



What Are Fiduciary Responsibilities?

by Jennifer Tucker, Director and Chair

When I was elected to the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) Board of Directors last April, I was very excited, and then very nervous. I knew what the roles and responsibilities of my position were, but performing the job was something else entirely. When the Board met in New York for its first meeting last June, we had the privilege of having a workshop with Dr. Rumay Alexander, a consultant who specializes in organizational governance. She taught us how to work together as a board and how to effectively represent the membership. We were also delighted to have Dr. Robert Piemonte, past NSNA executive director, who presented a workshop on the role of the board and staff and who described the Board's **fiduciary responsibilities**.

You may be wondering: "What does fiduciary mean?" Since we had the chance to learn about what it means, I want to share this information with NSNA members so that you, too, can learn about the important role that you play in governing NSNA as well as your state and school chapters. No matter what board you serve on, you will always have fiduciary responsibility for the organization—whether it is a not-for-profit organization or a for-profit corporation.

Both the House of Delegates and the Board of Directors have roles to play in policy development. The Board has the legal and financial responsibility for the organization's assets and is responsible for making sure that NSNA's funds are used appropriately and that NSNA is fiscally sound. In addition to the NSNA bylaws, the Board is required to follow state and federal laws that pertain to any action, business, or communication within the organization. As NSNA is national in scope with chapters in all states, the Board is responsible to comply with federal law, and with the different laws of 50 states. This can create challenges when one state would like the organization to act one way and another state has laws that may be contrary. In these situations, NSNA is legally obligated to comply with the most restrictive state laws so that the organization is not held liable in any state. Penalties for acting outside of the scope of the law can include, but are not limited to, loss of not-for-profit status as well as legal action against the organization.

Responsibilities of the Board of Directors are listed in NSNA Bylaws Article VIII. For example, the Board approves the annual operating budget, establishes policies for investing NSNA's reserve fund, and approves policies that relate to NSNA's daily operation such as purchasing equipment and appointing an executive director, who is responsible for carrying out the day-to-day business. Along with the legal and financial responsibilities, the Board has the responsibility to implement the resolutions passed by the House of Delegates at the annual meeting.

You may now be asking yourself, "What is a resolution and what is the role of the House of Delegates?" The House of Delegates meets each year at the annual meeting of the association and provides overall direction for NSNA. The purpose of the annual meeting is to hold an election, receive reports, and conduct any such other business as may properly come before the House of Delegates" (NSNA Bylaws, Article VII, Section 1). The delegates' time together is limited and must be efficiently and wisely spent. Each year, NSNA may receive as many as 30 resolutions from school and state chapters that are debated and voted on. Resolutions that pass the House of Delegates become NSNA policy. The Board of Directors is responsible for implementing resolutions passed by the House of Delegates. This is accomplished through NSNA programs, publications, and cooperative relationships with other organizations, coalitions, and governmental bodies. Other business brought before the House includes reports from the Finance Committee, Bylaws and policies Committee, nominations from the floor for elected positions on the Board of Directors and Nominating and Elections Committee, and other business within the scope of responsibility of the House of Delegates.

Knowing what our duties are contribute to a well-governed organization. So please, keep this article with you and let it serve as a tool for you as you participate in leadership roles at the national, state and school chapter levels. Your feedback and questions are welcome. Write to me at:

nsna@nsna.org. ☺

references

NSNA Bylaws Article VII, Section 1. *Getting the Pieces to Fit 2005-2006: A Handbook for State Associations and School Chapters*. (p. 14). Brooklyn: National Student Nurses Association.

The "Write On" column is intended as a forum for students to respond to articles in *Imprint* as well as issues in nursing today. Please send your letters to: *Imprint* Editor, c/o NSNA, 45 Main Street, Suite 606, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, or e-mail to nsna@nsna.org, att. WRITE ON.

A Mission Trip to Biloxi

In this special Write On, Rachel Green, a nursing student at the University of West Florida in Pensacola, FL, talks about the trip that fourteen nursing students made to help out the victims of Hurricane Katrina. *Imprint* is proud to feature this special column as it is important to remember that almost six months later, the victims of the Gulf Coast hurricanes continue to rebuild and recover and are in need of assistance.

On August 29, 2005, Pensacola, Florida, prayed that catastrophic Hurricane Katrina would not rip through their already fragile city. Instead, she pummeled over the New Orleans, Biloxi, and Mobile coastlines, leveling areas that many knew as great vacation spots, but more importantly, areas that many others called home. The despair of the situation left us grieving for our neighbors as people attempted to find ways to help those who lost homes, jobs, possessions, tangible memories, and even loved ones to this horrendous storm. The question, "What can we do to help?" proved frustrating: what could we offer as nursing students, with little financial resources and no licensure to allow us to provide health care? That was the negative outlook we had until an opportunity presented itself that gave us a chance to feel less helpless, and a chance to learn the meaning of "daring to care."

One of our nursing instructors, Mrs. Shawn Bolender, had a direct connection with some of the tragic effects of the storm. Her childhood home was in Biloxi, Mississippi where her mother tried to weather the storm. She survived, but Mrs. Bolender lost a family member to the hurricane's fury. Through it all, our teacher has remained a dedicated leader in the education of her students and has opened our eyes to the possibility of turning awful situations into opportunities. With the help of Lela Jordan, Mrs. Bolender's sister and Youth, Family, and Community Service Director for the City of West Palm Beach, Florida, the nursing students of UWF had the chance to help the people of Biloxi.

In early September of 2005, Lela Jordan launched a mission to provide direct aid to the people of her hometown. Less than a week before, people of all walks of life came together to

help collect, sort, package, label, load and ship an 18-wheeler with supplies for those who were in dire need of basic goods. On September 15, the 18-wheeler leaving from West Palm Beach, Florida reached its destination in Biloxi, Mississippi, where it needed to be unloaded into a supply warehouse.

Seven junior-class nursing students, and seven senior-class nursing students all piled into cars with a great sense of anticipation as we were finally going to be able to contribute to the relief efforts on location, no less! Absolute shock filled us as we approached the warehouse that was staffed by the Salvation Army; there were boats in streets and yards from a dry-dock marina that had been ripped apart, as well as debris piled high on the side of the roads. The warehouse was in the process of being organized and stocked with bottled water, clothing, non-perishable food items, pet supplies, toys,



Standing bottom row (l t r): Connie Randles, Julie Murray, Sheena Young, Christina Gomez, Laura Wendt, Shawn Bolender, Cecilia Snyder, and Lela Jordan Middle row: Regina Bougie, Jeanne Harris, and Rachel Green. Top row: Rebecca Bailey, Kristin Hasty, Christin Jones, and Lydia Civelli. Not Pictured, but part of the mission: Matthew Lundh, and Patricia-Posey-Goodwin



The devastation in the wake of Hurricane Katrina along just one street in Biloxi.

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cleaning products, beds, and useful supplies. The teamwork in the warehouse was inspirational, as a group of only twenty-seven volunteers contributed to the relief efforts: members of Biloxi's own fire department, a displaced nursing student, and his cousin, and firemen from Atlanta and Canada. We unloaded the truck in a few hours, thanks to the volunteers, including the driver of the 18 wheeler.

We were amazed at the incredible generosity of people who were the most affected by the storm. As we broke for lunch, the men with the Biloxi Fire Department offered their food, use of their showers, and other luxuries that we realized we had taken for granted. None of us felt that it would be right to take them up on their offers, since we had brought our own food, we were only going to be there for the day, and we were there for *them*, not the other way around.

It was an eye-opener to see one of the firefighters looking through some supplies we had just unloaded to find diapers for his little girl and a razor for a much-needed facial shave, and initially we felt it was a little strange that he should be helping himself to the supplies that were meant for the victims. It made us realize that these guys and their families were the victims, and the ones that we were there to help. These men survived the storm on top of their fire trucks as the station flooded, wearing life vests and praying they wouldn't go floating down the street as the hurricane ripped right through the structures of Biloxi.

After the job of unloading the truck was complete, some of the students decided to stay and work inside the warehouse, sorting clothing into piles by gender and age.

We came upon another eye-opener when we left the warehouse to look

at the damaged area. That is when I realized that the huge warehouse full of hope and supplies would not be enough to give these people back their lives. We knew a storm could cause severe damage, but it's hard to fathom that kind of devastation until you see it. Not one house we saw was suitable to live in. On just one street we saw houses that had floated off their foundations and into the middle of the road, houses on top of cars, houses with water line markings close to the roof tops, and houses so demolished you could see their interiors with family belongings strewn everywhere. These people lost *everything*.

How do you come home when your home is no longer where it used to be, or no longer standing? And this was only one street in Biloxi. The warehouse no longer seemed like it would be nearly enough to start providing for even a street full of families. My heart sank again with helplessness and hopelessness as I tried to imagine how the hurricane victims would start their lives all over again.

The trip back to our homes in the panhandle of Florida was solemn and mournful. We knew we had started something, and none of us were willing to turn our backs on it. We'd helped to cheer up the firefighters who had been away from their evacuated families, and had done a little manual labor to unload supplies, but that was only a beginning; we started thinking about what else we could do.

A month after our trip, we'd already begun to plan other projects. Thanks to the creativity and leadership of one of the junior nursing students, a group of nursing students who went to Biloxi have been working on a project to raise a substantial amount of money. Laura Wendt led the group in putting together a calendar with a collage of pictures collected from our trip. She has been

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successful in finding donations for the materials and labor, allowing the majority of proceeds, after the discounted cost of printing, to go to charitable causes. Proceeds will go to sponsoring displaced nursing students by the storm, so they may be able to continue their education.

Post-Script

At the encouragement of Shawn Bolender, some of the juniors involved in the mission trip attended NSNA's MidYear Conference in November 2005 to share our experience in hope of advocating for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Five of us – Laura Wendt, Christina Gomez, Julia Murray, Cecilia Synder, and I – presented to a group of attendees at Cheryl Schmidt's presentation on emergency preparedness. We are all very grateful to Ms. Schmidt for giving us fifteen minutes of her presentation time, and to NSNA's support in sharing our story and poster presentation at MidYear. Julie Murray created the poster and Laura Wendt created a slide show presentation set to music that included pictures we took on our trip.

We also want thank Lela Jordan, for being our inspiration, and for giving us an opportunity to make a difference. We also wish to thank her sister, Shawn Bolender, for being a very dedicated teacher, and for being our motivating force in this mission, as she has taught us what being a caring nurse is about.

Recovery efforts in Biloxi and other cities will take years. Our hope is that the sale of the calendar, "Remembering Biloxi, MS after Katrina," will serve as a reminder that those affected by the tragedy need our help for a long time to come. The proceeds from the sale of these calendars will be dedicated to help nursing students displaced by Hurricane Katrina. ☺

MOVING?

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Include your new address and membership number! Or go online www.nсна.org and click on member services

