

Discovering the link between nursing and healthy policy

SAMANTHA FOX WAS QUESTIONING HER CAREER CHOICE, THEN REALIZED JUST HOW INFLUENTIAL RNS ARE AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL.

SAMANTHA FOX ALMOST BECAME A nursing school drop-out.

The 23-year-old was in her second year of nursing at the University of Western Ontario (UWO), completing a practicum in general surgery at London's Victoria Hospital, when she became disenchanted and discouraged. She met a patient who was having half his leg amputated because of a gangrenous infection in his foot. When she learned he was homeless, had diabetes and couldn't afford his medication, and that most of his other leg was amputated for the same reason a year earlier, Fox grew frustrated and began to question working in a health-care system she felt didn't pay enough attention to prevention.

"We weren't doing health promotion...we weren't teaching," she remembers, adding that nurses have a responsibility to advocate for their patients. "That's something we're taught from day one." Fox looks back on the experience now and realizes it was a turning point. "We should have been advocating for him to go somewhere where he could take care of himself," she says. "If that means that we have to advocate for better funding for programs, then that's what we have to do."

Fox walked away from nursing school for one year. Fearful of

losing her degree, she returned, albeit reluctantly. But thanks to the structure of UWO's program, she had an opportunity to experience community and family nursing in her third year of studies. This, she says, reignited her passion for the profession. "I remembered why I started in the first place: I like caring for people," she says.



In her final year, Fox was introduced to political advocacy through a placement at London's Ealing Public School. She and three fellow nursing students met with youth and discovered many feared for their safety on the busy road where the school was located. Fox and her classmates brought this information to city council and council had

crosswalk buttons installed, road lines repainted, and called for police to survey traffic. She saw the results of their advocacy unfold before her eyes.

Fox wanted to learn more about political advocacy, and visited Ottawa last summer to chat with MPs and the Prime Minister at a conference she says changed her life. It was at this event that Fox met former London-area MP Terry Clif-

Ambassador program, an initiative they hope will motivate youth to cast ballots during elections. Fox co-ordinates the program out of its home base in London, Ont., although its influence stretches across the country. She hopes to use her new-found political knowledge to influence nursing colleagues as well, noting she doesn't often hear a lot of political banter between RNs. She wants to remind nurses of the important role they can play in the political arena.

For now, Fox is finishing up her nursing studies and doing a placement in labour and delivery at the Victoria Hospital. She is only just acquainting herself with the political advocacy work of RNAO, and hopes to one day become more involved in events like the *Annual Day at Queen's Park*. In terms of the direction of

Three things you don't know about Samantha Fox:

1. She enjoys archery.
2. She has a weakness for romantic movies. Her favourite: *Ever After*.
3. Her dream job is Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

ford, the founder of Global Vision, the not-for-profit organization hosting the event, and a firm believer in the need to engage more youth in the political process. The two discussed nursing and community action, and bounced around the idea of creating a program to encourage youth to vote and get more involved in their communities. Since that meeting less than a year ago, Fox and Clifford have launched the Global Vision Riding

her career, she's not quite sure where she's headed just yet, but she knows any questions she once had about her career choice have all been answered. Her passion for the profession is stronger than ever.

"The only way I would get out of nursing is if all the problems of the health-care system were fixed," she says, laughing. "I don't think that's going to happen any time soon." **RN**

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