



BREAKTHROUGH TO NURSING
45th ANNIVERSARY

IGNITING DREAMS

Providing the Momentum to
Reach New Heights and
Empower Success



Breakthrough to Nursing Timeline

NSNA's interest in recruiting nursing students into the profession began in 1954, when the U.S. was faced with a critical nursing shortage. NSNA established a committee to recruit students into nursing. By 1964, the NSNA Nursing Recruitment Committee held a meeting that marked the beginning of a nationwide project that would eventually be named, "Breakthrough to Nursing."

The following pages present a chronology of evolution of the NSNA Breakthrough to Nursing (BTN) Project. Readers are encouraged to review the history of racial discrimination and the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.



1954

NSNA established a committee to focus on recruitment into nursing and also appointed a representative to serve on the National League for Nursing Committee on Careers.



1956

The LNL Committee on Careers began to address issues related to new supplies of nursing students and raise the question: what limitations based on such factors as marriage, age, sex and ethnicity, should schools be encouraged to modify or remove?



1961

The first official NSNA position addressing racial discrimination was passed by the 1961 NSNA House of Delegates, when they voted to support an anti-discrimination policy to ensure that national conventions be held only in locations where all members are accorded the same services and courtesies in hotels and convention facilities and have equal opportunities to participate.



1963

NSNA Nursing Recruitment Committee fostered the development of state and local involvement in recruitment.

BREAKTHROUGH TO NURSING

By Diane J. Mancino

To commemorate the 45th Anniversary of NSNA's minority recruitment project, known today as Breakthrough to Nursing, this article traces the origins of this lasting contribution to recruiting students into nursing from under-represented populations.

The 1960s were a time of hope and rage in the United States. This was also a time of revelations, revolutions, and regrets. Within a five-year span, Americans struggled to come to terms with the assassinations of three national leaders. On November 22, 1963, **John Fitzgerald**



Kennedy, 45, president of the United States and architect of the New Frontier, was killed by a bullet fired from a building



along the president's parade route in Dallas, TX. On April 4, 1968, Reverend **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**, 39, father of nonviolence in the American *civil rights movement*, was struck by a bullet as he stood on the balcony of a motel in Memphis, TN. Then, on June 5, 1968, Senator **Robert F.**



Kennedy, 42, while thanking supporters for his *victory* in the California presidential primary, was shot in the head at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles,

CA, and died the next day. Two main issues defined this decade: the war in Vietnam and civil rights. These two issues contributed to an ideological schism that separated the American people and to a conflict of generations for American college and university students. Perhaps due to restrictive nursing school policies, nursing students did not become visibly engaged in the anti-Vietnam War movement. However, the civil rights movement presented unique challenges and opportunities for nursing student involvement through NSNA.

NSNA, established in 1952, was a thriving and vital organization by 1960. Student leaders were mentored and guided by the top echelon of the American Nurses Association (ANA) and



1964

NSNA Nursing Recruitment Committee developed and initiated the implementation of a comprehensive plan to address recruitment of minorities into the nursing profession.

1965

NSNA House of Delegates took action to create a national recruitment project to recruit minorities into nursing, called the "Breakthrough to Nursing Project." (BTN)

1967

The first three target areas were selected for a new phase of NSNA's BTN Project: Pittsburgh, PA; Omaha, NE; and Minneapolis, MN.


1970

The BTN Project was nominated for the American Nurses Association Mary Elizabeth Mahoney Award.

1971

NSNA received federal funding from 1971 to 1977 to support the BTN Project target areas to recruit minority students into nursing and to expand the program.





National League for Nursing (NLN) leadership. They had a sound organizational structure, a competent staff, headquarters, equipment, and faculty support. They were eager, idealistic, and curious. The transient nature and time limitations of being a full-time student required quick learning so that goals could be met in a short period of time. This transient membership, however swift, permitted nursing students to create a meaningful community of student leaders. NSNA staff and advisors provided the continuity needed to sustain projects. The opportunity for NSNA to make a significant impact on nursing education during this decade was unparalleled in the history of the profession.

In 1960, there were 118,849 nursing students enrolled in 1,137 nursing programs, and 80,000 belonged to NSNA. By the end of the decade, there were 1,343 nursing schools, 164,545 nursing students enrolled, and 59,149 NSNA members. In 1962, dues were raised from fifty cents to one

dollar; in 1967, they were raised to two dollars; and in 1969, to five dollars. Human and financial resources were available to conduct business and act on important issues.

NSNA was well-positioned to be in the vanguard of the coming surge of social consciousness among the nursing student population. By the mid-1960s, NSNA had become deeply involved in social issues, and in 1971, the association received funding from the Division of Nursing, National Institutes of Health, and the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, for the Breakthrough to Nursing Project.

NSNA's interest in recruiting nursing students into the profession began long before this federal support. In 1954, the nursing profession was faced with a critical shortage. NSNA responded by establishing a "Committee on Careers" and appointing an NSNA representative to serve on the NLN Committee on Careers. NSNA had a valuable resource to offer the

committee student contacts at state and district levels of the association. It was felt that student nurses, being close in age to those they were targeting, could be effective recruiters. Hundreds of Future Nurse Clubs, such as "Daughters of Florence Nightingale," "The Clara Barton League," "Future White Caps," and "Nurses of Tomorrow," to name a few, had been established in secondary schools throughout the country. NSNA members would prove to be valuable in reaching these high school and junior high school students.

With the passage of *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, in 1954, many educators as well as the public became acutely aware of efforts to integrate schools, especially in the deep south, where it was met with fierce opposition. This Supreme Court ruling invalidated the 1896 decision in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* upholding "separate but equal" facilities. Separate schools for blacks and whites were now unconstitutional. In October 1956, the NLN



1974

The NSNA Board of Directors stepped up effort to retain minority students already enrolled in nursing schools, and sensitized the public and the nursing profession to the specific health care needs of minority groups.

1976

The NSNA House of Delegates action called for NSNA to work to eliminate sex discrimination in nursing and encourage nursing school course content to include the diverse health needs of pluralist society.

1977

The NSNA House of Delegates took action to continue an active leadership role in recruitment and retention of ethnic people of color and men into schools of nursing by establishing the following mechanisms to guarantee implementation of the BTN Project: nondiscrimination clause in NSNA bylaws; implementation of minority recruitment and retention projects by state and school constituents; publicity for BTN in *Imprint*; the allocation of financial resources to implement these actions.

1978

The NSNA House of Delegates added a BTN Director to the NSNA Board of Directors and urged state associations to take similar action.

We the People of the United States

insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the Progress, Welfare and establish this Constitution for the United States

committee began addressing issues related to new supplies of nursing students and raised the question, "What limitations, based on factors such as marriage, age, sex, and racial origin, should schools be encouraged to modify or remove?"



NSNA leaders realized that they needed to address the many barriers that prevented qualified students from entering and graduating from nursing school. In

addition to academic standing, admission policies were restricted based on marriage, age, gender, and race. In 1950, the percentage of nonwhite nurses to the total nurse population was reported as 3.5% by the Bureau of the Census. Admission of blacks to nursing schools was 3.2% in 1960, and in the fall of 1962, 82% of schools reported that they had a policy to

admit students regardless of race. A survey conducted by the NLN in 1963 reported that the number of black students admitted into all associate degree, baccalaureate, and diploma programs constituted 3% of the total number of students admitted to the schools reporting, and that the percentage of those actually enrolled was 2.7%. Almost 52% of the blacks admitted to nursing schools cited in this study were admitted to predominately black programs. The number of blacks admitted to nursing programs was lower in 1960 than it had been in 1950, even though their population had increased. The closing of many predominately black nursing programs resulted in limiting the access of blacks to professional nursing.

By 1963, the NSNA Committee on Careers had fostered the development of state and local involvement in recruitment. The need for nurses continued to rise, and in 1961, the military pressed nurse volunteers to serve in the armed forces in response to Communist tensions in Cuba and

Berlin. In a report entitled, "Toward Quality in Nursing: Needs and Goals," published by the Surgeon General's Consultant Group on Nursing in 1963, it was estimated that "graduations from schools of professional nursing must increase by 75% to a total of 53,000 per year to meet minimal goals for 1970." One fifth of all professional nursing positions were vacant in 1962, 58% of nurse educators lacked graduate degrees, and 11 % of budgeted faculty vacancies were unfilled. A special report of the 1964-1965 NSNA Nursing Recruitment Committee announced that the committee would implement some of the recommendations in the Surgeon General's report. The report stated that, "Restrictions on admission of certain groups to nursing schools result in serious loss to the profession. Men, married women, older women, and members of certain racial groups, particularly blacks, are not accepted by all schools." The Recruitment Committee determined that removal of restrictions in admission policies needed to be combined



1979

The NSNA Board of Directors supported affirmative action programs (in education) until all applicants could compete on an equal basis.

1982

The NSNA House of Delegates took action to address the needs of disabled nursing students; to support nondiscriminatory practices regarding the education, employment, and utilization of nurses on the basis of sex in all areas of health care delivery; and to encourage nursing programs to include transcultural influences on nursing care.

1985

The BTN Project expanded to include economically and educationally disadvantaged students.

1986

Faced with a critical nursing shortage in the US, the scope of BRN was further expanded to include general recruitment into nursing while continuing to focus on minorities and disadvantaged students.



with intensive recruitment efforts specifically geared toward these groups.



Actions taken at the November 1964 meeting of the NSNA Nursing Recruitment Committee changed the course

of nursing recruitment. This meeting marked the beginning of a nationwide project that would eventually be labeled, "Breakthrough to Nursing." Fresh on the heels of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, signed by **President Johnson** in July, the NSNA Nursing Recruitment Committee developed a comprehensive plan to address the recruitment of minorities into the profession. Working closely with the NSNA Board of Directors, the Committee on Recruitment prepared a resolution to bring before the 1965 NSNA House of Delegates to make minority recruitment a

national project. The following resolution was passed by the House of Delegates on May 2, 1965:

Therefore be it resolved that the National Student Nurses' Association, Incorporated, in convention assembled ... adopt as its national project: 1) Involving nursing students in improving the position of disadvantaged groups in society; 2) Further involving present members of NSNA and other nursing students from disadvantaged groups in the work of the association; and 3) Recruiting members of these groups into nursing.

The 1965-1966 NSNA Nursing Recruitment Committee was empowered with the task of implementing the resolution. With guidance from **Frank Stanley**, representing the Urban League, and **Dr. Elizabeth Carnegie**, a black nursing leader, the committee developed strategies to involve all NSNA members in the national project, develop models, and collect data. Approaches were devised to reach college-bound

racial minorities and interest them in nursing. State, and district national project committees were established.

In an effort to target black students to enter nursing, NSNA members served as tutors for primary and secondary school black students. They helped obtain and complete applications for nursing school, and guided students once they were admitted. They developed numerous routes of reaching minorities through urban leagues, coalitions, community agencies, school districts, church groups, and Head Start programs, libraries, and guidance counselors.

Members of Future Nurse Clubs were encouraged to focus on recruiting minority students. Local contributions and grants were solicited to offset expenses. Nursing school admission policies were questioned, and local committees worked with directors of nursing schools, state nurses associations, and state leagues for nursing to get them changed.



1994

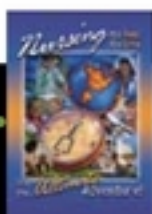
The NSNA Board of Directors recognized the importance of addressing the needs of nontraditional nursing students, defined as second career and older students.

1995

The NSNA House of Delegates took action to advocate for the right of men in nursing to work in labor and delivery.

1997

The NSNA House of Delegates recommended that the BRN Project participate in an Area Health Education Center activity entitled "Nursing Students Education with Style" program.



2000

The NSNA House of Delegates reaffirmed the BTN Project's efforts to recruit those underrepresented in the profession by helping associations form a BTN position and encouraging constituents to support enhanced recruitment efforts among younger populations, beginning in elementary schools. NSNA launched the "Nursing the Ultimate Adventure" campaign to interest teens in nursing. The campaign includes pamphlets and video that features boys and girls in high school who have made the decision to enter nursing. Their testimonials reflect the core values of the profession as the reasons for going into nursing.



In 1967, the first three target areas were selected for a new phase of the NSNA's National Project Breakthrough to Nursing. The Board pushed hard to interest members in Breakthrough to Nursing. Because interest was slow and resources scarce, the board targeted cities to concentrate its energies. In 1971, the Breakthrough to Nursing Project received federal monies to expand the number of target cities, hire field and headquarters staff, and strengthen an already established structure for minority recruitment. Funded target areas included: Phoenix, Los Angeles, Denver, Columbus, and Charlotte. Non-funded areas included Alabama, Idaho, and Illinois. Recruitment of minorities into nursing exposed NSNA members to inequities that cut through to the core of American society. They saw the hopelessness of indigent populations, including children, and the flagrant failure of the health care system to address human needs, and challenged NSNA's leaders to take on social issues. NSNA members worked in collaboration



2003

The NSNA House of Delegates encouraged recruitment and retention of men into the nursing profession and supported the inclusion of cultural competence education in nursing curricula.

2004

The NSNA House of Delegates supported mentoring middle, junior, and high school students with an interest in the nursing profession.

2005

The NSNA House of Delegates encouraged increasing awareness of the shortage of and need for nurse educators; and increasing NSNA involvement in global health issues.

2006

The NSNA House of Delegates supported the Wisewoman Expansion Act to provide low-income, uninsured women with health services to prevent cardiovascular disease. NSNA releases the DVD *Catch the Wave with NSNA*, an inspirational video used as a recruitment tool to introduce nursing students to the benefits of nursing and the National Student Nurses' Association.



with community groups, government agencies, and students in other health professions to provide services directly to people in their homes.

NSNA achieved national recognition for its efforts. In 1970, the Breakthrough to Nursing Project was nominated for the American Nurses Association Mary Elizabeth Mahoney Award, which recognized significant contributions to advancing equal opportunities in nursing to minorities. The Project added six new target areas that same year. Several NSNA representatives attended interdisciplinary meetings, conferences, and symposia, and also volunteered in Appalachia and participated in the Job Corps Summer Fellowship Program. A cadre of nursing students was fighting in the war on poverty and prejudice, and fervently believed that every nursing student had a

responsibility to make the world a better place.

BTN has become an important component of NSNA's governance structure that includes the position of a BTN Director on the NSNA Board of Directors. The BTN Director chairs the BTN Committee, which is responsible for reaching out to state and school chapters to implement the goals of the Project. The 2009-10 BTN Committee, chaired by **Carylin M. Holsey**, a student at Lee College, Baytown, TX, utilized the theme: *Igniting Dreams: - Providing the momentum to reach new heights and empowering success.* The committee focused on encouraging and empowering all individuals that have an interest in the nursing field, while continuing to pay special attention to and look for those that are less represented in the nursing community-at-large.

You are invited to celebrate BTN's 45th Anniversary with us, and I hope the 45th Anniversary theme, *"Igniting Dreams: Providing the momentum to reach new heights and empowering success,"* inspired your recruitment efforts this year. ☺



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Foundation of the NSNA. This article is an excerpt from her doctoral dissertation, "The Role of the National Student Nurses' Association in Addressing Social and Political Issues that Contributed to Student Unrest from 1960-1075" (Teachers College Columbia University, 1995). References available upon request.



2007

The NSNA House of Delegates encouraged increasing awareness among nursing students concerning the health disparities of migrant and seasonal farm workers and their families.



2009

The NSNA House of Delegates encouraged including global health in the nursing curriculum, and also supported advocating for interdisciplinary education. NSNA releases the DVD *Nursing – The Career of a Lifetime*, an inspirational program that presents accomplished nurses sharing their career journeys and new nurses revealing their dream careers, and the possibility of choosing a variety of nursing career paths.



2010

Celebrate the 45th Anniversary of the NSNA Breakthrough to Nursing Project!