

OPINION

PASADENA STAR-NEWS

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YOUR VIEW

by-product of the first) for reasons that they leave the bedside. Money only serves as a temporary salve to the underlying problem. Additionally, bonuses usually only apply to the new hire, leaving the "older" staff feeling as though their years of service and commitment to the hospital have little value.

The only thing that has any long-term benefit to ameliorating our nursing shortage is if hospitals hire, support and retain strong, competent nursing management. Because where there is strong, competent nursing management, you are likely to find a stable and usually full complement of nurses.

When there is a strong, competent nursing management, you have nurses who feel supported through the good times and through the bad times. A good example of poor nursing leadership is even reported in your article, since not a single recruiter interviewed in your article was identified as a RN. And though they may be excellent recruiters, a hospital committed to nursing excellence should consider having at least

one RN with substantial bedside experience as a recruiter.

I also found it interesting that your paper focused on our nursing shortage (which of course is a real issue), when in 2004 your editorial board sat down with a representative of the California Nurses Association who declared the nursing shortage over thanks to the "safe nurse/patient ratio" law that they had lobbied so hard for and that our shortage had also been "manufactured." It would appear that this law has done little to increase the nurse per capita rate. Our state, according to your reporting, still ranks dead last and has had the added bonus of financially destabilizing many of our hospitals.

Geneviève M. Clavreul, RN
PASADENA

Shortages still real

Re "Hospitals use bonuses, perks to lure nurses":

Though bonuses and perks being used to lure nurses may seem an innovative way to add to one's nursing staff, in the long run it is not the answer nor the cure to our state or national nursing shortage.

Why? Because time and time again, nurses usually cite poor management and working conditions (which of course is a

Hospitals use bonuses, perks to lure nurses

-Fa/11/n

By Elise Kleeman
Staff Writer

PASADENA — Free seminars, raffle prizes, free dinners and theater tickets — when it comes to luring nurses in the midst of a national nursing shortage, it's all fair game.

Today and Friday, for instance, Huntington Hospital in Pasadena is hosting a behind-the-scenes tour of its new wing for an expected 300-plus potential nursing candidates. Attendees will get to see the sparkling new cafeteria, break rooms and patient rooms where they could soon be working.

To sweeten the pot, the recruitment event will include give-aways, a free continuing-education seminar, and a raffle prize for "a weekend of Pasadena elegance" that includes a stay at the Ritz Carlton, dinner and tickets to the Pasadena Playhouse.

"Because the market's so competitive, we're always trying to distinguish ourselves," said Myra Aldana, employment services manager for the Huntington Hospital.

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NURSES Hospitals offer perks, bonuses

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As hospitals everywhere struggle to fill out their staffs in the midst of a nursing shortage, administrators increasingly are resorting to a wide range of techniques to attract new nurses and retain the ones they have.

In California, which congressional reports have ranked last among all states in nurses-per-capita ratio, the race to snatch up nurses fresh out of school or steal away more experienced staffers can be intense.

Some institutions are promising signing bonuses of up to \$10,000.

"We don't do too many sign-on bonuses, but will we? Yeah, eventually we will have to," said Gayle Kerfoot, nursing recruitment and retention manager at City of Hope in Duarte.

For now, Kerfoot said, City of Hope's reputation for top-notch cancer care has allowed translated

into recruiting success.

In three or four years, however, as the demand for nurses continues to rise and City of Hope's staff ages, she predicted more difficulty finding the necessary nursing staff.

"Sixty-something percent" of City of Hope staff are between the ages of 40 and 60, Kerfoot said.

To retain the nurses City of Hope now has, the cancer center offers perks, including pet insurance and ride-sharing — and bonuses of up to \$7,000 for employees who refer new hires to work in the most sought-after specialties.

"It's probably the most effective employee recruitment tool that we have," Kerfoot said.

At Methodist Hospital in Arcadia, the bounty for a new hire is \$5,000.

"In the past — 10 years ago — we were doing a lot of sign-on bonuses, that was the current trend," said Marcy Hudson, director of human resources. "But sign-on bonuses do not make your staff happy."

Methodist Hospital, like many others, is also working to strengthen ties with area nursing

programs, colleges and even high schools that could become pipelines for new nurse recruits. But even those methods might not be enough.

"I think what's going to be tough about it is there just are not

enough nursing schools out there to fill the demand," Kerfoot said. "And it's not just nursing schools — it's all health care."

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