

Friends of Nursing: A Community of Caring to Promote Excellence in Nursing Practice, Education, and Research

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FRIENDS OF NURSING:
A COMMUNITY OF CARING TO PROMOTE
EXCELLENCE IN NURSING PRACTICE, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Key Points

1. For more than 25 years, there has been a dedicated, conceptual framework for nursing philanthropy within an academic, community Magnet® hospital – to serve as a stimulus and guide to recruit philanthropic dollars and spend them in a prudent and wise manner.
2. A very significant amount of philanthropic dollars from literally thousands of donors have been utilized to support a diverse range of activities to impact and advance the professional excellence of nurses and quality patient care.
3. The program has become a model for other organizations and nursing services throughout the United States and abroad.

Abstract

More than 25 years ago, the name “Friends of Nursing” (FON) was adopted by an academic, community Magnet® hospital to signify a model for community support of nursing. From inception, the intent was to recruit philanthropic dollars to promote recognition for and excellence in nursing practice, education and research. Though philanthropy in health care settings is quite common and ordinary, what is unique about this program is the longstanding, dedicated conceptual framework for *nursing* philanthropy and, the very significant amount of philanthropic dollars from literally thousands of donors to support a diverse range of activities to impact and advance professional excellence of nurses and quality patient care. This model has been successfully replicated within a wide variety of other health care organizations and nursing services throughout the United States and abroad.

Introduction

More than 25 years ago, a local couple, pillars of the community, recognized high quality nursing care by donating \$100,000 to promote excellence in nursing practice, education and research at our academic, community health network. This investment in the nursing workforce was paid forward over the ensuing years in an ever expanding and continuously evolving cycle by the organization's nurses and their community. The resultant yield has been maximizing the human potential of our nurses.

The original intent for the use of philanthropic dollars – recognition of and excellence in nursing practice, education and research - is as relevant today as it was 25 years ago. These few words have provided and continue to offer a vision and guiding direction for community donors. This phrase also offers a framework to enhance nursing practice, education and research. Figure 1 schematically depicts programmatic components associated with this framework. This manuscript details how to blend philanthropic support for nursing to impact nursing practice, with the ultimate outcome enhanced patient care.

Creating the Framework

Historical Perspective of Philanthropy

Philanthropic support for hospitals in America may have started with Benjamin Franklin. In 1751, Benjamin Franklin and Dr. Thomas Bond co-founded Pennsylvania Hospital, the nation's first hospital. According to the terms of Franklin's will, signed in 1788, he specified payments from 'just debts' he owed to be paid to 'this excellent institution' (Franklin, 1788).

Philanthropy has been part of the fabric of the American culture since its inception. According to the Carnegie Corporation of America website, Andrew Carnegie, born in 1835 in Scotland, became known for his philanthropy in 1870 with a series of 'gifts' establishing libraries in more than 2500 communities. In his book "*The Gospel of Wealth*," Carnegie (1889) proposed that "the rich were 'Trustees' of their fortune and had a moral obligation to share that wealth in order to promote the welfare and happiness of the

common man.” By the twentieth century, it was far more common for the extremely wealthy individuals to contribute financially in support of the common good.

Within the field of nursing, the generosity of grateful patients and their family members is combined with an established history of nurses supporting their own professional field of service. Lillian S. Clayton, RN (1927) shared information on the general public helping to fund the five year international study of nursing practice with a focus on the standardization of nursing procedures. Ms. Clayton, as the USA Chairman of the International Council of Nurses, also remarked that a fitting memorial for Florence Nightingale would be a fund to support nursing education, rather than building a hospital (1927).

The issue of philanthropic support for nursing as a profession and in support of nursing education is a common thread running through the history of nursing. Mrs. Elizabeth K. Porter (1953), President of the American Nurses Association, stressed the need for public and private funds in support of nursing education. By the 1960’s and continuing through today, private foundations such as The Pew Charitable Trusts and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation include support for nursing education among their top priorities.

The Association for Healthcare Philanthropy (AHP) is a non profit corporation organized in Washington, D.C. It was established in 1967 as an international professional organization to encourage charity in North America’s health care organizations. According to the AHP website, the purpose is to provide “education, networking, information and research in healthcare philanthropy” (AHP, 2011).

For many years, Giving USA Foundation has produced an annual summary on charitable giving “researched and written by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis.” (Giving USA Foundation, 2011, p 4-6). As noted in their report on Year 2010, despite the last few years of distressed economy, charitable giving in the United States increased 3.8% and giving by individuals increased 2.7% in 2010. They track giving to religion, education, foundations, human services, health, public-society benefit organizations, arts, culture, and humanities. According to the Executive Summary 2010, contributions totaled \$290.89 billion; 8% (\$22.83) of total giving supported

health. Individuals contributed 73% (\$211.77 billion) of total contributions (Giving USA Foundation, 2011).

A Model for Philanthropy – Friends of Nursing

In the mid-1980's, our network leadership and a member of the Hospital's Board of Trustees became aware of a nursing scholarship program at Stanford University Hospital, Palo Alto, CA titled "Friends of Nursing." This program used philanthropic dollars to support hospital employees to become nurses. Intrigued and impressed with the concept, the name "Friends of Nursing" (FON) was adopted to signify a model for community support of nursing within our organization. From inception, the intent was to recruit philanthropic dollars to promote recognition for and excellence in nursing practice, education and research, exceeding the single component of formal undergraduate and graduate nursing scholarships.

With their \$100,000 gift in 1987, the hospital board member and his wife became our first "friends of nursing" and a conceptual framework of philanthropy to benefit nurses themselves and the profession as a whole was born. Network leadership recognized the need to be prudent with this first major gift to nursing. They were deliberate in their conception of these dollars as a strategic investment in the future of nursing at the organization, creating an endowed trust fund in which only a portion of the interest earned could be spent each year, allowing the principal to grow perpetually.

Building Nursing and Community Relationships

Actively building relationships with potential donors in our community to benefit nursing is primarily the responsibility of staff members in the Network's Development Department. Beyond the knowledge about and relationships with many of our community members, Development staff recognize that to consider a philanthropic gift, potential donors must perceive the beneficiary as deserving and that the donation will be invested wisely. Two other tenets of philanthropy that serve as keystones to encourage donations to promote nursing excellence at our organization are: 1) Illustration of strength by the beneficiary; and 2) Established, continuing relationships between beneficiaries and donors.

These tenets point to what we believe is a very basic, yet dynamic formula yielding remarkable successes associated with philanthropy to benefit nursing. Relationships between our nurses and community are mutually rewarding and beneficial, each enhancing the other and continuing the cycle. For example, the initial donating couple was inspired to pay it forward to our nurses through their receipt of excellent care. Dollars from their established trust originally funded six of 23 FON awards recognizing excellence during Nurses Week. These cash awards were used by recipients for continuing education and to implement specific projects and research, thus promoting enhanced levels of care. Achieving higher levels of care, in turn, inspires other community members to support nursing through philanthropic gifts. And the cycle continues.

Throughout ensuing years, grateful patients, their families, individual community members, private businesses, nurses, physicians, and other healthcare professionals have been motivated for a variety of reasons to support nursing. In addition, our nursing staff members regularly sponsor fund-raising events, donating the profits to benefit nursing programs and opportunities. These events serve not only to generate philanthropic dollars, but also create camaraderie and increase staff morale.

Collaboration between nursing leaders and Development Department staff members has been crucial to our tremendous financial success. Over the years, as nurse leaders and staff members employed their imagination and creativity to expand and enhance opportunities for nurses, they shared their dreams with Development staff. These individuals have the know-how to recruit philanthropic dollars necessary and to invest the funds prudently to support the ideas. Whenever possible, endowed funds are created to allow the donated principal to grow perpetually. Donors are encouraged to consider gifts of real estate, stock, annuities, and life-insurance policies as well as cash. The option to designate the purpose of the donor's gift, such as, but not limited to, nursing continuing education, research or awards is always offered.

Multiple strategies are utilized to initiate, promote and enhance partner relationships between nursing and our community. For example, staff members who benefit from philanthropic dollars are always given the donor's name and encouraged to write a letter of thanks. Another strategy is to invite a wide variety of

community members to participate in our annual “Spend a Day With a Nurse.” This program allows guests to spend a few hours shadowing a nurse to clarify the integral and diverse roles of nurses and showcase nursing excellence. This shadowing experience has inspired a variety of philanthropic gifts from the business sector as well as individuals.

The annual Gala Celebration of Nursing is a premier event attended by close to 1,000 people. This elegant affair, held during Nurses Week at a local hotel ballroom, recognizes all nurses and clinical service staff members for their contributions to outstanding patient care, education and nursing research. All individuals who have contributed nursing philanthropic dollars are invited and their donations publicly acknowledged in the evening’s program.

The Gala is also the time when the annual FON excellence awards are given to individuals and teams. These awards, each ranging from \$1,000 – \$2,500, are donated by former patients and their families, physicians, private businesses, and staff members. The first FON Awards were given in 1987 and included 23 awards by 10 different donors. In 2011, 36 awards from 32 different donors were given, a living testament to the paying it forward concept. For example, the two 2011 Patient Safety Award donors were previous recipients of FON Awards, as was the donor for the Nursing Education Award..

The “feature presentation” at the Gala is a story illustrating excellence about each award recipient. Often, the achievement was facilitated in some way by philanthropic dollars, such as donations to support nursing education. Publicly communicating these stories of excellence (both that evening and later, through the media who covered the event), especially if the achievement was facilitated from donated dollars, inspires even more gifts to support nursing.

Philanthropic Gifts by our Community “Friends of Nursing”

A Significant Donation

In 2001, our organization received its largest single gift -- \$29,000,000. The donor stipulated that the gift be used to “support the teaching hospital activities” of the organization. It is indicative of the respect for nursing within our organization that significant dollars from this trust have been designated to fund

nursing scholarships each year since dollars have been available. The scholarships support our own employees and individuals in the community to pursue formal nursing education, in return for a commitment to work at our network upon completion of their studies. Other activities supported by this trust include seed money for nursing research and funds for nursing education.

The Chair in Nursing

In 2002, after more than 15 years of being closely associated with our nursing staff and enjoying a mutually gratifying relationship, the initial donor who established Friends of Nursing donated \$1,500,000 to endow a Chair in Nursing, in his wife's honor. This chair, at the time the seventh of eight chairs in our organization, was the first nursing chair (all others were held by physicians) and provides \$75,000 annually to support professional development of the nursing staff through education and research. What makes the Chair in Nursing particularly significant is its uniqueness. Although chairs in nursing have been established in university-related hospitals, this is the only such chair known to exist in a community teaching hospital. The chief nursing officer made the following public statement at the time of the donation, "The Chair in Nursing sends a powerful message to our nurses and our community. It recognizes the value of nursing and shows we care about our nursing staff and their continuing professional development and education." Since receipt of the gift, Chair dollars have supported, among other things, an annual Research Day and attendance by our staff at a variety of national nursing professional meetings.

Nite Lites

Each year our Network sponsors Nite Lites, a 'black tie' Gala fundraising event. The beneficiary is usually a specific clinical service, such as pediatrics, cardiology, or neuroscience. Several years ago, Nite Lites honored our nurses, with the net proceeds of close to \$1,000,000 benefiting the comfort and care of our patients by supporting nursing research and education. This designation was a testament to the perception of nursing practice within the network in that the community's premier charity event showcased nursing. Further, the ongoing, mutually beneficial nursing and community relationships previously discussed within this nomination are evident in the purposefully worded statement regarding the intent of

the net proceeds -- first and foremost, “the comfort and care of our patients,” in turn “supported by nursing research and education.” The ultimate intent of philanthropic support for nursing is always to benefit patient care.

The Largest Gift to Nursing

The single, largest gift designated to support nursing occurred in 2007 when upon her death, a local woman donated \$23 million dollars from her trust to support our network nurses who want to return to school, attend professional conferences, earn special certifications and pursue other professional development opportunities. It is the second largest single gift the Network has ever received and demonstrates the power of our community and nursing relationships. For years, the donor personally assisted and became friends with the nurses who frequented her family’s shoe stores to buy their ‘duty shoes.’ One of these nurses was a nurse employed within our Development Department who was instrumental in founding our FON program. This individual maintained a relationship with this donor after the shoe stores were closed and shared with her the stories of our Network’s progressive development and assured she was closely apprised of “nursing stories” and the opportunities to support nursing to continue the legacy of outstanding patient care and outcomes.

A Community of Caring

While the dollars available to nursing from these milestone donations is significant, the extraordinary innovation of our dedicated focus for nursing philanthropy is that gifts to nursing have come from literally thousands of our community members. For example, there are 25 endowed trusts designated for nursing, 14 of which range in principle from \$20,000 through \$500,000. Many more community members have formally committed to endowed trusts through future gifts, such as fulfillment of insurance policies and real estate sales. Ongoing cash donations, able to be spent in full, account for the vast majority of donations. The opportunity to be a friend of nursing is well-known within our network family and community and includes regular donations from a wide variety of individuals and for diverse purposes.

Recognition of and Excellence in Nursing Practice, Education and Research

The seven programmatic components of the FON framework (Figure 1) provide a vision for multiple activities to enhance nursing practice, education and research. Many of these components are funded using philanthropic dollars. Some of the more unique opportunities within each component are detailed below:

Building the Profession – Creating the Legacy

Philanthropic dollars are used to support non-nursing staff within the organization to become nurses, as well as nurses who are pursuing undergraduate and graduate education. The donated dollars are an enhancement to the budgeted, operational dollars available through the traditional tuition reimbursement program. Philanthropy has allowed us to be creative and innovative in the types of scholarships offered, as well as flexible to address varying needs.

Professional Development

One of our newer programs funded through philanthropy is our Visiting Nurse Scholars Program. Donated dollars support our staff to visit a nationally recognized healthcare facility for several days, observing care delivery within the visiting practitioner's nursing specialty. The goal is to become aware of best practices that could, in turn, be implemented within our facility.

Reward and Recognition

In addition to the previously mentioned annual Friends of Nursing awards funded through philanthropy, donated dollars sponsor staff members to attend a variety of regional and national functions held to reward and recognize nurses for professional excellence. These include, but are not limited to, The Nightingale Awards of Pennsylvania and Nursing Excellence Awards sponsored by Johnson & Johnson.

Nursing Research

Donated dollars support our organization's annual Nursing Research Day, through sponsorship of guest speakers and staff members' registration fees. Philanthropy also provides grants to staff members for implementation of evidence-based practice and research studies.

Nursing Advocacy

For the past twelve years, philanthropic dollars have been utilized to support one or two nurses to attend the annual Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI). In return, attendees agree to chair the Professional Excellence Committee (PEC) Professional Development and Advocacy Work Group, which sponsors a variety of legislative activities throughout the year. Any associated costs of these activities are funded through philanthropy, such as informational forums with legislators to educate them about issues of importance to nursing and patient care.

Community Stewardship

Recognizing the merits of having our nursing staff participate in medical missions to third world countries, over the past 15 years philanthropy has supported more than 50 nurses to participate in humanitarian missions in such places as Africa, Thailand, India, Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Panama. To promote cross cultural professional development, donations have funded nurses to participate in nursing study tours abroad. For example, two staff members traveled with a local college of nursing on their study tour to Sweden; three nurses participated in another local university's study tour to England; and several of our nurses joined delegations traveling to Australia and China through the People to People Ambassador Program. Interestingly, a formal presentation offered by one of our nurses to staff at a hospital in England prompted a collaborative nursing research study on pediatric pain interventions.

In order to promote recognition for nursing practice, education and research, we continuously seek ways to not only achieve recognition for our individual nurses and teams through internal and external award programs, but to devise novel strategies to increase the public's and other health care professionals' understanding of the role and thus, admiration and respect for nurses. One method has been formation of the PEC Community Outreach Committee. This committee is ever vigilant to opportunities for our nurses to be visible in the community and communicate a positive portrayal of the profession. Examples include: sending new and used nursing textbooks to countries devastated by natural disasters (gift dollars paid for the new texts and mailing costs); and, supporting outreach programs by our center-city Emergency Department staff to their needy population.

Leadership Within the Nursing Profession

We are fortunate that Network operational dollars are available to support our staff's professional development. However, at the same time, we have continued to work with Development to gain additional philanthropic dollars for this purpose. In particular, for the past 10 years, we have achieved the goal to have our health network represented by staff members at the majority of national professional nursing conferences; frequently, we do not simply attend, but rather present cutting-edge innovations and research via posters and oral presentations. Most assuredly, without donated dollars, we could not have sent this voluminous number of staff members to national and international meetings. It is just one more strategy in our constant quest to use philanthropy to transform both our own work environment and to pay it forward to external professional colleagues through shared knowledge and inspiration.

Outcomes

"Friends of Nursing gives grateful patients an opportunity to acknowledge the nursing care they have received and to support nursing practice...in a meaningful way..." Bernice Buresh, Co-Author, *From Silence to Voice*

A myriad of positive outcomes can be directly and indirectly associated with our utilization of philanthropy to promote recognition of and excellence in nursing practice, education and research. The ever-increasing amount of philanthropic dollars able to be raised could be perceived as empirical evidence of an effective program. A second outcome is the continuously expanding and unique opportunities available to our nurses through use of donations. In turn, we believe these opportunities have directly and positively impacted the care offered to and outcomes achieved for our patients.

Another outcome of this innovation is that we have communicated the FON concept to the nursing professional community through publications and presentations at national conferences. As a result of this communication, we have responded to requests for additional information on the FON program by providing free, formal consultations to representatives from more than 150 health care organizations throughout the United States, Canada, England, Australia, and Norway. Many of these organizations have, in turn, developed nursing philanthropic initiatives similar to ours.

Summary

Philanthropy in health care settings is quite common and ordinary. What is unique about philanthropy at our organization are the following quantitative facts: 1) For more than 25 years, there has been a dedicated, conceptual framework for nursing philanthropy – to serve as a stimulus and guide to recruit those dollars and spend them in a prudent and wise manner; 2) A very significant amount of philanthropic dollars from literally thousands of donors have been utilized to support a diverse range of activities to impact and advance the professional excellence of nurses and quality patient care; and 3) The program has become a model for other organizations and nursing services throughout the United States and abroad.

Friends of Nursing is an exemplary innovation that has provided the framework and vision “to promote recognition and excellence in nursing practice, education and research.” Our healthcare network depicts and communicates its primary focus on patient care through the simplistic schematic of a tricycle. The large front wheel of the tricycle represents commitment to the advancement of patient care, supported by two smaller, but necessary, wheels of education and research. Philanthropic dollars can be metaphorically perceived as the air that fills those two rear wheels of education and research to keep that tricycle ever moving forward in pursuit of patient care excellence, But indeed, the reality is a legacy of nursing excellence.

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