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It's What Nurses Do Capturing the Essence of Nursing

by Linda L. Jones, Editorial Director

Celebrating Nursing

Each May, during Nurses Week hospitals, communities, publications and peers celebrate nurses. In May, *ADVANCE* features the Best Nursing Team contest in celebration of National Nurses Week. *ADVANCE* decided one week is not enough time to honor people who have the kind of devotion that keeps them working when they themselves are suffering, when their homes have been swept away by flood or when they are in a combat zone.

In this issue, we introduce what we hope to be an annual acknowledgement of individuals who encompass the essence of nursing.

Essence of Nursing

There are no set criteria; this is not a contest. Essence of Nursing is a sampling of nurses we've heard about who have the "soul" of a nurse and who are using that spirit in a variety of settings and practices.

In this issue you'll read about a nurse in a busy ED who finds the job a breeze, compared to being shot at as a combat soldier and medic in Iraq. Then there is an Ethiopian native, now a nurse in the U.S. whose interest in nursing began after living in a country where access to healthcare is nonexistent. Other RNs have gone on to nurse despite hardship; one continues to work in the same ED where her son died of a gunshot wound.

Some of these exemplary nurses work toward bettering the profession, seeking to improve

systems to help nurses do their jobs or to improve nursing practice as director of a board of nursing. Of course, patients are at the forefront of the practice of all these nurses, from those whose credo is to believe in the dignity of every patient, no matter their cognitive, social or economic position. These are only a few of the accomplishments of nurses highlighted in the Essence of Nursing.

Essence of Nursing

by Lyn A.E. McCafferty, editor

If you asked 10 nurses to write down the top five characteristics that make up the people who go into nursing, the lists likely would be completely different. Yet, all nurses have something in common.

When *ADVANCE* decided to celebrate individual nurses, we wanted to look beyond accomplishments and status. We wanted to honor nurses for who they are.

In this special section, you will read about New England nurses making a difference — some in the lives of just a few, some in the lives of many. From their pictures, they appear to be ordinary people; but when you read their stories you'll see they are anything but ordinary.

These women and men embody the essence of nursing in their attitude, what they do, what they accomplish and the lives they touch each day. I hope these stories will reinvigorate you and your nursing practice.

‘Golden’ Years

A nurse’s disillusionment with traditional nursing homes led her to an entrepreneurial adventure

By Andrea Kerr

A desire to let people age on their own terms led Barbara Trimble, MEd, RN, to create an innovative alternative to nursing home care.

A registered nurse with more than 30 years experience and executive leadership in the healthcare industry, Trimble has worked in long-term care, sub-acute care and assisted living services. She is the perfect example of putting the phrase “finding a better way” into action.

“Three years ago I was doing some consulting work in nursing homes when I noticed that even in the most beautiful facilities there were people who either didn’t need to be there or didn’t want to be there,” Trimble recalled. “I decided to do some market research with families and residents to find out what it was they needed.”

Aging With Dignity

Trimble documented a wide variety of needs including medication assistance, transportation to appointments or social events, housekeeping and maintenance services, and meal preparation.

The focus group research identified three specific concerns for older adults: loss of independence, loneliness and becoming a burden to children or family. Families and children expressed concern for their parents’ safety, their health behaviors and finances. The top three needs expressed by elders



Extended Family members and staff charter a tugboat to meet the tall ships entering Portsmouth Harbor.

were not a surprise: people want to live at home as they age; they want what they want when they want it, and they want to work with a single organization which will provide for all their needs.

“Having heard all that, I looked around and saw there were lots of people and agencies doing parts of what these people wanted, but there wasn’t anything offered that addressed all their needs,” Trimble said. “What happens is that Mom or Dad wind up saying, ‘I don’t want to be a burden on my children so it’s easier to just go into a nursing home than for them to have to worry.’”

“Most of these people are just grateful their children still care at all and they feel they really don’t have any choice but to go into a nursing home,” Trimble added. “I knew it didn’t have to be that way.”

A New Approach

Armed with this research and years of professional experience in healthcare and senior services, as well as a master's in organizational development, Trimble launched Extended Family in March 2005. Her goals were to create a single source for premium home services; keep people at home; offer comprehensive support; include wellness, prevention and advocacy; and connect people to their friends and community.

Strictly private pay, Extended Family's approach is unique. Billing itself as a "member organization," Extended Family limits its membership to 75 people, enabling staff to better serve the needs of their customers. The business charges a premium for its outstanding customer service, using the same legendary principles as the Ritz Carlton hotel chain.

A full-service company, Extended Family offers a wide variety of services including personal and nursing care, fall prevention, meal preparation, hospital advocacy, and brain wellness and medication reconciliation.

Extended Family's "boutique" approach also includes concierge support such as massage, yoga, travel, hobbies and entertainment. The company provides these services through its contracts with alternative therapists and individuals known as "good neighbors." Modifications to make living at home safer and more comfortable also are available by skilled craftsmen Extended Family partners with.

Meeting Demand

Trimble says the success and positive reaction she's received from members and healthcare professionals has inspired her to expand Extended Family.

The company's original model was launched in Portsmouth, NH, where membership is currently

at 50 clients. Another site began operations in Cambridge, MA, and plans are under way to open six additional sites by the end of this year including ones in Daytona Beach, FL, New Jersey, Colorado and Vermont.

While the services the private pay company provides might seem unnecessarily luxurious, Trimble says Extended Family's healthcare specialists find their work extremely satisfying, both personally and professionally.

"The nurses we hire love what they do," Trimble confirmed. "Our approach not only lets them practice the clinical aspects of nursing, but also allows them to really get to know their patients."

"Every quarter a nurse visits her patients and completes a whole personal profile on them. She finds out what their goals are. If [a patient] on continuous oxygen wants to visit her old neighborhood in a few months, then the nurse can help work out a way to make that goal happen safely."

"Many nurses have been in some type of quality improvement program, and what's nice about Extended Family is nurses can manage their own group of patients," she continued. "They're the ones who know best what their patients need or what will make their day."

Trimble said Extended Family's approach is perfect for nurses who are tired of the current healthcare system and who are genuinely interested in the phenomenon of aging.

"Everyone dreads aging and many view it as 'time to throw in the towel,'" Trimble noted. "I think we've created a new solution that can change the whole face of aging."

Andrea Kerr is a frequent contributor to ADVANCE.