



The Breakthrough to Nursing® column presents ideas and perspectives about the importance of cultural diversity in nursing.

By Grant Tyler, NSNA Director; Chair, NSNA Membership Committee; and member of the NSNA Breakthrough to Nursing® Committee

# Are You Strong Enough to Be a Nurse?

## Using the Nursing Exploration Patch and Medicine Merit Badge to Spotlight Nursing for Girls and Boys

“You are the future of this profession.” We have each heard this quote many times in school as we progress through the multiple lectures, clinicals, and careplans preparing us for the nursing careers ahead of us. As the future of this profession, we must also assess the potential devastation of the impending nursing shortage. This year’s Breakthrough to Nursing® (BTN) committee would like to give thanks to, and follow the lead of, several state associations: North Carolina Center for Nursing, North Carolina Association of Nursing Students, Student Nurses’ Association of Pennsylvania, Michigan Nursing Students’ Association, and Indiana Association of Nursing Students. These organizations have each labored on the future of nursing, working to implement a nursing career-focused patch for such organizations as the Girl Scouts of America and the Boy Scouts of America in their respective states.

This idea began at the North Carolina Center for Nursing. A Nursing Exploration Patch was created to focus on sharing the passion of nursing with students in elementary through high school. This patch is adaptable for a multitude of organizations that use a requirement system.

Many Girl Scout organizations throughout the country have seen the benefit of offering this type of experience to their members, while other organizations have yet to see similar benefits.

The exploration patch focuses on five components for completion. These five areas consist of career exploration, educational lessons, skill builders, service projects, and technology. These areas offer a variety of opportunities for students to learn more about opportunities in the nursing profession as well as improve health and wellness decisions.

Many organizations have strived to open the doors to youth across the country. Because of the passionate work by these committed professionals, many girl scouts may now choose to pursue this patch. Since 2001, these same organizations have attempted to implement the inclusion of this patch nationally through the Boy Scouts of America, but have not yet succeeded. It is imperative to include boys as well as girls in the opportunity to learn about nursing careers.

There is one similar merit badge offered by the Boy Scouts of America, which focuses only on medicine in general. Anna Sers,



Nursing Exploration Patch



Medicine Merit Badge®

(continued on p. 24)

APRN, CNAABC, worked with the Dutchess County (New York) Boy Scout Council beginning in 2003 to develop a program entitled “Are You Strong Enough to be a Nurse?” This program uses the Medicine Merit Badge requirements of the Boy Scouts of America with the ability to place focus on nursing. Boys are able to earn a merit badge while being exposed to a potential future in nursing. Boys and parents alike are able to spend a half day going through stations run entirely by men, allowing participants to view nursing as a more gender neutral profession. “The boys get a different look at what men do in nursing,” Sers stated. “With the boys participating together it helps to remove peer pressure.” The idea behind the program is to spotlight men while attracting both boys and their parents. With the requirements of this badge weighted toward boys

learning about physicians, Sers has been able to utilize those same requirements to highlight nursing.

Not only is there a low number of men in nursing, but more importantly, we are anticipating a nursing shortage

I look back at everything I learned with the Boy Scouts and wonder where I would be today had I been exposed to nursing sooner.

that may soon have devastating consequences. As an Eagle Scout, I spent my youth earning merit badges like this one. I look back at everything I learned with the Boy Scouts and wonder where I would be today had I been exposed to nursing sooner. Like so

many others out there, I was unaware that nursing is an option for men. Attitudes have begun changing over the years, but there is still an overwhelming stigma out there. The time has come to change perceptions and encourage young men to join one of the country’s most trusted professions.

I challenge every state and school association to check out the “Are You Strong Enough to be a Nurse” program at [www.scoutsexplorenursing.com](http://www.scoutsexplorenursing.com). We have the opportunity to follow the steps of an incredible nursing leader and begin making a difference that is sure to impact nursing. This website provides useful information including a materials section with a downloadable program outline. If feasible in your association, I encourage you to consider this type of BTN project. ©

The Medicine Merit Badge is Copyrighted Material. Used by permission of Boy Scouts of America. All rights reserved.