

# what's happening

Maine Medical Center  
Portland, Maine 04102

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## Staffing shortfalls are hospital-wide

Nearly everywhere you look, it's the same story: overtime is running well above budget, supervisors are performing line tasks, and services are being curtailed. The service and clinical support areas of Maine Medical Center are suffering from the same labor shortfall that has gripped the entire southern Maine region.

The unemployment rate in Greater Portland is about 2%, down almost a full percentage point from a year ago. The impact is evident in every industry in the area, from fast food chains to high tech manufacturing. Some companies are going to extraordinary lengths: importing workers from as far away as Alabama, renting hotel rooms for seasonal workers, paying bonuses, and at least temporarily, raising salaries.

The labor shortage is having a severe impact on Maine Medical Center and other hospitals, where the challenge of keeping vital support services at a functioning level has become an all-consuming task. Hospitals must cope not only with the shortage of help, but with the financial constraints imposed by being part of a regulated industry.

There are few options when it comes to support services in a hospital setting: they *must* be available. Regardless of the staffing situation, the needs of MMC's 500-plus inpatients and hundreds of Emergency Department and ambulatory patients absolutely *must* be met daily. Even if departments are

short-staffed, the floors get dirty and wastebaskets fill up, blood gas tests and x-rays have to be performed, 11,000 pounds of dirty linen arrives in the laundry every day, electrocardiograms and lab tests must be done, and patients and employees have to eat.

How serious is the problem? Overtime in Pulmonary Medicine is more than double its projected amount. Food Services is short 20 full and part-time people, and is running 250-300 overtime hours each week even before vacation season starts. Housekeeping is down 15 full-time equivalent employees. In Cardiology, four of five ECG

Tech positions for treadmill tests were vacant at one time.

These are only a few examples; nearly every professional/technical department and support department is experiencing some degree of staffing shortfall.

The first response to shortfalls is increased overtime and more work for each individual. As Linen Services Manager Phil Larson reports, his people "end up doing their own jobs and part of someone else's, moving around to areas of highest priority." Housekeeping Services Director Dan

**SHORTAGE**, Page 3



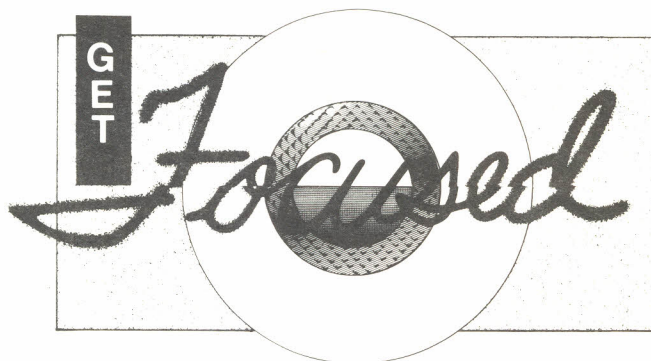
**THE FRIENDS** of Maine Medical Center recently awarded \$300 scholarships to MMC students, (from left to right) Catherine McIntire, School of Surgical Technology; Lynn Falk, School of Cardiovascular Technology; Matthew LeProhon, School of Radiation Therapy; and Dianne Roy, School of Radiation Therapy, not shown. Each year a scholarship fund is established from the interest on the Friend's membership dues, to help students with financial needs. (A/V Photo)

There will be no  
**What's Happening**  
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due to vacation schedules



## Enter the MMC Employee Photo Contest!

Prizes in  
each category:



1st prize - \$50.00

2nd prize - Dinner for two at Snow Squall

3rd prize - Godiva Chocolates

People's Choice Award - MMC mug and MMC visor

The deadline for entries is Friday, July 22, and winners will be announced Wednesday, August 10. For contest rules and entry blanks stop by the Public Information Office.

## More Marketplace

**FOR SALE:** North Deering, 3 BR 1½ bath ranch. Family room with wood stove. Asking \$115,000. Call 797-9054 after 5 PM.

**FOR SALE:** Immaculate, very private location, most everything is new. Garage and family room with Franklin. Asking \$119,000. Call 797-9126 evenings.

**ROOMMATE WANTED:** M/F to share 3rd floor apartment in lovely old brick home in West End area, 5 minutes walk from MMC. Part of apartment is large bedroom with private bath. Rent is \$500 per month, includes heat and electric; your half is \$250. Call 772-5193 after 6 PM.

**FOR RENT:** Nice small, sunny 2 BR apartment, 3 miles from MMC, near ocean, parking. \$450/mo. heated, security and references. Call 767-4038.

**FOR RENT:** 2 BR apartment, 2 blocks from MMC, cathedral ceiling, skylight, 1.5 baths, fenced yard. \$650/mo. Call 775-3162.

**FOR SALE:** Nice 2 unit apartment house in Portland, East Deering area, near ocean, excellent condition, nice yard, new roof, siding and oil heat, \$124,000. Call 767-4038, leave message.

**WANTED:** Moving, must sell furniture, appliances, kitchenware, clothes, everything. Please call 767-4252, leave message.

**CHILDCARE:** Certified nurses aid (mother of 1), will care for children 0 to 24 months in North Deering area home. Excellent neighborhood, lots of TLC. Call 797-2896.

**FOR SALE:** 1986 Jeep Cherokee Chief. Automatic, A/C, 4 WD, excellent condition. Call 839-8149 after 6 PM.

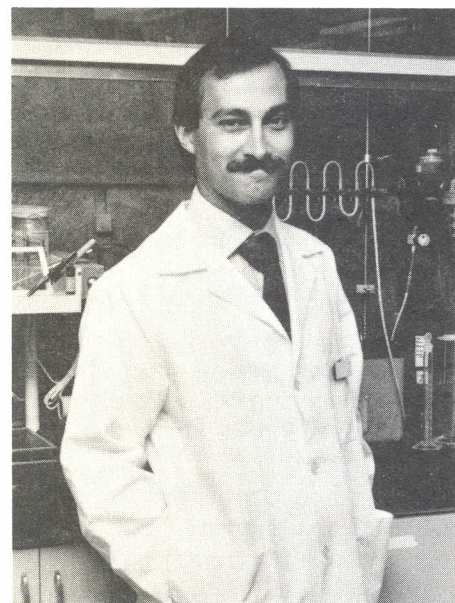
**ROOMMATE WANTED:** Single professional female seeks same to share a sunny apartment located on West Street. Heat included, off-street parking. Please call 774-3695 evenings.

**FOR SALE:** Oceanfront condo, 1 BR, garage, low taxes, low condo fees, Panoramic views, \$115,000. Call 934-1177 evenings.

**WANTED:** Residential or commercial cleaning accounts. Services performed by professional with ten years experience and excellent references. Estimates given. Please call 767-4460, leave message.

**FOR SALE:** 25' sailboat, 1985 MacGregor, retracting keel, sleeps six, trailer, accessories included. Excellent condition, used in fresh water only. \$8,500. Call 767-4634 after 6 PM.

**FOR SALE:** 13.9 cu.ft. refrigerator, 2 years old. Almond color, requires defrosting. Excellent condition. Great for apartment or cottage. Asking \$200. Call 282-1925.



Paul Maniscalco, MT, has been named Assistant Laboratory Coordinator, for the Central Processing section of Pathology. Maniscalco will assist the Supervisor, as well as establish a liaison between the Department of Pathology and the nursing units.

Maniscalco most recently specialized in Toxicology in the Chemistry Section. He is a graduate of York College in Jamaica, New York, and has been employed at Maine Medical Center since 1977.



## SHORTAGE, From page one

Nein says some services have been curtailed and some employees have been given expanded areas of responsibility. "Lots of overtime" is how Materials Management Director Tom Guare describes how his departments are coping.

Supervisors throughout the hospital are taking on more and more line work. Whenever necessary, supervisors in Pulmonary Medicine work 12-14 hour days, supervisors in Food Services assemble salads and plate trays, and Housekeeping supervisors work alongside their employees.

When extra hours and teamwork still aren't enough, decisions must be made to reduce services. Ranking priorities is always difficult, except for one: patient related services must come first.

Not that reducing services is easy or enjoyable. As Food Services Director Mary Keysor, RD, says, "When you're in the service business, you want to *increase* services, not reduce them. I'd love to install the larger salad bar we're having built, but I don't have enough people to cut up the vegetables. I'd like to keep the courtyard grill open, but we've had to close it for lack of staff."

Likewise, Dan Nein would love to have his Housekeeping staff clean everything every day, but without the people it can't be done. "Patient rooms come first, along with bathrooms. Then come the most visible other areas." Decisions to vacuum certain areas every week instead of every other day, for example, have helped stretch the available staff.

Another way of coping with the shortfall is less tangible, and ultimately the most important. As people must work harder to do the same tasks with less help, as response times to requests get longer, as services are curtailed in some areas, the understanding of those in other areas becomes crucial.

Mary Keysor, for instance, says that when the nurses requesting late meal trays for patients understand that the limited staff is going as fast as it can, it helps. Dan Nein says in those areas where the unit helpers pitch in and where office workers understand the less frequent vacuuming, his people are better able to cope. "You come to realize," he says "that it's the team effort, not just in our department but

everywhere, that will get us through."

The hospital has stepped up recruiting efforts, and turned to creative ways to keep staffing levels up. Open houses for service workers have attracted in some new employees, and recruiting for professional/technical positions has become more aggressive throughout New England. Some departments are making greater use of students; a new cooperative effort between MMC's Food Services Department and the Southern Maine Vocational Technical Institute, for instance, will bring Culinary Arts students to MMC for their benefit and the hospital's.

The more fundamental issue of competing with the pay scales offered by area businesses will be more difficult to solve. Unlike a fast-food restaurant or manufacturer, MMC can't simply "buy" its way into the marketplace. State regulation of hospital revenues places a limit on how much the hospital can increase its salary levels.

State regulations allow the Maine Health Care Finance Commission to consider out of cycle adjustments in a hospital's revenue cap for salary hikes for "health care professionals," but not for support staff. MMC Executive Vice President Don McDowell points to this as "just one more example of how little the current hospital regulation system has to do with the reality of trying to run a hospital. Whoever wrote the regulations didn't stop to think that support staff are a critical part of the hospital operation - we can't do without them."

Despite the regulatory problems, McDowell says that MMC will be looking for ways to adjust its salary structure for the new fiscal year that begins October 1. "We must use the resources available to achieve a more competitive salary for our support staff and that is our goal for the next fiscal year."

## Thanks

To Women's Board members, co-workers and friends. I wish to express my most sincere thanks for your many cards, letters, gifts, flowers and visits during my recent stay in the hospital. Your kindness at this time meant so much and will never be forgotten.

Sincerely,  
Lillian Goupil

## Clerical training courses offered

Registration for MMC's new clerical training program is from July 5 through July 18. The courses, Keyboarding I (typing) and Business English, will be filled on a first-come first-served basis. Courses will take place on Monday and Wednesday evenings at Southern Maine Vocational Technical Institute, August 15 - December 14. The courses have been developed specifically for MMC employees who might want to consider a transition into clerical positions in the future.

To register, or for more information, please call the Office of Training and Development between 8 AM - 4:30 PM at extension 2824.



*Please remember to lower your voice when discussing information in patient care areas when there are others not involved with the patient within listening range.*

## Thanks

To the many people who cared for Donald Simpson -

My family wishes to express our thanks and respect for all the care, love, and support Don received. The nurses of SCU and the Physicians gave us much comfort and made a sad situation easier to cope with. Isla Estrabrooke and Kathleen Bennett deserve special thanks for being with all of us when we needed someone the most. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours,  
The Simpson and Egan families.



# Marketplace

**CHILDCARE:** Mother with lots of TLC will babysit full or part time. Approximately 3 miles from MMC. Call 799-0991.

**FOR SALE:** Moving Sale. Sunday, 7/10/88, 9 AM - 2 PM, 98 Frost Hill Road, Portland, (off of Summit Street).

**FOR RENT:** 3 BR Ranch minutes from MMC, 1 1/2 bath, finished basement, carpeted living room with woodstove, hardwood floors in upstairs bedrooms, 1 car garage, no pets. \$975/mo. plus lease and deposit. Call 761-9022 or 775-4386.

**WANTED:** Good home for free kittens, 6 weeks old. All kittens have front double paws, gray and white. Please call 772-8580 after 4:30 PM.

**FOR RENT:** West End, near MMC, newly renovated 4 room apartment in quiet Victorian building. Hardwood floors, modern kitchen and bath, 2 fireplaces, storage space, parking, private back yard. Non-smoker only, \$500/mo. Call 774-7295.

**FOR SALE:** 1977 Honda. Runs, but needs some work. Best offer. This car could be a good parts car. Call 774-6451 afternoons.

**FOR SALE:** Moving July 1, must sell select hardwood, red oak, mahogany, ash. 2 board foot rough, milled slightly higher. Call 775-3155 evenings.

**FOR SALE:** Dutch Colonial home, double lot, 2 car garage, just redecorated. 2 BR, must be seen. Just minutes to MMC and Maine Mall. \$114,000. Call 883-6683 between 5 - 8 PM.

**FOR SALE:** Buxton split foyer, 4 BR immaculate corner lot, well landscaped. 13 miles to MMC. Asking for reasonable offers. Call 883-6683.

**WANTED:** Painting work. Interior/exterior quality work, free estimates. Call 642-2644.

**WANTED:** Plumbing work. Plumbing/heating services. Master license, 10 years experience, prompt service. Call 767-4038.

**FOR SALE:** AKC Golden Retriever pups, \$200. Shots and worming included. Must be seen to be appreciated. Both parents can be seen with pups. Ready to go 7/18. Call 797-3197.

**FOR RENT:** Charming 1 BR apartment in quiet Victorian building on Deering Street. Ample storage, comfortable space for professional single or couple. Heat and hot water included. Available 8/1/88. Call 774-8473 and leave message.

**FOR SALE:** Reservations for 2 tent sites at Blackwoods campground in Acadia National Park for the weekend of July 30th. Call x2761 or 799-1420.

**ROOMMATE WANTED:** M/F to share sunny 2 BR apartment on Cumberland Avenue, 3 blocks from MMC, cats okay. Rent \$247.50 plus 1/2 utils. and security deposit. Call 874-0739 noon to 10 PM.

**FOR SALE:** Waterbed, queensize, mirror headboard, dark pine, \$275. Call 688-2240.

**FOR SALE:** 1976 AMC Hornet wagon. One owner, \$500 or best offer. Call x2755 or 772-7193.

**WANTED:** Wallpapering or interior or exterior painting accounts. Professional workmanship. Free estimates. Phone 879-0046 or 772-3179 after 6 PM.

**ROOMMATE WANTED:** To share furnished condo in Scarborough. Includes free parking, laundry, cable TV, and VCR. Non-smoker, no pets, \$350/mo. plus utils. Available 9/1/88. Call 883-3239 after 5 PM.

**FOR SALE:** 1979 VW Rabbit, 2 door hatchback, 4 speed, runs great, very little rust. Many new parts, tires, brakes, exhaust, windshield. Very reliable, must sell. \$1,000 or best offer. Call x2351 or 761-3972.

## what's happening

**WHAT'S HAPPENING** is published every Wednesday at Maine Medical Center, Portland, Maine for members of the hospital community and for friends of the institution throughout Maine and northern New England. Comments, questions and suggestions may be addressed to Public Information Office, MMC, Portland, ME 04102. Telephone: (207) 871-2196.

Wayne L. Clark, Editor.

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**WANTED:** Piano teacher, upbeat qualified piano teacher who likes teaching teenagers. Please call 773-4216 or 766-2941 after 4 PM.

**FOR SALE:** Flute and clarinet. Excellent school instruments. \$75 each. Call 883-5821.

**FOR SALE:** 1972 Volvo wagon, no sticker, runs for parts, best offer. Call 767-2420.

**FOR SALE:** Full set, nearly new men's Wilson golf clubs with new bag. \$350. Call 799-7979 after noon.

**FOR SALE:** 23' Seasprite, fiberglass sloop, 6 sails, O/B motor, VHF radio, cradle. Reduced to \$5,900; flatbed trailer for boat, \$900. Call 799-7979.

**FOR SALE:** Moving sale, everything must go. Matching ladies and mens dressers and night stand, rugs, double bed with box spring and mattress, bookcase, dinette table and chairs, students desk and much more. Good prices. Call for appointment. 871-4756 (8:30 AM - 5 PM), or 773-2463 (after 5:30 PM and before 8 AM).

**FOR RENT:** In Westbrook, 20 minutes from MMC, 3 or 4 BR apartment with garage, W/D hook-up, \$600/mo. not including heat and utils. Call 854-2878, leave message. Available 8/1/88.

**WANTED:** Yards to mow, lawns to rake or clean. Also other general yard work. Excellent references. Call 775-6708 after 6 PM.

**FOR SALE:** Pre-hung metal exterior door. 2' 8". Best offer. Call 797-7014 after 5 PM, or radio page 172 before 4 PM.

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