



## Membership in RNAO = Voice, Influence and Impact

RNAO'S FAMILY IS COMPRISED OF thousands of RNs and nursing students who each have their own reasons for joining our professional association. Member surveys show that political action and voice are the top reasons colleagues join. Our educational offerings and optional legal assistance program (LAP), as well as personal professional liability protection provided to all members through CNPS, come next. We've heard that many RNs and nursing students join to receive substantive discounts when they attend conferences and institutes. These reasons to join are diverse, and so too is the stage at which each member is in their career.

Given this diversity, representing 35,000 RNs and nursing students across Ontario is no small task. Impressively, our board of directors is well-positioned to do it effectively, given their experiences mirror those of our members.

Take for example Aric Rankin, our newest and youngest board member. Aric, an RNEC at Hamilton's De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre, joined RNAO 12 years ago as a student and has excelled in every voluntary role he's taken on since those early days. Aric has transitioned from student member to student representative to new grad to chapter president to board member. He exemplifies the kind of advancement and growth that so many members enjoy. He's given so much of himself to RNAO and

shares proudly that in return has received even more.

Rebecca (Becky) Harbridge, another newly elected board member, is a public health nurse. Becky joined the association mid-career. Until that point, she admits to thinking she should join her professional association, but never quite got around to it. Becky is like many members who discover RNAO's extensive

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benefits and activities only after they've joined, and who wonder why they didn't do it much sooner. She is also a wonderful example that it's never too late to join.

And then there are some of our longest-standing members. Our awesome President Rhonda Seidman-Carlson is among them. During a recent conversation, Rhonda shared with me her realization of just how much she has grown as a leader and as a person since joining RNAO, and especially since taking on the role of president. She reminds me that so many of our members who lend their voices to our advocacy work are, at the same time, furthering their

own leadership expertise.

Many are able to transfer this expanded knowledge and skill to other aspects of their lives – professional and personal. The richness of membership comes from the endless opportunities for ongoing leadership development.

These examples of personal and professional growth through RNAO membership should prompt each of us to

advising them of important issues and urging them to become educated and to act on changes in the system that impact us all.

Being a member of RNAO means being in the loop. It means being part of the bigger picture. It means being able to gain influence and have a positive impact. Indeed, RNAO's presence, influence and impact have exploded over the past decade, in Ontario, across Canada and abroad. This resounding success is because of you, the growing number of RNs and nursing students who have joined the association (up from 17,729 in 2002 to 35,012 in 2012). It is because of members who have chosen day-in and day-out to act in moving healthy public policy that we have succeeded in positioning the voices of RNs as a progressive force on all health and health-care fronts. From social and environmental determinants of health, to the RN's role in delivering health services today and in the future. Our voices, individually and collectively, are paramount to affect robust healthy public policy.

There's never been a more important time than right now to be a part of RNAO. It sounds like a sales pitch, but it's simply the truth. Health care is changing, and our values, expertise, and voices must be counted. **RN**

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