

Nursing *Voice*

LEHIGH VALLEY
HOSPITAL



Second
Place
Photo Contest
2001

Second Place

Karen Schleicher, RN
Labor and Delivery

P A Mothers *Prayer*

Thank You Lord, for the precious gift of new life,
And for the people who work saving lives.
Be with me in joy and fatigue;
In nights of fitful sleep and in
The blessings of peaceful slumber.
May I always recall the awe and wonder
Of this day; and rejoice
At the privilege of being an
Instrument of your ongoing creation.
Amen



Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukah! Happy Easter! Flags and Fireworks for the Fourth! But what works for Nurse Week? Happy Nurse Week? Merry Nurse Week? Congratulations? Nothing seems quite right. No phrase really captures the sense of Nurse Week.

I could say congratulations on your decision to become a nurse – or on your successful completion of

school and boards. Maybe I could wish you a Happy Career in Nursing. I don't think "Merry" works although humor and joy are significant features of nursing.

The question is how to express to nurses the feelings engendered by Nurse Week. Congratulations is one fragment – after all, you did decide to become a nurse and did succeed in school and boards. Respect is another portion – you do research; you continue to educate yourself on new medications and procedures. Awe is another component of the feelings prompted by examining nurses – awe at the knowledge, skill, and sheer hard work displayed every day. Humor is certainly a bit of nursing because people can say and

do funny things sometimes. Friendship and support are prominent emotions when I think of the nurses I know. Caring...definitely a major factor. Caring for patients and each other.

From the Editor...

Maybe the answer is that no cliché or single phrase is sufficient. Nursing is a valuable, multifaceted profession that demands one's best. Take pride in your accomplishments. Honor yourself and your fellow nurses. Strive to meet the highest standards of care.

Perhaps Nursing Voice honors nursing most by letting nurses speak for themselves. Listen to the voices of this year's essay writers and celebrate Nurses.

Darla Stephens, RN, Lehigh Valley Home Care,
Editor, Nursing Voice

Essay Contest Winners

1st Place

My "Other" Family

Beth Kushner-Giovenco, RNC, Mother Baby Unit

2nd Place

A Most Beautiful Tapestry

Marybeth Sprankle, RN, Adult Behavioral Health

3rd Place

If We Only Had More Time

Maryann Godshall, RN, Pediatrics

Photo Contest Winners

2002 First Place

Veronica Weslowski, RN, Heart Station LVH-M

Second Place

Carol Stiegler, RN, ASU-OR 17th

Honorable Mention

Maryann Godshall, RN, Pediatrics

Debra Belles, RNC, Labor and Delivery

Kathy Urban, RNC, Spectrum Administrators

Kathleen Vitale, LVH-M Central Scheduling

Karen Yellin, RN, Supervisor, LVH-M

Mary Ann Amole, RN, NICU

Richard Riccio, RN, BSN, CCRN, TNICU

2001 First Place

Bobbi Heisley, Central Physician Billing Dept.

Second Place

Karen Schleicher, RN, Labor & Delivery

Third Place

Carolyn Stiegler, RN, ASU-OR 17th

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17 PACU

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Home Care

2002 Nursing Voice

My "Other" Family



We were out later than we thought we would be on Christmas Eve. Much later than we should have been since it was close to midnight and our rambunctious 2½ year old son Ryan was still awake. But we had been with our families welcoming the holiday season, and we always make allowances for an altered sleep schedule during this time of year. We also were celebrating that our son was home and healthy after a two-week stint in the hospital for complications of pneumonia. This was going to be a happy time for our families, who had been so worried about Ryan and it felt good to be happy after all the worries those two weeks had held for us all.

I thought nothing of the two messages blinking on the answering machine when we arrived home. I listened to the first, which was from a co-worker. She sounded desperate, begging me to call her when I

explain the visceral pain that I felt, but anyone who has lost a loved one tragically knows the blow that the sudden death of a vibrant person has on your soul.

For Sharon was not just a co-worker. She was a friend. I first met Sharon when I was a new graduate. She guided me and mentored me and made me feel welcomed. I admired her talents as a nurse and looked up to her as a role model. Although I left mom-baby for several years, when I returned, I found the same Sharon. This time, I was a seasoned nurse but nevertheless she once again came to my aid. For I now was a new mother and again she supported me and guided me with her experiences as a mother. She laughed at my stories of Ryan and always took the time to ask how he was. I depended on her for that guidance more than I realized. I took for granted that

she would be there when I called with Ryan's latest achievements, or fears with his newest ailment.

And now she was gone. Not to another unit. Not to another hospital. But gone. Forever.

As a unit, we pulled together. We accompanied each other to the calling hours and the funeral. We held each other in the halls as we cried and

mourned her loss. We came together and had a memorial service that I don't think any of us will ever forget. We continue to talk often of her and how much we will miss her.

It made me realize that we not only care for our patients. We also care for each other. In subtle ways and in ways we don't notice. It's the hug that we give when we've had a bad day or a less than ideal patient outcome. It's the donuts we stop to get, remembering everyone's favorites. It's the birthdays we remember, the flowers we send to an ailing co-worker, and the fundraisers we plan for the unexpected events that happen. It's offering to help make a bed or offering to watch a patient while your coworker takes a much-needed break.

Beth Kushner-Giovenco,
RNC, BSN, IBCLC
Mother-Baby Unit

arrived home. "No matter how late" her words echoed. It was not unusual for her to call, for she and I had become good friends through the years. But on Christmas Eve? It was the strain in her voice that put a knot in my stomach. Something was wrong. It was not until I heard the second message that I began to understand what. The second message was from my mother, again with a plea to call.

As I heard my mom say hello, the phone shook in my hand. I knew it was not going to be good news. But nothing prepared me for what she was about to say. "It's Sharon... she and her husband were killed today in a car accident." She was crying and I could barely understand her. "No," I sobbed, as if that would change the words that just hit me. It was then the severity of the words struck. I am unable to

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My "Other" Family

I am fortunate to work with an amazing bunch of women. They have supported me in my successes and failures. They are there to pick me up when I fall, and to keep me up when I feel I no longer have the strength to keep going. They are a family to me

and it's taken such a tragedy for me to realize the extent of my feelings for them. We are blessed with today, we do not know what tomorrow will hold. Take time today to let your "other" family know how much you truly care. Thank you my friends for being you.

The following is a poem I wrote after Sharon's tragic loss.

A TRIBUTE TO SHARON

Maybe it was her cheerful nature
The way her smile lit up the room
The way her eyes twinkled when she laughed
I'm not sure exactly what it was
But I loved her so.

Maybe it was the way she loved those around her
Her family... her friends...
Unconditionally, with an intensity difficult to describe
I'm not sure exactly what it was
But I loved her so.

Maybe it was the way she nurtured
As she cared for her patients and their families
As she cared for her co-workers and their families
I'm not sure exactly what it was
But I loved her so.

Maybe it was the way she guided and mentored us
As she shared her stories and wisdom
On being a mother, a wife, a friend
I'm not sure exactly what it was
But I loved her so.

Maybe it was her gentleness
The way her hug warmed your heart
How she knew something was wrong without you saying
I'm not sure exactly what it was
But I loved her so.

Maybe it was her energy
The way she took on every challenge
Her lack of fear even during the most dire ones
I'm not sure exactly what it was
But I loved her so.

Maybe it was none of these
Maybe it was all of these
What I do know is that she is gone
But only in a physical sense
For I feel her spirit inside me
I can hear her voice still guiding
I can still hear her laughter
I can still feel her warmth
What I do know exactly
Is that I loved her
And I will miss her so.

It made me realize that we not only care for our patients. We also care for each other. In subtle ways and in ways we don't notice. It's the hug that we give when we've had a bad day or a less than ideal outcome.

Maryann Godshall, RN
Pediatrics



The

True Heroes

Honorable Mention Essay Contest

I am writing this story to talk about those who I've learned are true heroes. They are not sport stars, movie stars, or even world leaders. The true heroes are children with cancer. I used to think they were brave soldiers, but I've learned they are indeed heroes. I've seen many children fighting the battle with cancer, however what led me to this final realization is a night I spent with a 17-year old girl. I'll call her "M." She was dying of Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia (ALL). She had been diagnosed with leukemia when she was 11 years old. While other kids were playing, she was enduring chemotherapy. That alone is heroic. She had been doing well and was thought to be in remission. Until recently when the unthinkable happened... she relapsed. Lately, we were giving her supportive care, transfusing blood products and easing her pain with narcotics. She knew she was sick, but wanted to go home so she could go to the mall. She just wanted to go to the mall! What a simple request. Many people in the hospital made extraordinary efforts to get her home just once more. She was discharged on a Thursday evening and readmitted that Saturday in severe pain. "M" got to the mall 2 times in that short period. I was assigned to her that following Monday. As you might imagine, when I looked at my assignment and heard she was dying, I was not overjoyed. I wasn't one of the unit's core group of chemotherapy nurses who knew her well. I had only cared for "M" a few times. I felt inadequate. I knew I would just do my best.

She was on a Dilaudid and Ativan drip but still having pain. We gave her boluses of pentobarbital,

which seemed to help. Her Ativan was discontinued and a pentobarbital drip was added to the Dilaudid for comfort. As I watched her struggle, I remembered the days she was up walking around in the halls, talking to all the staff, and looking for stuff to do. I saw her parents and could not even imagine their pain. I have a 17-year-old, and could not imagine saying good-bye to those hopes and dreams. All my actions seemed so inadequate.

She fought so valiantly, but then just before 9 PM, she passed away. As I sat at the bedside with her parents and physician, I couldn't believe how hard she had fought. She was so brave for so long and NEVER (as kids never do) complained or gave up. Her parents cried. I tried to be strong so I could help them. The pastor and chaplain on call were so very helpful. I realized then, this was another gift of nursing. Helping people to "die well." Not to die alone, but loved with family and friends at their side. I remembered a comment made by a pediatric oncology practitioner in an article in the *Nursing Voice*: "People ask me how can I do this. How can I not." I finally understood what she meant. What I thought was going to be a bad night, turned into a beautiful experience I will cherish forever. How fortunate and privileged I was to be there when she took her last breath. My fellow staff members were so supportive.

On the drive home that night, I turned on the radio and heard Mariah Carey sing "Hero." Tears just rolled down my face.

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Second Place Essay Contest



Marybeth Sprankle, RN Adult Behavioral Health

It began like any other Saturday in mid-December. I arose early and began making mental notes of things I had to do. I mailed Christmas cards, hung Christmas decorations, threw some laundry in and made a quick run to the grocery store. Knowing how quickly a day can fly, I attempted to get as much work done as possible. This evening was going to be "date night" for my husband and me. We searched the newspaper for an action movie to enjoy after a quiet dinner at a local establishment. I was really looking forward to a stress-buster evening with Ron.

Around 4:30 that afternoon, we both changed into something a little more chic, a rare occasion with the hustle and bustle of Christmas, and drove to the restaurant. While we were on the final course, Ron asked me which movie I had decided on. For some reason, I changed my mind about the movie, remembering that our church was having their musical drama that evening. Although it would be offered again Sunday evening, the words just suddenly came to me, "I would like to go to the church play tonight!" Being the kind soul that he is, he just said, "Are you sure?" Indicating that I was, we left the restaurant and headed for church.

A Most Beautiful

"Bethlehem Star: The Light That Still Shines" was the name of the play presented by members of the church, both young and old. I was impressed with their talent and comforted by the message "open your heart to someone today." I felt I had certainly made the right decision in suggesting we change our plans at the last minute. Little did I know that the evening was far from over... and the best was yet to come.

At the end of the musical, a church member, who is also an RN, stood at the microphone to make an announcement. He told us there had been an emergency situation involving a fire at a high rise in the community. Our church had been asked to assist by "taking in" a large number of people who needed a place to stay temporarily. He then asked if any medical personnel in the audience would consider remaining to assist until we understood exactly what their needs might be. The rest of the congregation was asked to exit as quickly as possible, to empty the parking lots so emergency vehicles could enter to bring the residents. At this point, we weren't sure what had happened or where these people in need would be coming from. We were told that approximately 200 might be brought to our facility. I turned to my husband and told him, "You go home, honey, but I must stay." He just smiled. If I was staying, HE would too.

Shortly, all those who stayed were directed to a meeting in the old chapel. Long ago, the pews had been removed and chairs placed instead for Sunday School classes. Interested people and teenagers who just wanted to help in some capacity came also. We formed teams and quickly planned for the arrival of our "patients." The first rumor that we heard was that an apartment building had caught fire, and then later that it was an elderly high-rise. Finally, we got word from a Command Center that over 500 Cedarbrook Nursing Home residents were being evacuated because of heavy smoke throughout the building due to an electrical fire. Suddenly the mood changed. We thought we would be taking care of families with young children who needed a place to lay their heads

Beautiful Tapestry

for the night, to get in from the cold... instead, we were talking about people with complicated physical and mental needs. Now I realized the seriousness of the situation but could not fathom the extent of the help we could offer. This was definitely going to be a challenge. As a professional nurse associated with Lehigh Valley Hospital, I realized that my patients were wherever I happened to be.

The only doctor in our group of volunteers was Dr. David Carney, a local physician who had also been attending the Christmas program with his family. He met with us and told us we had an enormous job ahead of us. I have to tell you that at this point I began thinking about how early I had arisen that morning and how hard I had worked all day trying to get Christmas plans on the road. It was already 9:00 PM and I thought how nice it would be to just go home and get my jammies on! Then, this other little voice inside me said, "Hey kiddo, what are you thinking of? Knock it off!"

We had a little reprieve notice before the emergency vehicles arrived. During that time, approximately 40 volunteers transformed our church and Sunday School into a nursing facility. We set up tables for a reception and sign-in area and decided who would triage patients. Others removed folding chairs from the classrooms. Some went down to the kitchen to assemble snacks and beverages. Two men assumed leadership and assigned the medical personnel to the one of three different areas. We decided to use two of the largest classrooms and the old Chapel. I was to be in charge of the Chapel. Dr. Carney said of these arrangements later, "WE didn't do that... God did that, and in a short period of time! He provided us with leadership, very talented nurses (who just happened to be here on the site), support staff, volunteers, and kitchen help. He provided us with our own Physical Therapist, an Occupational Therapist, a Pharmacist and even our own newspaper reporter. He knew that we would need some people who had an understanding of emergencies and disasters, so He

provided us with several firemen on site." All of these people just happened to be on site that evening... and if you believe that, I have a bridge in Brooklyn I would like to sell you! No, I am not convinced that "these things just happened." Dr. Carney wasn't either, when he stopped to remember that our ways are not always God's ways. While we were waiting, my husband went home to get me a change of clothes. I've never nursed in high-heeled shoes before! He also brought me my own stethoscope.

As the rescue vehicles began bringing our patients, everyone was in ready mode. The following thought came into my mind... "Okay guys, let's roll." With a small handful of volunteers to assist me, I was really ready. It was something that I always wanted to do. When Hurricane Andrew hit Florida, I wanted to go. When 9/11 came, I wanted to go. I always wanted to be an active participant in some way that would be real sacrifice. I guess it's the part of me that always wanted to be a hero.

None of our patients walked in that night. Most were in wheelchairs while a few arrived on stretchers or litters. We didn't get the 200 patients we thought we were going to get, but we received 96 and we only had 7 or 8 RN's to divide among the three areas. The patients were triaged according to their medical needs and physical disabilities. Some were amputees, one or more paraplegic. Some had Foleys, colostomies, ileostomies, or wound dressings needing care. A brief medical history was obtained (it was important to know if any patients were diabetic) and volunteers, called runners, wheeled each patient to one of the three areas where RN's were waiting. These RN's were very able to handle the situation because of the wonderful, devoted, caring volunteers that assisted.

I spoke with each and every patient, introduced myself, took their vital signs, and offered them our support. They were cold, anxious, and confused. Several elderly ladies looked around and asked where they were. I responded that they were at Cedar Crest

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A Most Beautiful Tapestry

Everyone present that night became a piece of a beautiful tapestry woven of many strands. Not one of fine cloth or silk, but of the purest cotton, strong, durable, rich in design and lasting. A most beautiful tapestry made of the finest, caring people that I know.

Church. Much to our delight, they giggled and said how nice to be in church again and that they hadn't been inside one for quite a while. Some patients were angry and gave us the silent treatment initially. The teenage volunteers offered them snacks and warm drinks, after checking with me to see which snacks to give them. Other team members sat on the floor beside the wheelchairs and held the patients' hands and tried to cheer them.

Within a couple hours, the chapel was full with 50 patients in wheelchairs or litters. Although so much was going on and so much needed to be done, I began to realize that these people were becoming exhausted. When Dr. Carney came into the Chapel, I told him, "I have to get these people out of their wheelchairs and onto the floor so they can sleep. They are totally exhausted." Dr. Carney said he didn't know how we were going to do that, especially with 50 people in one area. I was somewhat discouraged but a little while later, we received notification that the Red Cross was sending us cots! I couldn't believe it. When Dr. Carney told me, he asked how many cots I thought I could use. (He was thinking 10 or so). "I need one for each resident." He just smiled and patiently said there was no room in the chapel to place a cot for everyone. "Where will you put all the wheelchairs?" I asked him to leave it to me. He still doubted it could be done, so I put my hands on my hips, looked him straight in the eyes and said, "I will show you how! Please let me try." He looked puzzled but smiled and nodded. I began to sense that things would fall into place.

Midway through the night, Wal-Mart heard of the need and donated huge boxes filled with brand new pillows. They told us to bring a list to the store, and they would fill it if they could. They donated everything that we needed including cases of diapers, personal wipes, surgical gloves and several other items. Lehigh Valley Hospital across the street provided us with blankets, bed pads, sheets, pillowcases, and laundry bags to put our soiled linens into.

Papa John's Pizza also heard, and sent us 15 large pizzas to feed our staff of volunteers. Things HAD begun to roll and we were working like a finely tuned team to give the best possible care to our patients. One of the volunteers rolled a big TV with VCR into the chapel and the only videos we had to offer were... you got it... "Veggie Tales" and Sunday school lessons! The residents loved them and never hesitated to call out when a tape finished that it was time to "Change the movie, Missy!"

The cots finally arrived and into the early morning hours, we worked diligently to place each patient into a nice, clean, warm cot... each one with their own "new" pillow. Eyes closed and most were in dreamland quickly.

I left the chapel in someone else's hands while I walked over to the command center, our church library. I sat for a few moments to enjoy a slice of pizza. I had witnessed a complete change – from a Saturday evening church play into a newly formed nursing facility. Through the windows of the library, I saw young and old alike moving quickly through the hallways intent on the job of caring for the elderly patients. I saw love shining through smiles as each one labored to help another. I saw teenagers who literally had to be dragged from the building to go home with anxious parents, concerned for their child's rest. I heard "thank you" over and over again. I saw my tired husband, who refused to leave, pushing patients in wheelchairs to the bathroom in between yawns.

Each of these volunteers are special, caring people... oops, it is morning already. The sun is coming upon a new day. Every one present that night became a piece of a beautiful tapestry woven of many strands. Not one of fine cloth or silk, but of the purest cotton, strong, durable, rich in design and lasting. A most beautiful tapestry made of the finest, caring people that I know.

If We Only Had

More Time

Third Place
Essay Contest

Maryann Godshall, RN
Pediatrics

If we only had more time...
We could have gone on that shopping trip to King of Prussia
You could have eaten your favorite chicken in your favorite restaurant
We could have become better friends
If we only had more time...
I could have come to your wedding
I could have cared for your children instead of you
We could have had that party at the "marble bar" in your basement
You could have done that photo shoot in New York
If we only had more time...
We could have gone on another limo ride with "Vito" the driver
We could have gone out dancing
We could have made your parents that photo memory album you wanted
Your grandma might understand what a cell phone is
If we only had more time...
We could have taken a walk
I could have sat on your bed and talked
I could have gotten you that double chocolate cake you like
We could have made s'mores
If we only had more time...
You could have brought your dog in again

We could have had another pizza party in the conference room
We could eat another Perkins' pie
I could have looked at you and not asked why?

If we only had more time...
They might have found an antibiotic that kills bacteria
You might have had your lung transplant
We could have made you better
If we only had more time...
I would have better understood your pain
I wouldn't have had any other patient but you
I would have been able to sit down and watch that movie with you
If we only had more time...
If we only had more time...

If we only had more time...
But we don't. Our time is over.
You are gone and I miss you. I miss your family.
They became my family. Thank you for letting me in. I forever will treasure each minute I cared for you and spent with you. Be free. Now your beauty is eternal and time doesn't matter.



Caring...

A Deeper Meaning

Honorable Mention *Essay Contest*



Debra Belles, RNC
Labor and Delivery

Caring blossoms long before our
nursing careers.
We didn't just fall into this profession,
It was destined.
The enthusiasm, the caring,
The visions we had as graduate nurses,
Fueled our existence.
Do you remember the first time
You really connected with a patient?
Perhaps it was the way the old woman
looked at you
Or how her eyes spoke to you
when she could not.
Do you remember how you
quieted the sick child
When she was afraid?
Or the extra moment you took to
listen to the widower,
As he spoke of the good old days.
That was important...
Really important.
To Him.

Remember the thrill you felt
When you saw life
Bursting into the world as a
newborn baby?
And, there was no way to foretell
Your reaction to the young woman
Killed in the car accident.
Think about how you felt when the
older man,
Swallowing his pride,
Asked for help changing his
colostomy bag.
Never forget just how important
it was to save their dignity,
Spur their hope, and care for
their families.
Growing with each new experience.
Thirsting for every new chance
to really make a difference.
Good Nurses. Caring Nurses...
never forget that passion.
They never allow that fire to
extinguish inside their hearts.

Honorable Mention

Essay Contest

Taking Away Someone's Freedom



It is scary to think that someone has the power to take away another's freedom. I'm not talking about being sent to prison or losing the car keys for a week in the case of a wayward teenager. It's not about losing the freedom of speech or any of the other freedoms we think about.

This is taking away the freedom of someone you love. Taking away their freedom to live in their own place, to go to the store when they want to, or visit the next door neighbor for a cup of tea.

You must think the person doing this is heartless or cruel or that I'm talking about someone in a foreign country. I'm not.

Kathy Urban, RNC
Spectrum Administrators

Most of the time it is not heartless or cruel and it happens every day right here in your own town, in your own neighborhood or possibly in your own family.

Having to place someone you love into a nursing home can be devastating to the person to whom it is happening and the family who has to do the placing. Some of you may already have gone through this life changing event in your immediate or extended family.

It happened to me last year when I had to place a ninety-two year old aunt into a nursing home. I knew all of the practical reasons in my head. Her safety was of prime concern. She already had fractured her pelvis trying to get on a bus to come home from visiting her ninety-four year old sister in the nursing home.

We tried to keep her at home as long as we could, but despite her assurances to me that she was eating and able to take care of herself, my family and I knew she was declining. Typically, she was sleeping more, eating less, and forgetting to do normal activities.

It is one of the most heartbreaking things to see. A woman who has lived all of those years independently. Now she must change her entire life. Can you imagine ninety-two years of independence and now you have to move into a home with strangers? Think about it. She will now eat with strangers, share a bathroom with strangers, and possibly have to share a room with a stranger. How do you tell someone who has graced your life for so many years you are taking away their freedoms for their own good?

Some of you might say, "Well, it's for her own good," and you would be right. But try to imagine taking all of your belongings, which for most of us would be in our home or an apartment, and reducing them to what can fit into a 9x12 foot room. Forget that dining room set that was your mother's and forget those dishes you have been saving for special occasions. What about those boxes of pictures you have collected over the years of family members past and present? What about your letters from a sweetheart many years ago? What happens to all of the things that are a part of you?

I remember "that" day well. I was up all night before the day of the move. Still trying to find the right words to make her feel better. Trying to decide if this was the right thing to do. Was it just because we were tired of running back and forth checking on her? Or was it because we had to give up some of our freedoms to make sure she was safe, taking her medications, had food, etc? Was this the reason, our convenience?

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Taking Away Someone's Freedom

How do you tell someone who has graced your life for so many years that you are taking away their freedoms for their own good?

As dawn approached and near tears for the tenth time that night, I knew the decision was necessary. Not right, but necessary. How could making a person give up their freedoms be right? But it was the necessary thing to do.

The look in her eyes as I knelt down by her chair and took her hand in mine is one I will never forget. My voice was shaking as I quietly told her that the time had come for someone to now take care of her. As I softly told her again the reasons she had to leave, the tears welled up in my eyes. As the tears started down my face, she looked at me and placing her frail hand on mine, she whispered, "I know."

In those two words, she willingly gave up all the things that you and I take for granted – watching the television show you want to watch, eating when and what you want; the list goes on and on.

I am in awe of the strength it took for her to say those two words. I can only hope that when my time

comes, as it will for many of us, that I will have the strength to be able to give up my freedoms with as much grace and dignity as Aunt Betty.

Remember their internal strength the next time you drive past a nursing home and see the residents walking outside or sitting by a window. Remember they were just like you many years ago, with fulfilled lives of family and friends.

Do you have the strength to think of them when you have baked too many cookies or have extra books waiting for readers? Do you have the strength to take five minutes and drop off treats or cut some of your flowers and tell the attendant, "Please give these to the residents," or stop by and actually go inside for a visit. Takes a lot of strength, doesn't it?

If they have the strength to give up their lives as they knew it, do you have the strength to acknowledge that sometime in the future, someone who cares for you will be asking you to do the same?

Honorable Mention Essay Contest

Kathleen Vitale
LVH-M Central Scheduling



Once

I once felt strength in a hand held in comfort.

I once saw compassion in eyes familiar with despair.

I once heard conviction in a voice guided by experience.

I once smelled tranquility in a rose laid by my bed.

I once tasted relief from water held to parched lips.

I once was blanketed in hope and kindness and love...

I once knew a nurse.

Imperfect Love

Kathy Urban, RNC
Spectrum Administrators

Honorable
Mention
Essay Contest



The woman had just given birth.
The baby was born.
The pain is over.
The nine months of hoping and
waiting are gone.
She smiles tenderly at her child.
Her face changes.
Is this the child
I have been hoping for?
Her eyes begin to tear and redden.
Her hopes begin to fade.
The child is not the perfect baby
She thought it would be.
The imperfections are apparent.
What will everyone think?
The infant, the child
Is not who she wanted.
The baby looks at her
Almost with a knowing glance,
But you are my mom,
Will you take care of me?
In the next few hours or days,
The woman cares for the child.
Feeds and clothes.
Bathes and watches over the cradle.

Whether in the minutes after birth
Or in the days ahead
As in all things, time changes our thinking
And acceptance gives way to
something more.
The love builds for this imperfect child.
"This child is mine and no one else's,"
thinks the woman.
In that moment this woman
Becomes in the true sense of the word,
a Mother.
She loves this special child more than
life itself.
She will sacrifice many times in the future.
She will cry with frustration at times.
And she will wonder "Why" too many
times to count.
But who else could love this special child
With whatever imperfections
More than a special woman who
is a Mother.
For who among us is perfect.
Thank God we had a mother
Who loved our imperfections.

Carol Stiegler, RN

ASU-OR 17th

The smiles tell the whole story. The patient and his mother are pleased with the toy and the improved quality of life donated by caring professionals. The nurse's smile demonstrates the joy that comes with caring for others. The photo was taken in Guatemala during a trip with the "Healing the Children" organization.



Second Place

Photo Contest

2002

The Perfect Job

Honorable Mention Essay Contest

Karen Yellin, RN
Supervisor, LVH-M



"Why me?" she thought. She slammed her locker shut and got ready for her 3-11 shift. "Why do I always have to be the one to be 'flexible?' It's like I'm the only one of the bunch who has no life! Jeez!"

As a result of the times, Ellen had lost her job as a college health nurse at the local community college. She had been in college health for nearly a decade. She'd stepped back into the hospital and to what some might call "real nursing:" bedside nursing. She had taken a job a year or so ago in PACU. She remembered "Post Anesthesia Care Unit" being called simply "Recovery Room" in the old days. She didn't understand why things just couldn't remain the same.

Ellen saw that more than the names of the units had changed. IV bottles were now bags. Fewer needles were required with "needleless" systems in use. No more "buretols." Now doses of IV medication came in little, pre-mixed plastic bags. Much more was computerized, even procedure manuals and PDRs. Fewer memos were posted, since more was communicated through the hospital's Intranet. Many other things had changed as well. It was all exciting, challenging, and initially, rather scary.

In spite of the vast changes, the basics remained the same, and slowly Ellen adjusted. She was grateful for her understanding co-workers as she found her way into current hospital routines.

In fact, after a while, she thought she'd found the perfect job: regular hours, most weekends off, skilled and caring co-workers, sleepy patients who rarely stayed longer than an hour or two, no baths, no meals to serve,

few bed pans and no visitors! She never had to get involved. It was ideal!


Ellen had one of the coveted day-shift positions. However, the staff now was faced with new challenges. The operating room schedule was brisk, and staff frequently had to adjust their schedules to meet the demands.

They were supposed to take turns rotating to the less desirable later shifts. Ellen often volunteered because, in reality, she was the one with the most give in her life, although some days she allowed herself to feel very put-upon. This was one of those days.

"It's like they just know when I'm on. They save all the late, messy cases just for me!" she grumbled to herself as she hooked the oximeter to yet one more seventy-something somnolent patient. She knew her sentiments were irrational, but she was still thinking about the fact that she couldn't be home when her daughter got home from college. They would have to find time tomorrow for catching up.

She slipped into autopilot as she snapped monitor leads into place and attached the blood pressure cuff. She glanced at the monitor as she put the stethoscope in her ears, beginning to count and listen to the woman's respirations.

She regurgitated all the vital signs and listened to the anesthetist's report.



“... a seventy-nine year old woman...,” the CRNA went on. “She’s the same age as Mom,” Ellen thought.

She continued to listen to report, and nearly chuckled as she looked at the woman’s face. “Yep, that could be mom, alright; getting her hair permed for her big day of general anesthesia!” Ellen thought.

“... History of post-op nausea and vomiting. I gave her Reglan and Zofran. She’s healthy. Only been in the hospital to have her gall bladder out and to have her three kids. Met them in Holding. Nice family. It’ll be hard for them. She isn’t going to have much time because of what they found. Such as shame.” The anesthetist handed her papers to Ellen, and left the unit.

“Don’t rub your eyes,” Ellen cautioned, as she gently brought the patient’s hand away from her face. Ellen held the woman’s hand and smiled.

The woman’s hair fell around her face in soft ringlets. Her complexion was smooth with a hint of a flush, much as a child’s might glow after coming in from playing outdoors with her friends.

“It’s all over, Doris. It’s six o’clock in the evening and you’re in the recovery room.”

“Is the doctor here? Can I talk to him?” Doris tried to ask, slurring her words a bit.

It was a relief (sometimes more than others) to justify postponing some conversations until another time.

“He’ll talk to you later when you’re more awake. You won’t remember anyway because of the medications they gave you. You get kind of forgetful for a while,” Ellen explained, squeezing Doris’ hand again. She let go, turned, and started her charting.

Ellen stopped intermittently to check the vital signs, dressings, drains, and urine output; she asked Doris if she had any pain. Doris had an epidural catheter placed that was working beautifully to manage discomfort.

She walked over to the desk where the surgeon, more somber than usual, was writing the orders.

Ellen hesitated for a moment until the doctor finished. “So... she’s not going to do well?” Ellen asked tentatively.

The tired surgeon looked up, locked eyes with Ellen and said, “No. It doesn’t look like it. Much more extensive than we previously thought.

Basically, what we did was remove most of the cancer, decompressing the bowel. At least she’ll be able to eat normally for a little while longer.” He paused, then started to look for the patient’s home phone number. He still needed to talk with the husband. “No, she doesn’t have long at all.”

Ellen glanced over at Doris sleeping peacefully. She was the only patient in the unit at the moment. Ellen waked back to the bedside with a couple blankets from the warmer.

“Let me bundle you up a bit. It’s awful cold in here, don’t you think?”

“Well, I guess I am a bit chilly,” Doris responded with a slight shiver, her lips sticking to each other and to her tongue as she spoke.

“Looks like you could use an ice chip or two?” Ellen offered.

“Oh, yes! That would be lovely.”

It was October, and as she completed her paperwork Ellen thought of Doris and the coming months: Thanksgiving, Christmas, the end of another year. She was seized by a sudden grief for this stranger’s inevitable passing.

Every once in a while, even after thirty years in nursing, unwanted emotions would surface briefly, then get pushed back down just as quickly as they had appeared.

“Well, Doris, time to get these wires unhooked and get you back to your room. Guess your family’s waiting for you?” Ellen began to remove the monitors.

“Yes. They’re wonderful. My husband was waiting to come over until my daughter was out of work. He doesn’t drive anymore,” she smiled weakly, sighed, and closed her eyes. She was still very tired.

There are no windows in the recovery room. However, right outside the unit at the end of the hall, there is a large window that encompasses the entire wall. Ellen liked that window. She could check the weather and get a glimpse of what was going on in the outside world.

Continued on page 20



First Place
Photo Contest

2001

This picture taken in the PICU, of Michelle Dunstan, RN and her patient, is a visual essay of "Nurses Caring."

Carolyn Stiegler, RN
ASU-OR 17th Street



I belong to an organization called "Healing the Children." This organizations goes to third world countries to do surgery on under-privileged children. This picture was taken of a little boy in Panama. I was taking him to the operating room. He has such a beautiful smile on his face because he knows we are going to repair his mouth.

Third Place
Photo Contest

2001

Honorable Mention Essay Contest

Nurse, Where's My Mommy?

Mary Ann Amole, RN
NICU



Nurse, nurse, where's my mommy?
Could you find my daddy, too?
We went to Grammy's for a visit
Riding in our van of blue.
I fell asleep in my car seat
Holding my stuffed bunny, Jack.
My brother was sleeping right beside me
In his car seat – in the back.
Daddy yelled and I woke right up,
Then I heard a great big bang.
Another car crossed over and hit us
"You're OK," the angels sang.
"Mommy, Daddy!" I was calling
But they never answered me.
"My leg hurts bad, I have a boo-boo,
Turn around so you can see!"
I was scared, I started crying
But Mommy never called to me.
I saw a light. I heard some talking.
Scary people! Who could they be?
They took us out of our blue van
Me and my little brother.
They flew us to the hospital,
Without my Dad and Mother.
Nurse, nurse, where's my Mommy?
Can't she come and visit me?
I am sad and very lonely,
I have a boo-boo on my knee.

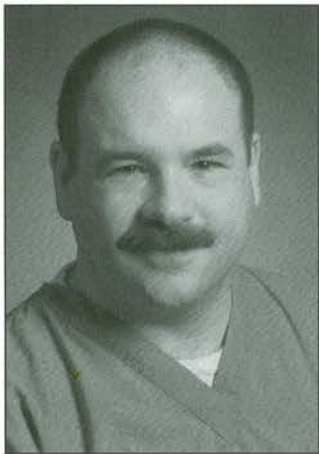
Nurse, nurse, where're my babies?
I can't find them, are they far?
They were in their car seat
In the back seat – in the car.
There they are, I see them plainly.
Thanks for showing me the way.
I can only stay a minute
Before the light calls me away.
Would you tell them that I love them?
And I'll hold them in my heart.
From heaven I will watch them grow up
Sadly, not to be a part.
Nurse, nurse, I was dreaming.
I thought I saw my Mommy there.
She told me that she'd always love me
And then she stood and brushed my hair.
Sorry, honey, you were dreaming
And I must have been dreaming, too
Your mom and daddy went to heaven
The doctors did what they could do
Mommy told me only one thing
And that was that she loves you so.
I will take care of you and brother
The very best way I know.
Here's a hug – I know your leg hurts.
Hey, here comes your Uncle Kyle.
He will take care of you and brother.
Your heart will heal after a while.

Honorable Mention

Essay Contest

Richard Riccio, RN, BSN, CCRN
TNICU

Where Are You?



Looking down into your open
eyes staring blankly into space
I wonder where you are despite
the obvious before me –
For two weeks you have been here,
with every treatment done
Two weeks of staring into space,
I wonder where you are.
Did you know that it snowed today?
I tell you so
But still you stare into space, a world
I do not know of.
The monitor above you tells me you
are still here,
Progressing slowly – please hold on.
Yet I can not help but wonder where
you are, what you hear,
What you sense, with eyes wide open looking into
nowhere.
Your family is here, they hold your
hand, talk to you in
Loving words – do you know
they're here?
Nervously, they look at all your
lines, hear the beeps and
See the lights that keep you moving along a continu-
um
That seems hard to comprehend.
Did you know it's Christmas Eve?

The little tree beside
You twinkles with lights of red and green.
Your family gone now, their holiday,
no doubt, just not
The same without you.
I look again into your open eyes and
tell you what I do, now
Almost knowing you understand
some how.
The New Year past, your treatments
now so few
And yet you still stare blankly into
some other world.
An empty shell one would think, but
I know you are there,
Somewhere, but where?
You leave my care for the next step,
the beeping ceases –
Flowers, cards go with you.
I touch your hand and say goodbye,
to wish you luck,
To visit us when you are well again,
as if to reassure
Myself that we did our best for you,
and there's still
Hope.
Report given to your new nurse,
You're settled in your room
One final goodbye, the end of several
Weeks of knowing you only by
calling your name.
I see your eyes open, once again
staring into
Space, void of expression and
I go to leave.
I take one last look back at you
and still wonder
Just where you are.

Justin

Honorable Mention Essay Contest



As I sit here tonight after your viewing
I have no words to say.
How unique and special you were
In every single way.
From the moment you walked on the floor,
To the moment you went home,
You'd always have someone by your bed,
You never were alone.
What a crazy special kid you were
I want everyone to know.
Why you ate the crazy stuff you did
I'll never really know.
Hot bologna, sour pickles, sour cream and

Maryann Godshall, RN
Pediatrics

onion chips
Coca-Cola slushes and BK mozzarella sticks.
We even let you keep your food in the fridge
in the nurses' lounge
Since someone drank your juicy juice, oh
that's not allowed.
You watched TV, played your cards
And kept us company at the desk.
Let's talk about your room
It really was quite a mess.
You'd get mad at me when I'd straighten up
Cause it moved around "your stuff."
But little buddy with all you had, it really
was enough.
Just a little space on the table was all that
I would ask.

You'd say OK and help me clean it up
Then leave me with a brand new task.
Triple H was your man on WWF
Garfield was your favorite comic.
Let's not forget Taz and the Animaniacs.
I remember when you made us take the quiz
You made about yourself
You e-mailed us funny stories,
Some I think that you made up.
I say goodbye to WakkoBro316 at aol.com
And treasure the memories that I hold of you
As if I had been your Mom.
I remember your last weekend
When I was your nurse at night
I remember looking in your eyes,
How scared they were and full of fright.
I hope I helped you through it all
I promised you I'd never lie
When I left you that Monday night
I didn't think that you would die.
As I turned to leave that night
And paused to look back to your room,
You smiled and flashed that wave to me
Oh Just, you died too soon.
No one wanted you to suffer,
You worked hard for every breath.
Your brave little body was tired
But I wasn't prepared for your death.
I'll cherish each and every memory
That I have of you.
You'll be forever in my heart
That's all that I can do.
There will never be another Justin
To tell the nurses what to do.
There will never be another.
God made only one of you.

Veronica Wesolowski, RN

Heart Station, LVH-M



"When I grow up, I want to be just like Mommy." In 1991, Johnny was only 4 years old but wanted to be like his caring mother.

First Place Photo Contest 2002

Continued from page 5

The True Heroes

*And when a hero comes along with the
strength to carry on*

*And when you cast your fears aside, you know
you can survive*

*And you'll finally see the truth that
a hero lies in YOU.*

That's when I realized how much of a hero "M" was to have gone through what she did. At the end, she even tried experimental treatments such as taking small amounts of arsenic to fight cancer. She knew if it didn't help her, it might

help us learn more about cancer for someone else. So many kids do that. If that isn't being a hero, I don't know what is.

Ironically, the next song that came on the radio was "Everything's gonna be alright, Rock a Bye, Rock a Bye." That was "M". That's how she would like to be remembered. Was that a message from "M" I wondered? I know. Weirdly enough, that brought me peace. I will always remember you, "M." We all will.

Continued from page 15

The Perfect Job

When Ellen pushed Doris' stretcher around the corner to face the window, the hall was filled with the golden light from a spectacular autumn sunset. Ellen looked toward South Mountain. The leaves were ablaze with their new colors. The deep gray sky beyond the mountain made it even more stunning. She loved sunsets, but moved on down the hall.

Impulsively, she stopped the stretcher, turned around slowly, and returned to the window.

She woke Doris. "Doris, open your eyes. Turn your head to the left over there. Just look at that sunset! How about those colors!" She watched Doris' face brighten, regaining briefly that youthful glow.

"I remember sunsets like that years ago, when the kids were young and we'd go camping on an island in the Narrows at Lake George. Those were such happy times!" Doris reflected.

The light soon faded, though. And, in spite of their wish that the sun might remain just a little longer, it set.

Doris closed her eyes once more. Ellen turned the stretcher away from the window, proceeding to Doris' room. It was time to move on.

Doris wasn't going to have many sunsets left. Ellen hadn't wanted to miss sharing this one with her.

Continuations