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# Nurses ratify contract with 3 percent annual increase

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After working for almost a year without a contract, employees at Sullivan County Health Care ratified a three-year contract that was approved by the county commission Tuesday afternoon and includes a substantial one-time payout.

"Everyone worked diligently on this," nursing home administra-

tor Ted Purdy said. "The employees were able to provide some giveback to the facility."

As part of the agreement, the county agreed to give some employees an extra payment totaling about \$107,000.

"Technically, it's a one-time payment," Purdy said.

According to Purdy, the payment will be made to union employees who worked at the nursing home during the past year. The amount each employee

receives is based on 3 percent of the base pay multiplied by the number of hours worked.

"This is for the people working there right now and not employees who have left," commissioner Ethel Jarvis said.

Jarvis said the payment is money that employees would have received if a contract had been in place over the past year giving each person a 3 percent increase in pay.

"That was my take on it,"

Jarvis said.

In addition to the extra payment, the contract gives each employee a 3 percent raise for each of the next three years.

Purdy said that 91 percent of voting union members approved the contract.

"I was really pleased with that," Purdy said. "Both teams worked very hard on this."

The union has been working without a contract since July 1, 2007. The new contract became

effective Tuesday and will expire June 30, 2011.

"We were trying to make some clarifications on working conditions and benefits," Purdy said.

Union president Elizabeth Koski would not comment on the new contract.

Purdy said he hopes that with a contract in place, the ability for the facility to attract new employees will improve.

"We still have some openings,"

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Purdy said. "This current month we've been able to attract some LNAs."

Overall, Purdy said he is satisfied with the outcome of contract negotiations.

"With this contract it will provide some assurance and security with our staff and improve

recruitment and retention," Purdy said. "It will be an effective agreement over the next three years."

Jarvis agreed that with a contract in place, working conditions will improve at the facility.

"When you have negotiations going on, everyone is on pins

and needles," Jarvis said. "It keeps workers in a kind of turmoil. My feelings are that the union contract being signed will stabilize us."

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