

Students are an inspiration as we embark on new membership year



In this issue of *Registered Nurse Journal*, we meet Cailin Hill, RNAO's Perth Chapter student representative and a third-year McMaster University student who's launch-

ing a new network that will link nursing students to their peers across Perth. I know that when you meet Cailin, you will embrace her passion for our profession and respect her eagerness to get tomorrow's nurses talking about education, clinical placement and career opportunities.

Cailin is among the growing number of RNAO student members who are a source of inspiration. Nursing Students of Ontario (NSO) President James Chu, and past presidents before him, have dedicated significant time to making their RNAO experience valuable. RNAO's nursing students are involved in an extensive range of activities, and, as a result, student leadership shines.

When 13 nursing students joined the board of directors at its meeting in September, two of them, Katarina Stanisic and Regina Hernandez, spoke to the group about preceptorship and the importance of student involvement in RNAO.

Lan Nguyen, Sean Lee-Popham and their 20 peers from the Ryerson, Centennial, George Brown collaborative nursing program attended a Massive Hunger Clinic on Oct. 3, accompanied by their professor Laurie Clune. They saw first hand the faces of poverty and they learned to speak out. What a treat it was for me to sit on the lawn at Queen's Park and engage in a meaningful conversation with them. We talked about

their future, and we discovered that while some are committed to stay in nursing for the long run, others have yet to decide. We discussed themes ranging from poverty to the Chaoulli court case and medicare, to wait times for surgeries, to wait times for food.

These students, who are the future of nursing, are discovering the power of a collective voice, and the importance of becoming socially aware and politically active ambassadors for our profession. They are among 2,500 student members who are seeing the benefits of being part of their professional

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association: personal growth; professional education; social awareness; political action and influence.

Those thousands of students and thousands more registered nurses – as many as 24,000 in fact – are feeling empowered by the presence of RNAO in the halls of government, at numerous decision-making tables, in boardrooms, and

on the frontlines.

This strong membership is vital to RNAO's continued advocacy on behalf of RNs in all sectors and roles. The more members we have, and the more committed they are, the more means and energy RNAO has to tackle important and often difficult issues, and to find solutions. And in so doing, nurses and nursing's voice and visibility become higher than ever before.

Since my last column, we have continued to respond and mobilize members on such important health-care and nursing issues as: the Chaoulli ruling that challenges the very foundation of Canada's medicare system; the Canadian Medical Association's wrong-headed decision not to reject a two-tier system; and the sexist and damaging advertising campaign of Cadbury Beverages Canada/

Motts Clamato that denigrates nurses.

We also crossed borders by calling on RNs to support – physically and spiritually – our nursing neighbors to the south who struggled in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Nurses' letters of support, words of encouragement, and participation in relief efforts on the Gulf Coast have meant the difference between hope and despair for many disadvantaged residents.

Members are responding to our action alerts, and their voices and views are guiding ongoing discussions and debates about these and other important health-care issues across communities, the province, and indeed the country.

RNAO has also been hard at work ensuring interest groups, regions, and chapters have access to the tools they need to put a professional face on their communications. In September, we offered each group its own personalized RNAO logo to reflect a consistent image of the association to all our audiences. We increased the funding available for chapters and regions without chapters to lead local events and activities.

Change is afoot at RNAO – and not just in increased membership numbers. RNAO's new office building at 158 Pearl Street will officially open on Oct. 31 and we are very energized by the pending move. Come and visit us anytime and watch for a formal invitation to your new home's open house. Given the move, we urge you to renew early – before your 2005 membership ends on Oct. 31.

Our membership goal for 2006 is to reach 27,000 members – a 16 per cent increase from 2005. I know we can do it – last year we managed a 14 per cent increase in membership! Together, we are stronger than ever before – as a collective and as individual nurses.

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IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RNAO.