



ENLOE'S MESSAGE

Hear from the CEO

Episode 28: Talking Nursing

Jolene Francis: Enloe Health's Senior Team message is presented in this caregiver-centric podcast providing an update on what's new and exciting across the campuses of Enloe Health. Hello, everyone. I'm Jolene Francis, Vice President of Philanthropy & Communications. Welcome to the May 2024 episode of Enloe's Message. Today, we're joined by two guests: Donna Larson, Vice President of Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer, and Sandra Bernstein, Senior Director of Nursing at Enloe Health. Welcome, ladies. Thanks for being here.

Donna Larson: Good morning. It is such a pleasure to be here.

Sandra Bernstein: Morning, Jolene.

JF: Nice to see you both. So, we have some exciting activities coming up. And one in particular is celebrating our largest employee group at Enloe Health. And I'm speaking, of course, of National Nurses Week. This year, National Nurses Week is recognized the week of May 6. Before we talk about how Enloe Health will be celebrating, I just want to take a deeper dive into the practice of recognizing and celebrating this group of important professionals and ask for some thoughts from the two of you about the challenges and rewards of choosing nursing as a profession.

So, I'm just going to toss out a couple of questions, and we can discuss. Are we ready?

SB: Great.

DL: All right.

JF: So first, I'm curious, and you can decide who goes first to answer this, but I'm really curious: When did you decide to choose nursing as your career and what made you choose this noble profession?

SB: I think I'll go first, if you don't mind, Donna?

DL: Yeah, go ahead.



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SB: For me, Jolene, caregiving has really just been a part of who I am. From the time I can remember, I've always found joy in serving and helping others.

JF: That sounds wonderful.

SB: It's the truth. Nursing wasn't necessarily a career I was looking for. It's actually a second degree of mine, but it ended up being a career that found me. I was really blessed to have a mentor in my life that was a nurse. Her name is Katie Skelton, and she was a director of nursing at a hospital in Southern California.

And she had highly encouraged and pushed me to consider nursing as a career. She instilled a lot of confidence in me that I didn't have at the time, and she saw strengths and abilities that she verbalized to me that she thought were a good fit for the world of nursing. With her being my mentor, it also brought an opportunity for me to obtain a position in a hospital and work as a transporter for a radiology department.

And so, I was exposed to the direct impact that nurses had with patients. And it was there that I really realized, "Oh, this is something that I really would enjoy doing." And so as I worked through my prerequisites for nursing, I continued to work in the hospital setting. And, you know, nursing to me is such a rewarding career.

It's been an honor to be able to be called a nurse. Nursing is helping others in some of the most joyful, scariest and vulnerable times. And it's an honor to be a signature of help and aid in times of need for others.

JF: That's a wonderful story. So, I have to ask, though, what was your first degree in?

SB: I wanted to be an athletic trainer for a professional sports team.

JF: No kidding.

DL: Quite a difference.



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JF: That is quite a difference. Yeah. Well, we're glad you chose nursing, and we're lucky to have you here. So, Donna, tell me about your story.

DL: Well, you know, Sandra, you touched on a really key point, and that is to have a successful nursing career, you really need the passion and desire for the profession because it's not an easy profession. I have always wanted to be a nurse. As a young child, I took care of cats, dogs, lost birds, my dolls, anything I could get my hands on. And my favorite book was Nurse Nancy.

JF: I love it.

DL: It was really a natural pathway and journey for me. I did not enter into the professional world of nursing until probably in my 30s, but I worked in hospitals, and part of that was lack of confidence. But as I watched others around me, it built my own confidence to pursue that pathway and journey for me.

JF: Wow. That's a great story, too.

OK, I'm going to switch gears a little bit, and I'm going to talk about your current career in nursing. And we'll talk about eras, and an era for you can be a decade, it can be a year, it could be a couple of months. It's whatever you choose. But what has been the most personally rewarding era in your career and the most personally challenging?

DL: Well, for me, every era has been rewarding. And one thing that people may not know about me is, my entire nursing career I have changed job roles about every four years. And I think it's because it is so dynamic. There are so many opportunities out there, so many wonderful things that you can do as a nurse, and so rewarding in many ways, and there are impacts in every role that you play that are sometimes different. But change for me is exciting. And...

JF: Does that mean you're restless?

DL: Oh, of course.

JF: Donna's a little restless.



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DL: But I do want to tell a little story of one thing that really impacted me as a nurse. And it was when I worked night Shift as a SWAT member. We used to have RNs at Enloe that were SWAT nurses. It was a short-warning activation team, and we responded to codes and traumas, started IVs, and just generally helped.

On one night shift, I was on the fourth floor in the oncology unit, and I was putting an IV in a cancer patient who was going through chemo, and clumps of hair were falling out of her head, and she was very tearful about it. She had beautiful long hair and she said, "I wish I could just shave it off, so that every moment wasn't this loss that I'm experiencing."

And so I put her wish into action, and I shaved her head. We sat together as I shaved her head, and we both cried. And it touched me in a way that probably no other experience has touched me in my nursing career. And that is how at a person's most vulnerable moment, maybe the worst day in their life, we can have the greatest impact.

And that story has stayed with me in every role that I have played.

JF: I can see it in your eyes, but what a gift to give that woman. What a wonderful gift. Good golly. What was the most challenging thing you've ever dealt with? Well, there's probably a list.

DL: You know, it really it's more kind of big picture challenging. And that is I am very challenged when I see nurses doing roles that they really are not passionate about. And I am challenged by that because there's so many things we can do as a nurse. You know, if one particular area isn't your passion, there may be another area that is.

I would encourage any nurse listening that if you haven't found your true passion, look for it. It's important to have passion in this profession because it's a hard profession.

SB: And that's part of the beauty of nursing: There's a shoe for everyone. There's a perfect fit. It's so dynamic, it's so broad, and how you can touch a patient — not necessarily just at the bedside — but so many other opportunities, whether it's with technology or operations, you can make an impact as a nurse on a multitude of scales.



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JF: So, what's your most rewarding era for you, Sandra?

SB: When I think of rewarding, it's hard to really identify just one area in my career. You know, I've had personal experiences where nursing has touched my life, in my own personal health or life journey. And I think back on the impact they have had on me and my family. And I'll never, ever forget that nurse's face, that nurse's name, what they said, and some very challenging situations personally.

And I, I think I'm just honored to know that I can have that impact on an individual as well and being in the role of a nurse. And I think transitioning from bedside nurse into leadership and identifying how you have the opportunity to not only serve the patient but to serve the caregiver, and when you're serving the caregiver, you have the ability to serve the patient as well, but on a different level because if our caregivers aren't taken care of, they don't necessarily have the tools to do the best for their patients.

So I think being a proud moment for me or rewarding for me, would be being able to have the opportunity to be a leader for nursing and make that impact on another level.

JF: Yeah. And we're so glad you chose that role. Thank you so much. So we're going to move on now. And I'm just going to ask the two of you, as nursing leaders, you have a unique perspective of this art. So what do you feel are the biggest challenges of providing outstanding patient care in the national climate of the health care industry?

DL: Well, Jolene, that is a loaded question. You know, as I alluded to before, health care isn't easy. I don't know that it ever has been, but it definitely feels like it is getting harder. The first thing that comes to my mind is our workforce. We have had a high number of baby boomers retire, and they took with them hundreds of years of experience.

And so as we recruit and support our newer nurses to ensure clinical competency and success, along with generational differences, that is really challenging. I don't know, Sandra, what your top point is.

SB: I think the complexity of nursing and health care is a big challenge. And what I mean by that is, all this technology is impacting or influencing how we provide care and being able to balance



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and not lose the compassion and the personal touch that nursing is. That makes it a true art. I feel like it's a daily challenge that nursing faces.

DL: All the while we are asking all of our nursing units and areas of operation to be productive and financially responsible and put rigor around that. And we see the increased illness of our patients, you know, lack of access to care. By the time a patient arrives in the Emergency Department, they can be really, really sick. And so, the acuity of the patient is going up.

And it definitely creates challenges to balance what you were just referring to, Sandra.

SB: Our patient population has changed quite a bit, too, with mental health being so prominent. It is a new skillset that nursing is having to learn in the inpatient acute settings where before your focus was your specialty of med surge or critical care, but now you have to have a sharpened tool to make sure you can care for a patient with mental health, as well to ensure that they're getting the complete care that they need.

DL: And along with that, we're seeing increased workplace violence, which is a high priority for us to keep not only our patients safe, but our staff safe, their families safe. And it's all such a balance in how we do that and maintain safety.

JF: Well, we're very glad that you're in the leadership roles and you're helping to move that forward. So speaking about your leadership roles at Enloe Health, what is your proudest moment as a leader?

DL: There are so many. And it really comes down to the teams that we work with and that we work for. For me personally, the implementation of the Rapid Team, that was really a wonderful thing that we committed to at Enloe Health many years ago, our Planetree designation with Distinction, one of seven hospitals in the world focusing on person-centered care, our discharge lounge, our Telesitter program. You have some great accolades for the Mother Baby Care Center, Sandra.

SB: Yeah, our maternal care here at Enloe is part of what's called the CMQCC, which is a collaborative in the state of California, and there is a strong focus on quality care. And because of all the great work in regard to providers and nursing, we're one of nine hospitals to meet some performance standards and be on the Honor Roll for Hospital Compare, California Health



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and Human Services, and U.S. News & World Report has recognized the maternity care that we provide as well.

JF: Amazing stuff.

DL: Yeah, well, I could keep going. You might have to cut me off. We are proud of our infusion center and the volumes that they have been faced with, and yet they maintain high-quality person-centered care. We hear so many kudos coming out of that area.

JF: Yes, we do.

DL: Our breast care center, which within a year of opening, received recognition. Our Emergency Department is seeing higher volumes since post-Camp Fire, and yet even with those high volumes, they are taking great care of our patients related to the patient experience and the management of the lobby. They have maintained about a 3% left without being seen rate, which is quite phenomenal with the volumes.

JF: Now that's down quite a bit, isn't it?

DL: It is. At one point we were at 13% when our volumes were not even as high as they are now.

JF: What remarkable work.

DL: Definitely.

JF: Well, that's all very exciting stuff. I know you could keep going on and on. I want to talk a little bit about what's coming up during the first week of May. So, what are some of the exciting things we can expect to see during this year's Nurses Week celebration at Enloe Health? Tell us what you've got planned, unless it's a secret now. You don't have to spill any secrets. But let's talk about the fun stuff.

DL: There are a few secrets, you know. First of all, every specialty and role deserves recognition. We are all caregivers. But, Sandra, will you share what you told me earlier?



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SB: Yeah, that 34% of our workforce is in nursing at Enloe Health.

DL: And I personally am very excited that for the first time in my career at Enloe Health, we are actually celebrating Nurses Week. And I think it's really important to recognize the high-quality care that nurses deliver every day and that they are the final safety check for a patient and the vital role that nurses fulfill with the constant challenges that they are faced with.

So, I don't know, Sandra, do you want to talk about a few of the things that we are doing for Nurses Week?

SB: Well, we're definitely going to make sure people know it's Nurses Week.

JF: So that's code for we're keeping it secret a little bit.

SB: You know, I'm excited as well as Donna, that we are going to have a week to celebrate the great profession of nursing, whether it be with banners, some signage, posters. I think nurses deserve recognition, and I know all care providers are important. But I think Donna stated it earlier, nursing is the last check of safety. They're there holding a patient's hand through some really hard times and some really joyful times. And they spend the majority of the time with the patient. And so I do believe that the profession deserves a week of recognition for all the hard work that nurses do each and every day.

JF: Yeah. And I think for listeners who may not remember, we are still going to celebrate Caregivers Week. We're doing that in June. So, we have a whole, like we have typically for the last, well, since I've been here 13 years, had a recognition week for all caregivers. But it just made sense that we pull out a couple of those larger employee groups, especially with 34% of our workforce being nursing and there is a national recognition week, we should be paying attention to that.

So, it's nice that we get to pull that out and do that specifically for nurses and celebrate them and their skills and their compassion and just their dedication to our patients and to our organization. And so, we're looking forward to doing that. Caregivers Week is coming in June, and we'll have a lot of fun stuff going on.



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And, of course, we just came off of the Physicians Week celebration, which was really fun, too. All those specialties that have a national recognition week will be celebrated in one way or the other. So, we're excited to do that, and we should be celebrating the great work that's going on around here.

DL: Which, Jolene, if I may, one thing that I did not talk about as far as proudest moments and, Sandra, you might want to touch on as well, you know, Healthgrades.

JF: Yes. Let's talk about Healthgrades.

DL: Patient Safety Excellence Award, which recognizes hospitals that have the lowest occurrences of 14 preventable patient safety events, including infections, injuries such as falls, pressure ulcers and other serious conditions. Enloe Health is in the top 10% in the nation. And we have made America's Top 250 Best Hospitals for the past three years. And I firmly believe that nursing drives and leads the way around this patient safety, which is a big shout out.

And it's now in our park. You can go out and see all the work of the Quality Summit posters.

SB: Yeah, I meant to mention that when you talk about proudest moments. If you just go out to the Enloe Health Park, you can see all the proudest moments on a poster with the Quality Summit posters. The hustle and bustle and all of the busyness around us. I went through the park yesterday, and I was like, "Oh, that's right. This is all the great work that we do."

DL: And I would really encourage every nurse to take a moment and go look at all the fabulous work that is going on in the organization and all their many contributions. There are great posters that tell the "why" behind the work that we are doing.

JF: Yeah. I'm glad you brought that up, especially Healthgrades. I mean, it's really important for all of us to know that that's more than just a badge on our website. There is real effort, real work and real recognition behind that. And it doesn't happen by accident. That's a lot of hard, dedicated work every day. People are being innovative and stretching themselves every day.

That's what that represents. And we really can't celebrate that enough. But I think the Quality Summit is another good example of what we can do internally. And what just amazes me is that we have more than 100 submissions again this year and people do this voluntarily. They just



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want to be better. And when you're already at the top of the list, to continue to want to be better is pretty remarkable.

DL: And Jolene, we've been on that list for three years now, which is another remarkable thing.

JF: I absolutely agree with you. I think it's just amazing what the folks in this organization individually and collectively can do. So, we should be celebrating it every darn day.

DL: Thank you for letting me go back.

JF: Well, any time. Anytime. Hey, I'm going to end up with one final question here: If you could get personal face time with every nurse in the organization, what inspiration would you give them?

DL: You matter. You make a difference in the lives of people every day. Sometimes when they're in their worst place, sometimes when they're in their best place. But you have a great opportunity to make an impact on another human.

JF: Beautiful words, and you're making us all tear up around the table. Stop it now. That's beautiful.

SB: Yeah, it is.

JF: Sandra, what would you say?

SB: I mean, I don't know that I can top that. I think that sums it up. You know, just maybe adding that there's no greater thing than making a difference in someone's life. So, humanity is being good to each other. And nursing allows you to do that each and every day.

JF: Beautiful sentiments, ladies. Thank you. You matter. You make a difference. And we're so grateful. We're so grateful for you.

DL: And we are very grateful for every one of our nurses in our organization.



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JF: Cheers to the nurses. Cheers to every one of them. Well, that's about all the time we have for today. Thank you, Donna and Sandra, for sharing time with us behind the Enloe Health microphone. We look forward with anticipation to celebrating our nursing staff the week of May 6, and then we'll reveal all the secrets. So, stay tuned.

And a special thanks to all our caregivers for spending time with us and sharing this program with your colleagues and friends. We'll talk again in June when we're joined by another member of our Senior Team to discuss what's new and exciting around our campuses.

Thank you all for your hard work and for choosing to be part of the Enloe Health team. Take care, everyone.