

National Nurses Week 2009 Message from ANA President Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR

Greetings! As we celebrate **National Nurses Week 2009** (NNW) May 6 - 12, the American Nurses Association (ANA) and its constituent member associations (CMAs) salute nurses across the country with the theme **Nurses: Building a Healthy America**. Nursing is often described as both an art and a science; this year's theme reflects the commitment nurses make every day for their patients and the compassion and quality of care they provide for their community.

Today's nurses must have the strength to care for patients during times of disaster and crisis; the commitment to remain involved in continuing education throughout their careers; and the compassion to provide hands-on patient care at the bedside – as they have done throughout the centuries. Moreover, at 2.9 million strong, nurses represent the largest group of health care workers in America, and we have the power to achieve much-needed reform in nursing and in health care. That is why it is important to take time out during National Nurses Week to thank nurses for what they do and to remind the public just how vital our nation's nurses are to patients, their families and society.

Of course, giving thanks, recognition and acknowledgement is only part of the reason we celebrate National Nurses Week every year. Another equally important reason is to remind the public of nursing's contributions to the health and well-being of the nation. So, as you celebrate National Nurses Week this year, I hope you will also take a few moments to reflect on some of the challenges that also face nursing today, and the advocacy efforts of ANA in these areas:

- Establishing staffing levels that promote a safe and healthy working environment for nurses and to ensure the highest possible patient care. To support safe staffing, ANA has launched a national campaign to help fight for safe staffing legislation. To find out more about what you can do to advance safe staffing, please visit www.safestaffingsaveslives.org. This Web site serves as a one-stop source of helpful information with user-friendly tools. On the site, you will be able to find ANA's "Principles on Safe Staffing", background research on safe staffing, federal and state legislation and ANA's legislative and legal action.
- ANA favors a restructured health care system that does the following: Enhances consumer access to services by delivering primary health care in community-based settings; Fosters consumer responsibility for personal health, self care, and informed decision making in selecting health care services; Facilitates utilization of the most cost-effective providers and therapeutic options in the most appropriate settings.
- The American Nurses Association (ANA) announced its endorsement of President Barack Obama and looks forward to working with the new administration and new lawmakers to affect positive change for nurses and the patients we serve. President Obama believes, as ANA does that health care is a basic human right, not a privilege. ANA is ready to work with the new administration to provide safe, affordable quality health care for all.
- Increasing interest and support for addressing educational preparation for the RN workforce. Evidence shows that higher levels of nursing education are linked with lower patient mortality rates, fewer errors and greater job satisfaction among RNs.

As we celebrate NNW, beginning with National Nurses Day on May 6 and concluding with International Nurses Day on May 12, I hope you take time to reflect on how rewarding a nursing career can be, and to share your passion for nursing with others. This week is an opportunity to take stock, and take pride in what you accomplish as nurses, and hopefully to inspire others to choose this challenging and fulfilling profession.