2019 Chapter Award Recipients
About AACN Circle of Excellence Awards

At AACN, we believe that acute and critical care nurses deserve recognition for all they do every day for patients, families and our profession. That’s why we created the Circle of Excellence awards: to honor and inspire our members through programs focused on excellence and innovation. This booklet showcases the exceptional efforts of our 2019 Chapter Circle of Excellence award recipients. These chapters deserve recognition for all they achieved in fiscal year 2018-2019 that exemplifies our mission, vision and values.

We hope the achievements detailed in this booklet inspire you as much as they inspire us. We also hope they motivate you and your chapter to apply for next year’s awards. Nominations open in July and will be accepted through Nov. 1. The President’s Award for Chapters is open through Feb. 15, 2020.

For details, please visit www.aacn.org > Nursing Excellence > Excellence Awards > Circle of Excellence Chapter Awards

Thank you for everything that you and your chapters do to further AACN’s mission. We are truly a community of exceptional nurses!
Honorable Mention

All chapters are vital to the success of AACN, and your work in your community of exceptional nurses helps to achieve our mission. Although the following chapters were not selected to receive a Circle of Excellence award this year, we want to acknowledge them and share our appreciation for their continued commitment to excellence.

Brazos Valley, Region 15
Texas

Broward County, Region 7
Florida

Diamond State, Region 3
Delaware

Greater Birmingham, Region 6
Alabama

Greater Long Beach-Orange County, Region 19
California

Greater Milwaukee Area, Region 8
Wisconsin

Greater Richmond Area, Region 4
Virginia

Greater Rochester Area Finger Lakes, Region 2
New York

Greater Washington Area, Region 18
Washington

Hawaiian Islands, Region 18
Hawaii

Mountain to Sound, Region 18
Washington

North Central Wisconsin, Region 8
Wisconsin

North Harris Montgomery County, Region 15
Texas

Oklahoma City Area, Region 15
Oklahoma

Pacific Crest Regional, Region 18
Oregon

Rochester, Region 13
Minnesota

Suffolk County, Region 2
New York

Triangle, Region 5
North Carolina

West Houston, Region 15
Texas
The Houston Gulf Coast Chapter (HGCC) has tirelessly demonstrated its commitment to working with other organizations to fulfill AACN’s mission, vision and values.

We have passionately pursued exemplifying President Lisa Riggs’ words that “our voice and our strength give us power,” and we sought several ways to combine our nursing voices to do the most good and, ultimately, deliver the best care for our patients and communities.

This year’s programming includes collaboration with Santa Fe High School, Houston Food Bank, Star of Hope, Filipino Nurses Association (FNA), Hispanic Nurses Association (HNA) and the Society of Critical Care Medicine.

After an emotional school year following the Santa Fe High School shooting in our backyard, the board came together to brainstorm how best to help our neighbors, who endured a huge physical, emotional and financial blow. We partnered with the Santa Fe mayor, Jason Tabor, and his wife, Kyra Tabor, Santa Fe Independent School Districts nurse, to fundraise and collect goods for their newly established Santa Fe Strong Resiliency Center.

During the horrific event, the school nurse learned that their disaster care packages were largely ineffective in a time of need, and we sought to help collect funds to purchase better kits for all their public schools, as the region is not without need. The funds and supplies that were collected went toward the physical and mental health of those visiting the recovery center after having PTSD and depression because of the shooting.

The shooting came at a dangerous time, when school let out, and some students were left isolated with their thoughts and without support during the summer. The resiliency center was designed especially for this purpose, and HGCC was glad to help their cause. It is now set to be a long-term resource for the community.

One year following the tragedy of Hurricane Harvey, we partnered with the Houston Food Bank during their “Hunger Games” event, along with more than 50 Houston businesses, organizations and groups to fundraise, collect goods and volunteer to make the biggest impact in our community. Many displaced Harvey survivors are still without...
basic goods, and the Houston Food Bank has been a mainstay of support. We were able to help raise nearly $28,000, which translates to countless meals and support for a community that had been reeling from the devastation faced in 2017.

The need to do the most good will continue this November 2018 when HGCC joins the Star of Hope and teams with FNA and HNA to fundraise and give the children of Houston a holiday season to remember. We will donate our time and fundraise to give Houston-area families a Christmas dinner and gifts. We know that our community has been hit hard, and the holidays magnify the daily struggles. Partnering with FNA and HNA ensures that our impact is felt deeply. We have realized as one chapter we may do much, but together we can do the most.

In the spirit of collaboration, we use our monthly membership meetings to team up with several organizations such as Celgene and NxStage to deliver education to our members to support patients during oncologic emergencies, prolonged intermittent renal replacement therapy, early mobilization and sepsis, just for starters. In this way, we’ve focused our efforts on educating and empowering our members in their nursing practice, which helps them deliver the best nursing care at the bedside.

Our year of programming wraps up by joining forces with the local chapter of the Society of Critical Care Medicine during our December membership meeting. While our voices as a chapter are strong, we are stronger when we join together with other nurses and healthcare professionals in an effort to spread knowledge and empower each of us in our roles to deliver the best patient care.

Each of these events is geared toward AACN’s mission, vision and values in ethical accountability and integrity, leadership in finding the opportunities to help and educate, excellence and innovation to best serve our members and, thus, our patients, and collaboration to maximize our efforts. HGCC has further programming planned for the next few months to hone in on the delivery of AACN’s mission.
Excellence in Chapter Collaboration

Northwest Chicago Area Chapter
Illinois

By combining our collaborative voices, the Northwest Chicago Area Chapter (NWCAC) has worked with many groups in nursing and in the community to share our mission of providing expert knowledge and making our optimal contribution to the community. Since NWCAC’s inception in 1972, when a group of critical care nurses met to explore the opportunity to initiate a chapter, we have found that our voices are our strength!

NWCAC is planning the Illinois Region 10 meeting, which will be on Nov. 10, 2018. The collaborative team included NWCAC, Greater Chicago Area Chapter and our Illinois Chapter Advisory Team (CAT). Through collaboration, both chapters shared the decision making and financial responsibility. The location, registration, program, refreshments and lunch were jointly planned. Since the evening will culminate at the ice hockey arena, we will focus on related “cool” topics for the daytime meetings.

Our quarterly NWCAC educational meeting begins with hypothermia, “When It Is Cool to Be Cool,” workplace violence, “The Critical Care Nurse and Violence in the Workplace,” and fluid responsiveness, “Six Dynamic Pillars of Fluid Resuscitation.” A Chicago-style lunch and networking provide an opportunity for chapter members to meet and collaborate. The afternoon Region 10 meeting will include “Appropriate Staffing” from our CAT, “Nurse Sensitive Outcomes” and “Post-Concussive Syndrome.” After dinner and networking, we will meet at Nurses’ Night Out at the Allstate Arena for the Chicago Wolves vs. Rockford Icehogs ice hockey game. We will also collect children’s outerwear for “Snug Hugs for Kids” in collaboration with the Chicago Wolves and Merlin 200,000 Miles shops.

In March, NWCAC will present the multitrack Midwest Conference (MWC). An average of 300-350 nurses attend the two-day conference. Approximately 400 nurses attended in 2017, and over 320 participated this year. Collaboration with the 15 conference vendors also assists the attendees in obtaining knowledge and new industry technology. Evaluation results have indicated that 100 percent of those attending would highly recommend the conference and plan. The scores (Likert scale, 1-5 with 5 as very substantial) identified knowledge level improving
from 3.79 to post-conference 4.76. Comments include “AACN President as a speaker and presenter was incredible!” “Loved the conference,” “Great variety of lectures” and “Topics and speakers were excellent.” Next year, we are moving MWC to a larger venue to accommodate the increased attendance.

Collaborating with area colleges has been meaningful for NWCAC. Student nurses are invited to attend the Saturday educational meetings and our annual MWC free of charge. Students enjoy the opportunity to network with nurses and attend the sessions. Additionally, some of the board members have assisted the colleges to portray patients and their families in the colleges’ simulation lab. Post-session discussions with the students focus on the scenarios and their assessments, and review the patients’ plan of care. The students value this active portrayal and are grateful for these opportunities, and the critical care nurses in the simulation enjoy sharing their knowledge with the students.

As nurses, we are aware that our assistance and expertise may be needed at the most unexpected times. This was evident in early fall, when several members of the NWCAC board participated in a back-to-school program. We distributed first-aid kits to students and their families in Chicago’s inner city. Blood pressure screenings were also available, and informational sheets on hypertension and healthy lifestyles were distributed. Near the end of the hot, humid day, suddenly a young girl was found unresponsive. The nurses quickly assessed her and did not detect a pulse. After their prompt action to revive her and initiate a 911 call, she soon responded. The nurses turned over her care to the paramedics when they arrived. The school, the families and most of all the young girl and her family were very appreciative of our assistance.

Bringing support and education to those in the community is especially meaningful. NWCAC’s collaborations provide assistance to many groups. Various community partnerships have included packing meals for underprivileged children at Feed My Starving Children; blood pressure screenings at local high schools’ craft fairs; collecting warm outerwear for children at Snug Hugs for Kids; making blankets for the homeless at Blankets of Dreams; and creating 25 amazing baskets for our silent auction at MWC, which donated over $1,100 to the ALS Foundation. This fall, 25 large bags of clothing and household items were donated to WINGS (Women In Need Growing Stronger). Several attendees appreciated the WINGS information distributed at our September meeting, because they were aware of those who needed assistance.

NWCAC has been enriched and strengthened by our collaborations in the community, industry, colleges and other chapters, as we continue to use our voices as our strength.
The San Fernando Valley Chapter (SFVAACN) was officially recognized in October 1972. From the early years of our chapter’s development, we were committed to providing education for all levels of nursing to ensure we were raising a great community of future nurses.

In order to live out our chapter’s mission and vision, we collaborate with multiple entities each year. Today, we continue to follow our vision to provide the most innovative and high-quality knowledge to our exceptional critical care, progressive care and acute care nurses, and nursing students, throughout the Greater Los Angeles and Ventura County areas.

Our chapter welcomes all nurses and nursing students to our meetings and events. In fact, for more than three decades our chapter has been committed to allocating 75 to 100 seats to nursing students who choose to attend our semiannual symposiums, free of entrance fees.

Since 1988, our chapter has collaborated with Pierce College in Woodland Hills, College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita, Mission Community in Los Angeles and Glendale Community College. Most of these nursing programs have incorporated our educational events into their annual nursing curricula. Mount Saint Mary’s University in Los Angeles and California State University of Nursing in Northridge later joined the nursing student movement and expressed their interest in participating in these semiannual educational events.

As more and more schools have expressed a desire to participate, our chapter has invited them on a rotational basis to ensure that each school is equally represented and given the opportunity for networking and collaboration.

During our educational symposiums, nursing students have an opportunity to see the benefits of joining a professional organization. We started by having the current chapter president speak to the students before the start of the symposium. After establishing our student liaison position on the board, the chapter president and student liaison speak to the attending students together about the power of belonging to a professional organization. Benefits such as networking, scholarships, membership bundles and being a chapter board member give “Our Voice, Our Strength” meaning, as we collaborate to enhance acute care.
nursing practice in our area. Nursing students are also included in "opportunity drawings," where our board offers all kinds of prizes ranging from nursing uniforms to AACN and SFVAACN memberships.

As a result of our collaboration with various nursing programs, we have had the pleasure of recruiting nursing students to join our board. After initially joining as student liaisons, they submit an essay describing their interest in joining as official board members, which the board votes on. So far, three nursing students have become active members of our board. Our chapter is so proud to demonstrate that in everything we plan or do, we acknowledge how our educational programs can include our future nurses and colleagues. SFVAACN’s goal is to continue ensuring that every nursing student is inspired by our profession and can take pride in the pursuit of a professional nursing career.

In addition to collaborating with nursing programs, our chapter collaborates with various hospitals throughout the San Fernando Valley and surrounding areas, including Ventura County and Santa Clarita Valley. This collaboration is possible because the board represents multiple hospitals in our area. Any hospital that is not represented by a board member is assigned a hospital liaison — a hospital employee who agrees to recruit members to join the chapter and help advertise our events. Liaisons are incentivized via discounts to our symposiums and given special invitations to our quarterly events and dinners.

Most notably, we have great relationships with Providence Holy Cross, Providence St. Joseph, Los Robles Hospital, Valley Presbyterian, Northridge Hospital and Providence Tarzana. Both our monthly meetings and yearly certification review courses are held at these hospitals based on location and a needs assessment of the hospitals. For example, this year we collaborated with Valley Presbyterian to present a CCRN review course that had over 25 nurses in attendance. We are currently in the planning stages of collaborating with Providence Holy Cross to provide an SCRN review course in spring 2019.

SFVAACN was originated to provide quality education, professional networking and collaboration for acute care nurses. It is rewarding to see how year after year, through our collaborations with multiple entities such as nursing schools and hospitals in our area, our programs and professional growth offerings have continued to expand and excel.
The Central Minnesota Area Chapter (CMAC) has a long history of serving the community of St. Cloud and the surrounding areas. Even though our active membership is small (10-12), we are committed to the mission and vision of AACN. We strive to make our optimal contribution by using our expert knowledge, time and resources. Our community involvement is driven by the needs of our unique population.

For the past 13 Christmas seasons, CMAC members in collaboration with our two critical care units participated in “Sharing the Spirit,” sponsored by Catholic Family Services. Each Christmas season, CMAC receives a request from Catholic Family Services asking if we want to continue our support. Historically, we have selected to brighten the season for a family of five. Annually, we have been able to raise $1,200-$1,400 for gifts. CMAC members go shopping and strive to purchase each family member’s request based on their Christmas wish list.

For two years, we have been involved in Anna Maria Alliance, a shelter for abused women and their children. Our members have volunteered to prepare and cook weekend and holiday meals for the center. In 2018, we served Easter dinner and two additional weekend meals. Each month, the director of Anna Maria Alliance sends a calendar to a CMAC board member, with available times for weekend lunch and dinner meal preparation. Our future goal is to prepare and serve one weekend meal every other month. Last year, Anna Maria Alliance provided shelter to 487 women and 195 children.

Our chapter has also collaborated with CentraCare, our hospital system, by assisting with CentraCare-sponsored community events. Examples of our work include the following:

- **Take Heart St. Cloud**: This program provides bystander CPR and AED training to local schools, communities and churches. In October 2018, CMAC members volunteered for an entire day and taught bystander CPR to 300 9th graders at a local high school. After the training, each student received a blow-up manikin, a CPR/AED training DVD and an instruction booklet to take home. Each 9th grader was assigned the task of training at least two more people, which means 600 community members would receive bystander...
CPR/AED training. In October, CMAC members not only completed training at the school, but also at a local church and a community town hall. CMAC members have directly and indirectly provided bystander CPR/AED training to over 1,000 people. Our future goals include continuing to provide training for more students in Central Minnesota and assisting “Take Heart St. Cloud” in providing bystander CPR/AED training to all families of patients in St. Cloud Hospital who had an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest or underwent cardiac surgery.

• 9th Annual Pride in the Park: St. Cloud Pride is a nonprofit group formed to raise awareness of issues of heterosexism and homophobia in St. Cloud and the surrounding community. The group provides education, resources, programming and social opportunities to the LGBTQ community. During the 2nd week in September, St. Cloud Pride, with the support of community businesses, sponsors “Pride in the Park.” Vendor tents, music and food booths are spread throughout the park with the goal of providing awareness about our LGBTQ community. CMAC members volunteered at the CentraCare booth, checked blood pressures and handed out information about our CentraCare LGBTQ employee resource group. The goals of this resource group include reviewing hospital policies to ensure safety and inclusion, supporting Safe Space training for employees, joining community events to share opportunities to support those in the LGBTQ community and their families, breaking down barriers and stereotypes, and improving the care available to those who are part of the LGBTQ community. Pride in the Park was attended by thousands of people from Central Minnesota.

• CMAC members are also participating this November in Safe Space Training, a workshop sponsored by St. Cloud State University to educate people who serve the university and the St. Cloud community, and build a network of allies across campus and the community who are knowledgeable and supportive of the LGBTQ community. The four-hour training is designed to educate participants about queer and trans identity/issues as well as strategies for creating safe, inclusive and supportive environments.

• CentraCare Earth Day Marathon: CMAC members staffed water stations along the marathon route.

We may be small in numbers, but CMAC nurses clearly seek ways to support our community through education and public service, by devoting time to teach bystander CPR/AED, raising money to buy Christmas gifts for a family, preparing meals for women and children, and creating safe spaces by increasing public awareness of our LGBTQ community.
Thirty-five years ago, the Metropolitan Orlando Chapter (MOC) established itself in the Central Florida area to serve greater Orlando and the surrounding counties.

To remain consistent with the AACN value of volunteerism, MOC members engage and work alongside agencies to meet the health and social needs of our communities. Our partnership with community agencies fulfills the mission of AACN and ensures that communities, vulnerable populations and families are supported. AACN’s vision is to ensure that critical care nurses make their optimal contribution in caring for critical care patients, and MOC members seek to extend that vision through uniting our VOICE and STRENGTH.

MOC supported Common Action for Sustainable Development, a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that gives girls the rare opportunity to obtain college degrees in nursing. Chantale grew up in an orphanage in Nepal and would have been forced into marriage at 17. Boldly, she chose nursing, so she could return to her village and improve the quality of life of people living there. Supporting Chantale demonstrates a remarkable example of using “Our Voice, Our Strength” halfway around the globe to impact one person’s life and one community at a time.

With a $500 donation from our chapter, Chantale is completing her last semester of nursing school in Kathmandu, where she has already participated in assisting community health clinics, translating for physicians, taking vitals and keeping records. Through MOC’s support of vulnerable populations, Chantale will undoubtedly bring hope to others through her work and contributions. Chantale embodies the values of AACN, overcoming her vulnerabilities and leading the way for change. We are so proud to support her future as a nursing professional.

Every year, nearly half a million women die from cardiovascular disease, yet it is commonly thought of as an older man’s disease. To raise awareness of heart disease and stroke in women, the American Heart Association (AHA) created Go Red for Women, a passionate, emotional and social initiative designed to empower women to take charge of their health. Hard Hats With Heart provides companies in construction-related fields with free resources and tools to help improve the health of their employees. MOC supports our local community by partnering with AHA through these
two events. We participated in these events with blood pressure screenings, heart health education and CPR training.

Moreover, MOC supports AACN, our national nursing community, through our donation to the Sharon Connor Fund for Leadership Development via the Leadership Development Workshop. Over the past several years, we have donated $500 to support AACN leadership development initiatives.

For several years, MOC has supported local families during the holidays through the Angel Tree Program, which serves children whose parents are in prison. While some of these children would have gone without gifts, MOC shows their love and sponsorship to kids in need by donating gifts from our chapter members. We ask chapter members to bring a gift during a monthly chapter meeting or make a monetary donation to support the purchase of gifts for children who are enrolled in the program. The gifts are then delivered in time for their holiday celebration.

Last year, the chapter adopted boys and girls ages 10-12 who were categorized as “Lost Angels” and whose holiday wish list hadn’t been met. Their wish list included items such as nail polish sets, curling irons, board games, Hot Wheels sets, socks and bike helmets. Over 30 items were donated and delivered to Angel Tree’s Lost Angels. This year, we have adopted a specific family, composed of one 5-year-old girl and two boys, ages 3 and 11. Clothing tops their lists along with a Lego Disney Princess and tabletop air hockey. Our chapter will be working on collecting donations to meet those needs.

MOC incorporates AACN values in reaching out to communities both within and beyond our borders. MOC members discover the potential of their VOICE through uniting their STRENGTH to care and support communities, vulnerable populations and families through their commitment, dedication to servanthood and community service.
Throughout its 46-year history, the Northwest Chicago Area Chapter (NWCAC) has followed AACN’s mission in providing excellent education for nurses. Additionally, we have witnessed the increased need in the community to provide support and education.

At our transitional meeting, we elected to increase our involvement in the community and discussed the role of the NWCAC board and community liaison position. Our community commitment remains strong and ongoing.

In August, we assisted a local college in their nursing simulation lab. Members portrayed patients with various diagnoses. Nursing students encountered patients requiring assessment, identification of problems and initiation of a plan of care. After each scenario, their process and methodology were reviewed and discussed. The students enjoyed the sessions, and our members enjoyed sharing their knowledge and experiences.

Another community event in August in which NWCAC participated was the “Going Back to School” event. The event was held on a 90-degree day in an underserved area in Chicago’s inner city. Most of the student population at the school and their families had limited knowledge of healthcare and caring for themselves. NWCAC was involved in several activities during the eight-hour event. Our primary purpose was to distribute 250 first-aid kits. Additionally, we took blood pressures and recorded the results on informational materials that identified normal versus abnormal blood pressures. During the day, we also networked with families and discussed their healthcare concerns and questions about various aspects of care for themselves and their family members. Some of the older students also inquired about becoming nurses in the future.

At the end of the day, the students lined up to receive their backpacks and school materials. Suddenly, we heard, “Nurses, nurses needed right now!” We found a young girl, unconscious, and we were unable to establish a pulse. While we began to revive her, a 911 medical emergency was called. Because of the possibility of hyperthermia and dehydration, we also tried cooling her. As the paramedics arrived, she became more
responsive, and they took over her care. Everyone was grateful we were there to help her.

At our September educational meeting, we participated in a benefit for Women In Need Growing Stronger (WINGS). A nonprofit housing agency established in 1985, WINGS provides services, counseling and housing (up to two years) to survivors of domestic violence. We collected over 26 large bags of clothing, shoes, purses and household items for WINGS. We also distributed informational pamphlets to attendees at the meeting. Several people did not know that this community outreach was available. One participant said, “I wish I knew about this six months ago. My sister could have used this help.” Another commented that WINGS was such an important service, and she was going to share the information with a family member who would benefit.

Some of our members also participated in the Brain Aneurysm Foundation Walk on Sept. 30. One of our members is an aneurysm survivor, as is her daughter. Several hundred walkers attended to raise awareness and support for the group.

For the last several years, we have participated in the Feed My Starving Children program. The meals, consisting of rice, soy, vegetables and vitamins, provide lifesaving nutrition to starving, malnourished children. Our chapter has volunteered to pack meals that are distributed worldwide to children in need. Working together with other volunteers and realizing that this project makes a difference to so many people is very meaningful.

We also have assisted with blood pressure checks at a local high school craft fair. At the fair we also met several student nurses who had questions regarding nursing and their coursework. Some people also had concerns about their healthcare.

At our annual multitrack two-day Midwest Conference, we not only provide excellent nursing education, but we also have an annual silent auction to benefit a community charity. This year, 25 beautiful baskets were auctioned and produced over $1,100 in donations to the ALS Foundation.

During our Region 10 Meeting on Nov. 10, we will be collecting coats, hats, boots, etc., for children. These items will be collected for “Snug Hugs for Kids,” which is a collaborative event with Merlin 200,000 Miles shops and the Chicago Wolves ice hockey team.

In November, we will participate in making “Blankets of Dreams.” At this event, we will be creating blankets from 4 yards of fleece that will be delivered to homeless shelters. These blankets will help provide warmth and comfort for those in need.

NWCAC knows the need for nurses and healthcare may be unpredictable and emergent, as in the case of the young girl at the school event. NWCAC will continue to support our mission to bring outstanding education to nurses, while also contributing to the needs of the local and worldwide community during their most vulnerable times.
Since the Northwest Chicago Area Chapter (NWCAC) received its charter in 1972, its major focus has been to provide excellent educational opportunities.

The chapter has continuously supported AACN’s mission of fostering the professional growth of acute and critical care nurses. By assisting nurses to meet the dynamic demands of the healthcare environment and the challenges of new technology, and providing the best care possible for patients and their families, excellent outcomes can be realized.

NWCAC provides several opportunities for education. Based on member requests, the general chapter meetings are held quarterly on Saturday mornings, and participants receive 3 CNE credits. Additionally, members and the nursing community have eagerly attended the annual Midwest Conference (MWC), a two-day conference with multitracks that has been held for nearly 45 years.

Annually, the board of directors develops a strategic plan at the transitional meeting. The primary goal is to provide exceptional educational opportunities, which include expert knowledge and current evidence-based practice. Annual needs assessments are completed on SurveyMonkey by the chapter’s membership, and those attending educational offerings and MWC. Furthermore, new trends in critical care nursing are identified through literature reviews, best practices and published research results. Input from the recommendations, trends and research is reviewed by the Program Planning Committee to provide an outstanding slate of offerings for the educational programs and MWC.

The topics presented at quarterly chapter meetings focus on a central theme; for example, trauma, cardiac or neurology. The program is presented free to NWCAC members and student nurses with a nominal fee for nonmembers. The morning begins with networking, continental breakfast and recognition of certified nurses, followed by three presentations. To promote participation, several raffles are held with gift cards as prizes for the attendees. In addition, networking breaks and games are also enjoyed by the participants. Evaluations of the
quarterly programs have confirmed high ratings and shown positive feedback.

In planning the MWC program, national and local speakers are identified for potential presentations. Various teaching methodologies and interactive programs are included in planning; for example, interactive case studies, 3D neuro anatomy sessions and sessions on hemodynamic jeopardy were educational and enjoyed by the attendees. The conference has been well attended with an average of 300-350 nurses. This past year, over 320 nurses attended. Certified nurse attendance has gradually increased from 78 percent in 2014 to 96 percent in 2018.

On the first day of the 2018 MWC, Christine Schulman’s keynote, “Guided by Why”, was overwhelmingly well received by the audience. In the evening, a vendor-sponsored dinner provided education and networking for the attendees. An early morning session began the next day followed by the keynote. Each day, a total of 16 sessions (multitrack) were offered. A free raffle offered four registrations for the 2019 MWC. In the community spirit, 25 beautiful silent auction baskets were available for bidding. All profits, totaling over $1,100, were donated to the ALS Foundation.

For the last five years, evaluations have indicated that 100 percent of those attending would highly recommend MWC and would return. The conference evaluation scores are evidence of participants’ continued support. Comparing the last five years, 2018 evaluations using a 1-5 Likert scale (5 as excellent) revealed participants’ positive feedback: Conference Met Expectations improved from 4.5 to 4.65 and Sessions Presented at Appropriate Level improved from 4.52 to 4.64. Knowledge (1-5 Likert scale, 5 as very substantial) improved from preconference 3.79 to post-conference 4.76. Comments included “AACN President as a speaker and presenter was incredible!” “Loved the conference,” “Great variety of lectures,” “Topics and speakers were excellent” and “I liked that I could print handouts ahead of time.” Next year, we are moving MWC to a larger venue to accommodate the increased attendance.

NWCAC is also collaborating with the Greater Chicago Area Chapter and the CAT to sponsor the Illinois Region 10 meeting, which will be held in November. The morning will begin with our quarterly chapter meeting. We will then break for lunch and networking followed by the Region 10 meeting. In the evening, we will share our voices at the Allstate Arena and attend the Chicago Wolves vs. Rockford Icehogs hockey game.

The NWCAC Awards and Scholarship Program provides an incentive for members to earn points for participating in chapter leadership, activities and meetings that are applied to educational conferences and resources.

NWCAC continues to support the AACN mission to provide exceptional educational programs and expert knowledge for nurses in the acute and critical care arena and in the community. Through our voices, we gain strength to support, educate and nurture our colleagues. Through chapter leadership and engaged members, NWCAC continues to make optimal contributions to enhance lifelong learning and ultimately improve patient outcomes.
As critical care nurses, it is imperative that we maintain our quality edge as committed professionals who elevate nursing by ensuring that our clinical knowledge and practices are current.

To support AACN’s mission, vision and values, the San Fernando Valley Chapter strives to provide its members and the community with the latest information regarding evidence-based learning and clinical practices.

Our chapter offers semiannual symposiums as well as a certification review course. Each spring, we typically hold a two-day, multispeaker educational event that touches on the hottest topics in critical care, while in the fall, our one-day educational event with one or two speakers goes in-depth regarding a particular topic previous attendees have requested. We collaborate with various hospitals in the San Fernando Valley to help host our certification review course, which is determined by a program evaluation and needs assessment provided to attendees following our symposiums. To plan an effective and strong symposium the individuals’ needs are considered, including but not limited to the following:

- Nurse availability: Do you prefer a one-day, half-day or two-day symposium?
- Which day of the week do you prefer? On a weekend, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday?
- Personal development: What topics would you like to see at the next symposium?
- Long-term goals: Which certification review course would you consider taking?

For example, in the fall of October 2017, we hosted our one-day symposium presenting the topics of acute liver failure, neurological emergencies and an in-depth review of sepsis. After the symposium, we evaluated the attendees’ surveys and needs assessments and received nine requests for cardiac topics (including cardiac surgery, cardiac catheterizations and cardiogenic shock), seven requests for neurological-based topics, seven different requests for information regarding new technology, such as ECMO, CRRT, TAVR, etc., as well as seven more requests for CERP category B and/or C topics, including healthy work environments and effective communication and collaboration. With this information, we discussed potential facilitators who could speak on the
requested topics for our spring 2018 symposium. We aimed to have a healthy mix of physicians, nurses (including advanced practice nurses), as well as ancillary staff that were leaders in their fields. We hoped that with the diverse experiences of these facilitators, it would help attendees from different backgrounds understand the topics from a variety of perspectives.

By February 2018, we secured all speakers and hosted a successful two-day symposium, March 14-15, 2018, discussing the following topics:

- Transforming the Treatment of Valve Disease
- ICP Management
- Sepsis
- Prevention and Treatment of Subarachnoid Hemorrhage
- Fact or Fiction in Risk Management
- Introduction to Whole Person Care and Advanced Communication for End-of-Life Issues

Post-symposium, we reviewed the evaluations and had very favorable results. Some narratives from the attendees include:

- “Very enjoyable! Content directly related to current studies.”
- “Thank you. I enjoyed the entire symposium. Excellent speakers. GREAT TOPICS.”
- “ALL the speakers were all very good – the information very relevant to my practice. Very knowledgeable. I enjoyed the day!!”
- “Fantastic!! Thoroughly enjoyed the symposium and updates to improve care and change practice.”

- “Terrific conference! I will be back and encourage my colleagues to join. Content was well organized.”

Our fall 2018 symposium is quickly approaching, and we couldn’t be more excited. We’ve already confirmed our speakers for the event. Temperature Management will be discussed by a nationally renowned speaker, Mary Kay Bader, Crisis in Trauma and Care for the Clinician by Dr. Norman Wright, and Continuous Renal Replacement Therapies, by Jewett Laygo with Baxter International Inc. We are currently discussing plans for our spring 2019 symposium and have already scheduled another SCRN review course for April 2019.

In previous years, the San Fernando Valley Chapter has had great success hosting certification review courses. We have provided review courses for certifications such as CSC/CMC, SCRN and CCRN, and have always been excited about our attendance numbers. In 2018, we hosted a CCRN review course on April 18 & 19. We had 27 students attend the course, and 92 percent stated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that objectives were met. We can only hope the upcoming SCRN review course for 2019 will be just as successful.

The San Fernando Valley Chapter is dedicated to listening, supporting and encouraging local nurses to be the best that they can be by providing ample educational opportunities for their growth and passion to excel. Driven by AACN’s mission, vision and values, our chapter strives to have a recognized reputation for influencing nurses, families and community members in a positive light, by shaping best practices and influencing the quality of patient care.
Excellence in Chapter Educational Programming

Providing quality education for clinicians who are practicing in acute and critical care settings is a privilege the South Central Connecticut Chapter (SCCC) is most proud of. Education truly is the voice and strength of nursing. SCCC embraces the national AACN theme to inspire our members to transfer our knowledge to the most vulnerable patients in our local community through the highest-quality, evidence-based care.

To meet the needs of the membership, an online needs assessment was conducted in January 2017. Approximately half of the membership participated in the needs assessment survey, which was distributed and advertised via email. The results of this survey guided planning and implementation of the next year’s successful educational programming.

One of the first goals of the needs assessment was to better understand who our members are through collecting updated demographics. We learned we have a wide variety of ages, practice years, practice areas and education levels in our chapter. The board of directors also used the needs assessment survey to identify gaps in education and to give the chapter members a voice in programming.

Through the needs assessment, members indicated an interest to further individual professional development through live lectures and conferences. Using this information, a half-day leadership development workshop was planned for chapter members. This workshop was planned, implemented and evaluated using the framework and structure proposed by AACN’s model. Attendees were awarded 3.0 contact hours, and overall feedback was very positive. Based on the evaluations, 100 percent of participants felt the program objectives were met, learning objectives were adequately covered, teaching/evaluation methods were appropriate, and the program had met or exceeded attendees’ expectations. We will use this information to plan future programs, as 100 percent of participants reported they would attend a similar event; however, 12 percent were unhappy with the price of the program.

In addition to the half-day workshop, several shorter programs were offered throughout the year as a direct result of the needs assessment.
Chapter members were asked to choose clinical
topics that were most appealing or applicable.
The top scoring item for this survey question was
sepsis. Using this information, a highly esteemed
and well-respected nurse practitioner was invited
to address the membership about emerging re-
search and clinical guidelines for the treatment of
patients with sepsis. A discussion focusing on the
subject of compassion fatigue resonated with
many members and had lasting emotional and
educational effects. These programs were of-
fered in a social setting and shared over a meal
to facilitate the new scholarly, personal and
professional connections.

The chapter also hosts an annual Evidence-Based-
Practice (EBP) Dinner. This is an opportunity for
chapter members to answer a call for abstracts
and present ongoing or completed clinical proj-
ects to a local audience and share contributions
to nursing science while providing education
to their peers. SCCC is pleased to welcome the
national AACN president on an annual basis and,
last year, embraced Christine Schulman and her
presidential message, and she interacted with
SCCC members.

The chapter offers educational and networking
programming in a variety of settings to appeal to a
wide variety of members. We remained cognizant
of scheduling times and locations for program-
ing varying from late afternoon to later evening.
On average, 50 percent of the membership
consistently attended and evaluated the program.
Feedback was collected after each program.
The chapter uses the constructive feedback to
continually improve future programs, such as

the suggestion to provide name badges for
all attendees, not just the board members
(Program Evaluation, EBP Dinner, January 2017)
and improving signage during the program to
easily direct members (Program Evaluation,
President’s Dinner, September 2017).

Providing quality education to SCCC members
has multiple benefits. The membership benefits
by learning new concepts, guidelines or new
approaches to the care of those who are vulner-
able. Members may also expand their professional
networks or find new opportunities to expand on
educational opportunities. The greater community
benefits from a stronger, more enlightened group
of clinicians. From evaluations of programming,
attendees provide anecdotal evidence of
success, such as finding programs “insightful,
fantastic, awesome and inspiring.” It is these
words that motivate our chapter to continue
to provide creative programming to entice
educated, scholarly and informed discussion.

SCCC will capitalize on the knowledge gained
through a successful year of educational pro-
gramming by continuing to empower acute and critical
care clinicians to provide informed and evidence-
based nursing to the most vulnerable populations.
SCCC will reassess and reexamine the chapter’s
need to ensure future programs continue to meet
and exceed the expectations of the community
the chapter serves. Providing excellent education
to our members, our patients, their families and
our care providers is a top priority, “because noth-
ing less is acceptable.”
“Our Voice, Our Strength” inspires us to unite and make positive changes from within. As nurses we are in the unique position of acting to impact patient care every day. The Denver Chapter, “Nurses with Altitude!” has a strong leadership presence and relishes AACN’s history of bravely stepping forward to fulfill leadership roles.

The transition plan for our chapter leaders and committee members began by reviewing last year’s calendar of events to redefine and commit to our goals of education, community service and leadership. Strategic planning, new board transition and our succession plan were developed at the June meeting. The president and elect collaborated throughout the previous year to ensure a seamless leadership transition; thus setting a true example of leadership based on respect and transparency. Individual transition meetings were held, as experienced board members mentored incoming leaders. For example, the past treasurer assisted a novice with organizing and submitting financial reports. The chapter’s multifaceted Intradisciplinary Collaborative Conference representative is being mentored by a veteran lead. Another chapter member cautiously expressed the desire to lead a conference. An experienced leader sensed her hesitation to assume this substantial responsibility and offered to mentor. Collectively, this year’s officers, board and committee members confidently lead with an exceptional team approach.

Key to our succession plan is to recruit, develop and retain the next generation of leaders by recognizing talents and optimizing their particular skill sets. Setting the precedent of the mentoring program to achieve this succession plan is a major goal of our chapter. Recognizing the fine balance of the mentor/mentee relationship is both monumental and delicate. The newly created elect positions — secretary, program and membership chairs — are designed to promote mentoring opportunities. A unique symbiotic relationship exists with our treasurer and elect; they agree their learning is mutual, creating a beneficial and enjoyable relationship.

Succession planning is incorporated into nearly every opportunity: The secretary-elect is guided through the accuracy of the minute-taking experience. Two experienced leads are mentoring a new lead through the specifics of our annual community service event. We also recognize the value of the pay-it-forward experience and strive to integrate mentoring moments. Our student
representative initiated a plan to provide a more meaningful experience for students at monthly meetings by greeting them with small gift bags and introductions to board members. This motivated young leader is already anticipating a successor upon her graduation in December.

Our strategic plan is multidimensional. Establishing an enduring mentorship program to ensure leadership succession and continuity of programs is our foundation. Our board members are experienced leaders who are knowledgeable in chapter and AACN standards. They are enthusiastic and passionate mentors, yet able to challenge mentees with suitable finesse. Our members’ needs assessment survey is a valuable tool with a history of successfully guiding our annual course. This year’s education and social calendar, and community service activities have acknowledged a majority of member needs. The most requested categories are clinical practice, self-enrichment/healthy work environment and analysis, to be presented in a social setting.

Our calendar includes relevant and diverse clinical topics such as new IV medication for distributive shock and pacemaker/LVAD education. Our certification dinner will offer our certified nurses an evening of self-enrichment, dining and networking. Our “Nurses with Altitude!” continue the tradition of providing a hot breakfast and cheerful gift bags to 150 individuals at The Gathering Place. New community service actions this year include collecting eyeglasses for the Lions Club, slippers for skilled nursing facilities and a home improvement project this spring.

Meaningful Recognition is a new program, currently under focused development. Photos of participants holding chapter and AACN banners on our website strengthen the “Our Voice, Our Strength” commitment.

Each leader received a signed copy of their willingness to serve, with a specific job description and responsibilities. Using AACN standards, the new board positions’ descriptions were researched for accuracy. Individual members’ strengths are identified and developed into a dynamic support system. Board and committee reports are routine meeting agenda items each month.

The Denver Chapter has a dynamic engagement of past chapter leaders inspiring every person to attain their natural best. We are fortunate to have a former CAT and two AACN board directors in Colorado, ardently supporting chapter functions and leaders. They attend meetings and most recently assisted with annual strategic planning. They present annually at our meeting dedicated to AACN updates. We look forward to their attendance as guests at our certification dinner.

Our immediate past president Christine Schulman asserts, “To appreciate a fulfilling future is to know and embrace our past.” The Denver Chapter also celebrates the memory of Sharon Connor and her passion for excellence in leadership development.
The Greater Portland Chapter of AACN (GPC-AACN) has a rich history of promoting leadership among its members.

In our chapter’s 46 years, we have experienced the effect of highly functioning boards due, in part, to our succession planning and commitment to leadership development. When we look at our past leaders, we see how they were intentional in their professional growth and how they were nurtured by leaders before them. The depth of experience of our board members is a result of purposeful planning and a commitment to professional growth.

Succession Planning
With particular attention to AACN’s definition of leadership, GPC-AACN members pursue colleagues that show potential in their ability to influence others as well as complete their work and reach outcomes. Authenticity in the pursuit of leadership positions is paramount. The board often creates positions for aspiring leaders and fosters an environment for leadership development. For example, we have created positions such as education chair-elect, which is shared between two or three people. This has been a productive move for our board and for our membership, because having more people involved and committed to providing exceptional educational events lightens the workload and benefits the learner. Chair-elect positions currently include president and treasurer, so there is a full year for them to learn the role and responsibilities from their predecessors. As a side note to succession planning, we also created a buddy system for onboarding new members in an effort to enhance their experience and reduce any challenges of going from expert to novice in a new environment.

The VOICE of the Member STRENGTHENS our FUTURE
Last summer, due to the overwhelming nature of social media, the board created the positions of social media liaison and community outreach. These positions were created as a result of the voice of our members asking us to reach out to those who couldn’t attend meetings but wanted to feel connected. By using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, we have seen our membership base expand and have been able to connect with our members. At the same time, we have cultivated a relationship with these new leaders and facilitated
their success. The social media liaison improves communication by posting stories and articles that are relevant and educational for our community. While the board member who holds this position grows with intention as a leader among other leaders, the position provides an answer to our members’ request to improve our outreach beyond emails and mailings, further increasing our ability to recruit members for leadership positions on the board.

We have also embraced student nurses interested in critical care and board positions. We now have several student liaisons representing different nursing schools in the area who also serve on the board. They come with drive, fresh new perspectives and promote future leadership of the chapter.

Leadership Transition
Every year in June, we hold a leadership transition dinner. This transition is for outgoing and incoming board members. We hold this meeting to discuss strategic plans and yearly timelines, and to provide a forum to encourage incoming leaders. Prior to our transition dinner, the board goes through each board position’s job description and makes them relevant and applicable to current chapter needs. The president makes binders for each board position, complete with a timeline, strategic plan and job description. This is helpful for board members to reference throughout the year, as well as to promote better succession planning for the coming years and new board members. The strategic plan is reviewed and approved by outgoing and incoming leadership.

Another longstanding means of leadership development is engaging our former chapter leaders. The previous board member at large brings in our past chapter leaders to provide a historical perspective and foster decision making that promotes our critical care nursing community. This position has proven especially helpful for our large chapter. Their presence at every meeting, encouragement, strong leadership and ability to use their previous experience as chapter leaders help keep the chapter on track and ground us in our pursuit of excellence. The biggest responsibility for this member is to make certain every open position at the end of the year is filled by a nurse who upholds the standards of our chapter officers.

GPC-AACN is a fantastic example of how leadership creates longevity and excellence in our large membership. Through succession planning and professional development, leaders are prepared to influence members in their drive toward excellence, because nothing less is acceptable.
The Northwest Chicago Area Chapter (NWCAC) has been in existence since 1972. Its continued strength is maintained through the dedication of committed leaders and loyal members.

Our chapter bylaws and mission statement recognize the importance of authentic leadership. Incorporated in our bylaws is the following statement regarding our mission: “The chapter is committed to providing opportunities to enhance professional development and leadership, as well as a communication network for critical care nurses, progressive care nurses and emergency room nurses in the geographic region.”

Currently, NWCAC has nearly 100 members. We have been successful in maintaining membership over our 46 years in existence. In addition, over 72 percent of our active members have obtained and maintained their certification. Also, as a recruitment incentive, NWCAC offers national AACN membership dues for any chapter member who recruits four new members.

The NWCAC transition meeting with incoming and outgoing board members occurs in July. During the meeting, the board develops the strategic plan for the upcoming year, incorporating the AACN theme. Chapter opportunities for growth and member needs are inherent within the strategic plan. During the transition board meeting, the outgoing director/committee chairperson mentors the incoming director/committee chairperson with the duties of the role, the work plan, budget, annual report and other pertinent information. In addition, each board member signs the AACN board member contract that outlines the expectations of the member to develop and participate in chapter activities that support the mission and vision of AACN. The contract also includes expectations and responsibilities of the chapter as it supports the member. We also review job descriptions for the NWCAC board and identify any needed updates to ensure they are current and relevant.

Although our past board members have served their terms and have fulfilled their duties, they remain committed to the chapter and serve as valuable resources for incoming board members. By sharing their experiences as leaders, new board members can develop their personal leadership skill set and thrive in a setting of growth and mentorship.
Succession planning and developing the next generation of leaders has been an important goal and ongoing challenge for our chapter. NWCAC developed a Board Learning Partner Program to fill key roles in the chapter. By promoting active participation in the chapter in partnership with a board member, the board learning partners (BLPs) benefit. This last year, NWCAC had five BLPs working with the board members. All of the BLPs have agreed to remain on the board in key positions during the upcoming year. These positions include treasurer-elect, secretary, program co-chair, awards and scholarships, and hospitality co-chair.

We are fortunate that the current board members have been exceptional at mentoring these new members and supporting them as they enter their new roles. In addition, a renewed position opened as an opportunity for community liaison for community outreach. A new board member agreed to take on the community liaison position, because she was aware of the strength and support provided by the chapter leaders and board members.

NWCAC has an Award and Scholarship Program, which supports members who contribute to various chapter activities. These awards include reimbursement for conferences, nursing books, journals, certification expense and AACN dues. This program is an opportunity for NWCAC to recognize chapter members for their unique contributions to the success of NWCAC events. This past year the chapter awarded over $6,500 to active members.

NWCAC also supported four board members to attend the Leadership Development Workshop (LDW) at NTI 2018. In attendance were the president, president-elect, secretary and a new BLP. By attending LDW, these chapter leaders were privileged to experience this valuable opportunity to network and exchange ideas with other chapter leaders. This collaboration has been very beneficial, and it is very meaningful to have so many demonstrate their commitment by attending LDW.

By collaborating with local nursing schools, NWCAC has invited students to attend chapter meetings and the Midwest Conference without cost. This partnership strengthens the opportunity for student nurses to network with experienced nurses and develop insights into their personal contribution to the nursing profession as future nurse leaders.

NWCAC is a group of committed nurse leaders who have shared their experiences and professionalism to develop and mentor future nurse leaders. Throughout our 46-year history as a chapter, we have used our voices to be our strength in chapter leadership development and succession planning as we actively support AACN’s mission, vision and values.
Since 1972, Dallas-AACN has continuously supported and promoted a culture of certification. We share AACN’s vision that certification provides nurses with the current evidence-based practice required to meet national standards.

Nurses today need to validate their expertise to maintain the public’s confidence that nurses will always provide exceptional practice based on sound critical judgment. Because of the complexity of healthcare, with more responsibilities placed on nurses, certification of acute and critical care nurses is needed more than ever, and the evidence supports its link to patient outcomes.

We also realize a journey begins with the first step and through encouragement to attend CCRN/PCCN courses, nurses gain confidence and become more critical thinkers through knowledge of evidence-based and best practices offered through our programs.

In planning our previous certification event, we collaborated with a past chapter advisor and decided to target both progressive and critical care nurses. This way, we would increase the number of nurses attending the course. To do so, we offered a combined two-day CCRN/PCCN review course. Dallas-AACN is committed to promoting AACN’s mission, vision and values. Based on our needs assessment and feedback from neighboring hospitals, we set out to achieve the following:

• Influence the understanding of nurses to qualify for certification
• Increase the number of certified nurses
• Increase member renewal and retention of certified nurses
• Increase public awareness and promote the value of certified nursing practice

Part of the course focused on educating nurses to strengthen their voice by educating patients and the public about the value of certification and its links to outcomes and patient safety. Additionally, the course’s introductory session focused on promoting professional and ethical practice through emphasis on the AACN Synergy Model and the value of certification to nurses, patients, organizations and the public.

To plan an interactive and engaging learning forum, the chapter decided to combine the
CCRN/PCCN review with a Halloween-themed event (since the event was planned for the end of October). To make it a fun event, attendees were asked to dress up for Halloween on day two of the course review. Lunch was provided. Many baskets full of gifts, movie tickets and gift cards were given to the winners. Pictures were taken and posted on Facebook. Multiple vendors’ sponsors were solicited and contracts were reviewed, in accordance with the chapter governance manual, to help offset the expenses. We set up a station at the start of the event to provide attendees with certification handbooks, applications and information, a list of resources and teaching materials to make their certification journey as smooth as possible. To energize the audience, words of encouragement and positive messages were reinforced during the seminar and through a musical Dallas-AACN slide show on the value of certification. During the slide show, attendees joined the facilitator and engaged in dancing to the theme song, “Take Your Passion and Make It Happen.”

To increase the number of certified nurses, Dallas-AACN provides a CCRN/PCCN review course every two years, to ensure we have new nurse candidates who qualify to sit for the exam. We also encourage and increase awareness about the value of certification for both seasoned and new nurses by using social media, sending emails and distributing brochures and flyers. Dallas-AACN reached out to the community to spread the word about the CCRN/PCCN review course. Lectures were sent electronically through attendees’ emails. As incentives to increase retention of certified nurses, Dallas-AACN offers reimbursement of their CCRN certificate and bragging rights on Facebook. To celebrate, the chapter annually honors nurses who hold certificates in CCRN, PCCN, CSC, CMC or APP, during Certified Nurses Day or National Nurses Week. This recognition is based on feedback from our membership.

Today, many organizations recognize, promote and encourage nurses to achieve certification by offering salary increases and reimbursement for renewals. While monetary incentives are good to have, we understand that the true value of certification lies in creating a stronger, more prepared professional workforce, where public and consumer safety is a must-have. In turn, by promoting the value of certified nursing practice, the public is protected and visits hospitals that employ certified nurses.

Outcomes
• 25 percent of Certified Review Course attendees achieved certification in CCRN or PCCN; many others are informing us that they will apply. We continue to encourage and support critical care nurses.
• Positive feedback and evaluations on the education provided
• Recruited 11 new members who joined Dallas-AACN and national AACN
• Evaluation of survey showed satisfied service provided by Dallas-AACN chapter members

Dallas-AACN strives to inspire, motivate and promote the value of certification. We will continue to represent and commit to promoting AACN’s mission, vision and values.
Focusing on our acronym, Grow, Renew, Achieve and Certify, the Greater Raleigh Area Chapter (GRAC) promotes the value of certification through various facets.

Growing our chapter membership is a vital part of our annual strategic plan. By promoting chapter growth we are continually adding to our base of certified nurses. By adding certifications to our online website registration process for educational activities, we are now able to track the number of certified nurses, including CCRN, CCRN-CSC, CCRN-CMC, CCRN-K, CTRN, CFRN, CNRN, CEN, PCCN and CNML, along with other certifications. Seeing our chapter grow and the variety of certifications our members achieve meets our strategic goal for certification. In the last year, our chapter membership has grown to 126 active members with 86 members holding certification. GRAC is honored to have so many of our members achieve national certification.

The chapter promotes Renew at our monthly meetings by providing educational opportunities and offering CERPs for certification renewals. Assisting our members with contact hours through CERPs promotes certification renewal and stresses the importance of monthly CERP activities. Working closely with area drug and medical device representatives, we are able to provide updated education to our members. Last year, GRAC began collaborating with the Triangle Chapter on their yearly conference. This collaboration has enabled GRAC members to attend PCCN and CCRN review sessions at the conference along with providing members a chance to network with certified nurses in our community.

GRAC focuses on the value of certification by providing NTI registration to three chapter members. The chapter holds a drawing during our January and February meetings for chapter members planning to attend NTI. One winner, chosen at each meeting, receives an NTI registration scholarship. During March, GRAC sponsors an essay for a chapter member to attend NTI for the first time. The 250-word essay focuses on what attending NTI would mean to them, along with incorporating the AACN yearly theme into the essay. Essays are blinded, sent to all board members, voted on and the winner is announced during our March meeting. Providing these opportunities for members to attend NTI reinforces the chapter’s desire...
to promote learning and certification. Each NTI registration winner is asked to present a five-minute overview during our fall meetings on the impact NTI made on them and, if not certified, their future goals for certification.

The chapter recognizes the Achievement of certification during our March meeting by presenting a flower to each certified nurse who attends the meeting. Certified nurses are asked to stand and be recognized for their commitment to excellence in critical care, progressive care or nurse management. Taking a moment to recognize those nurses who strive for clinical excellence is one small way to honor our certified members.

Recognition of our members continues with our respective hospitals on Certified Nurses Day. Our nurses are recognized at hospital-sponsored breakfasts and with certification plaques in their respective units. Two years ago, GRAC began a new recognition for certified nurses by honoring the longest certified nurse, newest certified nurse and one at-random certified nurse with a one-year AACN membership. Supporting our members with national membership promotes the contributions of our certified members and adds to the recognition of three chapter members.

Certifications through AACN and ANCC are a growing requirement in the hospitals where our chapter nurses work. Certification is the new standard for participation in clinical ladders throughout the Triangle area. Promoting certification is an increasingly important avenue for our chapter and our annual strategic plan, as our members advance on their respective clinical ladders. We strive to promote the value of certification and encourage our members to be mentors for those seeking certification both within and outside our chapter.

Throughout the year, GRAC focuses on promoting the value of certification through Grow, Renew, Achieve and Certify. We strive to provide not only educational activities for our members but a focus on the importance of certification. It is through “Our Voice, Our Strength” as a chapter that we can promote excellence in care through certification, using our voice as a chapter to strengthen clinical excellence in patient care.
The Houston Gulf Coast Chapter (HGCC) is dedicated to the continued growth and education of critical care nurses. HGCC has a longstanding commitment to assist critical care nurses seeking their certification through our educational offerings and review courses. This year will mark the fourth CCRN course hosted by HGCC. The mission of our chapter aligns with our own AACN national president Lisa Riggs that “our voice and our strength give us power.” Our focus and belief are that certification promotes excellence in nursing and fulfills our promise to our patients to deliver no less than the best care. Certification is our voice, and increased knowledge strengthens and empowers bedside caregivers. One of the three national initiatives that HGCC focuses on is to assist nurses in fulfilling this promise to obtain specialty certification.

HGCC board members used AACN’s past theme of “Guided by Why” to engage and empower our members to strive for excellence — igniting the flame in our critical care nurses to reflect on their goals and why they chose to be nurse leaders in this profession. The feedback from our members demonstrated that they highly value expertise, compassion, professional growth and integrity. We surveyed our 200+ members, and the response was overwhelming. Our members want educational offerings and opportunities that allow them to grow in their profession.

Our chapter previously offered a CCRN review course for all critical care nurses in the Houston area. The certification review was a success, and attendance was over 210. To measure the effectiveness of the review course, we surveyed our members before and after. Prior to the course, 42 percent of nurses were CCRN certified. The outcome six months following the course showed an increase to 50 percent. With our chapter hosting this review course, it also offers our currently certified nurses an updated review of evidence-based critical care practices, which will aid in the renewal of their certification. Being certified is a way to express their dedication to patient care and commitment to professional development. We were able to host another review course Oct. 18-19, 2018, with over 100 attendees from as far as Midland, Texas, seeking to expand their knowledge to achieve certification and demonstrate their passion for delivery of the best patient care.
HGCC wanted to celebrate and raise awareness of the significance of certification and excellence. Our chapter, along with the other two Houston-based chapters, collaborated in hosting a “Certification Celebration Gala” to honor those recently certified as well as those nurses who presently hold certification. The gala served as a networking event for area critical care nurses and our past national president, Christine Schultman. To continue the momentum throughout the year, our chapter invites our alumni members and various current AACN board members to speak and educate our members on the value and significance of certification during our monthly educational meetings.

Our chapter continues to be a champion for certification by informing nurses of the benefits. Engaging and empowering our members to obtain and maintain certification is grounded in the ideology of “Our voice and our strength give us power.” Certification and the pursuit of excellence through education aligns with the AACN theme that AACN President Riggs expressed at NTI in Boston: “It is easier to ACT your way into a new way of thinking than it is to THINK your way into a new way of acting. Positive deviant practices are a mechanism that allows us to act our way into a new way of thinking. They jar us. They shake us up. They push us in new directions. And they do this simply by making us question our usual practices to allow us to arrive at a better result.”

Thus, through increased knowledge and specialty certification, critical care nurses will gain the power they need to bring positive changes to their workplaces.
Each year, the Palm Beach County (PBC) Chapter incorporates the national president’s theme in its activities. This year, the chapter highlighted Our Voice, Our Strength in all communications with members via the website, emails and all postings of monthly meetings, upcoming events and activities.

During monthly educational meetings, our chapter president started with a quote from National President Lisa Riggs and presented our chapter business using slides with the national theme background. These meetings include current clinical topics with discussion of the nurses’ roles as change agents and leaders in driving patient care forward through new knowledge, products and technology.

Riggs stated, “We can invent our future — not become victims of it. Our voice and our strength give us power. The power we need to change this profession we love.” The Professional Practice Committee called our members to task with the “Break the Rules Challenge.”

At each monthly meeting, every Evidence Based Nursing Practice (EBNP) workshop and the certification review, excerpts from President Riggs’ speech were discussed. Next, a slide of a superhero in superhero stance — hands on hips, standing tall — was flashed on the screen. Attendees were asked to stand and assume the position.” They were then asked, “If you held the power, what would you change in your everyday practice and how would you do it.” These responses were collected from September 2018 until March 2019.

These responses fell nicely into healthy work environment categories, with appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition and skilled communication issues being the three most common. In February, a focus group meeting, open to nurses from all hospitals, allowed for discussion of solutions to these identified issues. The goals of this meeting were to 1) create an environment where staff from many hospitals would recognize others and share common issues, 2) foster a collaborative effort using our voices, our strength to explore opportunities for change, and 3) empower attendees to return to their workplaces with solutions and explore implementation.
The Break the Rules Challenge presented a challenge to make a difference by identifying an issue and implementing a solution. Members could submit an essay describing the issue, the implemented solution and the result. The solution with the greatest clinical impact will be chosen, and the winning member will be awarded paid registration to NTI 2019 in Orlando.

In its 12th year, PBC AACN’s EBNP Initiative demonstrates Our Voice, Our Strength by guiding nurses to explore best practices and implement nurse-driven actions to change practice and improve patient outcomes. Over the past 11 years, it has resulted in 63 EBNP projects and awarded $24,750 to local critical care teams for education. When asked, “Why did you participate in this EBNP initiative,” one team replied, “Because nurses should own their own practice.” Many local hospitals have incorporated it as criteria for their clinical ladders. This buy-in of our EBNP initiative has been a great vehicle for collaboration between hospital leaders and chapter leaders and a great incentive for their nurses.

In May, PBC AACN celebrates its 46th year as a chapter and will host its 29th annual Recognition Luncheon, which highlights the achievements of local critical and acute care nurses, including PCCN and CCRN certification. The national president’s theme is always the foundation of this event and the inspiration for the brochure, programming and décor.

During the morning, a workshop will be offered where all responses to the Break the Rules Challenge will be unveiled and displayed. A panel of local chief nursing officers will discuss the three most common issues and the feasibility and possible implementation of the solutions offered during the challenge. Many hospital and community leaders will attend, which will allow the conversation to be elevated to levels where further implementation of change is possible. The leadership of PBC AACN will meet with hospital leadership to further discuss the identified issues and suggested solutions.

As critical care nurses, our duties and roles reach far beyond our units’ walls. PBC AACN continually assesses the dynamic healthcare arena and community to provide the education necessary to prepare our members to perform and excel.

PBC AACN exhibited at Student Nurses Day at our local college to interface with future nurses. We fed the hungry through our annual Thanksgiving food drive and served food at a local soup kitchen. In December, we donated toys to the U.S. Marines’ Toys for Tots and performed Christmas carols at the VA’s long-term care facility.

Representing our chapter and our profession, we serve in a disaster, mentor future nurses and educate the layperson. By joining with local hospitals, universities and community organizations we improve the lives of our patients and the overall welfare of our county. PBC AACN is proud of its numerous contributions and recognizes that our presence unleashes Our Voice, Our Strength.
AACN’s theme for 2018-2019 is “Our Voice, Our Strength.” AACN President Lisa Riggs states, “When we use our collective voice and the strength we have as nurses, we can invent our future — not become victims of it.” The power of nursing inspired the development of this theme. AACN, which was originally founded in 1969, currently has an exceptional community of over 120,000 nurses. That is a lot of power!

Riggs’ dramatic presidential vision includes acting our way into a new way of thinking, collectively using our voice and our power, being courageous and reinventing the future, and creating the workplaces we want and need for ourselves and our community. She boldly inspires us to confidently step into our strength, use our collective powerful voice and change this profession we all love.

AACN’s mission statement notes that “patients and their families rely on nurses at the most vulnerable times of their lives.” AACN’s vision statement includes “creating a healthcare system driven by the needs of patients and families where acute and critical care nurses make their optimal contribution.” AACN’s value statement includes honoring ethical accountability and integrity in relationships and collaboration to ensure patient/family-focused care. This aligns perfectly with AACN’s theme for the year.

The AACN Chapter of Western New York (WNY) was created to bring AACN’s mission, vision and values to our WNY community. We wanted to truly embrace the words and meaning of this year’s theme, not only for our chapter members but to ripple everywhere in our WNY community.

The chapter board members first learned of this theme at NTI. We brainstormed on how to best present the theme in a meaningful, impactful way to all our members. We pondered every aspect of the artwork, searching every word and every meaning, and how it could relate to our chapter. We wanted to embrace it not only now, but for future strength and durability as well.

We started our new year with a September kickoff celebration welcoming our members to a theme-filled year. Our chapter president gave a PowerPoint presentation that included the year’s themed artwork. She gave direct quotes from Riggs’ powerful message to our members, highlighting the importance of our strength and our voice collectively to fearlessly and courageously drive healthcare in the direction we know it needs to be. She also gave a heartfelt testimony on how
the new AACN theme reflected in her life that left the chapter completely inspired.

We also came up with an innovative idea to break apart each section of the themed artwork and make a volunteer signup sheet for local chapter members to have an opportunity to share what impacted them in their lives with our group during every monthly meeting. This has personalized and inspired everyone.

Our chapter is able to host a yearly all-day educational event for our members. This year, we are blessed to have Lisa Riggs speak in April. She will visit with all our members, we’ll get to know each other and she’ll spread her message to all. Our members work in over 25 areas, so this message will spread to many facilities all across WNY. It will be a great highlight.

Another board member, a liaison for the chapter’s community service for Cornerstone Mission (homeless women and children of WNY), discussed the AACN theme and how it impacts the community. She gave a speech, “Being a Voice for the Voiceless,” based on part of this year’s theme. The theme has positively impacted the donations of money, time and talent to the shelter every month. We now also have representation from our chapter on the community board, which meets quarterly. It is especially exciting to let our fellow community board members at Cornerstone Mission know about AACN and how it impacts our community.

A board member was speaking to a friend about the new theme with excitement. As her friend listened to the part about speaking for the voiceless, she was touched. She decided to have her two daughters, ages 6 and 8, make cookies and lemonade, and host a table at a local garage sale. All the money they raised went straight to diapers for the homeless babies. By the end of their day they raised enough money to buy 500 diapers! Cornerstone then featured the girls in their newsletter as the heart of the mission and included an AACN reference.

The future holds excitement for us to continue sharing the AACN theme: being the change we wish to see, together fearless and united, radiating possibility, “Our Voice, Our Strength.”