

Reaching Out to Ensure the Future



Over the course of the past few weeks I have witnessed first hand the truly caring nature of nursing students. In the days following Hurricane Katrina, and then Rita, students from numerous nursing programs responded to the urgent need in shelters and provided assistance where needed.

It has been humbling to receive countless boxes filled with donations from nursing students around the country. More importantly, it has meant more than words can express to the thousands of displaced families who have been entrusted to our care. Florence Nightingale would be proud to see the fortitude with which nursing students approached one of the worst natural disasters of our time. The countless smiles of children receiving their first toys or coloring books since their possessions were destroyed served as a quiet “thank you.”

As I look to the future beyond the daunting “post hurricane” weeks in my home state of Texas, I am reminded once again of the power imparted when human beings come together for a single purpose: to simply care. It puts me in mind of the very reason that many of our faculty members choose to remain in academics. Often they pass on readily available, high income positions in other areas of nursing practice; however, they remain. It seems that there is an innate need in our instructors to “give back”, ensuring quality nursing for the future. These are our mentors, the ones who give selflessly of themselves.

The term mentor is defined as “a wise and trusted teacher, guide and friend” (Webster, 2002). As a nursing student, you will find that mentorship is an enormous part of the nursing continuum. You may

already have a fellow student or faculty member of whom you ask questions, or from whom you seek guidance. After all, it takes a very special person to mentor a stressed out, sleep-deprived nursing student! Whether faculty-to-student, or student-to-student, the art of mentoring remains an essential element in the passing of knowledge and wisdom. I have been very fortunate to have outstanding mentors who have helped me maintain focus and have provided endless support!

Mentorship is a large part of the mission of NSNA, and was therefore an obvious choice as the focus of this edition of *Imprint*. Nursing has traditionally been a practice of mentorship, nurturing professional nurses to become respected agents of change in the nation’s healthcare system.

The art of mentoring is carried from nursing student to practicing nurse. Professional nurse mentors help guide novice nurses through the evolution necessary to become an experienced professional nurse. It is crucial that each of you connect with a trusted professional nurse that can augment the skills and training you receive as a student.

In the following pages, experienced clinicians provide valuable advice on developing the mentor/protegé relationship. Your mind will become engaged in the art and science of mentoring, so sit back, relax, learn, and enjoy!

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