



THE STATE OF THE UNION



NEWSLETTER

HOUSEPARENT EDITION

What's a Steward Do?

"You may bring your Union rep to this meeting."

Those words can make you & your spouse more than a little nervous, and your steward understands. In fact, it's their job to help you through times like these. Chances are, your assigned union steward has sat in on several fact-findings with HLAs and other administrators, and understands the process quite well. He or she has volunteered to serve, both the union and the membership, and is committed to seeing that the process is fair and that any consequences delivered are just.



So what does a steward do exactly? We attend monthly meetings, before the general membership arrives. We speak with our assigned houseparents (usually by HLA group), and meet with them periodically to discuss concerns & possible resolutions. We compile information for this newsletter. We stay positive & encourage others to do the same. We follow strict confidentiality guidelines. And, of course, we attend and take notes for fact-findings with employees and administration.

Some folks express surprise that their steward didn't act like a defense attorney, or argue with the HLA or administrator. Let's be clear: we're houseparents just like you. We observe the process, ask questions as needed, help you make your points while taking diligent notes the entire time, and in general make sure that you're treated fairly throughout the process. If, after reviewing all the facts with your steward, you decide to file a grievance, you have the right to do so, and your steward will continue to assist you. Contact your lead steward (Scott Schuyler - SD, Jen Caugherty - MD, & Tracy Nzambi - ED) if you're not sure who's assigned to your home.



THE CONTRACT


+ As the negotiation team continues to meet with administration to settle on a new contract, many members have raised questions about what exactly our team is proposing. As fruit of pre-negotiation meetings, where all union members were encouraged to give input into priorities, five primary wish list items were identified and are now represented in the proposal that was given to administration. All of these came directly from union members. All those attending the meetings were given a chance to vote on a host of proposed changes. Contact one of your union reps for a list of these five items.

+Remember, our current contract runs through July 31st, and your negotiation team (lead stewards from each division, president, assistant to the president, and secretary, plus reps from local 464 & Michael Katz, AFL-CIO contract negotiation lawyer) are working hard, during off-duty time, to bring you a new contract.

Your VACATION:

- BROUGHT TO YOU THROUGH UNION NEGOTIATIONS -
- PAST -
- PRESENT -
- FUTURE -



 *Next Meeting: Please join us on Tuesday June 11th at 10 am at the Union Hall in Hershey.*

Shadowing / Teaching

Recently, the school has added several new houseparents to the MHS community. We can probably all remember the end of last school year when there were not enough flex houseparents to cover days off. However, there seems to be concern over the school's initiative in hiring "so many" new houseparents and some apparent apprehension caused by misunderstanding. Flex houseparents are a required position for many purposes at MHS. Each of those purposes has a positive impact on the full-time placed houseparent in some capacity. For example, when we take flex days, need emergency medical assistance or take a personal day together, these folks are assigned to take over the daily operations of our student homes with expectations that there will be minimal disruptions. However, we need not forget our role in helping these new flex couples in our role as mentors and coaches. If you review our job description and PAQ, you will find a notation under "professional development" which states that houseparents "assist in the professional development of MHS employees by mentoring and coaching houseparents in training". If we want those folks to do a good job in our homes, we need to engage them in meaningful ways when they come to shadow in our homes and not just treat them as a chauffeur for the students. However, it is a two-way street and new flex couples need to be proactive when entering a home to shadow whether it is the first time or the 101st time because there is always something new to learn about our position. May we continue to work together learning from each other how to best care for the kids of MHS.

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS: If you are called into any meeting with a supervisor and feel unprepared to answer questions concerning your performance, this statement may be given reflecting your right to union representation:

"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my union representative, officer, or steward be present at this meeting."

(1975 U.S. Supreme Court Weingarten decision)

