



Honoring Nurses Week—and the Enduring Spirit of Nursing

Dawn Bowker, PhD, ARNP-BC, CNE, President, Iowa Nurses Association

Last month, we recognized National Nurses Week, a meaningful time each year when we pause to reflect on and celebrate the extraordinary impact nurses have on individuals, families, and communities.

Nurses Week is anchored on May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, whose work forever transformed healthcare and shaped the direction of nursing. Nightingale's legacy is not simply historical—it is deeply relevant today. She saw what others overlooked. She questioned assumptions when suffering was accepted as inevitable. She believed that environment, dignity, and careful observation could change outcomes and save lives.

Perhaps most enduring, she modeled the courage to speak up and challenge “the way things have always been.” That spirit continues to live in each of you.

When I reflect on what it means to be a nurse, I think of what I see every day in our profession.

I see nurses who remain present with patients and families during moments of uncertainty.

Nurses who take the time to explain—again and again—because understanding matters.

Nurses who notice subtle changes others might miss.

Nurses who hold space for grief and quietly celebrate healing.

I see nurses who stand steady in moments of fear, who stay at the bedside long after charting is complete, and who carry the stories of their patients long after a shift has ended. I see nurses who show up—on nights, weekends, holidays, and on ordinary days that become extraordinary because someone needed their care.

I see nurses who advocate—who speak up when it matters most. Nurses who recognize that a patient is never just a diagnosis, but a person with a story: a mother, father, sister, brother, son, or daughter. Nurses who understand that each individual brings a unique lived experience that deserves respect and compassion.

This is the essence of nursing.

Nursing is both a science and an art. It is evidence-based practice grounded in human connection. It requires critical thinking and compassion in equal measure.

Nurses are not optional. Nurses are essential.

We are advocates, healers, listeners, and educators. We are protectors of dignity and champions for those in our care.

Each time I witness your work, I am reminded why I was called to this profession—and why, after more than four decades, I remain deeply proud to be a nurse.

As we reflect on Nurses Week, I encourage each of you to recognize the legacy you carry forward: a legacy of trust, service, and humanity. It is reflected not only in the moments that are seen and celebrated, but also in the quiet, often unseen acts of care that define our profession.

Thank you for choosing nursing. Thank you for your continued commitment to growth, to advocacy, and to excellence in care.

Never underestimate the difference you make or the impact you are capable of achieving.

It is truly an honor and a privilege to serve alongside you. ■

2025 BEST MSN PROGRAMS FOR NURSING

MORNINGSIDE UNIVERSITY
Nylen School of Nursing and Health Sciences
morningside.edu

On-Campus BSN
Online RN to BSN
Online MSN Tracks

- Family Primary Care Nurse Practitioner
- Adult Gerontology Nurse Practitioner
- Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner
- Clinical Nurse Leader/Educator

Online DNP Tracks

- MSN – DNP

Scan the QR code for more information

The Morningside University experience cultivates a passion for lifelong learning and a dedication to ethical leadership and civic responsibility.