By Larry Lemos, DNP, MSN, MHA, RN, GCNS-BC, NE-BC

On behalf of NOVA, I hope you had a joyful National Nurses Week! The theme for 2015 is “Ethical Practice. Quality Care.” As VA nurses, we advocate for veterans to promote their rights, health and safety to ensure they receive the best care. Quality care incorporates ethical nursing practice into the core of what VA nurses do daily. “ICARE,” “My VA,” and ethical nursing practice all have the goal of doing the right thing for veterans. VA nursing staff comprises one-third of all VA employees. This makes nursing ideally positioned to model the cultural shift necessary to regain the veteran's trust in our system. During Nurses Week, I hope you took the time to celebrate the impact you make on the lives of those you serve.

As we celebrate our 35th year as an organization, NOVA is focused on meeting the needs of our members. Since 2011, NOVA has introduced a number of changes – a new logo, a new electronic newsletter, and a new website. NOVA has also produced a new membership video, which is available on our website, to recruit additional members. Recently NOVA hired a consultant to work with the Board on strategic planning and marketing. This includes reviewing our mission, vision, and defining our customer’s needs. Please take the opportunity to share with NOVA what you want out of your professional association by sending me an email or by meeting in person with any NOVA Board Member at our upcoming Annual Meeting.

NOVA is pleased to announce that VA Secretary Robert McDonald has confirmed his opening Keynote Presentation at our Annual Meeting, June 10-12, at the Liaison Hotel in Washington, D.C. Secretary McDonald will discuss how VA nursing’s core values are intertwined with the greater health care community, provide an update on hiring health care providers since the implementation of the “Choice Act,” and what the nurses's role is in helping implement his “Blueprint for Excellence.” NOVA Past President Nancy Claflin will review our 35-year history and NOVA’s influence on the nursing community, patient care, and legislation. The first day of the program will conclude with a panel discussion with our Veteran Service Organizations partners and how the VSOs and NOVA can partner to provide the best care for America’s Heroes. The day ends with a Welcome Reception.

Thursday begins with NOVA discussing how to partner with other nursing professional associations as we often share common goals and challenges. One such common professional concern is for advanced practice nurses in America to have a full practice authority. Currently, there are 19 states and the District of Columbia where they practice as such. Penny Jensen will discuss how the VA’s move toward APRNs having full practice authority will lead the way for this to become the norm in all 50 states. The morning continues with a discussion on VA’s National Recruitment Program. Teresa Morris, NOVA’s Manager, Advocacy and Government Relations, will prepare attendees for sharing NOVA’s...
NOVA Welcomes New Associate Members!

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Visit Us on Facebook!

Since Facebook has become a common way for individuals to keep up-to-date with friends and interests, the NOVA Board decided this was a great way to communicate. Membership to Facebook is free and it is easy to set up a profile page. Once you set up a page, or if you are already a member, enter Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs in the search box at the top of the page and you will find our group page. Send a group member request and we will add you.
Heard on the Hill

By Teresa Morris, Advocacy & Government Relations

Attention All NOVA Members!

As we approach NOVA's 35th Annual Meeting, I hope all of you are making plans to join us in Washington, D.C., to celebrate this wonderful accomplishment!

One of the exciting opportunities awaiting all attendees will be a chance to join us as we "Storm the Hill" to discuss NOVA critical issues with Members of Congress and key staff. For more information on scheduling your appointment, please visit the NOVA website: www.vanurse.org and click on the “Legislative” tab.

I urge you to become familiar with NOVA’s Legislative Agenda, which was developed to directly align with the core values of VHA. We will also have on hand at the Annual Meeting policy papers regarding several critical issues NOVA feels need to be addressed by Congress and VA leadership. Currently, they cover improving IT, meeting human resource challenges, recruiting and retaining the best and the brightest health care professionals and having a voice and seat at the table as VA undergoes a major restructuring in all areas of care and services.

As we acknowledge the long standing efforts of NOVA, the only professional organization dedicated to VA nurses, we must take the time to renew our advocacy goals by standing together with one voice to strengthen VA nursing.

Educating Congressional staff is key. Many of those on the Hill are new and not familiar with some of the issues facing VA. Add to that the continued oversight and monitoring of the “Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act,” and we have our work cut out in helping the Department of Veterans Affairs continue to move forward in the future.

I encourage all of you to check out the Annual Meeting Agenda and Schedule at www.vanurse.org/documents/schedule.pdf and to find your Members of Congress using the links provided below. We ask all Annual Meeting attendees to schedule an appointment with your Representatives and Senators to further NOVA’s legislative goals. Now is the time to start brushing up on your government relations skills. It looks to be an exciting June for VA Nurses in our Nation’s Capital!

For NOVA’s 2015 Legislative Agenda, visit our website at: www.vanurse.org

To find your Representative – using your zip code, visit the US House website: www.house.gov/representatives/find/

A list of Senators can be found at: www.senate.gov

NOVA Signs Educational Partnership With Excelsior College!

April 22, 2015, Washington, D.C. – The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) has signed an educational agreement with Excelsior College that will allow its members to pursue a nursing degree or certificate at a reduced rate. In addition, the agreement extends special pricing to the spouses or domestic partners of NOVA members pursuing degrees through any of Excelsior’s five schools, including Business and Technology, Health Sciences, Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Public Service. In total, the College offers more than 30 individual degree programs.

“The partnership with Excelsior College provides a benefit to NOVA members with opportunities to pursue a high-quality education from an accredited educational institution,” Nancy Claflin, NOVA Past President and Chair of the Education Committee commented. “NOVA members can take advantage of the discounts offered to pursue their dreams of achieving higher education. NOVA supports a highly educated nursing workforce providing excellent care to veterans and family members.”

NOVA is a nonprofit professional nursing organization whose mission is to help shape and influence health care within the Department of Veterans Affairs. It supports nurses in providing high quality care, an optimal work environment, informing nurses on relevant issues that impact VA health care and nursing practice, being a strong voice in the legislative arena, and having a strong presence at the VHA corporate leadership level. NOVA has 141 chapters located throughout the United States to include Pacific Islands and Alaska at 20 VA Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) areas.

Excelsior is the largest educator of nurses and is considered a pioneer in the nursing field, having introduced a competency-based associate degree distance learning program in 1975 with funding from the Kellogg Foundation. In total, Excelsior’s School of Nursing serves more than 19,000 current students across the associate, bachelor’s and master’s levels, and has produced over 50,000 nursing graduates.

Excelsior College’s Dean for the School of Nursing, Mary Lee Pollard, provided her thoughts on the NOVA partnership. “The School of Nursing is proud to be affiliated with NOVA and to continue our work with the Veterans Administration to provide the best care possible for our nation’s veterans,” said Pollard. “Through this partnership we can provide an opportunity for continued on next page
Chapter News

Chapter 166
Tampa, FL
By Ericka Lewis, RN

As a way to honor veterans and acknowledge their service and sacrifice, NOVA Chapter 166 donated part of the proceeds of our comedy show fundraiser to Honor Flight of West Central Florida (HFWCF). Honor Flight is a non-profit organization created to honor WWII veterans by sending them (free of charge) to Washington, D.C., to reflect at the national memorials. In continued support of HFWCF, a few NOVA nurses and friends of NOVA gathered at the St. Pete Airport to welcome home these special heroes as they returned from their day trip at the Capitol.

As Holly Peebles writes, “That was an amazing experience!! It was so touching, everyone was yelling ‘Thank You’ to the veterans and some of them got quite emotional. One WWII veteran parked himself in his wheelchair at the terminal exit and told everyone ‘Thank You’ as we left. I will be going again.” Our Chapter is proud to have been a part of such a beautiful and patriotic celebration. To find out more about Honor Flight of West Central Florida, log onto www.honorflightwcf.org.

“It’s our way of paying back a small part of a large debt owed by a grateful nation”- Adam Walmus, Houston VA Medical Center Director.

Pictured Above: NOVA Chapter 166 Members greeting WWII Veterans.

NOVA Chapter 166 congratulates it’s 2014 local scholarship winners: Emmanuela Pierre-Charles, SCI-DR, Cally Graniero - 4 SOUTH, Mariamma Pothen - MICU, and Brandi Williams– ARC-II. Tampa NOVA Chapter 166 has a long standing tradition of supporting higher nursing education. It is with great pride that we congratulate our 2014 NOVA Chapter 166 Scholarship Winners. We would also like to thank all of those who donated during our fundraising events! Your kindness and generosity are warmly received and greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Pictured Above: 2014 NOVA Chapter 166 Scholarship Winners.

www.vanurse.org

nursing professionals of the VA to pursue an advanced degree – a credential that has been shown to improve the quality of nursing care as well as patient outcomes.”

Excelsior is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and is a three-time designee as a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education by the National League for Nursing. It is also designated as a Best School for Men in Nursing by the American Assembly for Men in Nursing. In addition, the College recently launched the Veterans Bachelor of Science in Nursing (VBSN) project, which offers veterans specialized advising services, a dedicated nursing faculty mentor who served in the Navy Nurse Corps, as well as courses designed to educate all nurses on the special needs of military populations and their families.

Beyond a robust array of online educational programs and an extensive range of support services tailored to students, the College also offers UExcel, an extensive credit-by-examination program that provides an additional way to earn credit toward degree completion.

Excelsior College, www.excelsior.edu, is a regionally accredited, nonprofit distance learning institution that focuses on removing obstacles to the educational goals of adult learners. Founded in 1971 and located in Albany, NY, Excelsior is a proven leader in the assessment and validation of student knowledge. It offers more efficient and affordable access to degree completion through multiple avenues: its own online courses and college-level proficiency examinations, and the acceptance in transfer of credit from other colleges and universities as well as recognized corporate and military training programs. Excelsior College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

For more information, please visit: www.excelsior.edu/web/partners/nova.

President’s Message
continued from page 1

legislative agenda with our elected officials. After visiting with our elected officials and their staff on Capitol Hill, a Congressional Reception will be held in the Rayburn House Office Building.

Friday opens with NOVA’s Awards Breakfast and the display of Poster Presentations. Cheryl Dellasega will discuss the very serious problem of bullying within our profession and the impact it has on retention of the best nurses in our system. Scott Shreve will discuss how the Comprehensive End of Life Care Initiative has changed the culture of care for veterans with serious illness. We end the Annual Meeting with the opportunity to listen to Donna Gage, VA’s Chief Nursing Officer, who will share her vision of the future of VA nursing.
Chapter 202
Topeka, KS
By Cletus Steinlage, RN

NOVA Chapter 202 recently made a donation to the Equine Therapy Program used for PTSD clients, as well as to the Homeless Veterans Program.

On February 27, 2015, NOVA Chapter 202 held the “Denim Friday” which was a great success. Our Chapter partners with the Kansas Psychiatric Nurses Association every two years and presents Certified Nurse Education credits to health care workers. This year’s topics included alternative treatments for pain and anxiety. TeleHealth presented some new technologies that are being used in home care of veterans.

Chapter 226
Boston, MA
By Kelly Skinner, RN

The March Madness Calendar Raffle is our biggest fundraiser. Special thanks to Eileen Pflanz who coordinated the 2015 March Madness Calendar Raffle and to all the staff who generously donated over 30 great prizes and purchased the calendar raffles. Some of this year’s winners include Eileen Pflanz, Nancy Brooks, Donna DeMartino, Kelly Skinner and Colleen Casey. Their prizes included $50 Home Goods/TJ Maxx/Marshalls gift cards, $50 Dunkin Donuts gift card, tea basket and votive candle, $100 Aquitaine Restaurant gift card, $25 cash and a VA t-shirt. Without the effort and support from our members, we would not be able to offer the NOVA Chapter 226 Scholarships each year to nurses, nursing assistants, and health technicians who are currently enrolled in nursing schools or provide monetary support to our members attending NOVA’s Annual meetings. When it comes to making a positive impact, the NOVA Chapter 226 nurses rule!

Pictured Above: (Left to right) Eileen Pflanz and Nancy Brooks.

Pictured Above: (Left to right) Donna DeMartino and Kelly Skinner.

Pictured Left: Colleen Casey.
Chapter 326
Dayton, OH
By Margaret Kruckemeyer, Nurse Emeritus

Dayton NOVA nurses mantra of “Preserving the best of the past, by improving the present to create a better future” was demonstrated on April 11, 2015, at our “Learning Day at Dayton VAMC” event. NOVA nurses, both active and emeritus, helped to host and provide forty-eight Girl Scouts (juniors and cadets) with their fifteen leaders from Southwest Ohio Region with learning experiences utilizing nursing actions (assessment, wound care, first aid, CPR, hand washing) within Dayton’s new simulation center. Dr. Debi Samsel, RN, PhD, oversaw the simulation modular learning areas staffed by nurses. Many of them are retired but quite willing to share their years of nursing experiences with future candidates of nursing. Anna Jones-Monnet, Associate Chief of Patient Care Services and also a Girl Scout at one time, welcomed the eager learners to our heritage of healing campus. Community partnership involvement was spearheaded by NOVA’s Kathleen Hayes, RN, and Margaret Kruckemeyer, RN. Both Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame members demonstrated the strength of coordinating and leading volunteers from chaplain service, Master Gardeners of Miami Valley, American Red Cross and American Veterans Heritage center as they worked throughout an eight hour day to provide a plethora of merit badge earning opportunities.

Participants learned tree planting techniques. Each group planted a dedicated tree on Dayton’s VA Medical Center Campus and took home a small tree to plant within their community as well. Genealogy was taught by Carolyn Burns, highlighting ancestry of Americans who have served their country within their own family systems. Veterans History was taught by MSG (ret) Mark Conrad at Dayton’s based Miami Valley Military History Museum site (www.mvmmh@yahoo.com) within the historic Putnam Library on Campus. Participants were all encouraged to return in May when NOVA members will be helping to staff the Armed Service Day 5K, May 16, 2015, and Patriot Freedom Festival, May 23-24, 2015, on the Dayton VA Medical Center Campus. www.americanveteransheritage.org.

Further learning activities are being planned to highlight the Veterans History Project’s fifteenth anniversary year in teaching interviewing and recording skills of oral history. We hope to see more VA nurses come to NOVA’s Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., June 10-12, 2015, and see our poster.

Chapter 342
Coatesville, PA
By Laurene Elauria-Johnson, RN

Nurses play an important role in the management and treatment of pain. With the growing number of veterans diagnosed with substance use related pain, we are interested in learning more about the relationship between nurse characteristics, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs toward pain and pain management behavior of nurses caring for veterans with substance use disorder. The study is significant in obtaining knowledge of variables that can help improve pain management for veterans and an opportunity to evaluate current pain management programs.

Maria Valdez, MSN, RN, CRRN, and Laurene Elauria-Johnson, MSN, RN, from 59A MH are conducting this VA IRB approved research at Coatesville VAMC.

Chapter 346
Lebanon, PA
By Nancy Elliott, RN

NIWI 2015 Scholarship

Being selected for a NIWI Scholarship was an honor. I went to the conference wanting to learn all I could to be prepared to visit with the legislators from my district and state. The NIWI provided me an opportunity to meet and network with nurses from different specialty areas and from other areas of the country. No matter what state we were from or what area of nursing we worked, we all had one thing in common—we were all there to learn how to advocate for each other and for our patients.

As a member of the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) Board of Directors, I have participated in three Legislative Roundtables thus far. On June 10-12, NOVA is holding its Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. There will be an opportunity to visit Capitol Hill during the conference. NIWI has provided me with the confidence to meet with legislators or their assistants. I feel grateful that I can provide my colleagues some insight of what to expect when they have an opportunity to visit the Hill.
Locally, I have one item I am planning to present to my state legislators. I feel that my experience at NIWI has prepared me with the knowledge and poise to write to them when issues arise within the nursing profession and legislation is presented within the Senate or House of Representatives. I have an increased awareness of how important constituents are to the legislators. They need to hear from us so they know the needs of nurses and other healthcare professionals. They need to know what we need to provide quality and safe care to health care consumers.

In my VA, I am responsible for coordinating two hospital-wide programs. Attending NIWI has increased my knowledge of how to present the programs’ related “Asks” in a detailed way, so my points are clear and concise.

NIWI is an experience nurses from all specialty areas would benefit from attending.

Retired And Still A Resource...

If you plan to retire from the VA within the next six months, please consider joining as a NOVA Nurse Emeritus Member.

GOVERNANCE

The Nurse Emeritus Group is comprised of NOVA members who have retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs or who plan retirement within the next calendar year.

The Nurse Emeritus Group is an established group within the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) and, as such, adheres to all policies and practices as governed by the Bylaws of NOVA.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Nurse Emeritus Group exists to support the mission and vision of NOVA through continuing engagement of nurses who have retired or have immediate plans to retire from active employment in VA.

The Nurse Emeritus Group seeks to recognize and value the expertise of retired VA nurses through substantive projects that support the working VA nurses and the veterans they serve.

The Nurse Emeritus Group strives to recognize and celebrate the contribution of retired VA nurses through positive affirmation programs and projects.

What are the dues for Nurse Emeritus members?
The dues for NOVA Nurse Emeritus members are $50 per year.

What does the Nurse Emeritus Group do?
Nurse Emeritus projects currently include: “Cool Scarves” for soldiers deployed in the Middle East and NOVA membership promotion and fundraising efforts to support nursing scholarships.
Welcome Aboard! New NOVA Members
February 2 - April 30, 2015

112 NORTHERN ARIZONA VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Michelle Adkins-Shanks
Gary Cline
Lynnette Goldtooth
Daisy Hacker
Ramona Hicks
Evelyn Olson

114 SOUTHERN ARIZONA VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Susan O. Lohse

126 VA LONG BEACH HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Irene Alhammadin
Diana Cartchi Clarete
Daphany Connor
Lizel Craig
Jerry Douglas
Ahamefule Epoh
Sunita Kumar
Janet Lehfeld
Raisa Camille Manuel
David McKay
Ann Petersen
Alberto Ramirez
Richelle Rippe
Kelly Shaw
Joshua Simpson
Antonio Vasquez

129 VA PALO ALTO HCS
Frances Georga Gubatina
Jennifer Lin
Bernadette Speiser

130 VA GREATER LOS ANGELES HCS
Carlos Enriquez
Tom Moseid
Denise Witherspoon

156 WASHINGTON, D.C. VA MEDICAL CENTER
Catherine Davelli
Angela Hollandsworth
Molly O’Connell
Charmayne Tyler-Jackson

166 JAMES A. HALEY VA HOSPITAL
Mariamma Abraham
Shywan Adamski
Emilia Agbakwu
Kristy Ashley
Andrea Barcz
Marecia Bell
Maria Biala
Lorrie Blount
Susanne Carroll

170 ATLANTA VA MEDICAL CENTER
Ann Marie Buchanan-Cummings
June Gandy
Angelra Grant

188 VA NORTHERN INDIANA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Elizabeth Meyers

198 VA CENTRAL IOWA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Deborah De Jong

206 LEXINGTON VA MEDICAL CENTER
Ashley Baldwin
Melissa Richardson
Jamica Scott
Mary Stumbo
Jessica Wallace

212 SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Tameka Anderson

214 OVERTON BROOKS VA MEDICAL CENTER
Sheila Aaron
Angela Dixon
Marian Gardner
Earnest Goldsmith
Kahal Heard
Tajacka Maxie
Shonda Small

216 VA MAINE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Destiny Davis
Rita Evans
Victoria Fabrebo
LaNita Fortenberry
Marlene Groner
Joanna Hahn
Danielle Hallman
Sharol Hipolito
Jain Jolly
Stephanie LaForest
Deborah Moore
Rajani Nelluri
Holly Peebles
Kathleen Rossiter
Carla Stowbridge
Simone Voigt
Holly Wertheimer

218 VA MARYLAND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Brenda Hawkins

224 EDITH Nourse ROGERS MEMORIAL VA
Jayme Bagtas
Ann Des Loges
Kate Golden
Alexander Goodstein
Maureen Gramzow
Nancy Jones
Christine King
Patricia Lane
Stephi Philip

226 VA BOSTON HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Heidi Bellar

236 JOHN D. DINGELL VA MEDICAL CENTER
Karla Price

238 VA ANN ARBOR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Kimberly Girbach

246 MINNEAPOLIS VA MEDICAL CENTER
Paula Cole
Lisa Cupersmith
Kathy Dardick

256 KANSAS CITY VA MEDICAL CENTER
Eunice Adebayo
Kim Hannan

266 LA NEW JERSEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Averyta Davis

282 SAMUEL S. STRATTON VA MEDICAL CENTER
Denise Dysard

306 VA HEALTH CARE NETWORK UPSTATE NY SYRACUSE
Emily Shapiro

308 CHARLES GEORGE VA MEDICAL CENTER
Julie Azar
Roslyn Bragg
Linda Bugg
Elizabeth Crooke

312 FAYETTEVILLE VA MEDICAL CENTER
Kelly Patterson

322 LOUIS STOKES CLEVELAND VA MEDICAL CENTER
Shawnee Fox

328 JACK C. MONTGOMERY VA MEDICAL CENTER
Shelly Carlton
Devyn Denton
Sheila Howerton
Rolanda Hutton
Stacy Royce
Jessica Whisenhunt

332 PORTLAND VA MEDICAL CENTER
Paul Browning

334 VA ROSEBURG HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Tracy Weistreich

340 COATSVILLE VA MEDICAL CENTER
Emily Herling

346 LEBANON VA MEDICAL CENTER
Kristi Beaupre
Sheila Howerton
Myrah Roberts
Vickie West

348 PHILADELPHIA VA MEDICAL CENTER
Russell Mosley

354 WILKES-BARRY VA MEDICAL CENTER
Laura Lee Olisewski

358 PROVIDENCE VA MEDICAL CENTER
Shonda Escobar

362 W.J. BRYAN DORN VA MEDICAL CENTER
Christine Haggerty

364 VA BLACK HILLS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Valerie Anderson
Shawna Clement
Michelle Salazar
Madonna Schneider

370 MEMPHIS VA MEDICAL CENTER
Elizabeth Bryant

380 WEST TEXAS VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Tyndall Light

384 VA NORTH TEXAS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Josephine Birt
Fayrene Tolbert

407 VA TEXAS VALLEY COASTAL BEND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Maria Gonzales

410 CENTRAL TEXAS VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Leonard Slade

420 HUNTER HOLMES MCGUIRE VA MEDICAL CENTER
Brian Hobbs

440 MARTINSBURG VA MEDICAL CENTER
Ebony Gonzalez

450 SHERIDAN VA MEDICAL CENTER
Michael Bohne

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NOVA News
SPRING 2015

NOVA Mission Statement
NOVA: Shaping and Influencing Health Care within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

NOVA Vision Statement
VA nurses will provide high quality nursing care. VA nurses will have an optimal work environment. VA nurses will be well informed on relevant issues that impact VA health care and nursing practice. VA nurses will have a strong voice in the legislative arena. VA nurses will have a strong presence at the VHA corporate leadership level. VA nurses will be NOVA members.

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