



Union Protestors Question Patient Safety at Health Care Rally



State Senator Joe Neal (D-NV) speaks out at the union rally on unity amongst the brotherhood and their causes. Photo by Savoy/LVS-Voice

By Nichole Davis, Sentinel-Voice
Members of a local union that represents local medical workers protested in front of an unopened new hospital Tuesday.

Service Employees International Union (S.E.I.U.), local 1107, protested staffing issues at Sunrise Mountain View Hospital.

Union organizers estimate more than 500 people attended.

At the rally, they said patients' lives could be at risk, because there is a shortage of nurses and other skilled health care professionals in the valley.

The opening has forced a reduction in the staff size at Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center, which is also owned by HCA Columbia, said Sunrise staff.

"They're giving us too many patients per nurse and not enough staff staff," said Carol Burk, an registered nurse.

"We can't take care of them sufficiently," said the 14-year veteran. "We need staffing according to how sick the patients are, not the number of patients."

Mary Reffitt, a certified nurse's assistant (CNA) lobbied similar

complaints.

"For too long the patient's care has been governed by CEOs and the bottom line," said Reffitt, a single mother of twin boys.

"I think it's about time health care workers have a voice in patients' care," she said.

"Our primary issue is staffing. Employees feel like we're understaffed but on paper, at least for budgeting purposes, we're overstaffed," Reffitt said. Reffitt said she was most scared that she would lose her certification due to high patient/staff levels. She estimates that she handles 12 to 15 patients in a 12-hour shift, which represents 25 to 30 percent of the caseload of the nurse to whom she's assigned.

"Sometimes CNAs are completely responsible for patients care, excluding medicine and treatments," she said.

A spokesperson for Mountain View, which was being inspected by state licensing officials Tuesday, said she didn't know the purpose of the rally and had only been notified that a protest would happen.

"I don't know what their issue is," said Ann Lynch, a spokesperson for Sunrise Mountain View Hospital and Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center.

"We're not even open yet; so I don't know what issues they could have with us," she said.

Though hospital officials are aware of union organizing, Lynch said union officials have never brought their concerns to the table.

Terry Alaimo, a representative from the S.E.I.U. in Washington, disputes that claim. Alaimo, who came to Las Vegas six months ago from Washington D.C., said the union sent a list of five concerns to Sunrise administrators back in November along with a list of 112 employees who want to unionize.

"They know when they don't have enough staff. They know when they close beds, and they certainly know when they cut everybody's benefits," she said.

S.E.I.U., which represents health care professionals across the nation, has been organizing select groups at Sunrise Hospital Medical Center for more than a year.

Local Program Provides Martial Arts Training to Youngsters



Future black belts from the center work up a sweat during warm up exercises. Photo by Victor Ingram

Special To Sentinel Voice
Tired of traditional ways for youngsters to exert extra energies? Bored with basketball, frustrated with football?

A local program proposes to offer an alternative for youngsters to use both physical and mental prowess and addition to receiving benefits of mental focus and discipline.

The group, spearheaded by a Las Vegas police officer, offers martial arts training for youngsters ages 6-17. Sessions convene daily from 5 p.m. until 9 p.m. at a the Weeks Plaza Housing complex.

Officer Patrick Lawrence directs the training of more than 130 children who have signed up for sessions. Lawrence,

along with the Latino Police Officers Association and support from the Black Police Officers Association, secured funding for the program through a grant.

Lawrence, who has worked with at-risk kids for several years, saw the program as a method to entice children to place their energies into more positive outlets. He'd worked with adolescents for 7 years at Westcare, a local counseling agency.

After observing many youth programs which only scratched the surface of troubled behavior, Lawrence started the Jujitsu Drug Prevention Martial Arts Program.

"I wanted to put a process in place where the same at-risk youths would want to come in," he says, adding the

martial arts act as merely an attraction. Students are required to attend tutoring and maintain adequate progress in school.

Through the martial arts training, students are provided the discipline, focus, and insight to make confident decisions in life as well as protect themselves.

These very same skills are at work everyday as Lawrence, himself a black belt, patrols West Las Vegas daily as a Metro police officer.

"It helps when you're in a volatile and hostile situation without being volatile and hostile," Lawrence says.

Of the 46 students present at the Thursday session, none seemed
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Farrakhan to Appear Before Congress

Special to the Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON—Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan will be called before Congress to explain ties to Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi, congressional sources said Tuesday.

Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y., said Farrakhan had "crossed the line" when he obtained an offer for \$1 billion from Gadhafi. The money would be used to influence upcoming U.S. elections and further Muslim interests in America.

According to published reports, Gadhafi discussed the offer with national papers over the weekend, but Farrakhan has not spoken publicly.

King said that Farrakhan would be asked to testify before the House International Operations and Human Rights Subcommittee and would likely face a subpoena, if he does not comply.

Farrakhan, who is taking a 27-day tour of the African continent, met with South African President Nelson Mandela earlier this week.

Mandela met privately with Farrakhan for 30 minutes in his home Sunday where he lectured Farrakhan on tolerance.

According to published reports, Farrakhan, who has been widely criticized for comments against



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whites, Jews and women, appeared conciliatory after the meeting.

"All of the principles that President Mandela has outlined we agree with totally," Farrakhan said. "Islam is a religion which, if practiced, disallows racism, injustice, tyranny and oppression."

Mandela was under fire from white extremists and members of the white-led National Party, who said that Farrakhan's visit would set back race relations by several years.

Mandela supported his right to talk to Farrakhan, who has also visited Nigerian leader Gen. Sani Abacha during his tour which was sponsored by the Pan African Congress, a black political group.