

RNAO membership offers rewards and the chance to give back



'Why should I join RNAO?' It's a question students and fellow RNs often ask me in the fall when the membership year is coming to a close. It's a good question, and there are many great answers.

Many of you have heard me say that when I graduated in 1974, I believed in the message of a professor who told me there was really no option other than to belong to my professional association – it was ‘the right thing to do.’ I first joined RNAO as a new nurse, and although I’m not so very new anymore, I have always believed in my teacher’s message and renewed my membership each year.

Over the years, my RNAO membership has given me the opportunity to further my own education and offered me protection, advice and counsel during tougher times in my career. Belonging to RNAO has also given me the means to make substantive positive change in health care and nursing.

Through my RNAO work, I’ve been privileged to create a network of colleagues I can call on, consult with and share pleasures and anxieties. Many of these leaders have been mentors. Some have become friends who have supported my growth and lent me encouragement. My life, not only as a nurse but also as a person, has been enriched by these relationships.

And then there are all the members I’ve met. These are the nurses in every walk of life, in every form of nursing, in every community in our province. You are the men and women who continue to inspire me. I’m invigorated each and every time I read your stories in this journal, hear you speak at chapter meetings and at the Annual General Meeting, and see the daily summary in RNAO’s media clips that catalogues your activities in your communities.

RNAO has also helped me keep up with the rapid pace of change in health

care. When I first graduated, the health-care world seemed a simpler place. But today, as knowledge grows daily and evidence-based practice becomes more and more established, RNAO has provided tools and programs that have allowed me to stay current in my chosen area of practice. Belonging to an Interest Group, (or two or three), has also been a crucial part of my

to do what seemed best, there was always a risk that I would err. It was comforting to know that, if I intervened in a prudent way, I had some protection if worse came to worse.

I also never thought I would need LAP when faced with the loss of a job – but I did. The ease of access to counsel and expertise was invaluable. Beyond my own experience, I recall very clearly the colleague who called me one night to share fears that she might be fired. She wasn’t an RNAO member then, but she was when it mattered. When she lost her job several months later, she too took advantage of the same high quality advice and counsel that I had relied on in my own time of need.

In addition to everything the association provides for me, my RNAO membership also gives me a golden opportunity to make a difference for others, whether they’re fellow RNs or the people we serve. I’ve learned political action skills and been part of campaigns for change that have given me a hand in improving health and nursing. Sometimes, my actions in this regard have been very public and visible, as they are now. But at other times, depending on circumstances or pressures in my life, I have simply supported the organization’s activities through my membership dues. That, too, is one of the strengths of RNAO. Each of us can contribute to positive change in our own way, as fits our needs and capacities at any particular time. That just plain feels good.

So my years as an RNAO member have given me personal growth and encouragement, inspiration, education, protection, advice and counsel, and I have been able to be part of making a difference. Still need another reason to renew your own membership or sign up for the first time? Well, my very first nursing professor’s words still make a compelling case – join because it is the right thing to do! **RN**

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growth. Membership in these groups allows me to expand my horizons in areas like nursing research and education. Without access to these resources, I would most certainly be a poorer nurse and a lesser person.

RNAO membership has also brought me peace of mind. I’ve always opted for the Legal Assistance Program’s (LAP) coverage. I didn’t really think I would ever ‘need’ it, but there were times I was glad it was there. I can think of two or three motor vehicle accidents where I was an early responder. Emergency care wasn’t – and still isn’t – my specialty. In my effort

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