



Maine PASA Hosts Fourth Annual Conference

Lewiston-Auburn College played host to the 4th annual Maine PASA Conference on June 1st, which was attended by close to 100 direct care workers, direct support professionals and CNAs.

“Attendance was far above past conferences, when the typical showing was around 40 people,” said PASA Executive Director Roy Gedat. “This is a big step forward” in the participation by front-line direct care and support professionals who made up all but a few of those in attendance.

The conference offered entertainment by Maine humorist Tim Sample and four break out sessions designed to empower and support care givers in their work. It closed with employer-recognition awards.

The theme of the conference, “Recognizing You! Direct Care & Direct Support Workers Make the Difference,” recognizes the workers in this field, and reminds them of the value they bring to their clients.

“Its main purpose was to celebrate and promote the direct care worker,” Gedat said. Incoming Board President Joan Donahue, president of Hummingbird Home Care, welcomed conference-goers with an entertaining and powerful internal dialogue about her vision for success.

It wasn't graduation from college with good grades, or even starting her own business that brought her success, it was when she first donned the uniform of a nurse's aide. “I committed my hands to providing care for another



please see Conference, page 4

Sign up for September 18th Advocacy Training. Details inside/space is limited!

Leadership Council Seeks To Grow Chapters

PASA's Leadership Council is working to expand and grow its chapters, now that the lull of summer is almost over. Currently, we have three chapters in the state holding regular meetings: Bangor, Brunswick and Portland.

“This is where we're going to draw some support from other people who are not now active in PASA,” said Denise St. Pierre, Leadership Development Apprentice. In her work, she can go weeks without seeing another direct care worker, “and for me,” she claims, “that's a struggle.”

“Since becoming active in PASA,” she continued, “I've always felt very supported in anything I've tried to do.” More importantly, her involvement has shown her that she can make a difference in making changes in the system. Her greatest hope is that other people will see how they can make a difference, too.

It is in small group settings in one's local community that people can connect, share stories and exchange helpful information.

“We get our ideas from small groups and learn what's going on out there,” she said. When personal stories are shared by direct care workers with legislators and policymakers, the impact can be tremendous.

For more information on chapter meetings, call Denise at 324-8522.

Direct Care Worker Wage & Benefit Study Bill Wins Passage

It's official; on April 19, 2006, Governor John Baldacci signed into law L.D. 1934, “An Act to Improve Retention, Quality and Benefits for Direct Care Health Workers.”

Maine PASA members were active, through phone calls and testimony to educate legislators on the need for the study, which will report back to the Legislature in January. PASA members are also actively participating in monthly study group meetings conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor.

“One great success that we are having now at PASA on this project is getting workers around the table,” said Leadership Development Apprentice Tyson Sky Hall. However, now that the bill is passed, he said “More than ever, there needs to be more workers to come to the table, and other workers who aren't involved with PASA.” The study will examine the costs involved in raising entry-level wages for all the state's 18,000 or so direct care workers to between \$8.50 and \$10 an hour, including proportional increases for more experienced workers. The study will also look at options for extending MaineCare or other health insurance coverage for direct care workers, and will evaluate the need for a direct care worker registry. DHS will issue its report, including any necessary implementing legislation, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature by

please see Bill Wins Passage, page 2



If you have a membership question, need additional information on Maine PASA, or have feedback, e-mail our board members.

We want to hear from our members!

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Our Mission

Maine PASA is an association that promotes professionalism and development for the direct care, direct support and personal assistance workforce to support the highest quality of life for elders and people with disabilities.

Get Involved with Maine PASA

Maine PASA is looking for direct care and support workers who are looking to get involved with their profession. We have many opportunities for personal and professional growth and often can offer stipends and travel reimbursement so workers do not lose pay. Please call, email or write us for further information.

Bill Wins Passage, from page 1

January 1, 2007.

An overlapping bill, L.D. 1991, also won passage this spring. It more narrowly addresses wages for the 1,000 consumer-directed workers who provide assistance to disabled consumers in their homes. For this group of workers who are paid through Mainecare, wages were increased from \$7.71 to \$10 an hour -- the first increase in eight years. Both bills were sponsored by Senate President Beth Edmonds.

CARING FOR THE CARE GIVER

To study the broader wage issue in all settings, DHS will survey direct care workers who have left their employment in long-term care settings to see if they would return to work for a pay increase to \$10 an hour. The agency will also look at the level of interest among older persons for becoming direct care workers. Low pay and lack of benefits have led to staffing shortages and high turnover, both of which affect the quality of care. Most home-care providers cannot afford to offer health insurance under current MaineCare reimbursement rates. With Maine's elderly population predicted to increase 77 percent by 2025, Maine's "care gap" will continue to grow as the populace ages.

REGISTRY IDEA NEEDS CAREFUL REVIEW

While wage and benefit issues certainly are important, Hall is particularly concerned that the voices of direct care workers be heard regarding the proposal for a worker registry. Hall stated,

"There should be a healthy debate about how criminal background checks are done, and why direct care workers are targeted for that and not others. Otherwise, it could be (used) as a way to shift the blame when things go wrong. Instead of serving only as a policing tool to weed out bad workers," Hall continued, "a direct care worker registry could be an excellent way for workers to connect with families and with others who want to use our services. Just what information the registry would contain is open to discussion. The state wants to verify workers' training and see that they've passed some kind of criminal background check," adding that a fingerprinting requirement is also under discussion.

Hall went on to say, "There are some concerns about civil liberties and whether they meet the interests of workers. In the study, our challenge lies in making sure that the worker's voice is heard. Currently participating in the study group are PASA Leadership Council members: Hall, Iya'Negra Lavezzari and Joyce Gagnon.

"I'd like to see the attendance of workers at these meetings continue to grow."

UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting for the L.D. 1934 study bill will be held on August 15th at 1 p.m. at the DHS offices at 442 Civic Center Drive, Augusta. Subsequent meetings: September 12th, October 17th, November 14th and December 12th will be held at the same location from 9:30 a.m. to noon.

The Maine Chapter National MS Society

A non-profit organization dedicated to ending the devastating effects of multiple sclerosis. The Society offers direct services, educational programming, social and recreational programming, and information and referral to people with MS. They also offer free inservices to health-care professionals statewide who work with this population.

More Information

Call: 1-800-FIGHT MS

Web site: www.msmaine.org

Best Friends™ Training

October 21, 2006

9:00 a.m. – noon

Belfast*

Hospice of Waldo County

Educational Center at County General Hospital

118 Northport Ave.

Belfast, ME 04915

Trainers: Jan Halloran

Contact: Connie Woitowicz

Stipends are available for Maine PASA members to participate in a Best Friends™ training.

FMI: Roy Gedat @ 890-0773 or rggedat@exploremaine.com.

***We now have a forum on our website.
Visit www.maine-pasa.org to sign up.***

Grant Renews ‘Our Stories’ Project

The Maine Women’s Fund has awarded Maine PASA a grant of \$7,500 for each of the next two years to continue work on its “Our Stories” oral history project.

The project, begun several years ago, featured extended interviews with direct care support professionals who told in their own words what their experience had been working in the field. Seven profiles, including pictures, were created by Jocelyn Barrett of the Muskie Institute For Public Policy and posted on the Maine PASA website, www.maine-pasa.org <http://www.maine-pasa.org>. The profiles were also printed in past issues of the newsletter.

The profiles give a human voice to important policy issues arising from the direct care worker shortage, and its impact on consumers, providers and workers. They help to illuminate the need for better wages, training, working conditions plus benefits for Maine’s direct care workers. Look for more information in upcoming newsletters about this project.

The Maine Women’s Fund has invested more than \$1.4 million in organizations and initiatives that are working to ensure that women and girls are healthy, safe, secure, and creatively fulfilled. Among other things, the MWF focuses on fostering self esteem, promoting economic security among women, and providing access to quality health information and health care services.

PASA Offers Advocacy Training In September

Every day, direct care and support professionals give loving attention to the needs of their clients. It’s their job, and they know it well. But when it comes to advocating on their own behalf, for better wages or access to affordable healthcare, most workers don’t know what to do.

That’s why Maine PASA is offering a day-long seminar this fall to give direct care workers the tools with which to advocate effectively the changes in the workforce, to legislators, to the public and employers.

The advocacy training was approved by the Maine PASA board in July, and will be held on either September 18th or 19th in Augusta. Tyson Sky Hall, PASA Leadership Council Apprentice, is serving as the lead worker on the project.

Attendance will be limited to between 20 and 30 workers, including members of the Leadership Council and other interested members.

The seminar will include an overview of the key issues PASA has been working on, including the Health Care For Health Care Workers Campaign and the Study Bill to examine raising wages and creating a direct care worker registry. It will also introduce the Walk A Mile In My Shoes event, which is an invitation to

legislators to visit the workplace which will be held after the November elections.

PASA is working with the Maine Women’s Lobby on this training. Laura Lee Raymond, a member of the women’s lobby, will speak at the seminar.

The training will provide delegates the tools with which to effectively advocate changes in the workforce to improve the recruitment and retention of qualified professionals. It is hoped that the training will create a base of informed advocates who will understand both the issues underlying the current worker shortage -- such as wage rates, lack of health care benefits and advanced career opportunities -- and be able to speak about them. The seminar will give advocates the “how-to” tools in sessions to demystify the legislative process and write effective letters to the editor. A tour of the state house will conclude the training, which is being funded by Jane’s Trust and Health Care For Health Care Worker grants.

For more information, call Hall at 233-6213, or PASA Executive Director Roy Gedat at 890-0773.

An application can be found on page 11 of this issue.

Maine PASA invites lawmakers:

Walk A Mile in My Shoes

PASA's leadership council is planning a program to invite legislators to "Walk A Mile in My Shoes" to see the important role that direct care and support professionals have in the lives of consumers.

The event, an outgrowth of the multi-state Health Care for Health Care Workers Campaign, will take place after the November elections. Working in partnership with providers, PASA will invite legislators to meet with consumers and their families, and to spend some time in the direct care and support environment.

The lead person on the project, Development Apprentice Denise St. Pierre, said that Home Care For Maine has already agreed to participate in the event. "We will be asking for permission from the providers. That's a key piece of the puzzle," she said. "My hope is that I can find employers throughout the state who are willing to participate, including nursing homes, assisted living facilities, group homes and home care settings."

Lawmakers are considering whether to raise the minimum wage for direct care workers in all long-term settings, pending results of a study now ongoing by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor. Several PASA members are part of the study committee, and we want direct care workers to have a strong voice in this process.

Denise hopes the legislators who participate will have an opportunity to talk to consumers and their families, as well as to see for themselves the important role played by the direct care workforce in providing long-term care.

For more information, call Denise St. Pierre, Leadership Development Apprentice, at 324-8522, or you can email her at mtman399@adelphia.net.

Part of the Solution: A Conversation With Iya'Negra

When Iya'Negra Lavezzari moved to West Forks, she felt like she was in the middle of the woods, and that was just fine with her. She wanted peace and quiet, time to reflect, to write, and to heal from a troubled world.

She got a job doing staff relief as a CNA in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and home care -- mostly for higher end clients. After a lifetime of political activism working for social justice causes, the 57-year-old mother of three was content to provide loving care to her dementia patients.

"They have these moments of very, very sharp clarity," she said. "Sitting close. Listening intently. In those moments you realize why you do what you do. For me it's a recommitment to reaching deep inside. I think this kind of work gets you in touch with your own humanity, or lack thereof."

At first she wasn't going to get involved with the work of Maine PASA, then she was injured at work. To make matters worse, she had dropped her health insurance a week earlier because she couldn't afford it.



Iya'Negra needed surgery, but was ineligible for any type of medical assistance because she was working. After enduring a series of difficult health problems, she decided to get involved. She went around to health care facilities and businesses in the Jackman area: Greenville, Solon, Rockwood. Meeting people. Talking about PASA. Posting PASA brochures. Recruiting new members. "I meet with a lot more resistance than receptiveness. I'm African-Puerto Rican, and this is an isolated community," she said. "It takes going beyond my comfort zone to talk to some people, but I'm determined to spread the word about PASA, and even more, to connect with other direct care workers. I want to be part of the solution." Iya'Negra says the lack of affordable health care is a coalesce issue that direct care workers can coalesce around.

"There is health care, but if you can't afford it, you don't have access to health care," Iya'Negra said. "To me, it's a social justice concern, and if we don't figure out a solution, we're not going to move ahead as a profession." She currently serves on PASA's Leadership Council. "Maine PASA has done so much more for me than I have done for it. It's a chance for me to give back to my community -- the human

Iya' Negra *continued page 9*

Conference, from page 1

human being during the most intimate of situations. I committed my heart to understanding the life path of every person with whom I have the privilege of working," she said.

Donahue said "It is an honor to be trusted with preserving the dignity of another. I take it very seriously. It is the heart work and commitment to my fellow human beings that determined my success."

Tim Sample brought the audience to its knees with his Maine humor. Conference attendees will likely have a new appreciation for Maine's blue tarp solution to storage going forward. His remarks about the importance of direct care workers in his own life proved particularly eloquent.

A special legislative guest was state Rep. Hannah Pingree, who has been instrumental along with Senate President Beth Edmonds in promoting legislation that would benefit the direct care and support workforce. Pingree oversaw a panel of PASA members who have been leaders in efforts to build the future of quality jobs and quality care.

Leadership Development Apprentice Denise St. Pierre took part in the panel presentation, and found it to be very rewarding. "It was great because it used actual direct care workers to present, to speak from personal experience, and how we got involved," she said.

Ed Latham gave a presentation on caregiver well being, and Stephanie Truman spoke on effective ways to communicate about professional work, without taking it personally. "It was a chance for workers to get a pat on the back, to see that what they do is great," St. Pierre said. "Caregivers need to care for themselves, and we want to help them improve their skills."

Direct Care Worker Coalition Zeros In On Wage Study

The Direct Care Worker Coalition is focusing its efforts on a state study of what is needed to raise the wage floor of direct care workers to between \$8.50 and \$10 an hour.

Some members of the coalition think the best way to raise wages is to raise MaineCare reimbursement rates to providers of long-term care.

There is a core group of people from the coalition involved in the study group, including representatives from Maine PASA, the Maine Health Care Association, the Home Care Alliance, the Maine Association of Community Service Providers and the Maine AFL-CIO.

Coalition Facilitator Lisa Pohlmann said it is gratifying to see that legislators are starting to pay attention to the need for better wages, training and benefits for Maine's direct care workers. The coalition introduced the study legislation which was sponsored by Senate President Beth Edmonds and passed this spring.

"It's difficult to initiate legislation talking about wanting to raise workers' wages without having a figure how much it's going to cost the state," Pohlmann said, explaining the need for the study. "There are members of the coalition, along with Edmonds, who are interested in introducing legislation in the next session to raise MaineCare reimbursement rates to providers," she explained.

Another outcome expected from the study is development of a methodology within state government to track and monitor the wages of direct care workers. "Currently, this doesn't exist, and everything we know about this workforce tells us that this problem is going to get nothing but worse," said Pohlmann who works as the associate director of the Maine Center for Economic Policy. "The state needs to be able to monitor and track direct care wages because three-quarters of the funding for people needing long term

care comes from MaineCare -- and MaineCare levels are decided by the Legislature. Funding for a higher wage floor for direct care workers won't be easy."

"Obviously there is a limited amount of revenue for all the things the state wants to do," Pohlmann continued. "I have to say that these are very challenging times for state government, and it's not an easy time to raise revenue because there's such a strong anti-tax sentiment." But that's why it's so important for the coalition to educate the public that most of their MaineCare dollars support long-term care.

"It's a common misconception that the bulk of Mainecare is provided to poor people," she said. "We're trying to help regular citizens understand that the care of their relatives is funded through the MaineCare program."

More than 25 Maine organizations participate in the coalition, which began four years ago. It joins together workers with providers of all levels of long-term care services and consumers to improve the quality of long-term health care services in Maine. The coalition is also strongly supportive of the ongoing Health Care for Health Care Workers Campaign, a multi-state initiative of the national Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute.

Pohlmann is encouraged by the increased participation of direct care workers in policy development and public awareness efforts. She stated, "The presence of workers being organized either through the union or Maine PASA is starting to bring a voice to the workers. The beauty of PASA is that you all can speak to people locally, in your district. With such a critical need for increased funding for long-term care. It really requires everyone to have a public conversation."

PASA Board Plans Fall Strategic Planning Retreat

Maine PASA's new board chairman, Joan Donahue, thinks this is an exciting time in the life of the four-year-old organization. "Some major growth is happening," she said. "We have captured the attention of state legislators, and we now have the opportunity to prove how we are a very valuable asset, and that direct care workers do make a difference."

To further that aim, and adapt to the changes in the organization, on September 1st the board is planning a half-day retreat to come up with a strategic plan. The retreat will be organized by Tony Scucci, LSMW, who has already met several times with the board. As Donahue said, "The board is learning how to grow, to go from a board that got an organization started, to one that is focused on governance,"

Donahue, a former CNA, nurse, and now owner of Hummingbird Home Care in Warren, took over in June from outgoing president Julie Moulton, one of PASA's founding members. Moulton

stepped down to serve on the Leadership Council.

Rounding out the officers on PASA's Board of Directors is Helen Palmer, vice chair, Sue Levandoski, secretary, and Olga Gross, treasurer.

"Historically," said Moulton, "PASA's board has operated rather loosely, without clearly defining what is board work, and what is committee work."

Since the hiring of Roy Gedat as PASA's executive director, in January 2005, and the formation of the Leadership Council, plus paid apprentices earlier this year, the need to define roles has become clearer.

"Ever since Roy's been on board, things have grown by leaps and bounds," said Moulton. "He just rolled up his sleeves and got to work."

Employer in the Spotlight

Hummingbird Home Care and Coastal Home Health Care

Direct care workers Anne Dill and Melvena Cross are grateful to be working for agencies participating in the state's Employer of Choice Program.

"It's absolutely wonderful," said Dill, who serves on the Employee Advisory Committee at Hummingbird Home Care in Warren. "It's a peer-to-peer relationship with everyone on that committee." Cross, who serves on the EAC at Coastal Home Health Care in Ellsworth, said she really enjoys working on the agency newsletter, which brings together thoughts from both employees and clients. "They're really excited," said Cross of the clients she works with on the newsletter. "It gets them involved, and gives them something to look forward to."

A PROGRAM OF EMPOWERMENT

Employer of Choice is a Direct Service Worker Demonstration Grant now in its third year that is funded by the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Along with Hummingbird and Coastal, other participating agencies are the Home Companions Association of New England

"It is essential for home health care agencies to determine why direct care and aide employees are difficult to recruit and retain ..."

in Saco and Anytime Services for Seniors in Hollis Center. The program seeks to address the challenges faced by agencies in finding and keeping qualified workers. "It is essential for home health care agencies to determine why direct care and aide employees are difficult to recruit and retain," states the project guidelines. "By understanding this, agencies can work to create a workplace where quality direct care staff will choose to stay employed." PASA founder and Board member Elise Scala is the grant's project director.

"Each of these agencies was asked to establish an Employee Advisory Committee, and we asked that their direct care staff be significantly involved in the committee," said Scala, who works for the Muskie School of Public Service, Health Policy Institute, University of Southern Maine.

Dill said her experience on the committee has "promoted a feeling of acceptance, one in which you are not challenged by the barriers of a hierarchical status or position." She maintains that such a committee structure "allowed us as a group to accomplish a lot of things very, very fast." Hummingbird's committee has been focusing on issues of employee wellness, including the challenges of maintaining

professional boundaries in private duty home health care, and promoting life balance.

"In the field of professional care giving, the maintenance of professional boundaries and the professional maintenance of personal boundaries have probably been the most difficult lessons that I have had to learn," said Dill. "It is one that I work on daily."

Cross said Coastal's committee has been focusing on providing training opportunities for workers, as well as retention issues such as affordable insurance and better wages.

"Employer of Choice has helped us with learning how to find out what kind of training is out there and how to get the training," Cross said. "For instance, we didn't even know that Hospice was free or was being offered, and being an Employer of Choice helped show us how to go about it."

Cross said she appreciates learning about training opportunities. "As a caregiver, sometimes you become that part of the family they don't have. I just like to be there for them when people really need someone, to be whatever help I can be." Each of the agencies involved in the grant has a site coordinator who helps in organizing programs related to staff development and staff-led job-related discussions, networking and recognition. The program is part of a grant to demonstrate and evaluate the impact of certain employee programs on the recruitment and retention of direct care workers.

Scala said the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid have agreed to extend funding for the Employer of Choice program to focus specifically on health and wellness. More information about this will be included in the next newsletter.

"PASA continues to grow and develop, and it's especially exciting to see that the members are becoming more involved in defining the activities and the future," Scala said. "Since my early days it was very evident that workers needed to be active participants in some of the committee work on a statewide basis, and now Maine PASA is filling some of those seats."



Elise Scala: the founder and guiding light of Maine PASA.



Maine PASA Recognizes Outstanding Supervisors, Employers

Nominations from employees were the basis for four Supervisor Recognition Awards given at the June 1st Maine PASA conference in recognition of a demonstrated excellence in listening, management style and problem solving. The recipients were Jocelyn Almy, Darlene Chalmers, Sara Coleman and Olga Gross.

Jocelyn Almy, or Jo as she is known, is the administrator at The Stevens Home in Brunswick. Sally Thibeault, her nominator, said Jo always makes sure that her staff puts their family needs first. She goes out of her way to make sure the staff feel supported, and writes personal thank yous on sticky notes, complete with a smiley face.

Sara Coleman has been a health care nurse at the Jackman Region Health Center in Jackman for over 25 years. "She does a wonderful job," wrote nominator Leona Grant. "She is very well liked by all." PASA Leadership Council member Iya'Negra Lavezzari said one can go just about anywhere in the Jackman area and "just say her name, they love her. She is seen in a very, very good light in this community." She added that Coleman "was tickled pink" to receive the award.

Darlene Chalmers is administrator of the Senior Health Center in Brunswick. "She is truly a leader in this health care field," wrote nominator Helen Palmer. "Her professional and personal relationship with the whole staff, from housekeeping to administration, maintains a consistency of equality. She will and can get on the floor to work, as well as attend any and all meetings and functions throughout the facility in the Mid-Coast Organization."

Olga Gross is the executive director of Sandy River Home Resources in Portland. "She brings to the workplace a positive attitude to employees and co-workers," wrote nominator Susan Tucker. "Her experience as a PCA/CNA allows other co-workers to feel comfortable around her because of the creative ideas she has." Tucker said Gross's communication skills with the public have been "very positive" and led the clients of the agency to recommend Sandy River as an Employer of Choice under the Northern New England LEADS Institute grant. "She fixes problems in seconds. She is a very, very nice lady and certainly deserves the honor."

Employer Recognition Awards

Two statewide organizations were also nominated by employees for recognition at the conference. Speaking Up For Us and Home Care for Maine both received Employer Recognition Awards for their demonstrated excellence in the areas of communication, staff interaction, community-building and worker support.

Home Care For Maine was honored as an Outstanding Workplace for its longstanding strong support of its employees. Headquartered in Farmingdale, the agency has close to 400 employees and serves nearly 2,000 people a month with personal and homemaking services.

"I have been associated with several agencies and individuals in the 13 or so years that I have been a direct care worker, and Home Care is head and shoulders above any of the others," said Mike Jones of Bangor. "Regardless of budget constraints, the agency staff members are always looking for, and coming up with, little "perks" for the employees. The staff, from the CEO right down to the telephone receptionist, will thank an employee for all that they do for the agency and the consumers." Jones said "The office staff makes a noticeable effort to communicate with the frontline workers, whether it is a policy change or some newsworthy item. Telephone calls going out, or when an employee calls in about something, these items to be passed on are made a priority item to relay to the workers.

Speaking Up For Us, a statewide self-advocacy coalition, helps people know and speak up for their rights, and teaches support staff and families about self-advocacy. Formed in 1993, members of the organization hold statewide meetings, conferences and other gatherings, and speak before the state Legislature on important issues. "SUFU allows people to live a good life, with adequate support," said one of the coalition's three state advisors, Julie Moulton. The trained volunteers within its network of 20 local groups help to "teach people their rights, teach them speaking skills, and how to foster community inclusion."



Sun Journal editorial sparks reaction from PASA members

PASA members were quick to respond when a June 24th Sun Journal editorial criticized the governor's support of efforts to set a \$10 minimum wage for personal care workers.

Denise St. Pierre, Joyce Gagnon and Lisa Pohlmann all wrote letters to the editor to rebut the editorial's premise that the state should stay out of the wage-setting business.

It's just the kind of action -- a simple letter to the editor -- that members of PASA's leadership council would like more of its members to become involved with," said Leadership Development Apprentice Denise St. Pierre.

"This is a form of advocacy," she said. "It's an example of what people can do to help the cause of direct care workers and those who need their services."

The editorial said Governor John Baldacci and the state "should simply get out of the way" of the free market system, which "isn't perfect, but it is the best way we've seen yet for allocating scarce resources."

Pohlmann responded by saying the editorial "does not understand that long-term care is largely not a free market industry." Because so many Mainers cannot afford private pay, three quarters of long-term care is provided through the MaineCare program," she explained. And many middle-income families "will also need this safety net because they will spend down their assets and eventually require public assistance." Pohlmann also pointed out that unlike private businesses, long-term care providers cannot simply opt to increase wages in response to a shortage of workers "because the service is primarily paid with public funding controlled by state policymakers."

Gagnon wrote that she works under the Consumer Directed

Program, where the Legislature sets the wage. Under LD 1991, the wage went from \$7.71 an hour to \$9 an hour on July 1st, and to \$10 an hour in January if matched by federal funds. Under LD 1934, the study bill, there would be two wage floors, \$8.50 and \$10. "The pay raises initiated by the above bills . . . are designed to be investments in our long-term infrastructure," she said. She pointed out that many service jobs pay a lot more, "and if we don't pay our direct support professionals appropriately, we will not have qualified caring people to provide the essential services our growing population of elderly need." St. Pierre took issue with the editorial's reference to direct care workers as "a category of workers loosely termed 'personal care assistants.' I challenge the Sun Journal to get informed, take a moment and do a little research into the problems and challenges of direct care workers. Instead of making uninformed statements, why not meet with direct care workers, consumers, and their family members, and learn about the difference we make in their lives."

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Let Your Voice Be Heard

Writing letters to the editor and calling your legislator are two powerful ways to let your voice be heard on issues of importance to the direct care workforce and those we serve. Letters should be brief and concise, and include complete contact information. PASA's Leadership Council is encouraging members to become involved, offering support and assistance if needed. For more information, contact Denise St. Pierre at 324-8522.

And One More

A piece ran in the July 4th Portland Press Herald by Joan Donahue, the new president of PASA's Board of Directors. In it she used the recent case of a caregiver suspected of the murder of an elderly woman in Southwest Harbor to stress "the importance of education of the public, our legislators and our elders about caregivers." She urged the public not to hire untrained, unprofessional people as "caregivers, but to verify previous employment history, speak to character references and request copies of training certificates. "We wouldn't hire

anybody off the street to fix a leaking roof, invest our money, represent us in court or even install our cable TV," Donahue wrote.

"We must educate our citizens on how to hire and supervise a professional caregiver, or what criteria to use when selecting a personal care agency to provide such vital services. We must not trust unprofessional, untrained people to provide professional care-giving services for our most precious and vulnerable citizens."

Finger Print Direct Care Workers?

Last year's legislation included a resolve to study long-term care, direct care workers, and a part of the resolve is to evaluate the need for a registry. A committee is currently meeting to look at cost and outcomes for a registry for direct care workers. This registry would not be an option, but mandatory if you wish to be employed in the field.

One of the proposals would include fingerprinting not just CNAs, but direct care workers also. The committee needs to hear from workers, how do you feel about a mandatory registry and fingerprinting? Please go to the PASA website, www.maine-pasa.org and take part in the survey so we can provide input to the committee.

PASA Seeks Help From Membership On HCHCW Campaign

PASA's Leadership Council is seeking to identify who among its 700-plus members does not have health insurance, and asking them to call the helpline at Consumers For Affordable Health Care.

The information that is gathered will be used for research purposes in the state's Health Care For Health Care Workers Campaign, an initiative of the national Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute.

Calling the toll-free statewide helpline will also give workers valuable information about health care options they weren't aware they qualified for, such as the Dirigo Choice option launched in January 2005, aimed at small businesses and low-income workers.

"We're trying to get statistics about non-covered workers, what their options are, and what they choose to do," said Leadership Development Apprentice Tyson Sky Hall. Many people aren't aware, for example, that in a pinch, if they qualify, they can receive free care from hospitals, which are required by law to provide a certain percentage of free care.

In May, PASA became involved in Health Care For Health Care Workers, a three-state campaign in Maine, Michigan and Pennsylvania. For several years now, members have been encouraged to tell their stories about how important health insurance is for caregivers.

Denise St. Pierre, PASA's other Leadership Development Apprentice, said it's important to provide hard data about the lack of insurance among workers so that employers and policy makers can work to correct the problem.

"If you are an uninsured worker or know someone who is, please call the number," said Denise. The web site is loaded with helpful information, as well, as is the Healthcare For

Healthcare Workers web site, www.hchcw.org <<http://www.hchcw.org>>. A recent PHI report showed that direct care workers and providers lack credible, accurate information about the Dirigo-Choice product and its costs. Yet for some agencies, it is a viable option, as PASA Board President Joan Donahue, president of Hummingbird Home Care, can attest. She looked into it and was delighted to find that the health coverage was an affordable option for herself, her son and two of her employees. "We've got to get ahead of it because we're going to get slammed soon" as the number of elderly in the state continues to grow.

Consumers For Affordable Healthcare Helpline:
toll-free number: 1-800-965-7476
website: www.maine-cahc.org

Older people in Maine over the age of 65 are expected to increase by 77% between 2000 and 2005. At the same time, the demographic of people who have

traditionally cared for them – women aged 24 to 54 – is not growing fast enough to fill the number of jobs that will be required to provide services for this aging population of people.

"As the number of elderly citizens increases in Maine, we need to ensure we have enough quality workers to provide the types of support services which allow them to stay in their own homes

longer," said Roy Gedat, Maine PASA Executive Director. "An industry-wide lack of the benefit of health insurance poses a significant barrier to recruiting talented, caring people to this profession."

Maine's Democratic Governor John Baldacci signed the Dirigo Health Plan into law three years ago. "As of this past June," he said, "the plan was providing health care to more than 15,400 Mainers, including 2,300 small businesses, and had saved the state \$78 million in two years."

Donahue is serving on a Blue Ribbon Commission that will be assessing the long-term viability of the Dirigo Health Plan.

Iya' Negra from page 4

community.

She wants more than anything to let other direct care workers know that they can make a difference by attending meetings at which the future of long-term care is being discussed by policymakers.

"We shouldn't be intimidated because we don't have the technical expertise or we don't have the academic credentials." When the Direct Care Worker Coalition first began four years ago, there were very few direct care workers involved.

"People can be intimidated by the use of language," and some providers and policymakers have been known to use that to their advantage," she said. "But as more direct care workers are willing to take a place at the table, it's like saying to everyone, 'We're coming, and we're going to stay, so get over it.'"

Iya-Negra is planning to broaden her outreach efforts soon by holding a Cookout For Caregivers in her region. For more information, call 1-646-312-0175.

"It's important that we have a voice, a network, and to professionalize the work that we do," she concluded. "Maine PASA offers a way to workers to balance the playing field politically, and to come together around a common vision."

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Creative Corner

Supervision

I'm talking to Charlie about Nathan
wandering around the building
anywhere he pleases.
Charlie gets all concerned and says,
Yeah, we got to nip it in the butt.

They all want Nathan to be a greeter
at Walmart, same as they say
about every guy who's friendly
and retarded, and I'm thinking,
what are they going to do
with the old guys they already have,
but keep my mouth shut.

Instead, I point out to Charlie
he's got the phrase wrong,
but he's back to nipping it in the butt
two minutes later, anyway.

We both know Nathan isn't going to sit
still because of his head injury,
and when he does wander
he's so damn charming
with his, You drive me to drink – coke,
and I'm getting my gall bladder out again,
that it's usually not a problem,
except for the staff who say,
How come he's allowed to get away with that?

Truth is we'd rather see Nathan coming
than them any day, and I'm wondering
why we wanted to change things
in the first place.

By: David Moreau

*From: You Can Still Go to Hell and Other Truths
About Being a Helping Professional*

Maine PASA is delighted to accept poems and other creative expressions to include in our newsletter.
Please send items to Roy Gedat, Newsletter Editor, at rggedat@exploremaine.com for inclusion.

KVO Plans Round Table Discussions on Direct Care Worker Shortage

Maine PASA members are invited to help facilitate a series of Round Table Discussions this fall in Kennebec Valley about the growing crisis in long-term care.

A facilitator's training to be held on Aug. 23rd in Waterville for people interested in helping to host, facilitate or co-facilitate a meeting was announced by Tyson Sky Hall, PASA Leadership Development Apprentice.

The round table discussions, to be held in various local communities in late September and October, will be sponsored by the Kennebec Valley Organization, which last year played a role in raising Maine's minimum wage. The KVO is an organization of congregations, associations, community groups and unions from Gardiner to Skowhegan that brings people together to build relationships, develop leadership, and take action together on issues of shared concern.

A draft flyer for the round table discussion points out that between 2005 and 2030, the population in Maine, aged 65 and older, will increase by 94%. And women aged 25 to 44 will decrease by 10%. It asks the question: "Who will take care of you?"

Dan Koehler of the KVO is coordinating the facilitator training to be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Aug. 23rd at St. Francis de Sales Parish Hall, 52 Elm St., Waterville. To sign up or for more information, anyone interested can contact him at 873-5844 or email dankoehler@hotmail.com.

As Koehler said, "Maine PASA members will be most welcome to participate in these forums in any way, including as facilitators."

Advocacy Training



Advocacy Training

September 18, 2006

9 AM - 4 PM

University of Maine at Augusta
46 University Drive • Augusta, ME 04330-9410

FMI: Contact Sky Hall at
sky.maine-pasa@yahoo.com or 800.268.6612

Only 25 Seats...
Reserve Early!

Effect Change Before Change Affects
You, Your Colleagues & the People You Serve

Keynote Speaker

Lauralee Raymond
Maine Women's Lobby

Maine PASA is hosting a training seminar designed to give you the tools to create positive change in your workplace, in your community and in your legislature.

We will teach you how to effectively communicate with your elected officials, how to write letters to your local editors and how to pick up the phone and have a friendly conversation with your legislative representatives about issues important to you, your colleagues and your clients.

Don't miss out on this important advocacy training program. There is no charge for this training seminar, but seats are limited so reserve early!

Yes! I want to be a part of change!

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Directions to UMA

If coming from the south on I-95, take exit 112A. At the "Yield" sign at the bottom of the exit ramp proceed to the right onto Belgrade Road. Turn right at either the first light (University Drive) or the second light (Community Drive) to enter the Augusta Campus.

If coming from the north on I-95, take exit 112. Turn left at the lights at the bottom of the exit ramp onto Belgrade Road. Turn right at either the first light (University Drive) or the second light (Community Drive) to enter the Augusta Campus.



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In This Issue:

- Register Now: Leadership Advocacy Training for Direct Care Workers
- Stipends for members. Call Roy to inquire.
- Leadership Council Activities.
- Direct Care workers and the Legislature

Maine PASA is here for you!

Coming soon:

- More opportunities for members.
- Walk A Mile In My Shoes Event