

The Image of Nursing column explores and discusses issues relevant to projecting a positive image of nursing.

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The Ripple Effect

Everyone knows that there is no small way to break a calm body of water. No matter how small the object is that we use, there is always a bigger effect on the actual surface. This is not unlike our actions as nurses. We often are not aware of the big effect we have on others. One aspect of our nursing career that we may sometimes forget is that of a role model: not only for underclassmen, younger siblings, and our children, but also for our patients. This is because on a daily basis, we strive to be amazing nurses, and therefore, we show our patients what amazing nurses look like. Sure, we're busy and focused on the tasks at hand, working such long hours while often reminiscing about how we used to "dress up and go out" and how our nights are now focused on pajamas and an overdue dinner. But these things are minute in comparison to what we *do not* notice in our lives—like the fact that we are the reason our patient smiled for the first time since his/her surgery, or that by touching that family member's hand we gave them some overdue comfort.

The theme for this year's Image of Nursing Committee is "The Ripple Effect of Nursing: How Our Actions Reflect Our Image," and looks at the big effects we can make, no matter the scale of the action. The Image of Nursing Committee is not simply focused on huge actions that influence everyone involved (though these events *are* wonderful and important). Instead, we want to stress the importance of little actions that make up what we know of the nursing profession today. Even Florence Nightingale

knew the impact of her actions, when she said, "Never lose an opportunity of urging a practical beginning, however small, for it is wonderful how often in such matters the mustard-seed germinates and roots itself." The ability to influence people without even realizing you have done so is, in itself, spectacular. To be able to choose a profession that makes such events part of your everyday life is a dream come true!

Creation of an Image of Nursing Project to submit to the committee is easy. Get a team together, get as many faculty involved as possible, and elect a chairperson. Establish a plan for your project that includes what the group agrees on as a positive image of nursing. Ask yourselves things like:

- What aspects of nursing drew me in?
- What didn't I know about nursing when I started school that I do know now?
- What are some misconceptions about nursing that may deter people from joining the profession?
- How do I promote a positive image of nursing in my everyday life?

These questions can be used to create the Image of Nursing Project for your group. This project is simply a way to influence others about the nursing profession. It can be directed towards individuals from any age group, about any aspect of nursing. Often stereotypes and misconceptions are simply a matter of clarification from someone in the field. By correcting these thoughts and ideas about nursing, you are spreading a

positive image. Media involvement is great, and things like door prizes often help attract attention to your project. Try to find organizations or institutions that would be interested in your image group conducting a presentation or activity. Also, if not already appointed, refer to your state bylaws and propose an amendment to elect an Image of Nursing Director. This position will allow states to continuously create and implement an Image of Nursing Project, and spread a positive image of nursing throughout the state. If your state already has an Image of Nursing Committee, but you wish to keep your project local, contact the head of the committee anyway, to get ideas and advice.

Finally, the committee wants to remind everyone who decides to make ripples in their community to choose their "pebble" wisely, and remember the importance of keeping that positive image in the forefront of your actions, no matter where you are. We often cannot choose when we are going to influence someone; it is something that occurs when we least expect it. Even the smallest pebble can generate some surprisingly big waves." ∞

For more information on submitting and Image of Nursing project, download the Awards & Honors booklet in the Publications section of www.nсна.org.