**Philadelphia IAFF Local 22 Has Guardian Nurses**

**on their Shoulders and at their Sides, Literally.**

Missed diagnoses. Untreated pain. Cancelled procedures. Unaddressed trauma. Red tape.

These unfortunate realities of our healthcare system do not sit well with Guardian Nurses, a team of registered nurses and patient advocates based in Philadelphia, who are engaged to support Local 22 members and their eligible dependents going through health crises.

So what exactly do these nurses do about it? For one, they get in the car and they show up. *(names changed for privacy)*

**Ann**

She was weak, had numbness and kept falling. Scared and not knowing what was wrong, Ann went to the doctor, but was continually sent home with a vague understanding of what was causing her symptoms. After being referred to a neurologist, Ann was scheduled for an appointment one month later. With persistent issues, Guardian Nurses stepped in and she had an appointment within three days. Diagnosed with MS, Ann’s treatment began the day before her first appointment was initially scheduled.

**James**

James was hospitalized for GI pain and was diagnosed with internal bleeding. After a week, nothing was done to positively impact his care and the exploratory procedure to figure out what was wrong was repeatedly cancelled and pushed back. Until Guardian Nurses arrived at the hospital. Professionally persistent calls and in-person inquiries (the squeaky wheel) got the oil. Within 24 hours, James’ procedure was on the schedule for the next morning.

**John**

His wife could barely walk and was in excruciating hip pain. It was August, and an appointment was scheduled for October to evaluate the situation. Not good enough. Guardian Nurses made a call, and more calls, eventually moving the appointment up twice as the pain increased significantly. John’s wife had a hip replacement on September 3, more than 30 days before the initially scheduled appointment.

**Bill and Marybeth**

While visiting out of state, Bill and Marybeth were in a motorcycle accident. With serious - yet stabilized - injuries, they needed to return home to begin recovery. Enter Jen, a Guardian Nurse who began traversing the healthcare equivalent of a ‘Who’s on first skit?.’ She was able to ensure doctors more than 800 miles apart were on the same page, got records quickly transferred, and prepared doctors in Philadelphia to receive these two patients. Of note, Bill’s fellow firefighters made special arrangements to bring him home, while Guardian Nurses arranged a medical transport flight for Marybeth.

**Dale**

Dale’s foot was injured on duty and eventually required amputation.  While Guardian Nurses does not engage in workers’ compensation cases, they were heavily involved in helping Dale and his wife address the trauma by arranging individual and couples’ mental health assistance to begin the emotional healing process.

So, what does these anecdotes mean for members of Local 22?

Jen is a Guardian Nurse dedicated solely to the firefighters and paramedics of Philadelphia, a benefit provided through the union at no cost to members. As part of Guardian Nurses’ Mobile Care Coordinator Program (MCC), she travels to see patients throughout the city in a Guardian Nurses vehicle, co-branded with the local IAFF logo. Jen gets to know members, and they trust her, while often in a vulnerable state.

Having a confidential nurse advocate can improve healthcare outcomes for you and your family, and literally be the difference between life and death. In Philadelphia, Guardian Nurses work with Local 22 members to:

* **Explain a New Diagnosis**to help members make informed decisions
* **Coach and Support** members **t**hrough the challenges of a chronic illness
* **Visit Members at Home**or in the hospital to assess their care needs
* **Be Their Guide**, coach and advocate for any healthcare issue
* **Make Appointments**so members can be seen as quickly as possible
* **Go With Members**to see doctors, to ask questions and to get answers
* **Identify Providers**for all care needs and second opinions
* **Get Things Members Need**such as healthcare equipment
* **Provide Decision Support**when members are thinking about treatment options.

Who do you have on your side?

For more information, visit guardiannurses.com.