



2020 3rd Calendar Quarter Newsletter

Hello Brothers & Sisters,

There is no surprise that this newsletter will be dominated by the same thing that has dominated most of the calendar year of 2020 and that is the Pandemic that we continue to face.

The pandemic has continued to cause concern at not only this local, but many unions across the America. Quite frankly it has caused issues for many middleclass workers across the USA.

Currently the unemployment rate is at 8.4% and 21 million people are still unemployed. How that has impacted our local is we have seen around a 20% dip in overall membership and about 20% of the remaining membership is still out on furlough.

This has caused us to greatly cut our budget from this year and seriously look at our budget for the upcoming fiscal year as well. To date we have cut 80k and changed many of the things we originally planned to do this year. How long we will have to continue to do that will depend on how long we continue to have members out on furlough.

As things currently stand, Value Visions is fully staffed and the membership keeps growing. Balester we permanently lost 8 members and 4 members are still on furlough. Versant, Latham is fully staffed but overall numbers are down and NTS still has about 15 members still out on furlough. Finally, at Visionworks, about 500 members have returned to work and 200 are still on furlough. Previously we lost over 100 members permanently and around 125 has left the organization all together.

Overall our membership sits around 1100 members, down from the 1300 we had, with 850 currently working.

Over the last 6 months I have had to enter multiple MOU agreements with each company to help get us through the pandemic, in most cases we were able to secure very good terms, while having to give up very little in return and mostly temporary.

The biggest issues that continues to plague all of us is how overwhelmed all of you are. I just want to be clear that none of that goes unnoticed, and every day we are fighting to get all of you more help every day.

That Said, not all is doom or gloom. I am proud to share that we recently negotiated a new contract at NTS, and while the COLA is down from previous contracts, we were able to secure many other things that are definite improvements, including a severance package that was maxed out at 4 weeks, were now the minimum is 4 weeks and maxed at 26 weeks.

There are also many ways in this contract to increase wages alternatively, like getting ABO certified and more. We were also were able to secure new language around vacation time and mandatory OT that all swung in our favor.

Sometimes a contract is not about what you didn't get but it's about what you didn't lose, and in this contract not only did we not lose, we were still able to get many favorable things.

We are also currently in negotiated with Versant for the Latham call center as well. I anticipate this will be every bit of a challenge as the NTS lab, but I am committed to securing a contract that is something this bargaining unit will be content with.

Recently Versant Health shared that they were acquired by MetLife. What this means for our future I simply do not know yet. What I will say is I have been told it will not impact the operations at NTS or Latham, and that they are fully committed to the new contract signed at NTS and have given the green light to continue with talks at Latham.

What I also will say is that this does not come as a shock to me and I anticipated at some point this was going to happen. It is one of the reasons I continue to try and secure successor clauses in the contract as a safety net. It is also my belief that it is better to be owned by a business that as a practice is accustomed to dealing with insurance compared to being owned by a hedge fund.

Finally, I want to talk about the GMM coming up next week. While this year's GMM will be different than most, and I anticipated that participation would decrease. I am pleased that over 65 members are still planning to attend and I look forward to seeing everyone there as we have a great day planned.

As we embark on a new fiscal year, I am hopeful that eventually this pandemic will get behind us, and that we can all return with what will be the new normal. At the GMM I will be laying out what the next fiscal year's budget will be and one of the items on that budget is to get out and visit all the locations again in 2021. This was something I was hoping to do this year but it simply was impossible, so my hope is to be able to do that in 2021 instead.

It has been a pleasure to serve this local over the last three years. I hope to be able to continue to do so over the next three years and I look forward to seeing all of you soon.

In Unity
Jason

In Memorial

It is with sadness that I share that over these last few months, the union has lost a few of our brothers and sister and loved ones. My heart goes out to each of the friends, family and coworkers that worked side by side with each of them every day.

Kareem Devore, Newtown Square Lab

Jeffery Dado, Spouse of Former President Mary Dado

Charles Garrett, Visionworks

Melanie Alexander, Latham Call Center