

Hub union picks up Carney Hospital workers

By CHRISTINE McCONVILLE

Caregivers at the Carney Hospital in Dorchester yesterday agreed to join the local chapter of the Service Employees International Union.

With Wednesday's vote, 500 Carney workers — including respiratory therapists, radiology technicians, licensed practical nurses, housekeepers and dietary workers — are now part of I199SEIU, one of the nation's fastest-growing labor unions.

"This has been a long time coming, and we are thrilled," Kathy Riley, a nuclear medicine technician, said in a statement.

Some 79 percent of the targeted Carney workers voted for unionizing, organizers said.

Mike Fadel, I199SEIU's

executive vice president, said the employees will have a stronger voice at the hospital and will be able to join other union voices to push for more public investment in their hospitals.

Since 2006, I199SEIU has more than tripled in size in Massachusetts.

Labor leaders say the growth reflects a fundamental shift in union tactics. As the United States' manufacturing base disappeared, organizers targeted the booming service industry.

In January, Caritas-Christi Healthcare, which runs the Carney and several other area medical centers, signed a fair union elections agreement with I199SEIU and the Area Trades Council. That agreement promised to provide Caritas workers with free and fair voting conditions when deciding to form a union.

Carney is the third Caritas hospital in the past year to have its workers unionize. At the newly unionized hospital, the next step will be to elect a bargaining committee to draft a contract proposal.

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