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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Editorial Attractions** 2  
The Draw of a Magnet Is Right Here

**Exemplifying Nursing Excellence** 3  
Stories of Nightingale Honorees

**They're Spreading the Word About Nursing** 4

**Quality Attractions** 6  
Staff at LVH-Muhlenberg Talks Performance Improvement

**How to Foster Nurse and Physician Communication** 7

**Being a Nursing Advocate in Government**

**What Lois Learned from Her First Poster Presentation** 8

# Exemplifying Nursing Excellence



LVHVN'S NIGHTINGALE AWARD  
HONOREES TAKE ON CHALLENGES,  
IMPLEMENT REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS  
AND ARE LEADERS IN NURSING

Three extraordinary nurses...three Nightingale of Pennsylvania Award finalists...Gayriel "Tracy" Lester, L.P.N., float pool, Claranne Mathiesen, R.N., PCS, 6B and Betsy Seislove, R.N., PCS, TNICU, were chosen from hundreds of applicants statewide. They were honored with 18 other finalists at a prestigious black-tie gala in Hershey—where Seislove and Lester learned they had won in their categories.

"It was an honor to have been there because it means you're recognized by your hospital and the state," Seislove says. "Just being a finalist and sitting among my peers with that aura of excellence fulfilled some of my nursing dreams. Then when they announced I was a winner, my parents, my husband and I all cried. It was just overwhelming."

With friends, family, colleagues and a table of nominees sponsored by Friends of Nursing by their sides, Seislove, Lester and Mathiesen carried on the prestige and tradition of LVHVN Nightingale honorees. LVHVN has had at least one finalist each year and many winners since the award program's inception 11 years ago. Enjoy the stories of this year's honorees...

please turn to page 3

L-R: Gayriel "Tracy" Lester, L.P.N., Betsy Seislove, R.N., and Claranne Mathiesen, R.N.

*Magnet hospitals are so named because of their ability to attract and retain the best professional nurses. "Magnet Attractions" profiles our story at Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network and shows how our clinical staff truly magnify excellence.*

**LEHIGH VALLEY**  
HOSPITAL AND  
HEALTH NETWORK







# *The Draw of Magnet Is Right Here—* and the Pull Is Getting Stronger

This is an exciting time for nursing at Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network. As we mail our Magnet application, we also congratulate Gayriel “Tracy” Lester, Claranne Mathiesen and Betsy Seislove as finalists in the 2001 Pennsylvania Nightingale Awards. They are just three of so many wonderful health care providers who not only excel in clinical duties in the hospital, but in the community.

In this issue of Magnet Attractions, you’ll read stories of people such as Beverly Siftar, R.N., whose commitment to nursing takes her far and wide in the community, and nurses Vicki Trexler and Jennifer Velas, who hosted educators and legislators to LVHHN to learn about nursing firsthand. They are shining examples of the great accomplishments of our valued nursing staff.

To help attract and retain the best professional nurses, we give our nurses a voice in decision making through our R.N. Advisory Group. Nurses from every unit are sharing ideas and playing an active role in nursing improvements. We’ve improved scheduling and compensation programs with our weekend program, tiered float pool, more flexible scheduling options and staffing incentives.

We’ve increased education and professional development funds to support continuing education and presentations at local, regional and national conferences. We have

reinvigorated the unit professional practice models, focused on professional development and succession planning, and celebrated the Peggy Fleming Endowed Chair in Nursing. We’re recruiting quality nurses with increased internships, a formal mentoring program, scholarships for juniors and seniors in college and nursing schools, and SMILE (Scholarship Money Invested in LVHHN Employees).

Through these efforts and more, I’m pleased to report that our turnover rate has dropped from 16.5 to 10 percent. Our vacancy rate of 7 to 10 percent is the lowest in years and is impressive compared with national rates as high as 20 percent. We strive to provide more individualized caring with ratios that exceed other local hospitals and are excellent compared with national averages. We know it, and so does *U.S. News and World Report*, which recognized our ratios in its report about the nation’s best hospitals.

With such dedication, progress and accomplishments, I believe our eventual Magnet status just reinforces what we already know—our clinical staff truly magnifies excellence.

*Terry A. Capuano*

Terry A. Capuano, R.N.  
Senior Vice President, Clinical Services



# NIGHTINGALE AWARD HONOREES—THEY HAVE STORIES OF EXCELLENCE

## Gayriel "Tracy" Lester

*Clinical Practice L.P.N.*

As a nurse in the float pool for 20 years, Tracy Lester, L.P.N., has worked in all medical/surgical units, including oncology, cardiology and trauma. "Each of these units requests her and routinely attempts to recruit her to become a permanent part of its staff," says patient care specialist and coordinator Dale Kleinbach, R.N.

That's because Lester exemplifies excellence in clinical skills, as well as communication and interpersonal skills. "She creates a rapport with patients and families and encourages open communication," Kleinbach says. "She promotes active participation by patients in their care."

Lester continuously enhances her professional knowledge base and clinical skills, contributing significantly to the health team and helping new employees by providing a calm and friendly atmosphere that is conducive to learning. While pursuing a registered nursing degree, she still finds time for her community as a deacon, Sunday school teacher, treasurer for her local church and a Junior Girl Scout leader.



*Tracy Lester displays patches from the Junior Girl Scout troop she leads.*

## Claranne Mathiesen

*Advanced Practice R.N.*



If you use words such as dedication, determination, compassion and empathy to describe Claranne Mathiesen, R.N., add one more to the list—revolutionary. Mathiesen, the neuroscience patient care specialist, coordinated a Stroke Rapid Response Team that

has revolutionized the way acute stroke patients are treated at LVHHN and potentially at other hospitals throughout the state and nation.

Mathiesen worked with staff from multiple areas of the hospital to recreate the Trauma Center team approach and also worked to

shorten the time that EMS personnel take in bringing patients to the emergency room, says LVHHN neurologist John Castaldo, M.D., who nominated Mathiesen.

"Claranne has an incredible capability for multitasking, facilitating collaboration and accomplishing goals in a very short period of time," Castaldo says. "She has exceptional kindness, thoughtfulness and empathy for neurological patients and has spent selfless, personal hours above and beyond the call of duty in educating other nurses."

Mathiesen is the president-elect and past education chairperson of the Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter of American Neuroscience Nurses as well as past president of Sigma Theta Tau Xi Beta. Among her many awards and honors is the Friends of Nursing Award in neuroscience nursing in 2000.

## Betsy Seislove

*Advanced Practice R.N.*

Betsy Seislove, R.N., has never shied away from a challenge. Years ago, when the LVHHN trauma unit adopted patient-centered care, she stepped forward to help her co-workers adapt to new roles and responsibilities. Then she took the lead when the unit merged with neuro-intensive care and later moved to a new building.

"Betsy has been able to lead the way for her staff in weathering change while maintaining a forward vision of growth," says trauma coordinator Juliet Geiger, R.N. "She is a strong leader and mentor for other nurses."

Seislove is also an advocate for patients and families. She attained an advanced degree in case management, implemented a trauma

support group that allays the fears of patients and their families, and has been active on performance improvement committees and the hospital-wide practice committee.



The recipient of the Friends of Nursing Awards for trauma nursing in 1997 and best practice in 2000, Seislove has a commitment to nursing that continues in the community. She volunteers time to screen adults for stroke, participates in benefits to raise money for leukemia research and speaks to elementary school students on the importance of trauma prevention. ■



# They're Spreading the Word About Nursing

They are preceptors, community volunteers and role models. They are LVHHN nurses, and they are out in the community, spreading the word about their profession and paving the way for tomorrow's nurses. Here are the stories of three LVHHN nurses and the programs they embrace.

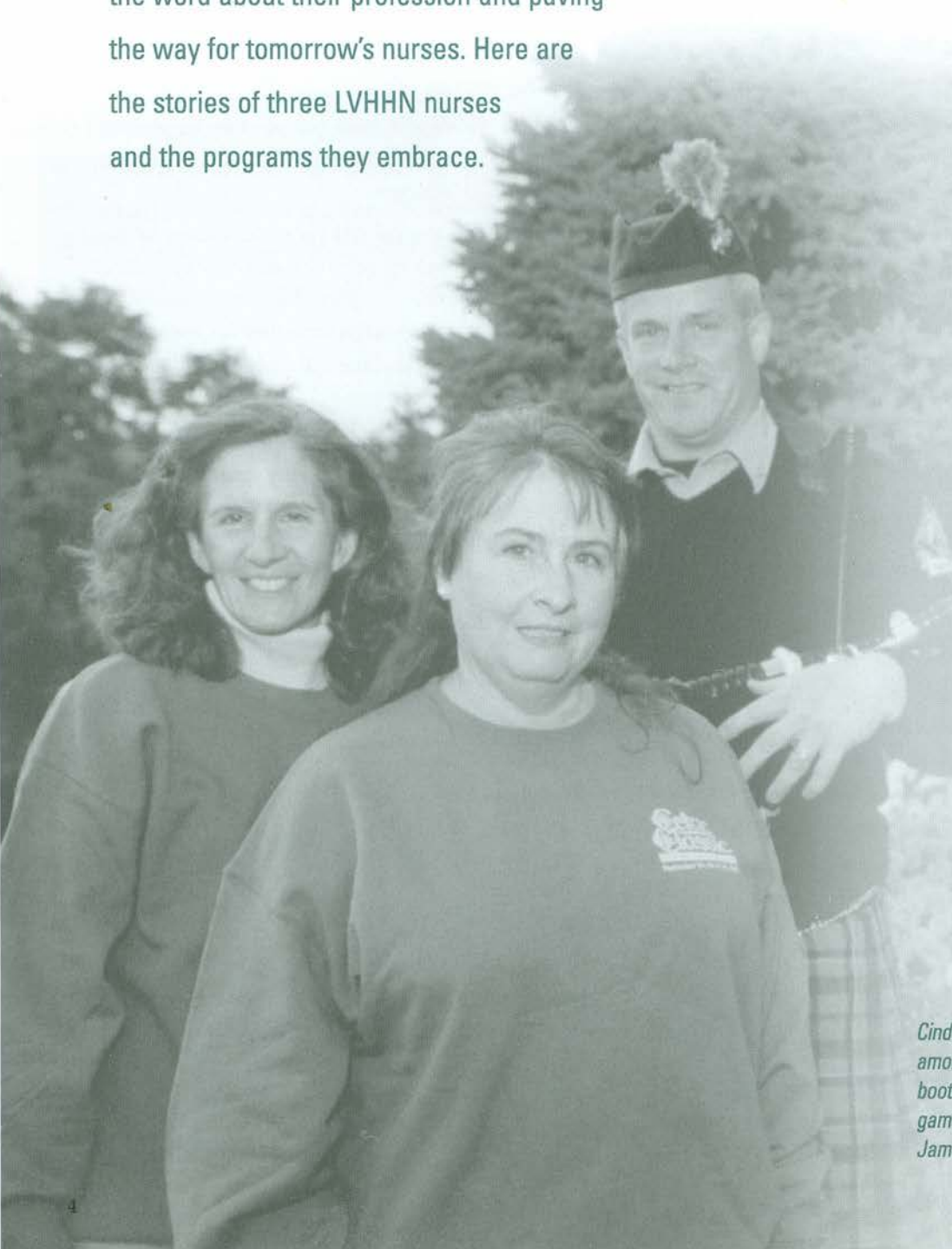
## Making a Difference in the Community

Volunteering at this September's Celtic Fest in Bethlehem is just a small part of the role Beverly Siftar, R.N. plays in the community. Siftar, supervisor of the operating room at LVH-Muhlenberg, has volunteered at Mayfair, Musikfest and Hogar Crea, and served as a CPR instructor and preceptor for nursing students. Her goal in these activities and others is to raise awareness of nursing in the community.

"There is a such as shortage of nurses that we need to be visible in the community, and I feel it's my responsibility to share the knowledge that I have," Siftar says. "Also, I keep thinking about retiring, but I really don't think I could do that until I know there are enough nurses to take my place."

Among her many activities, Siftar serves as a mentor for nursing students at Cedar Crest College, and provides special expertise on nursing in the operating room. "When I learn that my students chose a career as an operating room nurse, it's just an amazing feeling to know that I can have that kind of positive influence on someone."

*Cindy Colitas, R.N. (left), and Beverly Siftar, R.N., were among the nurses who volunteered at LVHHN's health booth at Celtic Fest, Bethlehem's festival of Celtic food, games and cultural events. Here they are with bagpiper James McCabe of Effort at Celtic Fest.*







*Jennifer Velas, R.N., shows Rep. Steve Samuelson what nursing is all about at the recent Spend a Day with a Nurse program.*

*Guidance counselor Joseph Tacker learned about nursing from Vicki Trexler, R.N., and shared his experience with students at Southern Lehigh High School.*

## Teaching the Next Generation of Nurses

TSU nurse Gloria Wagner, R.N., says her own education gave her a better appreciation of education. "I had to postpone my nursing degree to care for my mother and wasn't able to finish it for 20 years," she says. "Being an adult student really made me understand how important teaching can be, and I seem to have the patience and communication skills that a teacher Cires. I never get stressed out or think any question is a stupid one."

Wagner embraces educational programs such as Take N.O.T.E.S. (Nursing Opportunities to Educate Students), which gives high school juniors and seniors a chance to shadow LVHHN nurses and learn about career opportunities and nursing issues. Students spend one

morning each week with R.N. preceptors such as Wagner, who participated this fall for the fifth time, and listen to speakers about nursing each afternoon. The seven-week program, sponsored by the LVHHN PNC's Career Awareness Committee and the Lehigh Valley Business/Education Partnership, offers three clinical rotations of two weeks each. This fall, more than 76 nurses will have mentored 23 students.

"I look for any opportunity at LVHHN to educate students and community members about nursing," Wagner says. "I see students later and they tell me that they're in college for nursing. I really enjoy the ability to help mold a person, especially in nursing."



*Gloria Wagner, R.N. (left), mentors Christian Young, a junior at Liberty High School, in nursing through the Take N.O.T.E.S. program.*

## Spending the Day, Showing the Way

It didn't take long for the Spend a Day with a Nurse program to have an impact on Joseph Tacker, director of guidance at Southern Lehigh High School. Just a few weeks after spending a morning with staff nurse Vicki Trexler, R.N., on the MICU/SICU, he followed her advice and arranged for Lehigh Carbon Community College nursing instructors to offer career presentations on nursing at his school.

"It was an enlightening experience because I never realized how much time and dedication went into caring for just one patient," Tacker says. "I don't think our kids understand the skills and expertise needed by nurses, and my firsthand experience made me realize how vital nurses are."

Sponsored by the LVHHN Career Awareness Committee, the Spend a Day with a Nurse program is in its 11th year of bringing community members to LVHHN, where they shadow nurses. "Programs like this are important because we need to get more kids interested in nursing," Trexler says. "I made some suggestions about how Joseph could generate some interest at his school. And it's great to know he took it to heart." ■



by Kim S. Hitchings, R.N., Manager  
Professional Development and Outcome Studies

## Staff at LVH-Muhlenberg Talks Performance Improvement

Our Network Performance Improvement Plan says, "Each employee accepts and shares responsibility for improving organizational performance." So, how can you be involved? Begin by learning from staff on the ICU and CVCU at LVH-Muhlenberg. Thanks to Chris Hartner, R.N., patient care coordinator; Chris Lewis, R.N., director; and, Mary Rehm, R.N., staff nurse and chairperson for the units merged PI Committee, who answered the following questions...

### *How often does your unit PI Committee meet?*

We meet monthly for an hour. The time is charged to the allocated 10 hours per unit to support Professional Practice Model activities.

### *I understand you recently revitalized your unit PI Committee. What was your short-term goal?*

Our goal was for all staff—not just committee members—to understand and become involved in the PI process.

### *How did you accomplish this?*

We included staff in the monthly reviews of medical record documentation. Each month, different staff members completed the reviews. They became familiar with requirements, and that improved compliance.



**Learning About Pain Control**—(L-R) Internationally renowned pain expert Rosemary Polomano, Ph.D., R.N., discusses pain issues with Jane Dillard, R.N., PCC, LVH-M; Sharon Rabuck, P.C.S.-3S/4S; Susan Fackler, R.N., Breast Health Services, LVH-M; Paula Robinson, R.N., special procedures, LVH-M after her recent talk here.



**Another Step Toward Quality**—(L-R) Mary Rehm, R.N., and Grace Litonjua, R.N., discuss pain relief methods for their patients.

### *Has your committee identified other goals?*

Absolutely, we strive to continuously improve our patient satisfaction scores. We talk about strategies not just within our PI Committee, but with all unit staff. Patient satisfaction has a presence in everything we do.

### *Can you give me an example of a recent successful PI effort?*

We improved our documentation of patient teaching. Our staff members were teaching patients well. But we discovered they were not documenting it. The Patient Teaching Documentation Record was in the patients' charts at the central desk. So, we simply moved the document to the bedside. This simple change produced a great outcome!

### *Time for PI can be difficult to fit in with all our responsibilities. So, how do you begin?*

We prioritize our PI efforts. For example, we were required to show a regulatory agency that we improved documentation for designated indicators. So, that is where we focused. Within a few months, we achieved significant improvements and moved on to assuring that we implement IV site changes in the standard time frame.

### *Chris (Hartner), I heard that you recently experienced a euphoric PI moment. What was that about?*

Each month, when I receive the PI "blue book," I know that I must work with the PI Committee to develop required action plans for designated indicators which did not meet compliance goals for that month. When the most recent blue book arrived on Friday, my first thought was, "Oh no, a weekend devoted to action plans!" But when I turned to the analysis—to my great delight—both units had met all the goals. That weekend, I celebrated our units' strong commitment to excellence and quality! ■



# How to Foster Nurse and Physician Communication

*The team on 6B creates relationships to help deliver the quality care that each and every patient needs and deserves*

Their jobs sometimes pull them in different directions—a physician might be visiting one patient while a nurse is caring for another. But their mission of quality care at LVHHN remains the same.

Together, nurses and physicians strive to create collegial relationships that stress communication and, above all, put the patient first. In fact, nurse and physician collaboration is a way of life on 6B at LVH-Cedar Crest, where the team makes an extra effort to communicate, facilitate decisions and meet all the patient's medical and personal needs.



(L-R) *The Nurse and Physician Team*—Susan S. Stefanick, R.N., and David Caccese, M.D., care for patient Judith Pettit. Their team approach is key to communication.

## Here's how:

**They're specific about their patients' history and needs.** Conversations about past or future medical plans, medication dosages and orders streamline care. "Whenever I have patients on 6B, the nurses stop me to talk about all aspects of the patients' care," says internist David Caccese, M.D., immediate past president of the LVHHN medical staff. "That's very beneficial for me and the overall well-being of the patient."

**They share the family conversations.** "The families often know the details that are important to the patient and to share with the physicians — such as the patient falling at home and having poor memory or periods of speech difficulty," says Susan Stefanick, R.N., patient care coordinator.

**They communicate via wireless phones, when necessary.** "We always put the name and cell phone number of the nurse

caring for a patient on that patient's 'Wallaroo' (pull-down chart holder)," Stefanick say. "If a nurse is in another room caring for another patient, he or she can still be contacted instantly by a physician."

**They communicate across the specialties.** Nurses often work with doctors of varying disciplines while caring for a single patient. "Our role is to facilitate the care between the patient's doctors and make sure everyone is on the same page," Stefanick says.

**They visit the patient together.** "It's important for us to ask questions and hear the answers together and give the patient the attention he or she needs," Caccese says. "It's the best opportunity to gather information and make informed decisions as a team."

## They share their philosophies of care.

Being on the same wavelength of how to deliver care enhances trust and communication. "Dr. Caccese stresses his 'sit, ask, answer and touch' approach, and we share his philosophy through our PRIDE approach," Stefanick says. "It helps when he sees me comfort a patient who is afraid of needles or create a calm environment in a very busy setting."

**They think in "team" terms.** "The relationships we have established on 6B are exemplary and have created true teamwork," Caccese says, "and it's the kind of relationship that all nurses and physicians can develop at LVHHN." ■

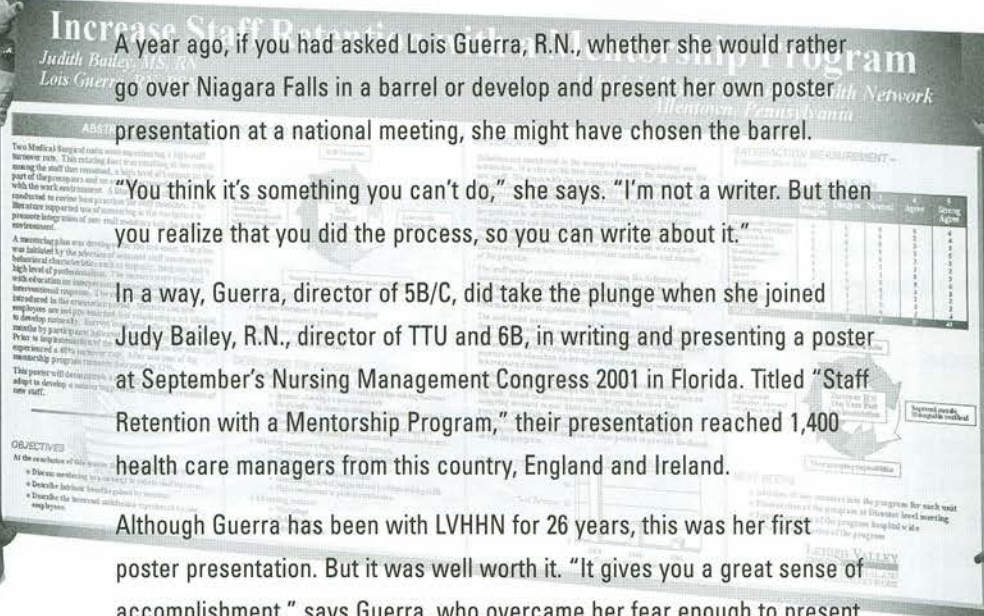


# WHAT LOIS LEARNED FROM HER FIRST POSTER PRESENTATION

*It's easy — well, with a good co-author, professional support and some determination.*



Judy Bailey, R.N.



Lois Guerra, R.N.

**So if you're thinking about creating a poster presentation, go for it. Here's what Guerra learned that can help you get started...**

## Finding a co-author provides support.

Working with Bailey was a real plus since she is a veteran poster presenter. Together, the women hashed out ideas and kept the creative process moving. "She was my mentor," Guerra says.

**Procrastination creates frustration.** "Get your ideas flowing on paper," Guerra says. Ask yourself: Why was this done? What did I learn from it? What were the outcomes? And define a strong educational component.

**Experts at LVHHN can help.** Professional development outcome studies staff

helped the pair condense a two-page abstract to 100 words and create a title. Photographic services personnel transformed Guerra's "cut and paste" design into colorful graphics.

**Networking and publishing opportunities abound.** Guerra and Bailey handed out 300 business cards and collected more than 200. And *Nursing Management* magazine approached them about submitting an article.

**More than one poster is impressive.** Of the 44 posters present at the conference, three were from LVHHN—more than any

single organization and the only from the Lehigh Valley. (Behavioral Health presented a poster about managing transition and merging staffs). "LVHHN captured everyone's attention," Guerra says.

## Living your presentation creates PRIDE.

The mentoring program helped reduce staff turnover by 28 percent on their units and is now a house-wide initiative. All the while, Guerra and Bailey walked the talk. A former patient care specialist in Guerra's unit, Bailey was recently promoted to her current position. "She mentored me into a new job," says Bailey with a big smile, matched only by the one on Guerra's face. ■

## MAGNET WORK GROUP

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Joanne Gimpert  
Lois Guerra, R.N.

Marilyn Guidi, R.N.  
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Debra Peter, R.N.

Molly Sebastian, R.N.  
Carol Sorrentino, R.N.  
Susan Steward, R.N.

Carol Torchen, R.N.

**WE TRULY MAGNIFY EXCELLENCE!**

**LEHIGH VALLEY**  
HOSPITAL AND  
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# Being a Nursing Advocate in Government

Regina Cannady can remember feeling the electricity in the air when, as a youngster, she sat in the crowd and listened to Sen. Edward Kennedy speak near the Bethlehem Steel plant.

"My brother and I were always interested in politics," Cannady says. "We would find out when politicians were coming to the area, then go listen to them. It was always exciting."

Today, Cannady, R.N., PCS, in the open heart and transitional open heart units at LVH-CC, has found the perfect way to meld her passion for nursing and her penchant for politics.

Cannady is the upcoming chair of the Professional Nurses Council's (PNC) legislative committee at LVHHN. Each year the professional nurse council provides two scholarships to the Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI). This three-day conference gives nurses the opportunity to learn how to influence health care through the legislative process. Participants learn from health care policy experts and government officials, network with other nurses and visit members of Congress. Legislative Committee chairpersons have all been past NIWI scholarship recipients.

Cannady's internship and involvement has allowed her to interact directly with local, state and federal legislative officials such as state senators Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, and 15th District Rep. Pat Toomey. The committee strives to keep legislators informed of nursing issues, such as the national shortage, and encourages them to sponsor legislation to support nursing education and health care.

You, too, can become involved. If you are interested in joining the committee, call Jann Christensen, R.N., project specialist, professional development and outcome studies, at 610-402-1789.



*Regina Cannady, R.N., discusses nursing issues with Rep. Pat Toomey.*



**Lobbying for Burn Patients** — Jackie Fenicle, R.N., director, Burn Center and specialty care unit, will be a guest of the American Burn Association in Washington, D.C., at a lobbying leadership conference next year. She will have an opportunity to educate legislators about resources for burn patients and discuss reimbursement for burn care.



## COMING ATTRACTIONS

### JOIN NURSING EDUCATION CLASSES

#### November

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- Nov. 8** ..... Assessment and Management of Behavioral Dyscontrol  
(Code Orange Training)  
7:30 - 11:30 a.m. or 12:30 - 4:30 p.m.  
Behavioral Health Sciences Center, LVH-Muhlenberg
- Nov. 9** ..... Assessment and Management of Behavioral Dyscontrol  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
SON, Room 900
- Nov. 28** ..... Symptom Management  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
JDMCC, Classroom 1A & B, 3rd floor

#### December

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- Dec. 6** ..... Ethical Issues in Pain Management  
A satellite teleconference from the University of Vermont  
1:30 - 3:30 p.m.  
LVH-Cedar Crest, Classroom 2  
LVH-17th & Chew, VTC Room
- Dec. 10** ..... Preceptor Preparation Program  
8 am - 4:30 pm  
JDMCC, Classroom 8, 3rd floor
- Dec. 13** ..... Learning Partners  
8 a.m. - noon  
JDMCC, Classroom 8, 3rd floor

#### January

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- Jan. 10** ..... Code Orange Recertification  
8 a.m. - noon  
SON, Room 900

#### February

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- Feb. 6** ..... Assessment and Management of Behavioral Dyscontrol Part I  
7:30 - 11:30 a.m. or 12:30 - 4:30 p.m.  
LVH-Muhlenberg, Behavioral Health Sciences Center
- Feb. 7** ..... Assessment and Management of Behavioral Dyscontrol Part 2  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
SON, Room 900
- Feb. 18 & 21** ..... Basic Dysrhythmias  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
SON, Auditorium
- Feb. 26** ..... Critical Care Course Day 1  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
SON, Auditorium
- Feb. 27** ..... Critical Care Course Day 2  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
SON, Auditorium

For more information, please contact Donna Stoudt at 610-402-2278 or see the bulletin board Nurs\_Ed\_Cont\_Ed. Registration instructions are included in each announcement.