

Travel Across Tennessee to Listen to Nurses

The month of September was exciting and eventful for the Tennessee Center of Nursing Advancement, a part of the Appalachian Highlands Center for Nursing Advancement. Our statewide listening sessions with nurses, nursing students, and stakeholders picked up speed when Dr. Horsley, Dean of the College of Nursing, and I hit the road for our first excellent adventure. Along the way we stopped at Walter's State Community College where Marty Rucker, Dean of Nursing, joined us, and who served as our able helper for the entire series of sessions. We were then joined by Sherry Richardson, the Executive Director for the Tennessee Board of Nursing.

Our first listening session was in Clarksville, Tennessee at Austin Peay State University School of Nursing. Dr. Eve Rice, Interim Director of Nursing, served as the host. We all fell into a set up rhythm posting the announcements, setting up registration tables, and ensuring the recording was in place for data collection. There was more than one site for sessions, and two sessions at each site, morning, and afternoon to provide opportunities for as many as possible to participate.

Our next stop was Memphis, where we were met by Dr. Wendy Likes, Dean of the College of Nursing, and Dr. Peter Buckley, Chancellor of the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. They provided us with a tour of the Center for Healthcare Improvement and Patient Simulation (CHIPS). They hosted a dinner session with the region's nursing leaders, and then conducted two more regular sessions with practicing nurses and nursing students. Jackson, Tennessee, neighboring Memphis, was our next stop. Dr. Leslie Sands, Dean and

Program Director of Nursing at Jackson State Community College hosted a tour of the School of Nursing and supported the listening sessions.

The next week brought us to the Tennessee Hospital Association meeting facilities in Brentwood, Tennessee. Two listening sessions were hosted by Dr. Pam Jefferies Dean, Vanderbilt School of Nursing, and Marilyn Debree, Executive Chief Nursing Officer, Vanderbilt Medical Center. The Galen College of Nursing in downtown Nashville hosted us in their new space located on the 4th floor of the Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) office building.

Our third and final week began in Chattanooga where our listening sessions were hosted by Dr. Chris Smith, University of Tennessee Chattanooga Foundation Professor and Director, School of Nursing, Chief Health Affairs Officer, Enrollment, Management and Student Affairs. We were thrilled with the large group of nursing students in the afternoon session. They will add an interesting comparison in our data group.

We next traveled to Knoxville, where we were hosted by Dr. Victoria Niederhauser and her team. Our state travels ended at the Bristol Regional Medical Center hosted by Dr. Lisa Smithgall, Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Executive Ballad Health, and Dr. Morgan May, Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer Ballad Health.

We could not have completed our listening sessions without the help of many people and groups. We are grateful to Melissa Nipper who arranged the team that set up the registration process and monitoring. Dr. Patty Harnois-Church assisted with the CEU certificate, verification of attendance, and evaluation of forms. The Volunteers from the TNA Action Coalition and the Rising Star leader group assisted us throughout the state. These volunteers included: Angela Beard, Karen Hernan, Patricia Scott, Tina McClavery, Chelcie Oseni, Andrew

Sebastian, Shkendie Papraniku, Carla Kirkland, Brandi Pruitt, Raven Wentworth, Sherry Raber, Rebecca Rae Kojak, Julia Steed, Cathy Taylor, Ashley Carter, Tina Sinatro-Wilhelm, Karen Hernan, Mary Bess Griffith, Kathy Gilbert, Robin Seay, Claire Marr, Candice Short, Marcia DePolo, Paige Mullins, and Patti Scott

Highlights of the Listening Sessions with Nurses

In total, approximately 449 participants attended the listening sessions, with 18% from west Tennessee, 50% from middle Tennessee, and 32% from east Tennessee. Gathering data through listening to the stories of nurses, students, and stakeholders provided insight into the strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities and threats to nursing in their regions. Their comments were captured verbatim in written and recorded form. No identifying information was kept except the city and the time of the session. The participants were placed into groups of twelve to allow everyone an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas. In addition, each participant received a blank sheet of paper to capture ideas they did not want to share publicly. All data is anonymous, and attendees wore nametags with first names only. Preparation for data analysis is already underway.

In every part of the state, we heard thanks for the opportunity allowing nurses to have a voice, and excitement that Tennessee was placing an emphasis on nursing and nurses' solutions. Their comments were clear: others think they know the answers for solving nursing shortages that have been in existence for a very long time. But nurses must be included in generating solutions. Major themes included the shortage of faculty, the demanding, taxing, and burdensome patient loads nurses are required to provide in the clinical settings, and

extremely sick patients on medical-surgical units that just a few years ago were cared for in intensive care units.

Nursing students related the same issues with patient care and noted that the nurses with whom they are assigned are helpful and wish to teach them, but they are so over worked with heavy loads of very sick patients, the students often feel intimidated if they interrupt with questions. Students related that seeing the nurses with such heavy loads of patients in the medical-surgical units, now where the ICU patients of a few years ago are found, they are hesitant to begin their careers in these areas. This discussion emerged in each city so we can clearly state that the nursing shortage is evident in major areas and cities in Tennessee, requiring all our attention if we want to create effective solutions. The patients are depending upon each of us.

Save the Date!

Many new ideas and “best practices” were identified. Hence, we plan a virtual best practice sharing day on November 21st, 2022.

Save the date: The registration for the event is being constructed for TNlovesnurses.org and AHGrownurses.org however this is not ready yet but will be soon.