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**PLANNED NURSES WEEK STRIKE AVERTED**

**Nearly 1,000 Geisinger Community Medical Center Caregivers Win Three-Year Contract Deals That Further Respect Caregivers and Protect Patients and Caregivers Alike**

**“These Contracts Should Go a Long Way Toward Keeping Caregivers Here at GCMC, Caring For the Community We Love and That Has Long Supported Us.”**

**Scranton, PA** – Exactly two weeks before a planned Nurses Week strike, 940 frontline healthcare workers spanning multiple job classifications at Geisinger Community Medical Center in Scranton overwhelmingly ratified three-year contracts that represent major steps forward in protecting and retaining seasoned caregivers at GCMC and providing safe and exceptional patient care to the GCMC community.

“We secured the biggest increase I’ve seen in my career as a nurse, which should go a long way toward keeping RNs here at GCMC, caring for the community we love and that has long supported us,” says Perioperative Care Nurse Kali Gargone, RN, Membership Chair of the Northeast Pennsylvania Nurses Association (NEPANA) at GCMC. “We’re proud of the hard work we did to strengthen safety protocols, and for the first time ever, we have provisions to ensure safe staffing in our contract.”

The RNs, LPNs, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, technicians, and degreed professionals including Pharmacists, Respiratory Therapists, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, and Chaplains, among others, comprise three Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals-affiliated bargaining unit groups.

**NEPANA is composed of 535 GCMC RNs and CRNAs. They have been unionized for more than 15 years; their contract expired on January 12, 2024. Today, an overwhelming 90% voted YES to ratify a new contract that includes, for the very first time, provisions to ensure safe staffing, a critical quality-of-care issue. The nurses’ new contract includes:**

- The right to file a grievance if GCMC is not appropriately staffing the hospital. Nurse staffing is a significant predictor of patient outcomes.
- A security personnel “huddle” to discuss all relevant safety incidents with the goal of implementing a visitor registration and control procedure to help track who comes into the hospital and ensure the safety of all patients and staff.

- Significant wages increases – 16% across the lifetime of the contract – that makes GCMC nurses the highest paid in northeast PA and ensures GCMC can attract new nurses and retain their experienced staff.

**The GCMC LPNs, Technicians, and Degreed Professionals are 345 Licensed Practical Nurses, technicians, and degreed professionals (Pharmacists, Respiratory Therapists, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, and Chaplains, among others). They have been bargaining since May 2023 for their first contract. Today, an overwhelming 95% voted YES to ratify their first contract. Their contract includes:**

- Back pay for overtime bonus shifts worked since May 7th, 2023, that Geisinger illegally reduced from pandemic-era rates.
- A new wage scale to improve recruitment and retention at the hospital. The average across-the-board increase will be 11% over three years, with some employees seeing as much as a 20% increase in year 1.

“We came together from every corner of the hospital to work together for each other and for our patients,” radiologic technologist Pam Guido, RT, a 23-year veteran of the hospital. “At the beginning of this process, most of us didn’t even know each other. Now, we have a strong, unified voice to advocate for caregivers and patients, hospital-wide.”

“The Union has given us confidence to advocate for ourselves and our patients,” says CT Technologist Valerie Werle, RT(R)(CT), an 11-year veteran of the hospital. “And that’s really everything, isn’t it?”

**The GCMC Advanced Practitioners are 56 nurse practitioners and physician assistants who have also been bargaining since May 2023 for their first contract. Today, an overwhelming 90% voted YES to ratify their first contract. Their contract includes:**

- A wage scale that, for the first time, respects experience and expertise. Much of the GCMC AP staff had been practicing at the top of their license with no additional pay. The pay scale negotiated in this contract goes a long way toward correcting that.

“I’ve been a nurse practitioner for 23 years and with Geisinger for 16,” says Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner and Lipid Specialist Caroline deRichemond, CRNP — the only board-certified advanced practice Lipid Specialist in the GCMC system. “I will be retiring in the next three to five years, but I feel, with this contract and the recognition and reward that come with it, I am part of a legacy to help the people who are coming up after me. I am literally crying tears of joy today.”

"Protections for our colleagues and our patient community were central to everything we fought so hard for in this contract," says Cardiac Catheterization Nurse Linda Driesbaugh, RN. "We are proud of ourselves, our contracts, and all they promise for patient care in our community.."

*The three bargaining units of Geisinger Community Medical Center caregivers are affiliates of PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, which represents more than 11,000 frontline nurses and healthcare professionals across Pennsylvania and was founded on the belief that patients do better when critical care staff have a voice to advocate for their patients and themselves.*