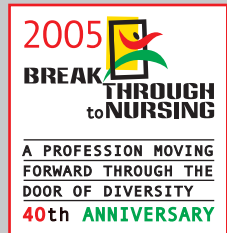


The need for professional nursing to reflect the growing diversity in today's society reaffirms the goals of NSNA's Breakthrough to Nursing project. The BTN Committee chose this year's theme, "A Profession Moving Forward Through the Door of Diversity", to support BTN goals of increasing recruitment/retention of minority groups within the nursing profession, and increasing faculty awareness of the needs of minority students. To celebrate the upcoming 40th anniversary of the BTN project, we can look back at the history of Breakthrough to Nursing and what issues sparked the need for its establishment.



"NURSING: A PROFESSION MOVING FORWARD THROUGH THE DOOR OF DIVERSITY"

BY TONYA BROWN

Breakthrough to Nursing Timeline

Compiled by Diane J. Mancino

NNSNA'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 and also appointed an NSNA representative to serve on the National League for Nursing's (NLN) Committee on Careers. NSNA had a valuable resource to offer the NLN committee: student contacts at state and district levels of the association. It was felt at the time that nursing students, being close in age to those they were targeting, could be effective recruiters. Hundreds of "Future Nurse" clubs had been established in secondary schools throughout the country and NSNA members would prove to be invaluable in reaching these high school and junior high school students.

With the passage of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (*Brown v. Board of Educ.*, 347, U.S. 483, 1954), many educators as well as the public became acutely aware of efforts to integrate schools, especially in the deep south, where integration met with fierce opposition. This Supreme Court ruling invalidated the 1896 decision in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163, U.S. 537) upholding "separate but equal" facilities. Separate schools for blacks and whites were now unconstitutional. In October 1956, the NLN Committee on Careers began addressing issues related to new supplies of nursing students and raised the question: what limitations based on such factors as marriage, age, sex, and ethnicity, should schools be encouraged to modify or remove?

With this, NSNA leaders began to realize that they needed to address the many barriers which 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.

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

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 NLN Committee on Careers began to address issues related to new supplies of nursing students and raised 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.

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.

1969 The NSNA House of Delegates identified men as a minority group to be included in the BTN Project, and worked to change the traditional association of women in nursing to a gender-neutral image of nursing.

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.

1973 The House of Delegates took action to advocate for men to have access to all areas of nursing practice. (Reaffirmed in 1982).

1974 The NSNA Board of Directors stepped up efforts 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 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.

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 BTN was further expanded to include general recruitment into nursing while continuing to focus on minorities and disadvantaged students.

1994 The NSNA Board of Directors recognized the importance of addressing the needs of nontraditional nursing students, defined as second career and older nursing 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 BTN Project participate in an Area Health Education Center activity entitled “Nursing Students Education with Style” program.

1998 The NSNA House of Delegates passed a resolution addressing the education of racial minorities regarding the importance of organ and tissue donation.

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.

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.

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(BTN-continued from p. 59)

2004 The NSNA House of Delegates supported mentoring middle, junior, and high school students with an interest in the nursing profession.

2005 Celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the NSNA Breakthrough to Nursing Project!

References

Brown v. Board of Education and Plessy v. Ferguson. Retrieved August 15, 2004, from the National Center for Public Policy Research <http://www.nationalcenter.org/brown.html>

Online Resources

Encyclopedia Britannica's Guide to Black History , 1999
<http://search.eb.com/blackhistory/>

Learn more about Breakthrough to Nursing and the Civil Rights Movement with the following learning aids from NSNA:

Not for Ourselves But for Others
Brings to life the 50 year history of NSNA including a section on the history of the Breakthrough to Nursing Project.

To Advance We Must Unite-100 Years of the American Nurses Association

Provides an excellent review of organized nursing's role in the Civil Rights Movement and issues related to segregation in nursing.

Nursing-The Ultimate Adventure
Breakthrough to Nursing's recruitment into nursing video featuring teens and nurses from diverse populations.

50 Years of the National Student Nurses' Association
by Diane J. Mancino

Tells the story of Breakthrough to Nursing in text and photos, this is an excellent review of NSNA's rich and complex 50 year history.