

My Journey

by Lisa Marie Tierney

As my own nursing journey continues, I will be forever grateful and will remember each nursing leader who has mentored me along the way.

Back when children were playing, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" I knew that I wanted to be a nurse. Though it took me a few years to get serious about that desire, I did go back to school for nursing and it was always the goal of helping others that has kept me focused on my objective.

Harford Community College (HCC) in Harford County,

Bel Air Maryland led me to nursing leaders who were ready and willing to encourage and mentor me. Ms. Hubbard was the first to explain to the class about the college's student nurses association, and the upcoming NSNA convention I knew right away that I wanted to be involved in the future of nursing and that I needed someone to explain how I could participate.

I volunteered to be the class representative during first semester. The month was January and we started to have our SNA meetings at school. I was very fortunate that the faculty at HCC are very supportive of students being involved in leadership activities and we had an excellent SNA advisor, Carol Fetters Andersen, who was the teacher for our psychiatric and leadership rotation. Professor Andersen lives to better the profession of nursing while taking every advantage to mentor students along the way. I say this because by April of that first semester she had given me the tools to run for a national position in NSNA and win.

Professor Andersen is a past NSNA president who never forgot the importance of mentoring students to be nursing leaders. She defines a mentor as "a wise and trusted counselor." This might seem simplistic but it takes work to find someone with whom you can be open and honest. There is an exercise in Professor Andersen's book, *Nursing Student to Nursing Leader, the Critical Path to Leadership Development*, where you list your strengths, weaknesses, leadership skills, public speaking ability, and how you handle conflict. It provides very important steps towards knowing yourself so you can find a mentor who "fits" you.

Professor Andersen's mentoring to me was priceless. I just finished my year as a Director and Community Health Chair

of NSNA, and in this position, I was also mentored by Dr. Diane Mancino, the Executive Director of NSNA, as well as nursing leaders from all over the country. My position with NSNA gave me the opportunity to be a role model to my fellow students and to learn from them. Currently, I am the Community Health Chair with the Maryland Association of Nursing Students (MANS). Once again there is

a faculty member at HCC, Tina Zimmerman, who is on the board of the Maryland Nurses Association and who continues to be a role model by empowering my leadership development.

"Networking" is often associated as something vital to do when just searching for a job - wrong. Networking is meeting people in the profession who share your enthusiasm for the issues involved with nursing. Professor Andersen explained the need for a leader to develop "win-win" skills in conflict resolution that help both sides reach a collaborative solution while maintaining everyone's dignity. These are important skills in maintaining growth and effective teamwork. By networking, you learn to develop the skills that will enable you and others to communicate effectively on current issues and challenges facing the nursing community, and to work collaboratively on solving them. Only when you are fortunate to find a mentor and then take the opportunity to mentor others do you really begin to understand the valuable contributions you can make to nursing's future.

My experience in being mentored is far from over. As a new nurse, I have much to learn on this journey that will lead me to discover new leadership skills for myself, and to find ways to pass them on to others. Professor Andersen has taught me the benefits of participation. As my own nursing journey continues, I will be forever grateful and will remember each nursing leader who has mentored me along the way. ●

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