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2009 Labor Recognition Days

Covington, KY

On September 15, 16 and 17th NTEU Chapter 73 celebrated Labor Recognition Week. It was one of the largest celebration in some time. Vendors there were Fifth Third Bank, US Bank, Bank of Kentucky, Liberty Mutual, AFLAC and NTEU Legislative Committee. Artists Club Radio was there along with NTEU73 Minutes cast as they did a live show that was recorded for broadcast on the web based radio station. Sara Mayhew performed her original music, which was a big hit. Paula Elder and NTEU73 Minutes Ron Cunningham also performed. Ethel and Bobbie Jo provided the comedy and surprised the audience with their version of *Great Balls of Fire*. There was of course hot dogs, brats and metts for all members who were fed by the volunteers. Chapter President Jackie Huff was there on Tuesday greeting the members and serving the food. Also served were chips and either a soft drink or water. NTEU Field Representative Eric Bruce was also on hand and besides cooking the food, he took time out to be interviewed by



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Heather Phillips and Tammy Donaldson co-hostess for NTEU Minutes.

Labor Recognition Week is celebrated each year as we honor and remember the labor movement especially in the Federal sector. It is through the hard work and sacrifices of those who came before us that allows us to enjoy the rights that we have. Each Chapter in NTEU has their own way to honor the movement, Chapter 73 has traditionally held the cookout. *The Force* would like to thank everyone who step forth and volunteered their time to work at this function. Good Job NTEU 73!



Straight From The President's Desk

By Jackie Huff Chapter 73 President

What is extremely resist, changes without notice, and follows you to the bathroom? If you answered management, you may be right, but it wasn't the answer we were looking for. It's MRSA or Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus. This is a highly contagious, potentially life threatening rash, impacting multiple employees, all working in one unit and maybe in more areas but since management is saying they are not aware of this it is difficult to know how widespread this really is at our Campus. Now I am no medical expert. But if you have a highly contagious staph bacteria floating around the service center and at least three people in a small area have it, one could reasonably conclude that at least two of these people caught MRSA at work! NTEU stewards assigned to the Health and safety committee attempted to raise this concern to management coordinating with FOH, but management tried to shut them down. Management representatives demanded that any and all discussion about MRSA cease! Of course my stewards confronted management and refused to remain silent and contacted me with their concerns. Management has tried to arbitrarily eliminate the safety committee! Why does management want to silence us? Probably because they do not want you informed. We do not believe they are following Center for Disease Control (CDC) standards regarding MRSA in a public place. But again it is hard to tell exactly what the Campus is doing about this problem since at our local LMRC meeting and prior to that when talking to Rick Goins they say they are not aware of any problems. Are they ignoring the problem and hoping it will go away? Well I maintain that employees who

contract MRSA should file workman's compensation claims if they feel this was a result of being at work and their doctor agrees. After all NTEU believes that management is fully aware that MRSA is affecting more than one employee and has taken no action to our knowledge! NTEU will not be silent on the issue. Here are some facts as found on the Center for Disease control website:

1. MRSA is a highly contagious drug-resistant bacterium.
2. MRSA usually manifests as a serious skin and soft tissue infection.
3. MRSA can be contracted through
 - a. Close skin-to-skin contact
 - b. Opening in the skin such as cuts and abrasions
 - c. Contaminated items and surfaces such as countertop, athletic equipment, and clothes
 - d. Poor hygiene (although even very clean people can get staph infections such as MRSA.)

So now your probably thinking, "Oh my Gosh, I don't want this stuff!! How Can I avoid it." The answer is simple, as there are many good defenses against MRSA. Here at the office our primary defense is washing our hands. It seems like a no brainer, but proper hand washing is essential. The CDC suggest you have to vigorously wash your hands for fifteen seconds and dry them with a disposable towel. They also suggest that you use another towel to turn the sink off. Another strong preventative is hand sanitizer containing at least 62 percent alcohol. This is just as effective as soap and water. Also it is very important to wash down the area of a

person who has been diagnosed with MRSA to help stop the spreading.

Currently we have three confirmed cases of MRSA on campus. Initially everyone possessing this knowledge was scared, left wandering about the ramifications. Could I get MRSA? Well the answer is yes and no. The CDC suggests that it is not necessary to close a businesses for cleaning unless there is a massive outbreak that otherwise be controlled. The CDC suggest that it is very difficult to catch MRSA from a hard surface. They also state that information sharing regarding contagious bacteria such as MRSA is important.

All NTEU wants management to do is educate employees as we are trying to do in this article as well as other information the union has put out on this issue so employees can take protected measures to avoid getting this. NTEU doesn't want to know who has this or any other decease but we do expect management to notify NTEU when something like this occurs that may impact the employees health and or safety since employees come to the union office to find out what the agency is doing about it.

So why then is the IRS resistant to sharing this information with you and refusing to work with NTEU Chapter 73 to keep the employees safe? Why would they try to shut down a committee designed to work cooperatively to accomplish this task when NTEU voices reached out to protect the members? I can not offer you a satisfactory answer to either of these questions. However I can firmly state that NTEU Chapter 73 stand strong and WILL be the FORCE protecting its members! If you would like to explore MRSA for yourself two good websites for information are www.cdc.gov/ and www.mayoclinic.com.

IRS EMPLOYEES “PLAGUED”

Kelley Loetscher

It is appalling with the overwhelming public announcements for people who are sick with flu like symptoms to STAY HOME; the IRS has not encouraged its employees to follow this mandate. There are so many sick employees coming to work sick because they have no leave, cannot afford to stay home without pay, have been threatened with AWOL even with medical documentation, and/or shown a total lack of respect for its employees’ health and well being. It is easy for many to respond thinking that those without leave have abused it in the past, however, there are many who legitimately have had illnesses, injuries, family emergencies, and surgeries that have used all of their leave. Thus, when the experience symptoms of coughing, sore throat, congestion, etc, they come to work regardless of the warnings of the CDC. WHY? Because there is no policy in place to keep these people at home until they are able to come back to work and not spread the sickness to fellow employees. Yet, these are they very employees that may be more susceptible to experiencing the symptoms:

[H1N1 Flu Information and Prevention Guidelines](#)

Transmission: H1N1 is an influenza

virus that is spread mainly through airborne droplets of the coughs and/or sneezes of someone who is infected. The virus may also be spread by touching an object or surface that has been contaminated and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Symptoms:

- Fever of 100.0 Fahrenheit or greater
- Body aches
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Congestion
- Cough
- Sore throat

Those who are infected with the seasonal flu or H1N1 flu may be contagious to others from 1 day prior to becoming ill to 5 to 7 days after.

Prevention:

- Cover both your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or Sneezing. Discard tissue in trash container immediately.
- Wash hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and water. (especially after coughing and or sneezing) Alcohol based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Keep your hands away from your face. Avoid touching your eyes,

nose, or mouth.

- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- If you experience any flu like symptoms stay at home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. (except for seeking medical care or other necessities) Fever should be gone without the use of fever reducing medications such as Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Motrin (Ibuprofen). Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from spreading the illness.
- Clean areas that are frequently touched by others such as doorknobs, keyboards, telephones, countertops etc. as needed.

H1N1 can survive on surfaces from 2 to 8 hours.

The Health Units are frustrated because of this lack of concern by management not to encourage employees to GO HOME when they are sick-not only for their own health, but for the well being of their fellow employees.

Yet, our own employer, the Federal Government, is not only urging, but IMPLORING employers to have a pandemic plan in place and to keep sick employees at home. At the minimum, that would not allow sick employees to come to work, due to the highly contagious nature of this sickness

The latest announcement asked sick people not to go to the doctor because they are overwhelmed already. Of course, we need a Doctor’s note to return to work after missing more than three days.

Continued on Page 7

NTEU Swapper

!!!Buying, Selling or Trading!!!

Items For Sale, Trade, or FREE. Apartments and Houses for rent or sale along with vehicle sales, trades and anything else you would like to get rid of etc. Place your articles on the www.NTEU73.org for all members to see. Advertisements will be kept on the web site for 30 days. Get on the Web site and see what has already been posted or follow the instructions to place an ad of your own.

NTEU73 Union Office Hours

Fourth Street Office

Monday—Friday 7:30 A.M.—1:00 A.M.
(859) 669-5370

Gateway Center Office Room 511

Monday—Friday 6:00 A.M.—4:00 P.M. & 7:30 P.M.—11:00 P.M.
(859) 669-5700

Industrial Road Retention Center

Monday—Friday 7:00 AM.—3:30 P.M.
(859) 669-5024

Not a Union member?

**Missing out on all the benefits Union membership brings?
Join Today!**

Swing Shift Happenings

Julie Orick was able to get leave letters removed from an entire department of employees folders in EXAM. Julie was able to help establish an RA for an employee in AM and push management to get the needed equipment to accommodate the employee. Julie was also instrumental in thwarting a possible termination for an employee in Sub Proc.

Linda Kelly worked with a team in Sub Proc to relieve a hostile work environment with the manager. Linda also helped an employee with getting the necessary information for an FMLA issue

Marc Beatty was able to get a counsel letter removed from an employee's folder.

Marc is working on 2 Grievances for FMLA issues and 2 adverse actions being imposed on employees.

Nathan Gibbs got AWOL removed from an employee in Exam. He is working on a mass grievance for overtime in Compliance, 2 evaluation grievances, 1 FMLA issue, 1 AWOL issue and 1 hostile work environment issue all cases have a grievance filed for them.

Bill Dreier helped an employee forward his suggestion to national for review.

Bill is working to get a bug free working environment and has an evaluation

he has filed a grievance for.

Brenda Parks was able to get an employee's evaluation request approved. Brenda worked to get an employee LWOP instead of AWOL.

Herman Taylor currently has 6 cases of Discipline proposals or adverse actions he has given oral replies for awaiting management decision.

Jackie Burch helped an employee with understanding the probation period, learning curve and evaluation process including reviews.

Leila Smith is currently working a mass grievance for a better work environment in Sub Proc, 1 dispute over a job selection, 2 evaluation grievances and 1 harassing work environment.

Teri Hampton is currently working 3 evaluation grievances.

Pat Hamilton is currently working on 3 mass grievances; 1 for overtime in AM, 1 for fair and equitable treatment in Sub Proc, 1 for fair & equitable treatment in Exam. Pat is also working to get a QSI for an employee, a grievance to force management to acknowledge a RA for an employee, an FMLA issue where Mgmt did not approve the FMLA as the doctor wrote it. Pat is also grieving a appraisal for an employee in Exam, a harassing work environment in Exam and a grievance for a job selection in Sub Proc.



NTEU Supports Bill Boosting Protections In Long-Term Care Insurance

NTEU is supporting legislation that would boost consumer safeguards and transparency for federal employees who purchase long-term care insurance policies in the future. Introduction of the bill, S. 1177, comes as many enrollees with an Automatic Compound Inflation feature are dealing with the surprising news of a steep increase in monthly premiums. "While there was a disclaimer about premium increases in a brochure, consumers had to hunt for it," President Kelley said in a letter supporting the measure. The letter was sent to Sen. Herb Kohl (D-Wisc.), chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, and committee member Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), sponsors of S. 1177. The legislation would strengthen rate standards so consumers who purchase plans have a better understanding of the coverage and costs in future years.



August Winner Julia Wiley

The Force

"NTEU73's Hard Hitting Newsletter"

President: Jacqueline S. Huff
Vice President: Dwight Cornett
Secretary: Julia Wiley
Treasurer: Cathy Dunhoft

Editor: Heather Phillips
Assistant Editor: Tammy Rackley
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"To Organize Employees to Work Together To Ensure That Every Federal Employee Is Treated With Dignity and Respect."

Passages In Time

Curtis Hill a steward and a friend passed away on August 23, 2009. NTEU Chapter 73 President Jackie Huff issued this statement "One of our fellow stewards Curtis Hill has passed away. Curtis has put many hours in for NTEU helping his fellow co-workers and it truly saddens me to hear this news." Curtis was a fixture on Swing shift. He represented NTEU at official meetings and represented employees with an untiring energy. Curtis has an infectious smile and when one met Curtis he would instantly become your friend. Curtis took his role as an NTEU seriously, even through his illness Curtis would still attend steward training and carry a case load. The passing of Curtis leaves a void in our ranks. He will be truly missed.



CONGRATULATIONS are in order. Tammy Rackley became an Aunt and Lona became a Grandma. Little Carl Thomas was born Aug 30th, weighing 8 lbs 9 oz. Congratulations to both of you.



If you have an item for the Passages in Time please email it to Heather Phillips at Heather.J.Phillips@irs.gov. Please put Passages in the subject line.

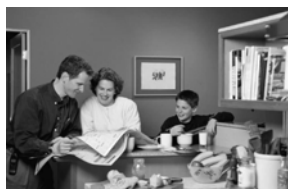
The Force reserves the right to select and or edit the content of items for print.

Writers Wanted

Do you have writing skills?

Do you have information that is newsworthy?

Submit your article to **The Force**. If your article is accepted, we will print it with or without your name attached; your choice. Email your submission to NTEU73mailbox@aol.com or bring it to the Union office. Identify it as "article for The Force" **The Force** reserves the right to edit all articles it prints.



Letters We Like Getting...

From an employee in Accounting

Jackie,

Just wanted to say thanks for all the help you gave me. I am so glad that we have people like you and the other union stewards that know the agreements and will fight for the employee.

THANKS AGAIN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Jackie

Thank you for placing Pat Hamilton in the position of Chief Steward, Swing shift. In April 16 of 2009 I was counseled by Retha Zulager, ACS Support, Collections Operations. The background involved a tax decrease I made.

Because of Statute, the money went to Excess Collection. Retha did not have the case but said "nothing would be done about it" and for me to sign that I have been counseled on this. I immediately sent an email to Mary Tarrance, LMR, to ask to see the case. I sent a follow up email to Mary May 15, 2009 and another email on June 12, 2009. I asked my former manager to ask Retha for a copy of the case. All of these people tell how important employees are, but no one wants to put their selves forward to help an employee understand a problem. I asked Pat Hamilton to help. She had a meeting with Retha. Retha said she told me what I did wrong. There was no case for me to see during the time Retha "told me what I've done wrong." I finally did see the sanitized case on August 13, 2009 as an Acting Department Manager went through the case with me. I'm not satisfied with having a statute but I'm thankful that someone talked to me about it. I believe that if Pat were not involved, I'd still be wondering what I was "counseled" over. Jim Sorrell

A Win For Season Employees In SOI

For four seasonal employees in SOI this fiscal year had a happy ending. These employees were worked for more then twelve months in their position in SOI without benefit of a furlough or detail to another position. A mass grievance was filed by Heather Phillips on their behalf. In her response on September 18, 2009 Operations Manager Sandy Ellison granted the remedy requested. "I found Sandy easy to work with after we met and I pointed out the violation and how it harmed the employee; Sandy worked with me to make this happen" stated Heather Phillips. "It was a win/win situation" continued Ms. Phillips . Originally, seven employees were involved one retired and two declined the conversion as they wished to remain seasonal.

IRS EMPLOYEES "PLAGUED" *continued from page 3*

Of course we are urged to wash our hands, but the soap available in the restroom is hardly a bacteria fighter—that is when soap is available in the restrooms, including sinks with both hot and cold water. We need quality soap along with hot and cold water to be able to wash our hands effectively.

I feel upper management really doesn't appreciate or trust its work force. They believe that employees would take advantage of any urging to stay home. That could and should be an issue addressed individually instead of punishing the entire work force for the few violators.

Join NTEU

Arise Pick Up Your Pallet and Walk

Heather Phillips

Some months are harder than other months to award this prestigious award. This is one of those tough months. It is not because of lack of candidates quite the contrary. There are so many that I can't pare it down to one. It seems that there is a growing number of managers that don't understand Article 34 what was Section 3 now is section 4 and has been expanded. So managers pay attention if you recognize yourself or if others recognize you, then this was written for you. If you expect your employee is misusing their sick leave they are to inquire and seek an explanation. If the employee provides a satisfactory explanation or documentation to explain the use of sick leave that should close the matter, otherwise the employee is to be orally counseled. However, if reasonable grounds still exist for questioning an employee's use of sick leave then the manager may request medical certification failure to provide certification then the manager can issue a leave restriction letter.


Far too often we see managers going from suspecting leave abuse to issuing the leave restriction letter without the steps in between. This is wrong! There is no justification for taking short cuts. Moreover, leave restriction letters are to be based on leave used for alleged sickness not for approved annual leave (unless used in lieu of sick leave) or for approved FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) leave.

At this time of year, managers should be mindful that we are entering into the cold and flu season. Employees may be requesting to use their sick leave. Let us not jump to the wrong conclusions. Employees are getting older and are more susceptible to disease and illness. Some employees have families and colds and flu is passed around like a cheap bottle of wine. Unfortunately, sometimes we get re-infected. The point is that leave restriction letters are for those improperly using their sick leave— not employees who need to use it because they or a family member is sick. In the bible we read about a sick man picking up his pallet and walking, but let us not forget this only occurred after divine intervention.

Only a real horse's butt would compound a problem by jumping to conclusions or taking short cuts through the truth. So if you are a manager and you see yourself in this then this butt is for you.

Chapter 73 proudly presents

September/October Horse's



Award To

Those managers who incorrectly issue leave restriction letters

Labor Recognition Winners

Legislative Drawing — Jerry Bollie

FEEA Drawing —
DeJuana Coleman
Paula Burgess

Wanted

Musician wanted to play organ or piano. Contact 859-581-6553.

Give 'em a break

It is time for the IRS to stop timing the bathroom breaks of employees at agency call sites.

You are entitled to your rights.

NTEU has demanded that IRS management put an end to this ridiculous practice.

Dignity in the workplace.

Respect on the job.

NTEU wants you to have both.



NTEU
The National Treasury Employees Union

www.nteu.org