Why should you join NPhA?

“Every team needs contributions from all of its players in order to be a champion. The same is true for the NPhA. In order to achieve a strong Union, with goals to achieve the best working conditions while providing excellent patient care, we need the participation of our members. By attending meetings, serving on committees and helping on committees, we can achieve these goals and enhance the profession of Pharmacy. We need our members’ input, ideas and participation.”

Dave Pasiack

SAVE THE DATES

Membership Development Workshop

Please choose one:

November 12
2 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Country Inn Suites
1837 Centre Point Circle, Naperville, 60563
(A few blocks from the NPhA office)

November 19
2 p.m. – 6 p.m.
Willowbrook Holiday Inn
7800 South Kingery Hwy., Willowbrook, IL 60527
(Just off of 155)

Workplace Violence, Workload Balance, Remote Verification, Short Staffing and Work Stress are all issues we want to address in future workshops.

The dates for these workshops are:

(They will be 2 hours long — one in the evening and repeated in the morning to accommodate other shifts.)

December 4 – Evening
December 5 – Morning
January 14 – Evening
January 15 – Morning

The locations will be announced. More information will be sent as the dates get closer.

Let’s Stand Together!

“Individualism is valued in our democracy, but highly over-rated in labor negotiations. We must band together to strengthen the only organization that is working for our interests. It is the only voice loud enough to be heard by our large corporate employer.”

Bob Ransum

“With all their faults, trade unions have done more for humanity than many other organizations of men that ever existed. They have done more for decency, for honesty, for education, for the betterment of the race, for the developing of character in man, than any other association of men.”

Samuel Gompers

The profession of pharmacy has changed so much over the years. So many small independent owner-operated stores have been shut down by the large corporations. Because the business of pharmacy has changed, so has the practice of pharmacy. We are no longer able to practice the way we did 10 years ago and the changes are not going to stop.

Our profession will continue to adapt and change, but we must also do what we need to do to protect our ability to practice safely and in the best interest of our patients, not the corporations.

A great article in the October 23 issue of Drug Topics looks at this very issue. The words of Charles Duhon, R.Ph. clearly state the choices we have when it comes to protecting our practice.

Is pharmacy a profession or a trade?

“How many times have you gone to your doctor and, while addressing your medical concerns, he is also on the phone with your insurance carrier trying to rectify a claim or at the receptionist’s desk trying to collect payment from another patient? Although you probably have not witnessed this in a doctor’s office, it is a common occurrence in community pharmacy.

I’ve been in the retail practice environment for more than 30 years and have realized that at the very heart of our profession lies a cancer that’s been eating away at its core for decades. The cancer is called inadequate staffing and it has caused myriad ills to befall the profession. I’m convinced that one of the primary contributors to the pharmacist shortage today is the disillusionment factor caused by stress brought on by inadequate staffing. I’ve known many R.Ph.’s who, early in their careers, chose to pursue other career paths because of work environment issues. I’ve seen many female R.Ph.’s who are often secondary breadwinners opt out of their profession because of intolerable stress levels due to inadequate staffing.

It should be obvious there is a problem when one of the most profitable drug chains in the nation, which offers high sign-on incentives and salaries that cannot keep pharmacists. The chain is quick to blame the pharmacist shortage. What it, like most retail chains, fails to acknowledge is that the shortage has been created to a great extent by the working conditions behind the counter.

One national chain has added new high-tech innovation to the practice of pharmacy. If you are filling prescriptions fast enough, a green light appears on the computer screen. If you fall behind, a red light appears. Records are kept of the red-light R.Ph.s deemed incompetent because they are too slow. It is amazing to realize that after six years of college taking courses such as biochemistry, pharmacognosy, physiology and physics, your competency level is judged solely based on the number of Rxs you can fill per hour.

When are we going to realize that this is an albatross around the neck of our profession? The sheer fact that several state boards have attempted to address this issue gives it legitimacy.

North Carolina and West Virginia have
Pharmacists around the country are facing many changes in the workplace. New technologies are being introduced in the workplace daily. Large corporations, like Walgreens, are under increased pressure to boost profits. In this climate, all health care professionals need a union to watch out for their interests and the profession of pharmacy. The Health Care Workers Council can help.

United Steelworkers
Health Care Workers Council

Pharmacists are not afraid to speak their mind. Here is copy of a letter to the editor written by a NPhA member, Howard Gerber. Published in the Chicago Sun Times on September 19, 2006.

Let GIs Use Local Pharmacies

With Congress back in Washington, lawmakers will address legislation that will impact more than 152,000 Illinois residents who serve our country as military families, both active duty and retired. At stake is a proposal to raise prescription drug co-pays and steer participants in the Tricare program -- which provides health care services to more than 9 million members of the military, retirees and dependents -- to get their prescription medicines by mail. Congress must choose to support our nation's military families or deny them the right to choose between local pharmacies and mail.

Medicare and Medicaid patients, federal employees and members of Congress all can choose where they get their prescriptions. Why should the people who serve and defend our country be forced to settle for less?

There is no doubt the Department of Defense has a legitimate need to contain the cost of its prescription drug benefit, but mail order is neither the best nor the cheapest solution. There is a better way to cut costs without denying our military families access to their local pharmacy because of expensive co-payments or mandatory mail order.

Most drug manufacturers provide discounts to the Department of Defense for drugs dispensed by military facilities and mail order, but not for prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacies. This discounted federal pricing is at the heart of the argument for steering military families to mail order to save money.

However, if Congress would clarify that the Department of Defense has access to pricing discounts for both retail pharmacy prescriptions and mail-order prescriptions, it would allow the department to meet its budget goals without taking choice away from military beneficiaries. The Department of Defense estimates that pricing discounts for retail prescriptions would save $251 million in 2007.

The federal budget is obviously important here. But military families have expressed a strong preference for the right to visit their local community pharmacy. They value the personal interaction with a knowledgeable pharmacist, welcome their professional advice, and appreciate the convenience of being able to fill a prescription quickly tight in their neighborhood. The professionalism, patience and personal touch of a local community pharmacy simply doesn’t arrive by mail.

Congress must make a choice. It can cut active and retired military families’ drug benefit and drive them to get their medicines through the mail. Or it can clarify that discounts from drug manufacturers are available for Tricare retail prescriptions. Drug manufacturers provide a discount for prescription medications in every other federal program.

Providing them to the Department of Defense for retail prescriptions would ensure that our military men and women continue to have access to their local community pharmacy. America’s soldiers and veterans deserve this choice.

Howard Gerber, Walgreens pharmacist, Loop

Have you done enough . . . continued from page 1

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Howard Gerber, Walgreens pharmacist, Loop

Why did I decide to keep my membership in NPhA?

“I have been a Walgreens pharmacist for 38 years and a union member for 20 years. I spent two years in management, although I joined the union as a condition of my employment. Through the years though I have learned the importance of my membership. The union gives me a voice for change through negotiations and it protects my job against unfair terminations because of the grievance procedures. Working with the staffing review process allows me to correct technician shortages during busy times. Closing the non-24 hour jobs over and over again trying to find a better work environment I knew about the cancer and for years little did I correct it. If you ignore the pain the ailment will consume you. We’ve ignored the pain for too long, and the ailment has begun to consume us.

Ask yourself, What have I done to change what is happening? If your answer is "nothing," then you only have yourself to blame."

Renee Van Duren

What can you do to help protect your profession and the patients you serve? Join the National Pharmacists Association. The NPhA has always been committed to serving the best interest of the Walgreens pharmacists and the best practices of our profession. NPhA has taken steps to help address workload and short staffing issues. Our recent victory in getting management to significantly increase tech hours at a particular store was one example of how we can use the Union contract to ensure change happens.

For more information call 1-800-233-8541.