

Celebrating our Clerical team

Welcome to *PaperWork* – the voice of HEU clerical workers – written by clerical workers for clerical workers.

CLERICAL TEAM APPRECIATION DAY: a great success

On April 23, HEU members celebrated Clerical Team Appreciation Day. Here are a few highlights sent to our Clerical Action Network (clericalworkers@heu.org).

In Victoria, the Royal Jubilee Hospital local handed out 18 dozen cupcakes, spearheaded by their social committee and the IM/IT (VIHA) department, who assembled a crew to deliver the cupcakes to clerical workers throughout their work site. The team included Douglas Jang, Charlotte Donaldson, Ivonne Santizo, Judi Griffin and Michael Sevigny.

The Royal Columbian Hospital local made two Starbucks gift baskets and distributed draw tickets and HEU pins around the hospital. During the local's strike vote, two winning tickets were drawn: Lovelee from Health Records, and unit clerk Reanna from the Renal Unit were the winners.

At Kiwanis Lodge, the local gave Melodie Lagrotta, their only clerical worker, a beautiful bouquet of flowers.



The Kamloops-Thompson local hosted a display table and handed out gourmet cookies, while the St. Paul's local distributed goodie bags to their clerical workers.

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Cupcakes for all! Charlotte Donaldson and Douglas Jang were on the cupcake delivery team at Royal Jubilee Hospital.



Royal Columbian Hospital celebrated with raffle basket draws and HEU pin distribution.



A display table and cookies were on hand at Kamloops-Thompson local!



Kiwanis Lodge celebrated Clerical Team Appreciation Day by giving flowers.

PREPARING FOR RETIREMENT: sooner than later

What exactly does being enrolled in the Municipal Pension Plan (MPP) mean? We'll try to demystify this deduction from your paycheque and have a look into the future together.

Once you've worked one year of full-time hours (this can be accumulated from part-time hours), you are enrolled in the MPP and start building a pension for when you retire. You don't have to remain in health care until you retire, but what you contribute during that time counts toward your years of contributory service. The MPP is based on your "best five" years of income, and your pension is based on the average income in those five years, which do not need to be consecutive.

If you've raised children in between, please let MPP know. If you worked as a casual and become full-time, you can buy back those years. Buying back those years, or months, will increase your total contribution and the amount you'll receive upon retirement. It might be expensive, but it may be worth it. Check with your payroll department or financial planner.

Please be aware that unpaid leave of absence (LOA) days affect your pension. Any hours worked less than 1,950 per year for a full-time employee decreases your contribution amount, and therefore your pension amount. You may notice a different number for your Years of Contribution and Years of Service in your annual MPP entitlement notice.

That notice also tells you how much pension you'll receive, based on if you would stop working that day. However, other information, like bridging and single or married etc., is not necessarily clear.



In order to prepare for retirement down the road, we strongly suggest you go to one of the free MPP seminars near you. You can go as often as you like. Just call the MPP number on the website (pensionsbc.ca), talk to a representative, and they'll let you know when and where the next session will be.

Planning now will ease the transition into retirement later.

AROUND THE BLOCK: passing the torch...

At our last clerical subcommittee meeting, we had an interesting discussion about the value of workers who have been "around the block". The consensus was that older women and men, who have been at the workplace for a substantial amount of time, are by far the best resource for sharing knowledge, mentoring and training. Experienced, or "seasoned", activists are the ones who will be passing the torch along to young workers as more and more HEU veterans retire.



Let's look at the journey of a new worker. In our facilities collective agreement, clerical workers do not have a two-tier wage system. We have equal pay for work of equal value. You get hired by the health authority (or other employer) and get trained in a specific job. This training is not a classroom situation, but rather a hands-on experience with a co-worker who knows the job you are being trained to perform.

Experienced workers not only know the job duties inside and out, but they've also trained many fellow HEU members over the years.



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They know the best ways to share their knowledge, provide tools to deal with any job pressures, and how to safely sail through obstacles you might encounter along the way.

Without this seasoned co-worker – who, generally speaking, is older – you would be up the creek without a paddle, floundering on your own. Yes, you have a collective agreement, a new job, and feel you can look toward the future. But what you lack is the experience to know when the rapids might be coming up and how to deal with unexpected situations. This is where the seasoned co-worker is beneficial.

Here's another situation you might find yourself in. You've been in the job for a while and feel confident that you've received the required training to get the job done. You're off and running. Running, however, has now brought with it a constant pain and you have no idea how to get through the day or what to do next. Your co-worker has seen this before, has been there before, and knows how to direct you to the right people to deal with a situation.



This may include workload, harassment and bullying, physical repetitive strain injuries from inadequately designed work stations – ergonomics, computer eye strain, cramped spaces with poor ventilation, noise pollution, etc.



The seasoned worker will know how to direct you to resources – a shop steward, an OH&S steward, a supervisor who assigns and prioritizes workflow.

There's tremendous value in working with, and learning from, older colleagues. They should not become invisible because they're "close to retirement". They still have a lot to offer, including words of wisdom from being "around the block".

These are the very people on whom the knowledge-base rests; these are the people who managers trust and heavily rely on to keep the workplace running smoothly; these are the people who, by far, are our rock and voice of reason. They don't get excited as easily by unexpected situations because there's not much they haven't already encountered.

Seasoned workers and activists are the people who will guide new workers and will stand up for all HEU members. These are the workers who get the same wage doing the same job as you, the new worker. The big difference is that they'll gladly share their knowledge and do not begrudge that you start where they end. They know that everyone deserves the same treatment, the same opportunity, and they have a healthy dose of solidarity. That's the foundation of trade unionism.

One day, you will be the seasoned worker preparing for retirement, and imagine how awesome it will feel to pass along the torch to the young workers and teaching them what you once were taught.

CAROL KENZIE appreciation

The clerical subcommittee members – past and present – would like to acknowledge the special contribution of Sister Carol Kenzie of the HSSBC/Kelowna local, who recently stepped down as our co-chair to accept a casual staff position at the union.

Carol has been the heart of the clerical subcommittee since its inception in 2006, championing clerical causes not only as an



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HEU member, but also as an elected member of the Provincial Executive.

As a founder of the clerical subcommittee, Carol's vision helped consistently steer the action agenda over the course of five subcommittees, including workload campaigns, health and safety education, clerical benchmark reviews, bargaining, and one of her favourite creations – the clerical mascot "Fredrica".

Carol is an excellent role model and mentor for HEU activists coming up the ranks, and demonstrates determined leadership in moving clerical issues forward.

She is a passionate union activist, focussed, dedicated and tenacious. Even when Carol's own job as a purchasing assistant was impacted by consolidation, she remained a true advocate for the clerical team.

The clerical subcommittee thanks Carol from the bottom of our hearts, and wishes her much success on her new adventure as an HEU servicing representative.



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