Nurses in Action

Cereal Drive Collects 81,000 Servings for Local Kids

By Elena Epstein

Mary McCulley, MS, RN, CPNP-AC, Division of Pain Management, goes to great depths when she wants to escape and relax—like 130 feet deep.

An avid scuba diver, McCulley has logged more than 1,000 dives at such exotic places as the Caribbean, Mexico, Hawaii, Fiji, Micronesia, Indonesia, Costa Rica and Honduras. She was immediately hooked after taking an introductory scuba diving course 25 years ago while vacationing in Martinique.

“I loved that it was part of a different world. It was very quiet and peaceful—it was exciting to be surrounded by things I’d never seen before,” says McCulley, who soon became National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI) Open Water-certified in underwater diving.

Over the years, she obtained certifications in Advanced, Rescue, Divemaster and, ultimately, Open Water instructor from the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), allowing her to dive deeper, perform rescues and provide instruction to other divers. McCulley also acquired diving equipment including a collection of wet and dry suits, air tanks, fins, regulators, masks and snorkels.

Along with seeing colorful corals, exotic fish and an array of sea life, she has encountered hammerhead and bull sharks during her dives, but never feels nervous or threatened by them, noting, “They’re more interested in looking for food on the surface than scuba divers.”

One of her tensest moments occurred during a dive in La Jolla off the San Diego coast, where her high-pressure hose blew out and she rapidly started to lose air. Fortunately, McCulley’s scuba partner handed her a backup regulator and she made it safely to the water’s surface.

“You can’t panic—that’s what scuba training is for,” she explains, drawing similarities between nursing and scuba diving. “You have to be knowledgeable to handle any situation.”

Diving offers a great workout and a stress release from her job, where she cares for patients with acute pain. “Diving has been a perfect escape—it puts you in a relaxed state of mind. When you’re underwater, you can’t think of much else. You’re very present and in the moment.”

In addition to the cereal boxes, the team also raised $5,085 in cash donations for the Regional Food Bank, which included a $4,000 check from West Coast University.

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“‘It was an intense week for everyone on the committee and all the volunteers,’” says Gayer. “‘Everyone worked really hard, but it was so rewarding. The drive brought such a sense of unity to all of us. I personally made so many new friends in different units of the hospital because of working on this project. I can’t wait for next year!’”

“Gayer prepared and presented a proposal to hospital administrators and the Collaborative Governance Committee, and once approval was granted, she quickly formed a steering committee with the help of fellow NICCU nurses Carly DePew, BSN, Lindsey Webb, MSN, RNC-NIC, and Dolores Greenwood, MSN, RNC-NIC.

The committee also included 25 other hospital employees of varying disciplines, all of whom volunteered countless hours during the 10 months of preparation leading up to the big event.

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“We Treat Kids Better

Fall 2017

FloSheet

A Triannual Publication for Nurses

Extra: Lives Outside the Hospital

Adventurer Dives Deep to Escape

By Vicky Cho Estrada

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“Gayer had been a part of a successful cereal drive when she was working at Children’s Hospital of Michigan, and knew she wanted to bring the program to CHLA when she moved to Los Angeles five years ago. That vision became a reality this summer.

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Less than two decades ago, CHLA had just two doctorally prepared nurses. Today, there are 24, with another 25 currently pursuing doctorates of philosophy (PhD), nursing practice (DNP) and other programs. “Nurses are taking on more responsibility and more research,” notes Suzanne Taylor, EdD, MSN, RN-BC, director, Clinical Education and Professional Development. “That makes an advanced degree more important than ever.”

Belson thinks nurses are natural researchers. “Being there on the front lines every day, you get a sense of the important questions,” she says. “I want to be able to take that understanding into my own research.”

She decided to get her doctorate to better equip herself to supervise the coming wave of doctorally prepared nurses. Imperial-Perez had a similar motivation. “You have to up your ability to mentor these new entry-level nurses,” says the CTICU clinical manager.

Cresencia had been teaching at a private nursing school when he realized most of his fellow faculty held doctorates in nursing practice or philosophy. “I figured the worst that could happen is that UCLA would accept me,” he jokes. “Then they did.”

Ono was driven by a desire to impact the patient and family experience. “How do we best support them to improve their outcomes and quality of life? That’s an aspect of care nurses can bring to the table,” she says.

All agree that going through the program together creates a tremendous support system. They text regularly and compare notes when they run into each other at CHLA. “That we’re from different areas brings different perspectives on a problem,” says Ono.

In fact, their entire cohort of 10 nurses at UCLA is so supportive, they’re known as “The Class That Potlucks.” The group produced a poster presentation, “Resiliency Among PhD Students: Navigating Doctoral Education as a Cohort,” which Cresencia helped present this July in Dublin, Ireland, at the 2017 Nursing Research Congress of Sigma Theta Tau International, the Honor Society of Nursing.

In addition to texts and emails, the cohort maintains a Facebook page and holds monthly get-togethers to celebrate birthdays and special occasions. “We’re nurses,” says Imperial-Perez. “We bring food.”

CHLA offers multifaceted support for nurses seeking degrees, including tuition assistance. Equally important is the mentoring and role modeling of doctorally prepared nurses who came before. “We’re in good hands,” says Cresencia.

Four years ago, Mary Baron Nelson, PhD, RN, CPNP, then a newly minted PhD, was looking for reinforcement. So she founded the Nurses With Doctorates group at CHLA. The quarterly gathering
connects nurse-scientists hospital-wide and recently opened attendance to doctoral students. “With the atmosphere of inquiry at CHLA, nurses are inspired to keep learning,” says Baron Nelson, assistant professor of Clinical Pediatrics at USC. “We’re raising the bar on the profession.”

Raising the bar includes the recent launch of CHLA’s Institute for Nursing and Interprofessional Research, directed by nurse-scientist Jennifer Baird, PhD, MPH, MSW, RN. Baird has started an offshoot of Nurses With Doctorates—an informal works-in-progress gathering where nurses and others interested in research get feedback and learn about funding, publication and other resources.

The CHLA support groups “validate that pursuing higher education is a really important, worthwhile endeavor, and that CHLA is here to support those who take this on,” says Baird.

Such encouragement is essential because “it’s a marathon to go for your PhD,” says Ono, requiring balance, stamina and sacrifice. She has made it so far with “a lot of support at work and home.” She even managed to plan her wedding last February while immersed in coursework.

Cresencia cut back on his hours in the PACU to handle the PhD workload. Belson cut back on her sleep. She used to get eight hours; now it’s about five, and varies with deadlines. For Imperial-Perez, the biggest challenge is “saying no” without feeling guilty to maintain a threshold for family, school and work balance.” She’s learning how, but often finds herself answering emails “way past midnight.”

It’s all worth it, they say, as they deep-dive into learning the research process and tackling their dissertations. Imperial-Perez wants to find ways to support parents in continuing the complex care of their child at home after cardiac surgery and, later on, the implementation of new ideas at the bedside through diffusion research methodology. After all, “even elegantly designed studies with earth-shaking results can take forever to realize change,” she says.

Ono’s subject is sinusoidal obstruction syndrome, in which vessels that transport blood through the liver become narrow and blocked. It often occurs after a bone marrow transplant. Cresencia is focused on pediatric emergence delirium, which can impact patients when they wake from anesthesia and cause injuries to patients or staff.

Belson is concerned about retinoblastoma, a rare cancer, which requires that patients have multiple rounds of anesthesia when young to undergo eye exams. She’s starting by analyzing their quality of life as adolescents.

In anesthesiology, things tend to happen quickly, and Belson is still adjusting to “the patience required by research.” During the school year, she, daughter Kate, 13, and son Liam, 10, hit the books in the evening to do homework. “It’s getting much harder than when I was in college,” Belson concedes, “to pull an all-nighter.”

Advice for a nurse just starting out: Work on growing some thick skin.

Best life advice: This is a job, not your life.

Personal motto: It is what it is (at least I say it a lot).

Favorite comfort food: Salty—Ruffles potato chips with onion dip. Sweet—Anything with cream cheese frosting.

Guilty pleasure: Binge watching my favorite TV shows while eating buttered popcorn.

Favorite TV shows: Every season and every episode of “Breaking Bad,” “House of Cards,” “Naked and Afraid” and “Modern Family.”

What do you love to do when not working? Running 5Ks and half-marathons with friends, and making and drinking wine with my husband and friends. Favorite wine-tasting areas are Paso Robles, Sonoma and Napa.

How many races so far? 41, most of them half-marathons.
Celebrating the accomplishments and milestones of CHLA nurses

Presentations
Annie Alvarez (Bone Marrow Transplant), Amy Dao (Duque 6 Rehab), Sydney Gardner (6 East), Marsha Jarquin (Care Coordination), Charles Mai (Cardiothoracic Intensive Care Unit), Sheryl May (Cardiovascular Acute), Margaret Teresa Reen (Emergency Transport), Stephanie Santiago (Post-Anesthesia Care Unit), Tu Beth Zemetra (Infusion Center), Michelle-Ann Ventura (5 West)

Promotions
Jennifer Baldwin (Endocrinology), Nurse Care Manager. Brenda Barnum (Newborn and Infant Critical Care Unit), Lead RN. Alejandra Briseno (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit), Night Shift 4 West. Lorie Ferreira (Newborn and Infant Critical Care Unit), Lead RN.

Life Celebrations
Marriages
Ann Alvarez (Bone Marrow Transplant), Amy Dao (Duque 6 Rehab), Sydney Gardner (6 East), Marsha Jarquin (Care Coordination), Charles Mai (Cardiothoracic Intensive Care Unit), Sheryl May (Cardiovascular Acute), Margaret Teresa Reen (Emergency Transport), Stephanie Santiago (Post-Anesthesia Care Unit), Tu Beth Zemetra (Infusion Center), Michelle-Ann Ventura (5 West).

Babies
Boys: Melissa Cacho (Bone Marrow Transplant), Katelyn Clark (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit), Lauren Hemmepoldrath (Bone Marrow Transplant, Cardiovascular Acute), Sarah Schneider (Bone Marrow Transplant), Aubree Sexton (Bone Marrow Transplant)

Girls: Bobby Briscoe (6 East), Christine Cruso (Infusion Center) and George Cruso (Float Team), Danielle Eraimi (Bone Marrow Transplant)

Community
Athletics: Katrina Lazo and Christina Ng-Watson (Float Team), Los Angeles Marathon, March 2017; Melissa Aguirre (4 West) and Jace Vargas-Weisser (Ambulatory Surgery), Walt Disney World Star Wars Dark Side Challenge (10k and half-marathon), April 2017; Cheryl Cameron (Neurology), Margaux Chan (Magnet Program), and Allan Crescencio, Elizabethtown, KY, May 2017.}

Joanna Krall


Allan Crescencio (Post-Anesthesia Care Unit): “Pediatric, Syndrome and Oncomedrinas,” poster presentation, UCLA School of Nursing Research Day, May 2017.


Brenda Barnum (Newborn and Infant Critical Care Unit): “Consenting for a Culture of Respect” and “Differentiating Goals and Futility,” lectures for Minor in Health Care Studies course on Health Care Ethics, USC, Los Angeles, CA, April 2017.

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This past summer was an exciting time for us. We completed our Magnet survey and I am thrilled that the three Magnet appraisers whom we hosted for three days found just one area for us to make adjustments in. In fact, we heard one of the lead appraisers saying, “I would like to work here.”

That comment makes me very proud because it captures the essence of CHLA. This is a hospital where nurses want to be. This is a place where each one of us has pride in our own daily work and pride in what we are able to accomplish together as a group. The Magnet survey is all about our nursing team and how they tell their stories, and how they show up for their patients and their co-workers.

The appraisers were extremely impressed by our level of interdisciplinary and family-centered care. They commented on how these are not theories we simply talk about or create posters about, but rather a practice that is evident in every unit of the hospital. Our collaborative governance, our daily rounds, the way our nurses interact with families and guide them through their child’s treatment are all examples of what sets us apart.

While these surveys are conducted every four years, our nurses are doing the necessary work every day on their units. The incredible quality of our care is ingrained in our culture and every one of us is focused on continuing to raise the bar. Yes, we got a stellar report. And we’re thrilled and proud of our accomplishments. But what makes me most proud is knowing that our nurses are not just a practice that is evident in every unit of the hospital. Our collaborative governance, our daily rounds, the way our nurses interact with families and guide them through their child’s treatment are all examples of what sets us apart.

As a clinical research nurse, Anne Nord, RN, BSN, CCRP, Hematology, worked on long-term studies involving Children’s Hospital Los Angeles patients with genetic blood disorders. Over the years, she saw many patients with sickle cell anemia, thalassemia and other rare blood diseases reach adulthood and “age out” of CHLA.

Two years ago, the Division of Hematology, Oncology and Blood and Marrow Transplantation in the Children’s Center for Cancer and Blood Diseases at CHLA launched PASSAGES—an acronym for Preparation, Self-Advocacy, Support, Life Skills, Accountability, Growth, Empowerment and Success.

The program, funded by the Rauch Family Foundation and the Italian Catholic Federation, aims at preparing 12- to 21-year-old patients with red cell and other rare blood disorders to navigate the adult health care system and providing support through collaboration with adult providers.

As part of the 11-member PASSAGES team, which includes nurse practitioners, social workers and physicians, she identifies adult primary care physicians and hematologists who have the capabilities of caring for complex hematology cases, shares patient health care summaries and medical records, and communicates patients’ unique needs.

She collaborated with Jacquelyn Baskin, MD, from the Division of Hematology, Oncology and Blood and Marrow Transplantation, and Dawn Canada, LCSW, a sickle cell disease clinical social worker, and solicited feedback from the Hematology team as well as former patients to help create PASSAGES.

In March 2016, Nord was named the program’s nurse navigator, responsible for linking patients to adult providers and facilitating communication between those providers and CHLA physicians, and became one of the only nurses at the hospital dedicated to transitioning patients to adult care.

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This led her to wonder, “What happens to them after they’ve had years of highly specialized care at the hospital that in many cases has cared for them their whole lives?” She raised this question with her colleagues and it became clear that a bridge was needed to help transition these patients from a pediatric to an adult health care setting.

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Her work involves personally interviewing and visiting adult care providers and, to date, she has created partnerships with nine physicians throughout Southern California.

In addition, Nord participates in monthly transition clinics for patients ages 16 to 20 who are being prepared for transition, and those ages 20 to 21 who are in the active phase of transferring to adult providers. So far, eight patients have graduated from the Transition Clinic and have successfully connected to adult providers.

“Many of these patients have been with us since birth and it’s the only place they know,” says Nord, noting a majority have complex health conditions. “These are not straightforward patients—some need blood transfusions every three weeks—and it can be challenging to find adult providers to care for them. The transition to adult health care can be complicated.”

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Krystal Perez, RN, BSN, was in her first semester at Cal State Long Beach with plans to become a teacher when a cancer diagnosis led her to Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. She endured chemotherapy treatments and several hospital stays over a nearly three-year period, and found her calling—to become a pediatric nurse.

According to Perez, being a former CHLA patient gives her insight into patients’ fears and emotions. “Because I was on the other side, I can give a different perspective. It’s easy to say, ‘I understand what you’re going through,’ but it’s different when you actually go through it.”

Perez adds that the comfortable, family-centered care she enjoyed as a patient still exists today. “I feel the same way about working here as I did when I was a patient. The environment is still so positive for patients and staff. I feel extremely grateful to work here.”

“I knew I wanted to work with kids, but becoming a nurse didn’t enter my mind until I came here,” says Perez, who had acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a cancer of the blood and bone marrow, which is now in remission. “I spent so much time at the hospital and created a lot of relationships, especially with nurses. They were like family.”

Among the nurses she bonded with was Maria Lapinid, RN, BSN, CPON, Hematology-Oncology. “I would see Maria when I came to the Infusion Center, and she talked about her career and how great it was to work at Children’s Hospital. She’s the reason I became a nurse,” says Perez, adding that their patient-nurse relationship was highlighted in a 2004 Johnson & Johnson public service announcement to promote nursing.

Perez, who joined Children’s Hospital in 2015, is a clinical care coordinator in Surgical Specialties. Her job duties connect her with orthopaedic, plastic, urology and otolaryngology surgery patients, and range from coordinating and tracking patient care and discharge planning to participating in daily rounds with the multidisciplinary team.

“The biggest challenge is knowing you are seeing patients and their families during some of the worst times of their lives,” she says. “But helping them deal with these difficult times is the most rewarding part of my day.”

As a Patient, She Found Her Calling

By Vicki Cho Estrada

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