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Promoting the Image of Nurses in the Local Community and Internationally

By Paige Burtson, RN, MSN, NEA-BC

If you have ever contemplated using your medical skill, or just your willingness to serve to help others, you may find something that sparks your interest in the featured stories of a few exemplary medical surgical nurses who are giving back to the community and elevating the image of the profession both locally and abroad.

LOCAL/NATIONAL

Medical knowledge is a valuable commodity to those who do not have access to healthcare. Some nurses choose to give back by volunteering in community clinics doing health screening and preventative education. A few examples are Catherine Chung RN (6W) through *St. Leo's Mission Community Clinic* (Solana Beach), Monica Neslage RN (10E) through Remote Area Medical Los Angeles (RAMLA), and Jen Pavone RN (3W) through the *UCSD Student-Run Free Clinic Project*.

At work, nurses frequently confront the issue of homelessness. The lack of resources available can be heartbreaking. Finding ways to help address this outside of the hospital is empowering. Agnes Maestre RN (11W) frequently spends her holidays serving food through the *St. Rose of Lime Feeding Program* in Chula Vista. A group of nurses on 11west joined together as a group to serve food to the homeless at *St. Vincent De Paul*.

The 8th and 6th floors collect food and Ernesto Gervacio RN (11W) participates in food delivery to local patients with HIV through *Mama's Kitchen*.

Tania Miller RN (6E) gives back through the *Boy Scouts of America*, organizing two camps per year for 300 kids, serving as the camp nurse, and volunteering weekly. Tania states that, "I like the Boy Scouts and the life lessons they teach such as 'Do a Good Turn Daily'; remembering to do something nice without being asked to do so. I try and bring this to my job at UCSD."

Others have found their cause in helping the elderly. Kellen Vawter RN (6W) and Malyne Santos RN (11W) volunteer with *Rides and Smiles*,

helping older adults with rides and companionship to medical or personal appointments. Laura Giambattista (6W) volunteers with *Honor Flight*. She helps bring a dream to life for WWII Veterans by coordinating trips to see the Veterans Memorial in Washington DC created in their honor in 2005.

INTERNATIONAL

Philippines

Several UC Health System nurses have emigrated from the Philippines. When going home to visit, many find time to serve in medical missions. In 2010, Lorna Alvarado (6W) assisted with setting up a feeding program for children ages 1-6, checked vital signs, and educated mothers on illness prevention in Sorsogon. Adorable Laus (11W) served at the Sasmuan Club Medical Mission in Pampanga. He will tell you that volunteering to offer medical services to the poor and needy leaves him with a great sense of satisfaction that he has helped his fellow man; so much so that he plans to return annually.

India

Rebecca Johnson (6E) in 2010 participated in a medical mission in



Tania Miller, Boy Scouts

11West team, St. Vincent de Paul





Ador Laus, Philippines

India through Loveworks (a mission program at Point Loma Nazarene University). She led a team of 10-15 nursing students who updated standards of nursing practice in an acute care hospital and assisted with health screenings. Rebecca felt that she understood more about Indian culture and could bring that knowledge back to the United States. She also appreciated seeing how medicine is practiced in another part of the world. She recently completed her second trip to Ghana in 2012.

Honduras

Anthony Velasco (6E) in 2011 joined UC students in the Global Medical Brigade. Anthony shared that his medical knowledge was invaluable, as he was the only registered nurse participating. He helped train others in how to take vital signs, check blood sugars, and do other basic assessments. He was able to help triage those needing treatment. Anthony shares that he feels satisfaction in representing the nursing profession internationally. He realized the potential that nurses have to use their knowledge outside of the confines of the hospital.

Vietnam/Laos

Maribel Perez (11W) joined the Global Health Force on a medical mission to Vietnam in May 2012. Maribel shared that the trip increased her awareness of how many people in the world do not have access to health care. She felt that participating in the mission helped to reinvigorate her nursing practice by serving in another country and culture.

In October 2011, Ouane Cam, RN (10E) spent her vacation time volunteering in Vietnam and Laos



Maribel Perez, Vietnam

with Americans Helping Asian Children (AHAC). Ouane told of her experience helping fundraise for assistive devices (glasses, hearing aids), learning how to fit hearing aids, and being able to deliver life-altering devices to children in need. The San Diego AHAC volunteers recently raise \$200,000 for this worthy cause.

South Korea

Kim Wonsook (6W) participated in a medical mission in Seoul in 2009. She helped in health screenings for a population with little access to healthcare. Kim enjoyed being able to use her skill and knowledge to help others.

Mexico

Ali Moreira and Susan Hartnett (10E) are both involved in Thousand Smiles Foundation. They use their medical skill in nearby Ensenada to help children who suffer from maxilla-

facial deformities such as cleft palate

Dennis Gerrits (8th floor) has also volunteered in Mexico in 2011 helping to conduct physical assessments for children through a medical mission at the Pierre Faure Institute.

Indonesia/Australia/Canada

Courtney Marsh (8th floor) in 2012 participated with Project Hope, an organization that uses volunteer doctors and nurses to travel the globe on a floating hospital ship to provide medical care to those in need. Courtney has been to Indonesia, Australia and Canada and shared that her involvement has helped to advance her nursing skill and increased her cultural awareness.

You can see and hear the excitement of nurses when they speak of their community service. Take the time to ask and you will uncover a host of possibilities and exciting ways to serve.

Volunteering for the Palestine Children's Relief Fund



Amanda Nasser, RN, BSN

My medical mission took place last October 2011 for about 2 weeks. During that time we accomplished 46 successful surgeries. I went to a town called Hebron in the West Bank. It is known to have a large majority of children suffering from congenital anomalies that need surgical attention. I was humbled by the opportunity to not only give back, but to be physically there making an impact and touching these children's lives in a capacity that I had never experienced before. I knew that when these surgeries were completed, these children would be able to grow up without having to suffer as a result of congenital malformations. This experience confirmed to me why I love being a nurse. It was an opportunity to branch out of my comfort zone and experience a whole different area of nursing. My duties on this trip included being the first assist to the surgeon in OR, being circulating nurse, helping with pre-post op care, prepping the OR, and translating Arabic/English. I feel such medical missions are the key to giving these resilient and brave children the healthcare that all humans should have access to.