



## Bigger and Better: Living up to Magnet as We Embrace the Future!

"Mommy!" exclaimed the voice over the phone one early morning on a day off and I struggled to wake up and make sense of this rude awakening. "Mommy, we're stuck!" This was not the voice of my biological child calling from afar for help, but rather the voice of my young co-worker using the pet name bestowed on me on my unit. She continued, "we're working on the magnet poster and we can't come up with a title! We need your brain!"

"Hmmm," I croaked, trying to approximate the sound of a wise, awake and alert mommy-nurse. "Well what do you have so far?"

"North Representing Magnet," she said, "but that's boring!" "Hmmm," I said again, trying to buy some time to wake up. "well, what's the content like?" She said, "You know, those new big words." Another voice chimed in reading, "The 5 Components: Transformational Leadership; Structural Empowerment; Exemplary Professional Practice; New Knowledge, Innovation and Improvement; Empirical Outcomes. And then we have some pictures on unit huddles and hourly rounds proving better satisfaction and safety..."

"Ah," I said finally able to open my eyes and come to life. "Representing is not what magnet is about, it's not organic enough. We have to live magnet. We have to provide evidence that we live it. Outcomes is what they want to see: solid evidence that we live and breathe magnet. We have to live up to Magnet." "Living up to Magnet! That's it!" they exclaimed.

In my sleep fogged brain it didn't occur to me that as a member of the Recruitment and Retention Council and an organizer of this year's Nurse Week, that my co-leader and I had just recently painstakingly hammered out this year's essay contest theme and that it echoed this very idea. Furthermore it eluded me that just a month ago at the House of Representatives meeting we had been given an update on magnet and it was made clear that magnet status is not a slam dunk, nor is it a review or reiteration of our previous work. No, magnet status is organic, it means we have to live up to and provide concrete evidence and outcomes that prove we are a magnet hospital. We have to be bigger and better!

In fact it is only as I write this essay that I realize that my sleepy remarks came from my own living and breathing of a magnet imperative: nursing leadership and decision making at the staff level, in other words: our model of Shared Governance. I have been one of the lucky ones who got in on the ground floor of this innovative new model. And it's been quite a ride: engrossing, interesting, painful, confusing, struggling, brilliant, successful...! Like any birth, messy but truly inspiring. We have watched staff nurses and staff from the other disciplines of our patient care services take on leadership roles and projects that they had never done before. We have learned how to come up with and follow through on projects; we have learned how to make our case for change; we have learned how to do the hard work to get things done. It hasn't always been neat and pretty, but no real and lasting change is easy. As

elected leaders we have taken seriously our roles as advocates and representatives of our fellow nurses and patient care staff members.

The leadership skills it has taught us has filtered down to the unit level through our unit based councils where we bring the work of the councils and house to be disseminated. We get feedback to bring back to our councils and in my case, as an organizer of activities that take a village, it has given me recruiting skills to mold the next leaders.

I call on my unit's activists to help with all my projects and this fosters nursing leadership in the making. Now nurses on my unit are organizers of one of the big celebrations of Nurse Week, the Garden Party. Some of these same young nurses are promoting certification of nurses; leading by example by becoming certified, and making a poster promoting certification. Becoming certified is a way of living up to and promoting professionalism. When I came to this hospital from a specialty hospital it was one of the first things I did, to challenge myself to become certified in order to live up to being a pediatric nurse at one of the foremost children's hospitals in the country. I now teach at the CPN review course held here at Children's Hospital and try to promote and help every nurse succeed in certification. It is one of my favorite things now because I really believe we all should pursue certification and belong to and actively participate in a national nursing organization. The young nurses who called me mommy that early morning are the ones who also produced our unit's Certified Pediatric Nursing poster and at that poster making session they also came up with the idea of putting together a booklet of helpful hints and test taking resources to assist their fellow nurses in becoming certified. They are nurse leaders in the making! One is going further in her education, to become a BSN nurse. The other is pursuing extra training as a skin care nurse and has stepped into an empty slot on the shared governance council. Yet another is an active member of the Society of Pediatric Nurses on our chapter newsletter committee, as the production manager. Along with other young nurses, they have also stepped into the roles as teachers of exemplary professional and evidence based practice, becoming the super users and teachers of the new defibrillators and reinforced teaching of our central line policy and procedure. I believe this kind of mentoring and developing of nurse leaders happens every day in this hospital and the shared governance model promotes further leadership development.

I believe this promotion of leadership, raising the bar and asking for more leadership, involvement, certification, education and professionalism is organic to CHLA. As we move to a bigger and better new hospital building and refurbish the remaining buildings, it is a living symbol of how we are embracing our bright new future. We have to prove and live up to magnet status; it's already there and organic, it's what we live and breathe!

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