**Council 21, Butler County MRDD EIS** held its election April 8, 2009. Officers elected are **Susanne Beckett**—president, **Diana Taylor**—vice president, **Mindy Flora**—secretary-treasurer and **Beverly Nagle**—delegate to the PGO Executive Board.

Congratulations to all and thank you for stepping up to serve your Union!

## **Help Us to Stay in Touch**

Has your name changed? Have you moved? Do you have a new telephone number? If so, please let your Union know. Help us maintain accurate membership files by contacting the PGO office to update your personal contact information.

