

Weekly Word

Monroe County Federation of Social Workers, IUE-CWA 381

167 Flanders St Rochester New York 14619

(585) 328-7170 voice

(585) 328-2162 fax

web site: www.fsw-union.com

e-mail: fswmessage@aol.com

John Vasko

January 3, 2006

I hope everyone had a safe and healthy holiday season. For some, the season is still not over but the work must go on. I'm just happy the days are getting longer meaning summer is on the way. That frame of mind and periodic tanning booth sessions keep me afloat.

Membership Meeting Reminder!

Federation Office
167 Flanders St
January 6th
5:30pm

-The only posted order of business is to vote on the Executive board motion to provide \$100 gift cards for striking workers at Caldwell Manufacturing, IUE-CWA 331. The total expense would be about \$4000. These workers voted unanimously to strike when the company violated NLRB findings by imposing a contract that removes Union security clauses.

2006 Resolutions

As promised, I will print here some of the resolutions that I received from your co-workers. Then, I will follow that up with some I think you need to consider adopting:

Nancy Hemry, Supervisor Income Eligible Day Care:

I resolve to: Eat MORE chocolate, inspire our boys to pursue their dreams (and MOVE out), to continue to SPOIL our daughter and to spend more time with my sweet husband of 25 YEARS! Happy New Year to all!

Reneita Linton, Examiner Team 34: I think everyone should do no overtime for at least a month so that maybe the amount of work we do can be realized

Helen Hyatt, Day Care Registration & Compliance and Election Committee chair for the Union: I wish my President would respond to my inquiries. It really is annoying to get NO RESPONSE and doesn't make a very good impression on union members who have come to me with questions. Peace and hope for a new year change.

Judy Minardo, Caseworker, Youth Opportunity Unit: I promise not to go completely insane with the new Connections and Court material and to do just everything at once !!!!!

Maryann Maher, Domestic Violence Liaison: I resolve to work harder towards getting a Domestic Violence Policy for all County Employees---

John Vasko, FSW President: I resolve to put more effort into getting members to realize that they hold the key to achieving a manageable workload. You can blame the Union, the County or DHS management if you want, but the key reason we all have more work than we can sustain is that we keep trying to do everything that gets thrown at us. Some have survived by cutting corners...some who have cut corners have been demoted, fired or have risked the safety of Monroe County residents. I've been asked to reprint something from a Weekly Word from June 5, 2001. Remember, this was written before Altrea, before downsizing, and before reorganization. At this time CPS Investigations was about the worst place to work as was any MA team. How does this compare to today? The words are just as true during any time period...

"Last week I promised to discuss in more detail how to give the work back. I have spent some time over the past week at Westfall and St Paul St and am finding a lot of interest in this concept, from supervisors and workers alike. The notion of giving the work back is really simple, but could be very difficult on you if done incorrectly. Let me begin by explaining some basic ideas just to be sure we all have the same understanding.

First, we need to understand that we were hired by Monroe County to manage a caseload or to perform some functions relative to our job descriptions. All of us play a role in this caseload from the Directors, through the Deputy Directors, administrators, supervisors and on to each one of us. It is safe to say that each person involved in this process has a considerable amount of work or responsibility.

We have to remember that this work is administered by Monroe County according to state and federal regulations. We are only assigned to manage a part of the work. While we recognize this reality, we also have to recognize that no one in the group mentioned above or in County administration has any control over how much work comes in the door. There are, however, two areas that have control over how the work impacts on your life. The first is County administration because they control the number of people that get hired. I know the folks at DSS, CSEU and at MCH have been routinely requesting additional staff and have been demonstrating the need for this staff request annually. Most of these requests get squashed in the County budget process; very few make it through.

The second source of control is with the individual worker. You have a certain amount of time to get as much of the job done that can be completed. This time period may be the 35-hour week. It may be a little more if you get comp time or overtime. It is your responsibility to come in during the times you are being compensated to perform work for the County. While you are being compensated, you must be working diligently at the assignments that you are given and completing as many tasks as you can.

You must be responsible and punctual in your attendance.

You must be working diligently on the work that is assigned.

You must take your two 15-minute breaks and one-hour lunch period...DAILY.

You must take your vacation days and comp days before you lose them by going over 40 days accumulation.

You must not work for free. The County does not ask you to work for free, so don't. If you have to stay late or arrive early to accommodate a client need, be sure, with your supervisor, to arrange for overtime or to flex that time off at a later date.

Discuss with your supervisor work you are not able to accomplish and attempt to develop a strategy for getting the work done. Have priorities set by the supervisor or the work reassigned. Also know that a response like, "Everything is a priority," is unacceptable.

Encourage co-workers to join you in adhering to this list and to make suggestions to the Union for other ways to give the work back. Together we can develop a list that can make a difference in the workplace.

You must be proactive in your job with your supervisor. If you are not able to work overtime (over 35 hours per week), advise them of this and return to # 6.

Be responsible to your teammates. If you have some free time, offer to help someone...the favor will be returned someday. Don't try to get work reassigned if you have not been diligent in your efforts since this will only cause resentment from your supervisors and (most importantly) from the co-workers who get the work dumped on them.

Read your Union contract. Practice it and the above guidelines. If you need further guidance in the application of these guidelines, be sure to contact the Union officers and stewards for guidance.

Recognize that the application of these guidelines will not be easy in the beginning. There is a lot of work to be done with a lot of unmet need in the community. We have to take responsibility for ourselves, though. Free work skews the workload statistics and foils any attempts to get additional staff. It also devalues the work that we do. There will be

You are not responsible to give additional hours that are uncompensated in order to complete all your tasks. You are not responsible to feel guilty for not completing all of your tasks if you have been working diligently during your compensated hours. If you cannot complete all the tasks that have been assigned, it is your responsibility to notify your supervisor and have them set priorities for completing assignments if the work is unable to be reassigned to someone else.

Not everyone has a job that requires too much. If you are lucky enough to be in this situation, please lend emotional support to your brothers and sisters who are overworked. Even in some of the high workload areas, there are individuals who can seemingly manage their assignments with ease. In the law of averages that is true. It is also true that there will be some who can't perform as well and are not able to keep their caseloads as current as other people. That's how we get averages...the slow and the fast combine to make the middle.

The bottom line to all this is how do we make our work lives better? Can we really give the caseload back? Giving the caseload back is, in reality, a philosophy and a way of going about your job. It is an attitude that must be adhered to and performed by virtually everyone to be efficient.

no relief if we continue to work for free. Until we give the work back by not working for free or by making ourselves crazed trying to get it done, the County will never know the numbers of workers that are needed, nor will you feel fairly compensated for the job that you do."

What the Union has now that we didn't have when this was first written is a Mobilization committee that meets weekly. Originally, this group formed to deal with the Altrea issues

and downsizing. Then the focus became the contract. Now our objective is achieving a manageable workload.

The Mobilization committee meets weekly on Tuesdays at the Federation office at noon. The meeting is about an hour long and, since you've given up your lunch hour to do Union work, we feed you. The only way we will have dignity in the workplace in relation to workload is by following the advice reprinted above and by joining together in implementing that advice so that no one member can be a target for practicing the terms of the contract between Monroe County and the Federation. Remember...we are all party to that contract and its terms.

Make this one resolution you all take to heart.

While I'm at it...I need to resolve to make a better effort at responding to messages by either addressing the issue, forwarding it to the right board member to handle or by putting an out of office message on when I'm on vacation or out of town on Union business. I admit...I'm not always punctual in my responses to calls or emails and need to work on that when I'm in the office.

Also...now that the contract is settled and the number of grievances seems to be reducing, I resolve to be out in the offices more to talk with everyone.

I think that's enough resolutions for this year!