



Tobi L. Moore

Uplifting nurses

Associations respond to member needs in a pandemic.

By Tobi L. Moore, MBA

“ Acknowledge your frustrations because holding in your feelings can lead to depression and anxiety. ”

In 2020, what kept me up at night was nurses' well-being and how they've been dealing with the impact of COVID-19. Despite the loss of more than 1,400 frontline workers who have died of this illness, nurses continue to work long hours caring for their patients. They fear contracting the virus and bringing it home to their loved ones. On days off, they adhere to infection prevention and control guidelines and limit physical contact, putting the needs of others first. If you asked anyone in healthcare why they keep going, their answer would probably be "because I care."

Facing the new year with an ongoing pandemic, we as leaders must continue to offer stability, reliable information, and useful resources to nurses. The American Nurses Association (ANA) and our constituent/state nurses associations have played a critical role in serving an emerging and diverse set of member needs during the pandemic. This also has been a time of opportunity to explore new modes of member engagement.

We knew the only way to make a difference would be to keep our associations relevant to all that our members were experiencing in 2020. We had to act quickly and responsively. At ANA-Michigan, we restructured our association a few years ago, which proved critical to our ability to pivot operations overnight and respond to nurses' needs during this time of uncertainty. We set aside routine, daily operations, and the status quo. Our innovative and proactive approach has been nationally recognized for establishing new practices and engaging with frontline nurses and potential association members.

How did we learn what our members' needs were during the crisis? We asked, listened, and prioritized. We heard firsthand how vulnerable nurses are to the negative mental health effects related to working under such ex-

treme conditions and went into motion to provide a resource. In Iowa, we started a 24/7 Nurse to Nurse Warm Line to allow nurses to reach out to other nurses to talk and have someone listen.

We also offered a complimentary storytellers' workshop to teach nurses how they can effectively share their countless stories and drive conversations during the pandemic.

Giving members a platform to have their voices heard is essential. We held several virtual town halls with elected officials so they could hear firsthand the many issues nurses in their districts were facing. This drove direct care and hero pay to our frontline nurses.

We created a virtual platform for connecting nurses across the state with our Networks of Support series. We offered webinars addressing stress management and burnout, which provided self-care tools and referral information to professionals for expert assistance. These recorded webinars are part of several resources for members and their nursing colleagues offered on our websites. ANA-Michigan responded to community needs and activated nurse experts to offer a COVID-19 Training Program for K-12 schools.

To all the nurses putting one foot in front of the other, know that you're helping to save lives every day. However, I'm asking you to please take care of yourself with these steps:

- Pace yourself as much as possible.
- Acknowledge your frustrations because holding in your feelings can lead to depression and anxiety.
- Let people help. Some people take joy in helping frontline workers. Let them help you.

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