

2005 NSNA/Nursing Spectrum/Nurse Week Essay Contest Grand Prize Winner

Kelly Kaufman, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY won the Essay Contest First Prize in which students were asked to respond to the question: "How would you encourage underrepresented populations to choose nursing as a career?"

The Grand Prize winner, was featured in the September/October issue of *Imprint*, and three other students were

recognized for their essays, which will be published in upcoming issues.

For more information about the 2006 National Student Nurses' Association/Nursing Spectrum/NurseWeek Student Writing Contest, visit www.nсна.org/pdf/NSNAessaycontest2005.pdf.

How to Recruit Minority Students into Nursing

by Kelly Kaufman

"¡Me duele la garganta!"

Would you know what this means if your patient said it? Please let me introduce myself. I offer the perspective of an individual from a minority population. I speak many languages and represent the beliefs, religions, and cultural practices that are shared by millions of your patients. I have no doubt that you have provided care for my family and friends at some time, but perhaps you were not aware of culturally sensitive issues in the care of minority populations. "¡Me duele la garganta!" means "My throat hurts," in Spanish. Your patients have been incessantly calling for me – calling until their throats hurt! I will explain how you can encourage me to choose nursing as a career.

Recognize the need for my help

Currently, racial and ethnic minority groups make up about 30% of the

population in the United States. It is projected that this number will rise to 40% by 2030. From receiving immunizations for disease prevention, to getting screened for cancer, to managing diabetes, health disparities are serious burdens to us. The nursing profession needs ethnic diversity among its members to represent such a large varied national population. While racial and ethnic under-representation will be challenging to fix, I'll let you know where to find me for help.

Start recruiting me early

By the time I am in high school, I may have formed other educational goals or work plans for the future. My neighborhood might look different from yours, but don't let that deter you from visiting me at my school. For many of my friends, this will be the first time that they will meet a nurse and learn about

career opportunities. At this stage, I want to be inspired with facts about the wonderful world of nursing. Explain how I will get the chance to represent my minority population, help others, and be afforded the versatility and benefits that come with a career in nursing. Let me shadow you on a career fair day. Provide additional guidance counseling in high school when I decide that I want to become a nurse, and offer me the opportunity to receive nurse aide training to keep my interest ablaze. As I apply for a nursing school program, please recognize that college applications and entrance exams might be obstacles for me, so avidly encourage my success in these processes.

Discuss my concerns with me

Understand that I am about to make a career decision that will radically affect my life. As a person from a minority

population, I am targeted by many stereotypes that attempt to label my work-ethic and abilities. Because of these false conceptions, I may find the hospital setting and staff who work there to be somewhat intimidating. At times, I may even doubt myself and my capabilities to become a nurse, and would appreciate some candid conversation about these concerns. Inform me that the face of nursing is changing and that both women and men are encouraged to become nurses!

Enable me to pursue an education

I may be the first member of my family to attempt higher education, and I need your financial support. Let me emphasize: I need your financial support! Without significant monetary assistance, becoming a nurse will just be a dream for me. My family may not have had the chance to put away for college as they tried to make ends meet, but I can better justify such an expense if you provide assistance with tuition, books, and living costs.

Provide a mentor for me

A nurse mentor from a similar background will help me to envision my future as a nurse. This person should act as an

advocate, confidante, and facilitator. Also, encourage me to join empowering nursing organizations that represent my needs, such as the National Black Nurses Association, National Association of Hispanic Nurses, or American Assembly for Men in Nursing. Nursing school will be no easy feat; like any other nurse, I will need motivation and inspiration along the way. Through unwavering optimism from nurses in underrepresented populations, I will be empowered to pass my nursing courses and make my family proud of my decision to get a higher education. Help me in my transition into the professional role of a nurse. Ensure that my needs are met in whichever clinical setting I choose, and support my decision if I want to further my education in nursing. In the long run, your recruiting efforts will pay off. With your investment in me, you can be assured that I will be an excellent advocate and will work to dispel stereotypes of underrepresented population and bridge the ethnic disparities healthcare faces. I'm waiting for an invitation to join a rewarding profession of which I can be proud. Nursing will break barriers for me, and I promise to break barriers for nursing! ☺