

President's Message
August 1, 2011

ISNO members returned from the 43rd National Association of School Nurse Conference in Washington, DC. June 30th thru July 3rd.

Iowa has a large footprint at NASN. Patrice Lambert serves as Iowa's national director. Rhoda Shepherd was recognized for her work as treasurer of NASN. Laura Wheeler, Iowa SNOY, was recognized with an Excellence in Nursing Award. Ann Marie McCarthy was inducted as a Fellow of NASN. A big thanks you to Patrice and Rhoda for their work on the NASN board and congratulations to Laura and Ann Marie. ISNO members attending from Iowa were Caren Wasta, Laura Wheeler, Patrice Lambert, Rhoda Shepherd, Sally Immerfall, Sharon Yearous and Barb Fleckenstein.

June 29th was pre conference day. Preconference sessions are clinical sessions, to name a few, Asthma in the School Setting; Best Practices, Helping Administer to the Needs of the Student with Diabetes in School (H.A.N.D.S.), School Nurse Childhood Obesity Prevention Education S.C.O.P.E., School Emergency Triage Training (SETT) and Advanced Pediatric Cardiac Examination for School Nurses.

June 29th is also leadership day with sessions specific to State Organization leaders, Sharon, Sally and Barb attended. Choosing between leadership and pre-conference day is tough.

The next four days include general sessions that everyone can attend. The Keynote Opening Session on Thursday, "Shed or You're Dead@: How to Stay Alive & Thrive in the Midst of Turbulent Change", was helpful and funny. The need to compromise, stay positive, juggle multiple priorities, let go, and find innovative ways to meet student's health care needs in this time of fewer staff and more students was explored.

Other General Sessions were: "Health Care at a Turning Point: Seizing the Opportunity", "Unintended Consequences: Prescription Drug Abuse in Our Schools and Communities", Pass the "Voice" for Meningococcal Meningitis Vaccination", "School Based Health Centers +School Nurses=Student Success", "Build a Fairytale Network of Dental Health Programs for This Fall", and the final Keynote Closing session, "Nursing the Nurse in You: Honoring Your Life Song". The general sessions were excellent.

"Unintended Consequences: Prescription Drug Abuse in Our Schools and Communities" was very interesting. Dr. Douglas Gourlay, MD from Mount Sinai Hospital The Wasser Pain Management Centre and Commander John Burke, and unit manager Michelle Lipinski, were very knowledgeable about the abuse of prescription medications. Two students on the panel were so thoughtful and openly shared how they got prescription medications and used them at school. One of the students said he used pain medications to get high every day of high school. This

was such an eye opener. The students were just like any other students; not bad kids, they just needed help. One of the boys spoke about the school nurse being helpful to him and giving him a safe place to be that was consistent and stable when he could not function at school.

Mary Louise Embrey, Director of Government Affairs for NASN arranged for visits to the Hill as a break out session on Thursday. Participants received assistance from NASN in making appointments with their state legislators. Many conference attendees participated in the visits to the Hill. All ISNO members attending the conference met with aides from Senator Harkin, Senator Grassley (Senator Grassley was at the meeting), Congressman Latham and Congressman Loeb sack. Prior to the visits to the Hill, we discussed NASN's legislative priorities; Student-to-School Nurse Ratio Improvement Act of 2011, The inclusion of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel throughout legislative language in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and The Lack of Paid Sick Days as a Public Health Concern.

At another breakout session, Paula Dobrow presented "Strengthening the Safety Net: Helping Students Transition Following Absence for Behavioral/Mental Health Treatment". She spoke of the school re-entry process being a stressor for the students who may be very vulnerable at discharge from hospitalization and return to school. The school nurse is often the trusted adult who can provide unbiased support, maintain confidentiality sharing information with those who need to know, and reinforce coping strategies thus improving attendance, adjustment and academic success. The school nurse's office is a place for the student that is consistent and a safe haven when anxiety gets to be too much.

Another session, presented by Martha Dewey Bergren, NASN Director of Research, on School Nursing Sensitive Indicators, challenged school nurses and researchers of school health services, to suggest outcomes to measure as a result of school nurse interventions; outcomes that measure the impact of school nurse interventions over and above other factors. The outcomes need to be sensitive enough to distinguish between the effects of family and community and quality and number of school nursing interventions on the student, family and school community. It is difficult to name sensitive outcome indicators. The reason identifying the outcome indicators is important is because health care providers, funding agencies and researchers are not familiar with the school nursing role and practice that will best measure the impact of school nurses in the school setting.

NASN conferences are well worth attending. Of course some sight seeing was in order. The National Zoo, US Capital, Library of Congress and the Holocaust Museum were worth the heat. The walk to Dupont Circle to Zorba's for falafels and calamari was so much fun and the food super.

Next year the NASN conference is in San Francisco, June 22 - 27. Hope to see you there!

The 2011-2012 school year starts next week and about 568 Iowa school nurses are headed back to work with about 465,569 students (School Nurse & School Health Services, May 2011); I imagine with some excitement, anticipation of changes and a very busy school year.

The heat has been an issue for many in the last month or so and most likely will be for all the students and adults returning to school next week. See NASN link on treating heat related conditions and the article in Pediatrics sent by Charlotte Burt.

I wish everyone a lot of energy, patience, and a smile on your face and that you practice to the full extent of your ability. And that the health office is a place that your students would say is comforting and they knew they could always get help from the nurse.

Barb Fleckenstein, RN, MSN