

LOCALNEWS

Nurses picket for rights

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

A steady stream of honking horns from vehicles passing in front of the Rainy Lake Medical Center hospital campus could be heard Tuesday in support of an informational picket.

Nurses and supporters lined Highway 71 holding signs requesting the rights to protect patient safety and disagreeing with management rights during a two-hour picket over an unsettled contract.

According to Diane Olek, who has been a registered nurse for 47 years, a 27-member bargaining unit, of which she is a member, has been negotiating a contract that expired Oct. 31 with management since



RLMC staff and supporters hold signs during Tuesday's picket.

September.

"The only stickler we're having right now is they want to implement a management rights clause into our contract," she said. "We have real concerns about that because (management) wants to limit what we can talk to them about."

The clause, nurses fear, could lead to administration perceiving it has the power to make decisions impacting nursing practice and patient safety.

In a world where health care is rapidly changing, Olek said there is no way to see into the future what issues may arise on which nurses would want to ap-

proach management personnel.

"We want to provide safe patient care," she said. "When you close communication off between two professionals, that does not help our stance for patients."

RLMC CEO Dan Odegaard did not comment about the picket, however, a statement provided to The Journal from Kelly Millerbernd, RLMC marketing and foundation coordinator, said RLMC was informed by the Minnesota Nurses Association the major issue is one of the employer's proposals that outlines the rights of the parties.

"It explains that the union



STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Rainy Lake Medical Center registered nurse Margie Eklund participates in Tuesday's informational picket in front of the RLMC hospital campus.

has the rights as outlined in the collective bargaining agreement and that the management's rights are restricted by the language

in the collective bargaining agreement," the statement said. "RLMC already has a management's rights section with two locals of American

Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, which covers all other unionized RLMC employees other than registered nurses."

Olek said during negotiations, management has assured the bargaining unit they will talk to staff about "anything they legally have to."

"But, if it's not something they legally have to talk to us about, they don't have to talk to us about it," she said. "That really concerns a lot of our nurses because we really want to make sure we're delivering safe patient care...The younger nurses especially foresee this as a problem down the road."

Millerbernd's statement said over the course of negotiations, both parties have been able to reach tentative agreements on many proposals and hope an "acceptable" contract can be reached in the future.

"RLMC continues to be committed to providing the best possible quality care to our patients," it said.

Olek stressed Tuesday's movement was not a strike, but rather a way for the community to understand nurses "are here for them."

"I love my job and I love what I do," she said. "I want nothing but success for this hospital, but to achieve that, we need to keep the lines of communication going with our management."

Fort Frances pulp and paper mill closes permanently

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Resolute Forest Products Tuesday announced the permanent closure of its previously idled pulp and paper mill in Fort Frances.

The company announced an extended period of market-related outage on its

remaining paper machine in January. The kraft pulp mill and another paper machine have been idled since November 2012.

"We tried hard to find a way to reposition these assets, particularly the pulp mill," Richard Garneau, president and chief execu-

tive officer, said in a release. "But unfortunately, due to end product markets, the mill's operational configuration and its cost position, we've concluded that there was no economically viable option for the pulp and paper operations at Fort Frances."

The company will provide appropriate notice to staff who were retained to manage the idled facility. It will also work with affected employees, all levels of government and other local authorities on programs to lessen the impact of this permanent closure.

Affected employees will be considered for job vacancies and opportunities at other company facilities.

Resolute is currently exploring opportunities to continue to operate the biomass boiler and electricity-producing steam turbine. The company is also pro-

gressing on three important investment initiatives underway in Northwestern Ontario: the construction of a new sawmill in Atikokan; the upgrade and restart of the idled Ignace sawmill; and the construction of a wood pellet plant at the Thunder Bay sawmill.

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CITY OF INTERNATIONAL FALLS

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MAYORAL PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS: the annual distribution of Buddy Poppies by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has been officially recognized and endorsed by governmental leaders since 1922, and

WHEREAS: VFW Buddy Poppies are assembled by disabled veterans, and the proceeds of this worthy fund-raising campaign are used exclusively for the benefit of disabled and needy veterans, and the widows and orphans of deceased veterans, and

WHEREAS: the basic purpose of the annual distribution of Buddy Poppies by the Veterans of Foreign Wars is eloquently reflected in the desire to "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living", therefore

I, Robert W. Anderson, Mayor of the City of International Falls do hereby urge the citizens of this community to recognize the merits of this cause by contributing generously to its support through your donations for Buddy Poppies on Friday, May 9, 2014, the day set aside for the distribution of these symbols of appreciation for the sacrifices of our Honored dead.

I urge all patriotic citizens to wear a Buddy Poppy as mute evidence of our gratitude to the men and women of this country who have risked their lives in defense of the freedoms that we continue to enjoy as American citizens.

Signed this 5th day of May 2014.

CITY OF INTERNATIONAL FALLS

Robert W. Anderson, Mayor

Public AUCTION

Saturday May 10, 2014 9:30 AM

International Falls, MN and Rainy Lake Area

Directions: From International Falls take Highway 11 East toward Rainy Lake 5 miles to County Road 109 also known as the KOA Road. Take a right and go one block to blue no. 2102.

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