Many of you will have never met me, my name is Helen Middleton, and I am currently the Bargaining Unit President at Women's College Hospital Local 80.

I became involved in ONA ,back in 2013 negotiating WCH Local contract and started to realize how important being part of ONA would be (although at the time did not comprehend how much ONA would become part of life).

This was only the beginning of my ONA journey , which then led to myself becoming Grievance Chair in 2014 .

During this time, I engaged with many nurses and met so many more ONA members at both the Local and executive levels. The grievance process exposed me to member's key issues and the process involved to resolve them .

Member engagement is vital as is the visibility of the ONA executive in your workplace. ONA members can be struggling with an issue and can be in that moment of feel helpless and not know where to turn. This is why I have spent the last 9 months reaching out to members in our bargaining Unit with a goal of communicating the support that ONA can offer.

I really enjoy resolving intake issues with ONA members and the journey resolving these issues which lead to mediation or arbitration. While it can be a stressful time for members, helping them understand the processes and supporting them through to the point of resolution is rewarding.

I gained insights into labor relations and have met so many fellow like minded ONA members some of whom are essentially my mentors and make me strive to be like them in their approach in supporting ONA members .

2020 has been both a difficult and challenging year for the nursing profession and front-line workers. It is also the year that I became BUP here at WCH, at the precise moment that the "first wave" of COVID began. It has been an eventful year here at WCH, where myself and Duane Stockley VP Grievance have navigated our way through many different aspects of the Executive portfolio .

These experiences included :

- Tackling employee safety at the JHSC holding our employer accountable to provide PPE to our front-line staff.
- Building a stronger, more engaged BU and Local executive by listening to the membership and their key concerns.
- Escalating chronic workload concerns involving Professional Practice to hold the employer accountable in delivering key staff driven solutions to improve the nurse's ability to provide patient focused care .
- Completion of Strike School course curriculum which equipped me with supports we have available in our fight for better work environments that values work life balance.

2020 has seen many changes effecting nurses from the Ontario Emergency orders which affected Nurses being reassigned to work in different clinical areas , to PPE directive 5 supporting our nurses using a PRCA to ensure appropriate PPE was provided by the employer.

This year, more than any other year has been a time of nurses being seen as health care heroes on one hand by our surrounding communities - only to be rewarded with a less than 1% pay increase by the Ford government.

This year has seen political action in the form of social media groups and support to have a more active role in creating this change. Strike school provided opportunities to meet fellow unionist colleagues in our shared goal of advocating for better working conditions resulting in quality patient care.

2020 was also the year that I became JHSC employee co-chair tackling health and safety concerns during this COVID-19 pandemic ensuring safety provisions for our employees to be provided by our employer.

If there is one lesson to be learned in 2020 , is that the nursing profession need to united and informed and part of the conversation . I will represent every member at ONA central discussion tables. This coming election, membership's voices at all our bargaining units and campuses need to be heard and represented at ONA central level. This month I ask for your vote for Local Coordinator of Local 80. We are Ontario nurses, and it is time for Ontario Nurses at Local 80 to have their say.

In solidarity

Helen Middleton BUP WCH