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2021 Excellence in Neuroscience Nursing Education Award

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Nominated by Karen Norman



It is great pleasure as a Stroke Coordinator at a Comprehensive Stroke Center to nominate my friend for AANN Excellence in Neuroscience Award. When I think about Neurology and Neuroscience nursing, she is the first person that comes to mind. She is a dedicated professional nurse educator that is always mentoring others to deliver the best possible care for patients. Her journey to this level of expertise has not been an easy one but one taken with many sacrifices and challenges.

She began her nursing career after graduating with her BSN from Winston Salem State University in 1975 with a BS degree in nursing. She was the first person in her family to leave home and complete college degree. While in college, she moved in with her

college dorm mother. This person became her friend for life. The nominee was her financial and primary caretaker till her death. She met and married her husband early in her nursing career. To this marriage she added 3 children that have always been her joy in life. As life has happened, her husband suffers from chronic kidney disease requiring dialysis. Without any hesitation, she has rearranged her house to provide care for her husband as well as her daughter and grandson. Caring is a principle that she is always demonstrating. She also cares for her professional colleagues and friends in the same way. I have seen her spend her last dollar to make sure others are fed. Our United way campaign is "Giving, Serving Together." She has always given at the leadership level while also volunteering her time.

Her nursing career began as a rehabilitation nurse in 1975. In 1981, she changed her career pathway to be a rehab educator. During this time period she guided the unit through initial CARF certification. She developed an orientation plan and ongoing education for nursing assistants as rehabilitation technicians. A position that promoted patient's rehab and the technician's growth and development. In the late 1980's, her career path took another challenge as she was given psychiatric nursing as an added responsibility. Many would not take on this challenge, but she flourished. She learned and taught that the connection between brain and illnesses were directly correlated. She developed education programs that met the needs of both services. As a new graduate in the early 80's, I met this wonderful person who taught me the importance of rehab and psychological illnesses. She has a way of teaching a class and making the student feel like the most important person in the world. Her favorite saying that I have now heard for almost 40 years – "Let's think about this!" "Now let's think through these steps one more time."

In the 1990's, we were working together in a supportive educational role, when she convinced 3 of us to return to school. I was working nights, but never fear she was there encouraging and pushing me that we could do that. She bought our ACT study guide and assured we all got our application completed. In 1998, she completed her MSN in nursing education. It took me a little longer, but I completed mine in 1999. This was due to her constant encouragement and her harassment. During the completion of the MSN, we returned to her alma mater WSSU to teach nursing clinicals. She was an advocate for the needs of minority nursing students. After completion of her degree, we continued to teach for many more years. She encouraged at least 4 others to teach there and offer professional development to our newest members of the nursing profession. This impact on the number of nurses in the workforce is hard to calculate. Yet we know many are successful leaders in nursing due to her mentorship and teachings. She remains active in the Alumni Nursing Association to this day. She supports scholarships and development opportunities for these students.

In the 2000, our hospital began its certification journey. As the educator for neuroscience nursing, she has been there all along the way. She developed educational offerings for all team members of the hospital. She has lead and prepared the staff for

the first primary stroke certification through comprehensive certification. In 2021, this hospital will have its 4th re-designation survey. She has been an integral member of the Neuro Bowl for the past 10 years. This educational offering uses a jeopardy team format with physicians as judges. It provides educational material to study and promote the latest research in neuroscience nursing. There is an average attendance of 75 plus nurses each year.

During her times as a neuroscience educator, she has worked on many education projects. She took the Yale-New Haven Dysphagia screen and adapted it for use at our facility. She implemented the screen, trialed it for use and then published an article about her research. This research promotes nursing's ability to assess dysphagia. It has been shared with other institutions. When the hospital switched to an electronic medical record it was added into the record. As time have elapsed the institution continues to work on eliminating dysphagia screen misses. She is currently leading a multidisciplinary team across the hospital system to develop alerts that will help eliminate dysphagia misses.

Education has been the backbone of her nursing career. She was one of the first BCLS (Basic Life Support-today) in our institution. She has maintained this certification and is now an Instructor-Trainer. She is also an ACLS (Advanced Cardiac Life Support) Instructor. As the leader of stroke and neuroscience education at the hospital, she was one of the first ASLS (Advance Stroke Life Support) instructors. She maintains these certifications and teaches courses throughout our area. All these courses come with cost that make it prohibited for everyone to take. She has utilized the information to develop classes that she can offer to improve practice without incurring the cost. Her goal is to improve the neuroscience patient's care.

Recently, she has taken her knowledge of the stroke and early experience with psychiatric units has allowed her to participate and conduct research on depression screening. She has presented several posters on her work at national programs. Recognition of the effects of depression on risk factor education and secondary prevention has been shared with nursing across the country.

She has been active in the nursing profession. She is a member of the American Nursing Association, American Association of Neuroscience Nursing, and the North Carolina Nurses Association. She has served as a board member in these organizations. She has remained active and helped the keep the Triad Chapter of AANN going during difficult times. She has presented posted presentations at ISC, AANN Conferences, and other conferences. With each project she brings a novice nurse to help mentor them in the presentation of research.

She has also promoted certification in Medical Surgical nursing and Stroke Nursing. She has sponsored a review course with her friend Cynthia Bautista that resulted in 20 new certified stroke nurses. This has become an annual project to promote certification

each year. She sponsors a lending library to help with study materials and provides pre-testing counseling to those that need it. Her philosophy is you can do this!

Lastly, she is an active member of the United Methodist Church. She is active in her beliefs, but she also uses this as an opportunity to promote healthy lifestyles. She is also active volunteer for the American Heart Association, Red Dress Day, MS society, and Joe Niekro Aneurysm support group. She provides financial support, her physical support, and her time.

I could write for hours about this person. She is a courageous team player who had promoting Neuroscience nursing no matter where she goes. I strongly nominate her for the Excellence in Neuroscience Education.