

The NorthShore Difference: Nurses Creating Exceptional Experiences



Message from Nancy Semerdjian, Chief Nursing Officer, NorthShore University HealthSystem



In December 2011, the Gallup organization announced that for the 10th straight year nurses were deemed the most trusted profession in the organization's annual Honesty and Ethics survey, which measures how trustworthy Americans measure different professions.

The president of the American Nurses Association said the top ranking "reflects an appreciation for the many ways nurses provide expert care and advocacy." Such a distinction is a great honor and quite humbling. For nurses at NorthShore University HealthSystem (NorthShore)—and everywhere—it sets the bar high for the standards we have as a profession, both for ourselves and for the patients who entrust us with their care.


Our 2011 Nursing Annual Report exemplifies what makes ours the most trusted profession—nurses creating exceptional experiences. Every day, our Magnet-recognized nurses at NorthShore Evanston, Glenbrook, Highland Park and Skokie Hospitals, and Home and Hospice Services, interact with their patients and colleagues to provide the most compassionate, relationship-based care. Individually and in collaboration across NorthShore, our nurses are actively involved in research studies, are committed to advancing quality initiatives and are important voices in our shared decision-making process to improve patient care.

Over the years, nurses have become integral to evidence-based practices and clinical research. Greater numbers of our nurses are either leading these projects or closely collaborating

with research colleagues. With an eye toward increasing new knowledge, we have established resources for nurses internally, and in partnership with the NorthShore Research Institute, to empower them to ask clinically important questions and move forward in conducting research. NorthShore offers access to mentorship programs, training and resources such as collaboration with Internal Review Board (IRB) personnel and statisticians.

This report brings to life the professionalism and commitment of our nurses. Some highlights include the cross-functional team of NorthShore clinical staff—including nurses—which earned a "Pledge Quality Achievement Award" from the Illinois Hospital Association (IHA). The IHA recognized the team for its evidence-based, holistic approach to prevention of pressure ulcers and improved patient skin care, resulting in a 45 percent reduction in the incidence of pressure ulcers. Our commitment to patient safety, including the "Call, Don't Fall" initiative, continues to see fall rates at an all-time low.

Whether it is Magnet recognition, a Gallup poll or the achievements from our many quality, safety and research projects, the professional standards for nurses are set high, and they should be—as patients and their families depend on us to provide exceptional care. I take great pride in sharing the accomplishments of our nurses in 2011 and look forward to their future success to benefit our patients, our profession and NorthShore.



Nancy Semerdjian, MBA, RN, CNA-BC, FACHE
Chief Nursing Officer, NorthShore University HealthSystem

Message from Mark R. Neaman President and Chief Executive Officer, NorthShore University HealthSystem

Every day, more than 2,600 nurses create exceptional experiences for the patients we are privileged to serve across NorthShore University HealthSystem. Their efforts are fueled by a passionate commitment to families in our communities and an unwavering desire to achieve the highest levels of excellence in patient care.

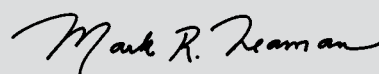
NorthShore nurses are a driving force behind our quality initiatives, working together with our dedicated physicians and staff. They initiate important new research studies and provide a critical voice in collaborative decision-making to elevate patient care. Those are just some of the reasons why, in 2010, NorthShore became the first health system in Illinois to earn nursing's most prestigious honor—Magnet status.

Whether serving on a multidisciplinary team seeking to deliver better clinical outcomes and experiences or researching new ways to use our Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system to further integrate technology with healing, we proudly recognize

our nurses' role in reaching beyond the current "best practices" to define the "next practices" that will become the standard of care in the future.

Congratulations to our entire nursing team for their outstanding leadership and dedication to the profession, while supporting NorthShore's mission "to preserve and improve human life."

We thank them for their boundless energy and enthusiasm to literally surround our patients with exceptional experiences through our system of caring.



Mark R. Neaman
President and Chief Executive Officer
NorthShore University HealthSystem



Nursing Facts and Figures 2011

NorthShore employs approximately **2,627** nurses.

Nearly **100** nurses serve on NorthShore's Hospital Nursing Councils (HCNs), which are a primary means of communication between the unit-based and system-based shared decision-making councils. Their membership is composed of nurse representatives from each patient care area. The councils generally meet on a monthly basis to share information, education and feedback.

NorthShore provides our nurses **professional opportunities** in a wide variety of practice settings, including:

- Clinical (inpatient and outpatient)
- Administration
- Research
- Home Health
- Hospice
- School-Based Care
- Medical Informatics
- Quality and Continuity of Care

Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) are an integral part of our care delivery system; **134 APNs** provide patient care for NorthShore inpatients and outpatients in a wide variety of clinical specialty areas.

Developing Nurse Leaders

NorthShore provides its nurses with many professional development opportunities through its Department of Learning and Development. In 2011, 50 clinical nurse managers piloted a program in leadership development called LEAD (**L**eads Change, **E**arns Loyalty, **B**uilds **A**lliances and **D**rives Results). Through the program, experienced managers enhanced their leadership skills. The program was so successful, it is now being offered to managers across the NorthShore system.

Additionally, 19 nurse clinical coordinators received training in Front-Line Leadership Development. This program is designed specifically for those nurses who are new to leadership roles, positioning them for growth and success.



Members of the 3 Medical Unit nursing team at NorthShore Skokie Hospital. From left: Anish George, Sandra Lis, Thresiamma Varughese, Cheryl Isberto, Leela George, Ruth Jordan and Gilda Agulo.

Joint Commission Surveyors Praise Nursing Care

In November 2011, NorthShore was part of the largest survey by The Joint Commission in the history of the organization. All four hospitals participated, as well as Home Health and Hospice Services. The survey was particularly rigorous, surveying against two manuals—assessing more than 1,000 elements of performance. Overall, the 18 surveyors said that it is clear at all levels from the bedside to the boardroom that the patient is at the center of all we do. For nurses specifically, the surveyors:

- Complimented the high level of care in the Intensive Care Units (ICUs), noting the distinction that three NorthShore hospital ICUs have received the American Association of Critical Care Nurses Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence in the ICU.
- Praised NorthShore's Vascular Access Teams and their process for reducing central line infections.
- Commended the medical-surgical nurses on their "patient safety huddles" and the overall patient safety process that seeks to quickly gather the care team following any accidents to examine the root cause and take steps for future prevention. The huddles occur mostly around patient falls and have helped contribute to the significantly low fall rate among NorthShore patients.
- Noted that staff is extremely at ease using the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system.

Teamwork Builds Trust for Patients and Families

The nursing care that 18-year-old Serge Sievertson received at NorthShore Skokie Hospital was so exceptional that his father Dana describes his family's interactions with his son's nurses "a life-changing experience."

The younger Sievertson's dreams were unfolding in the summer of 2011. An accomplished soccer player, he had just graduated from New Trier High School and was anticipating playing college soccer on a scholarship at Central College in Pella, Iowa. Those dreams were temporarily shattered when he was accidentally shot in the neck with a pellet gun. The pellet passed through his trachea and esophagus before it lodged in the vertebrae of his neck.

Sievertson was driven by a friend to the Skokie Hospital Emergency Department where the trauma team sprang into action. Sievertson required surgery to repair damage to the trachea and esophagus, and required a breathing tube. There was uncertainty about his outcome and certainly for the short term, playing soccer in the fall seemed unlikely.

Dana Sievertson specifically commended the care of Skokie ICU nurses Judith McKoy-Bent and Mary Hamester, and patient care technician Shanila Ismaili who were with his son most days. "They were absolutely phenomenal," he said. "Our family had a life-changing experience with them. Judith had the remarkable ability to perceive what you were about to ask. She would answer with a clarity you understood."

"We assess each patient individually," said Hamester. Serge was considered an adult, yet he still had needs attributable to an older child. She and the nursing staff found ways to make him feel independent. "We kept him informed and told him what was happening," she said. "We gave his parents total access."

"It's really important to work as a team—for the patient and his or her family," added Skokie Hospital ICU nurse Diana Diakakis.

"The care I had, from what I can remember, was phenomenal!" Sievertson said. "The nurses and staff were really cheerful."

McKoy-Bent said her maternal instinct kicked in as she cared for Serge. "He is so young, and we were worried about the outcome," she said. "We don't see a lot of patients who are that young in the ICU. He brought out something extra in us."

On the day Serge was discharged, he walked a mile. He began college on time in the fall of 2011, and from mid-September on, played in every Central College soccer game. Some of the attributes Serge used to describe the game's zeal—"love, passion, finesse and skill"—apply to his nursing care at NorthShore.

"This is what nursing is all about," concluded McKoy-Bent.

Exceptional Service

ICU Nurse Judith McKoy-Bent (center) with Dana Sievertson (left) and his wife Nancy Sublette.





Exceptional Outreach

Patient Marguerite Heinen (left) and Hospice Nurse Cathy Augustin

Compassionate Comfort on Wheels

When Cathy Augustin, RN, started nursing school, she looked forward to a career focused on taking care of babies. That was before she had a life-changing experience visiting a dying aunt in hospice care and decided that taking care of patients at the other end of life was truly her calling.

As a NorthShore hospice nurse, Augustin now provides dedicated care for patients and their families in their homes and in many cases in nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

Serving as a hospice nurse comes with a unique set of challenges and rewards, but Augustin has found herself at home in this arena, and tributes from patients and family members are a testament to her extraordinary skill and compassion.

“You have one goal for every patient—to provide comfort and peace. It is so satisfying to do that time and time again,” said Augustin, explaining her passionate commitment to the field.

In hospice, the patient is not just the individual; the patient is the family, the caregiver and whoever is involved in caring for their loved one, and for Augustin that is part of the reward.

“I like the family interaction. I like to hold people’s hands and be the calm in the midst of the storm,” she added. With an average case load of 10 to 12 patients, Augustin travels throughout the region and forms bonds with all kinds of people who, thanks to hospice, are often able to stay in their own home and remain comfortable in their final days, weeks or months.

“When I’m with a patient, I’m with that patient alone and I always try and convey the sense that they are absolutely the most important person at that moment,” Augustin said.

The support of her fellow hospice nurses and management at NorthShore helps Augustin rise to the toughest challenges. “You never know what you’re going to find walking into somebody’s home, and it’s good to know that help is always just a call away,” she said.



Nurse Susan Schory surrounded by some of her young patients in Cameroon.

Service Without Borders

No stranger to volunteer work, Susan Schory, RN, signed up for a Latin American mission with Project Hope, a charity committed to global sustainable healthcare initiatives.

Considering Schory’s labor and delivery, and education experience, Project Hope asked the NorthShore Nursing Professional Development Specialist to help with an ambitious new effort to establish a maternal child hospital in Cameroon.

“Women’s health is a human rights issue in Africa and here,” said Schory. So, while not knowing exactly what to expect, Schory quickly accepted the challenge and spent five weeks in the underdeveloped country.

“You have to go in with an open mind, not thinking about what you can change, but about what they need,” Schory said. Cultural differences in the patriarchal society contributed to the challenge, but Schory focused on the “amazing strength” of the women she was there to help.



Exceptional Research

Nurse Practitioner Olga Amusina

A Driving Force to Improve Care

A nurse practitioner in the NorthShore Highland Park Hospital Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for 12 years, Olga Amusina, DNP, feels fortunate to work for an organization that promotes a culture of excellence in patient care.

"The team I work with in the ICU is exceptionally dynamic and always looking for ways to improve. We never use 'we've always done it this way' as a reason for practice," Amusina said.

Amusina has channeled her drive to improve care into a growing interest in clinical research, and already has two successful practice-changing projects behind her.

"Olga is visionary. She has come up with really important questions that can ultimately impact patient care and cost efficiencies," said Nursing Research Council Chair Nancy Rodriguez, PhD, APN, NNP-BC.

Amusina's latest project looked at how to assess pain in patients who are unable to respond verbally. She devised a project to develop and implement a nonverbal pain scale (NVPS) for critical care nurses in the ICU. The innovative study, approved by the NorthShore Institutional Review Board, enrolled both patients and nurses and explored how comfortable nurses were with determining and managing pain for patients on mechanical ventilation and involved documentation in the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system.

The results were both clinically and statistically significant, Amusina explained, and were presented to the Corporate Critical Care Performance Improvement Committee, which approved the recommendation to use the NVPS and add it to the EMR system.

The new standard of practice was adopted at all NorthShore ICUs and also prompted a practice change in all medical/surgical units across the system.

"What's important is that prior to this project, ICU nurses were frequently unable to assess and document nonverbal patients' pain," Amusina said. "Since the study, there has been a dramatic improvement in nurses' ability and confidence to document and manage pain."

"Another benefit of this research is that nurses really feel that their opinion counts," Amusina added. While others may look to her as an example, Amusina is quick to thank Dianne Frank, ICU Clinical Manager, Rodriguez and the Nursing Research Council for support and training to conduct vital research. With this study submitted for publication, Amusina is already looking ahead to the next project.

"She's been a tremendous mentor to staff nurses in the ICU, helping them with ideas and working to empower them to consider research," Rodriguez said. "Her success has been inspiring to other nurses."

"It's a great to see that you can really make a change. This is not just an academic exercise; it's a way to improve practice," Amusina said.

"This is not just an academic exercise; it's a way to improve practice."



Nurse Educator Jane Egan (right) and Staff Nurse Eyi “Elaine” Kim.

Exceptional Education

Commitment to Lifelong Learning

NorthShore has a longstanding philosophy that lifelong learning is essential to maintain and increase competency in nursing practice. This learning is put into action every day with comprehensive education initiatives for nurses at all levels.

Nursing professional development specialists like Jane Egan, MSN, RN-BC, play an essential role in furthering education and quality care at NorthShore. Egan has a genuine commitment to nursing excellence and believes NorthShore has set the bar high with an expectation of high standards and professionalism from its nurses.

In addition to her role at NorthShore, Egan serves as a clinical instructor for Loyola University, spending one day a week with students at NorthShore Glenbrook Hospital who gain real patient care experience.

“My passion is bedside nursing, and I love this role,” Egan said. “Being on the unit with students is another way of maintaining my own clinical skills,” she added.

As a member of the Corporate Clinical Practice Council, Egan helps bring the voice of the staff nurse to the table while working closely with nursing leadership and other disciplines to help develop standards of care and clinical practice changes.

“I’m an advocate for staff nurses, as well as patients. With new initiatives, we have to consider what will work best with staff nurses who are so pivotal to exceptional patient care,”

Recognizing the critically important nature of ongoing education, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) recently embarked on a groundbreaking study of standardized transition to practice program for newly licensed nurses. Illinois is one of three states chosen for the study, and NorthShore is honored to be among the select institutions participating.

“We have best practices in place. We have a lot of resources and opportunities for people to learn and expand their knowledge and skills, all designed to ensure exceptional care for our patients,” said Nursing Professional Development and Research Director Karen Barnes, MSN, RN.

Both Egan and Barnes point out that the department strives to be innovative in its strategies to support nurses’ ongoing education with a myriad of opportunities—from tuition reimbursement and regular nursing grand rounds to certification review courses and online learning.

The common thread throughout all nursing education initiatives is ultimately working toward the best outcomes for safety and quality. “My job is to gear our education to accomplish that, and our nurses always come through for us,” Egan noted.

Best Nursing Practices Advance Quality

A Quality Excellence Achievement Award from the Illinois Hospital Association (IHA) provided significant recognition for NorthShore in 2011, the inaugural year for the IHA awards honoring innovation and best practices designed to advance quality patient care.

While recognition for the “Evidence-Based Holistic Approach to the Prevention of Pressure Ulcers” project was a plus, the real benefit was a dramatic 45 percent reduction in the incidence of pressure ulcers throughout the NorthShore system.

Chaired by Clinical Nurse Specialist Madelene Grimm, RN, CWOCN, the multidisciplinary task force, which has evolved into a standing system-wide committee, developed prevention and treatment strategies that became part of nurses’ workflow. Advances were implemented through policy and procedure revision, extensive education including targeted skin care champions in each unit, and changes to the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system to support clinical practice and documentation.

Uniquely positioned to chair this effort, Grimm has both a self-professed love of teaching, and clinical expertise and dedication to wound care.

“I’ve always had a passion for patients. I like being able to take the time and talk to my patients, to have humor and presence with them,” Grimm said. Taking time for careful observation is critical to proper wound care, she explained. For example, after cleaning a wound, it is important to stop and watch it to see how soon it gets wet again to determine the appropriate dressing for the specific wound.

NorthShore’s skin care champions have become a passionate and committed group helping to make a real difference throughout the hospitals. “Having trained experts right at the bedside who continue to stay educated in this arena and work collegially with other nurses and physicians has allowed us to decrease the number of pressure ulcers. We’re making a difference,” noted Grimm, who continues to work with the team to stay ahead of the latest technology, products and techniques.

Progress is ongoing, and Grimm is thrilled each time she discovers a new tool she can share with her team. “To be able to lift tape off an elderly person without causing a wound is wonderful,” she explained, demonstrating one of the latest products being tested.

Skin care champions have presented to fellow nurses and are continuing to look for ways to improve care and document best practices.

“I am blessed to work with an awesome team,” Grimm said. “And hats off to NorthShore for believing in this project and putting the resources behind it.”

Exceptional Quality

*Clinical Nurse Specialist
Madelene Grimm*





Advanced Practice
Nurse Janet Davis

Exceptional Career Development

A Work Environment Ripe With Opportunity

A long and varied nursing career has kept Janet Davis, APN, ANP-C, GNP-BC, at the forefront of her profession, where she is now caring for a growing number of patients as a nurse practitioner in a thriving Highland Park physician practice that officially joins NorthShore Medical Group in April 2012.

Davis' career began as a staff nurse in various units at NorthShore Evanston Hospital. She later worked as a transplant coordinator for heart patients and was also an early innovator in medical informatics and served as a nurse educator at NorthShore Highland Park Hospital. Looking back, Davis reflected on the exciting and diverse array of career experiences she has had at NorthShore, as the nursing field itself has evolved.

"The practice of nursing has changed, and it's more challenging than ever, particularly for hospital nurses who are caring for older and sicker patients with shorter stays," Davis said.

Davis' love of nursing is obvious, and she has found professional fulfillment every step of the way. "I feel like I've been very blessed in my career. I've always known I wanted to be a nurse since I was a child, and I've always been supported by NorthShore whether it was tuition reimbursement or encouragement to consider a new position," Davis recalled.

The fact that nursing offers so many options is, according to Davis, one of the wonderful things about the field. "In each position I've held, I came away with a gift. In the Critical Care Unit, I learned important communication skills in dealing with families in crises. Working with the heart transplant surgery team showed me I could learn a lot of new things," she said. "I've had wonderful nurse mentors and collegial relationships with physicians I've worked with."

As a nurse practitioner, Davis sees patients all day, up to 18 a day, and relishes the autonomy to care for so many, including managing numerous diabetic and hypertensive patients. "I love this role; it's perfect for me. I love to teach, and I get to mentor here," she said.

Davis hopes to serve as an example of the value of nurse practitioners in physician offices, and the physicians she works with agree.

"Nurse practitioners like Janet provide acute care, but are also spectacular at helping manage and educate patients with diabetes. Her patients adore her, and she provides great medical care," said Gary Kaufman, MD, FACP. "This is a great service we can offer our patients and definitely adds value to our practice."

"I feel like I've been very blessed in my career... and I've always been supported by NorthShore."



Exceptional Leadership

Clinical Coordinator Daniel VanDyke

Empowering Nurses to Be Leaders

Daniel VanDyke, RN, admits that growing up he never thought about being a nurse. Yet after serving nine years in the Navy, VanDyke landed a job as a patient care technician (PCT) at NorthShore Glenbrook Hospital in 2004 and has since moved up the ranks to the role of clinical coordinator on 4 North.

After completing his bachelor's degree, he is now pursuing a master's and is on track to finish the management/leadership track and earn his MSN in 2013. In addition to working full time and going to school, VanDyke is the outgoing chair of the Corporate Clinical Practice Council.

Nursing, it turns out, has been more than a vocation for VanDyke, whose skill and leadership ability continue to be recognized.

"I felt privileged when he accepted a position here. You could see early on, even when Dan was a PCT, that he would be an excellent employee, an excellent nurse. I saw the potential and he continues to impress me," said Clinical Nurse Manager Jane Friederich, RN.

"He was able to take charge, remaining calm and pleasant to deal with in all different situations," Friederich said, citing VanDyke's ability to diffuse tension and resolve problems.

Reflecting on his strengths, VanDyke suggested that the most challenging situations are often the most rewarding. "When you find a solution and are able to accommodate a patient and family and keep everyone as happy as they can be, that's very satisfying," he said.

"We all need to keep everything in perspective as this can be a stressful job," VanDyke said, offering advice for new grads. "As nurses, we really need to support one another and be there for each other. They tell you how important time management and prioritization are in school, and you realize how important that is on a busy unit."

VanDyke does his part to look out for nurses on his unit, encouraging them not to work straight through lunch—"you need to take the break, get away and just breathe for a few minutes." His support of others reflects his gratitude for the backing and mentorship he has received.

"My manager has supported me, and everyone at NorthShore has been so supportive, especially with going to school and flexible schedules," VanDyke said. Serving on the Corporate Clinical Practice Council was a very positive experience that reinforced the shared decision-making philosophy and advocacy for nursing at NorthShore, he said.

"I see him as a leader, and I think his success is inspirational, particularly for other men in nursing," Friederich said.

"As nurses, we really need to support one another and be there for each other."



Staff Nurse Cathy Paoletti

Exceptional Recognition

Rewarding Nurses Who Make a Difference

A dedicated Infant Special Care Unit (ISCU) nurse at NorthShore Evanston Hospital for 14 years, Cathy Paoletti, RN, has always been passionate about her work and her tiny patients.

With no formal training in research, Paoletti became a Nurse Research Fellow and harnessed her passion for patient care to conduct a study that has received national attention and helped change practices in neonatal intensive care units across the country.

Thanks to the support of NorthShore's Nursing Research Council and a team of fellow ISCU nurses, Paoletti and Nurse Manager Tina Edwardson, RN, BSN, RNC, (who served as co-investigator) designed a clinical study looking at frequency for changing nasogastric tubes (NGTs) used for feeding premature infants. The study, approved by the NorthShore Institutional Review Board, was funded by the NorthShore Associate Board.

NorthShore's ISCU policy had been to change tubes weekly. But when manufacturers recommended changing tubes monthly, with no clinical evidence to support the safety of this practice, Paoletti and colleagues were concerned about the growth of pathogens and subsequent risk for infection.

"I used to think research seemed dry and not something I was interested in," Paoletti said. "But this was something I believed in and felt I could make a difference."

Paoletti brought together a team of nurses to help collect data, which according to Nursing Research Council Chair Nancy Rodriguez, PhD, APN, NNP-BC, was an invaluable approach that broke down a barrier many staff nurses feel when considering research.

"This was a labor-intensive study with a very strict research protocol," Rodriguez said. The results were dramatic with 70 percent of the NGT cultures showing potentially pathogenic growth by day seven.

With the full support of ISCU physicians Michael Caplan, MD, and William MacKendrick, MD, the policy was not changed as manufacturers recommended and tubes are still replaced after one week.

Paoletti has presented the findings locally and nationally. She and fellow ISCU Nurse Holly Pilarek, RN, were also invited to present at the upcoming Research Summit for the National Association of Neonatal Nurses, a prestigious honor for the nurses and NorthShore. Additionally, Paoletti is preparing a manuscript at the invitation of a nursing journal editor.

"This is much bigger than I ever imagined, and I am humbled by the attention," Paoletti said. "If this saves one baby's life, then I've accomplished the most important thing."

Rodriguez is justifiably proud of Paoletti's work and the recognition. "Nurses were quickly taking notes at her national presentation. Presenters are typically advanced practice nurses with doctoral degrees; Cathy is a staff nurse and she just blew them away."



Exceptional Generosity

Staff Nurse Diane Nechi-Fragassi

Dedication to Nursing Inspires Giving

Although it has been nearly six years since Billie S. Booth died from recurrent breast cancer, Diane Nechi-Fragassi, one of the nurses who treated her, still recalls the courage with which Booth faced her disease and how she inspired other patients—and caregivers—at Kellogg Cancer Center at NorthShore Highland Park Hospital.

“Billie was a wonderful wife and mother as well as a busy lawyer,” said Nechi-Fragassi. “Despite the seriousness of her illness, she always shifted focus on others much more than herself. She was very inspiring to me as well as my coworkers and other patients.”

Booth’s family was equally inspired with her nursing care.

“The NorthShore nurses were wonderful, supportive and incredibly compassionate,” said Beverly Strellner, Booth’s sister. “They were there every step of the way for Billie.”

To honor Booth’s memory and the nursing care she received, Strellner and Booth’s husband, Joe Dalton, initiated an annual fundraiser in 2009 to support NorthShore Foundation’s Nursing **STARs** Program, which stands for **S**ay **T**hanks **A**nd **R**ecognize. Through Nursing STARs, patients and families can recognize the

excellent care received from a nurse, patient care technician, mental health counselor or an entire team of caregivers.

Gifts received through Nursing STARs support NorthShore’s Nursing Scholarship Fund, which awards annual scholarships to nurses to obtain advanced degrees. Dalton and Strellner recognized the care Nechi-Fragassi provided and have since raised more than \$30,000 through their annual fund-raiser. In 2011, 31 nurses received scholarships totaling \$78,000. The scholarships were given at a luncheon held at Sunset Ridge Country Club in Northfield last summer, which Strellner and Dalton attended.

Dalton enjoyed meeting and talking with the nurses. Supporting nursing scholarships can make a real difference in the lives of other patients who will benefit from the new knowledge the nurses will bring to their work. “It’s exactly what Billie would have wanted,” he said.

“It’s a great honor to receive a Nursing STARs award,” said Nechi-Fragassi. “Any award is validating, but particularly when it honors the whole profession. We have a fantastic group of nurses who love their jobs. We work as a team.”



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