

Lakeport Skilled Nursing workers reach contract

Written by Lake County News Reports

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LAKEPORT – Nearly 70 workers at Lakeport Skilled Nursing have a new contract as part of an agreement reached this week between United Healthcare Workers West and Horizon West, the facility's owner.

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Lakeport Skilled was one of six facilities, with 500 workers, who this week ratified a new master contract with Horizon West, a for-profit company operating nursing, assisted living and retirement facilities throughout California and Utah.

In addition to Lakeport Skilled, the other facilities involved are Foothill Oaks Care Center in Auburn, Heritage Care Center in Sacramento, Monterey Pines Skilled Nursing Center in Monterey, Placerville Pines Care Center in Placerville and Sierra Healthcare Center in Davis.

Union officials said the agreement was reached by a 97-percent margin after six months of contract negotiations led by an elected rank-and-file bargaining team and was settled on the eve of a strike at four homes.

Union spokesman Blinker Wood said Lakeport Skilled has 67 workers who are members of the union.

The settlement – which a union statement called "historic" – includes a number of new standards for nursing home workers throughout the country and follows the pattern set by contracts won at Mariner Health Care and Sava Senior Care earlier this year.

Important issues for Lakeport Skilled and other homes included staffing levels and health care affordability, said Wood.

Key elements of the settlement include:

- Wage increases of up to 25 percent over three years and wage scales at all six facilities. These increases take a significant step toward closing the wage gap between hospital and nursing home workers in Northern California.
- Quality of Care Committees that will give frontline caregivers a role in staffing and other patient care decisions. These committees provide for third party mediation if no agreement can be reached.
- Successorship language so that if a facility is sold the new owner must abide by the contract. While standard in many hospital contracts, this is an important first for the nursing home industry in California.
- Defined-benefit pension for workers at all six facilities.
- A Code of Conduct for organizing which will allow UHW to organize 18 non-union Horizon West facilities in Northern California without employer interference.
- Participation in the UHW Joint Employer Training and Upgrade Fund giving Horizon West workers the opportunity to participate in career ladder training and upgrade programs.

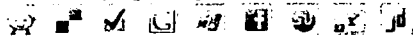
UHW members' settlement with Horizon West differs significantly from recent agreements reached between SEIU International and a number of nursing homes in Southern California. Those settlements do not include many of these key standards won by UHW members, including wage scales to ensure equity, a defined-

benefit pension plan, successorship protections or a code of conduct for organizing non-union workers. Most notably they do not establish quality care committees or any other real mechanism to give frontline caregivers a direct voice in patient care issues.

Under the agreements reached so far this year by workers at Mariner, Sava and Horizon West, UHW nursing home workers now have the opportunity to organize nursing home workers at 22 homes across California which is more than the number of homes UHW was able to organize under the prior Alliance model. Most importantly, newly organized workers will be granted full collective bargaining rights and the ability to have a real voice in their negotiations and their union.

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Donna Christopher - **Good news, indeed very**

Author | 11-07-2008 11:04:09

good news. Glad to see unions still have a little umphh left in them and that these fine folks are getting the proper pay for their hard work. I am part of a group that entertains there monthly, wonderful group of workers and the residents are just a delight. This facility has cared for many dear friends in a most caring and professional way - for which I am eternally grateful.

dogwalker - **New employer of choice**

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UHW-W rocks. Despite their bastardization by the mother ship SEIU, they continue to keep their eye on the ball and win decent contracts for their members. Roselli and Borsos should be leading the way for all SEIU members in California. I wish they were in charge of my contract! Let's hope that Andy Stern doesn't get named as Obama's Secretary of Labor. Roselli and Borsos are the only ones with the juevos to stand up to Stern and his autocratic style.

dogwalker - **Addendum**

Registered | 11-09-2008 16:50:17

You simply can't have the working poor in positions of care and advocacy for our society's dependent population. These employees costs of living are as high as anyone elses. Let's hope this boost in pay and conditions will restore them to the patient advocates they can and ought to be. Abuse prevention is more than just watching a video once a year.

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