

Salute to Nurses



History of Nurses Week

National Nurses Week, celebrated every year from May 6 through May 12, has a long, rich history.

Officially enacted by President Richard Nixon in 1974, the weeklong event is a celebration of all that nurses do to help keep the citizens of the United States healthy. And as of 2003, National School Nurse Day is celebrated on the Wednesday within National Nurses Week each year.

Nurses certainly deserve their share of the spotlight, and for a much longer time period than the allotted week. From supporting physicians in surgeries to performing home visits to the elderly, nurses go above and beyond their expectations to consistently deliver quality care.

Here's a quick breakdown of the most historic dates in the progressive evolution of National Nurses Week, as provided by the American Nurses Association.

A TIMELINE

1974 — In January, the International Council of Nurses proclaimed that May 12 would be “International Nurse Day.”

1974 — After many failed attempts by various activists and even Congress, President Nixon issued a proclamation designating “National Nurse Week.”

1982 — In February, the American Nurses Association Board of Directors formally acknowledges May 6 as “National Nurses Day.” The action affirmed a joint resolution of the United States Congress designating May 6 as “National Recognition Day for Nurses.”

1996 — The American Nurses Association initiated “National RN Recognition Day” on May 6, to honor the nation’s nurses. The group continues to encourage its state and regional nurses associations to acknowledge May 6 as “National RN Recognition Day.”

1997 — The American Nurses Association Board of Directors designated May 8 as “National Student Nurses Day.”

2015 — Hospitals and healthcare agencies everywhere are preparing for another ledger of National Nurses Week events and advocacy efforts. Check in with your local nurses association for information on how you can get involved with local happenings.



Florence Nightingale

Considered the founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale is still making an impact on the profession even after her passing more than 100 years ago.

Nightingale was born in 1820 in Florence, Italy. Revered as the Lady with the Lamp by so many, she set the standard of quality nursing in high-stress environments.

In 1860, she founded St. Thomas' Hospital and the Nightingale Training School for Nurses. Her nursing career started about seven years prior, when the Crimean War broke out. The battle was between the British Empire (Nightingale lived in London) and the Russian Empire.

The government recruited Nightingale to set up a group of nurses to tend to the injured and sick, which she did to national acclaim.

HONORING NIGHTINGALE

The final day of National Nurses Week is May 12 — Nightingale's birthday.

Nightingale received multiple honors from her government both before and after her death in 1910 and still goes down in history as a medical pioneer.

In 1908, she was conferred the merit of honor by King Edward. It was one of many official recognitions that helped to boost Nightingale's reputation as a true healthcare steward.

THE PLEDGE

The Hippocratic Oath was composed in 1893 and is called the Florence Nightingale Pledge as a token of appreciation. Countless nursing students have uttered the words of the pledge, which is modified here:



The Hippocratic Oath

“I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the process of this assembly, to pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully. I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous, and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug.

“I will do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession, and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping and all family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling. With loyalty will I endeavor to aid the physician in his work, and devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care.”

Ways to Celebrate

There are many ways to thank the nurses in our lives. Small gestures of gratitude can go a long way, even if it's not National Nurses Week.

We all should show compassion for our caregivers, because we all know someone who has benefited from the touch of a patient-focused nurse.

If you are employed in a medical environment that also employs nurses, one of the easiest ways to celebrate National Nurses Week is at work.

If you're at a loss for what kind of celebration to pull off, the American Nurses Association has developed a National Nurses Week toolkit to help you come up with unique ideas for your celebration. Check it out at their website at www.nursingworld.org.

Below are some other ideas for making your favorite nurse feel appreciated.

HOST AN EVENT

Even if you don't work in a medical setting with nurses, you can host a special celebration to recognize one or more nurses in your community.

For example, you can sponsor a community-wide event, such as a coloring contest or cooking showdown. Donate the proceeds to your nurse's favorite charity or even toward developing a community care program aimed at improving the health of your community.

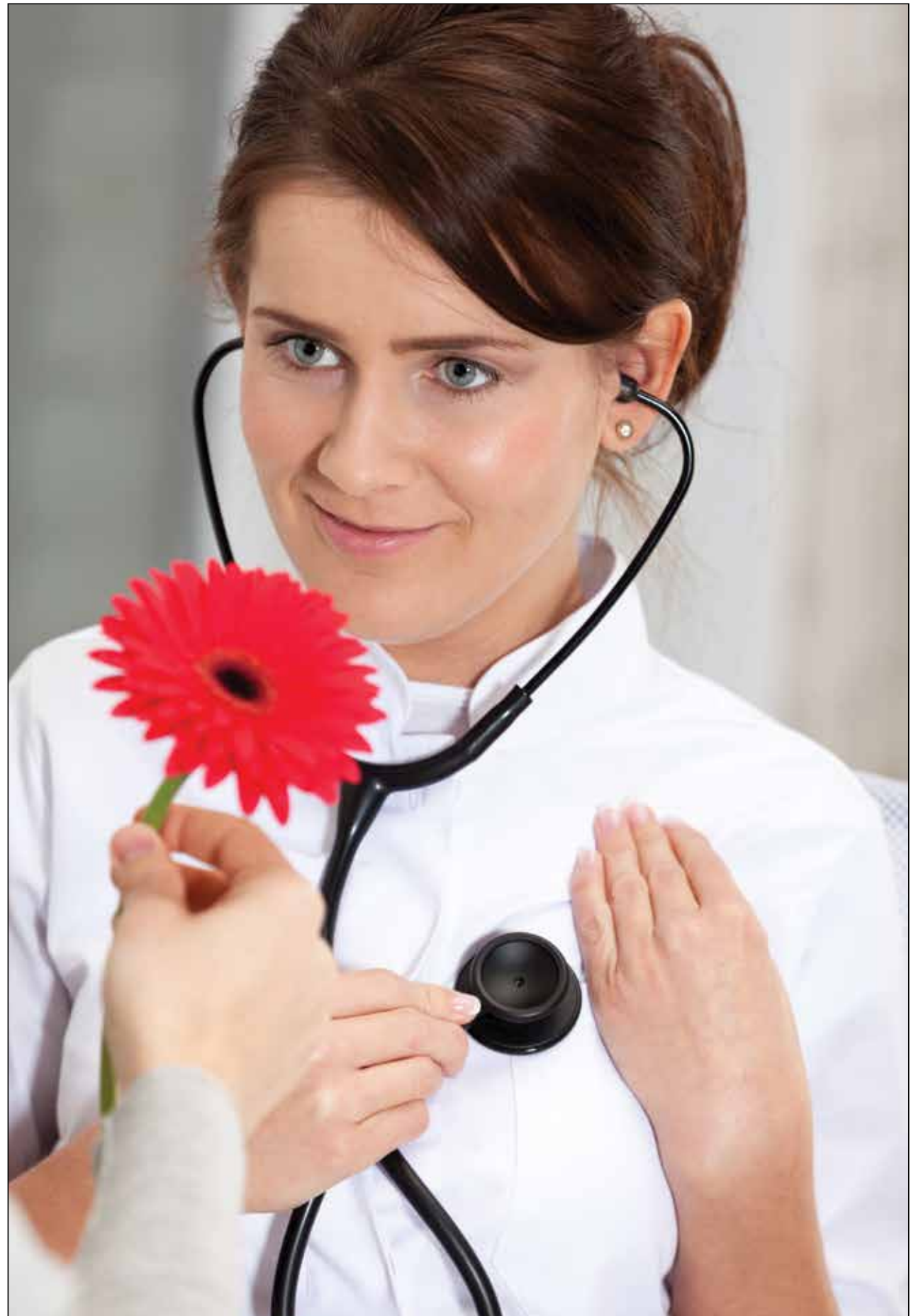
If you need a little star power at your event, invite a local celebrity to speak about health care or their own personal experience with nurses. The stories will help unite your audience in appreciating the nurses who wake up early or stay up late to deliver care every day.

PARTNER WITH YOUR PAPER

Your local newspaper is probably already aware of local events for National Nurses Week, but it can't hurt to reach out just in case.

If you're throwing an event, be sure to write and distribute a press release to your local newspaper, which is always looking for a great story.

Do you know the perfect nurse? Pitch his or her story to the local newspaper and see if they are interested. Your friend or family member may end up with a front-page story celebrating his or her efforts in the nursing field.



The Perfect Gifts

Nurses are by definition selfless and always looking to give a little of themselves to their patients.

That's why it's so important to give back to them when we have an opportunity such as National Nurses Week.

A simple token of appreciation such as a thank you card or even an engraved item will show that special nurse how much he or she means to you. Better yet, why not give a gift to the nurse in your life each day of the weeklong celebration?

GIFT BASKET

A brightly colored candy basket will be enough to bring a smile to the face of any nurse. It also lends itself to being presented in fun packaging. Go with a red and white theme and include the red cross nursing emblem on the basket to give it an authentic yet fun appearance.

Seasoned pretzels and chocolate are a can't-miss combination for your special nursing basket. Fresh fruits, cookies and various drinks can also be loaded into a basket for the nurse you know and love.

Don't forget to add a gift card to a local masseuse, beauty shop or spa.

Other nurses may appreciate tickets to a professional sports game or a new electronic gadget. Choose your gift wisely and keep it a surprise.

PERSONALIZED GIFTS

Do you have a picture of your favorite nurse in action? If not, snap one and upload it to a website that produces framed, personalized photos.

Add a custom caption to the photo, such as "Hard at Work" or "Doing What He Loves" to the photo to add a bit more uniqueness.

If you work with a nurse, coordinate with everyone in your department to make their own thank you card. Present cards to him or her every day throughout the week to show your appreciation.



Who Are Nurses?

A look into the nursing profession offers a glimpse into a fast-changing industry. Once a job dominated by Caucasian women, a trend has begun to emerge with males and minorities taking over more nursing positions.

The diversity is expected to expand even more over future decades, according to the Department for Professional Employees.

A 2012 report by the agency shed light on how much the industry has changed in the past decade or so and what could be in store in the future.

Here are some of the findings uncovered by the department's study:

- The vast majority of registered nurses (RN) and licensed practical nurses (LPN) / licensed vocational nurses (LVN) are women at 91.1 percent and 93.4 percent, respectively;

- The percentage of men in the field increased slightly in the last 15 years or so, rising from 6.9 percent of RNs in 1995 to 8.9 percent in 2011;

- Most nurses are white — around 78 percent — but the percentage of minorities among nurses has been slowly increasing;

- The proportion of African American RNs increased from 8.4 percent to 10.4 percent from 1995 to 2011;

- The percentage of Latino RNs increased from 2.6 percent to 5.1 percent from 1995 to 2011;

- The nurse population is aging as fewer people are entering the profession, with the average age of an RN



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increasing from 36 in 1980 to nearly 47 in 2008;

- Nursing programs are producing over 150,000 graduates

with RN degrees per year;

- Employers look abroad for nurses, with the number of foreign-born nurses up from

9 percent in 1994 to 16.3 percent in 2008;

- Since the recession of 2008, there have been fewer

nurses taking and passing the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) required for all nurses.

Become a Nurse

Nursing is one of the fastest-growing professions in the United States. Considering its great earning potential, flexible hours and the potential it offers for making a difference, it's easy to see why.

Employment of registered nurses is projected to grow 19 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The agency also reported the median annual wage for registered nurses as \$65,000+ in May 2012. The great salary coupled with the ability to impact peoples' lives are reasons to consider joining the nursing field if you haven't already.

NURSING OVERVIEW

Nurses provide and coordinate patient care in a variety of settings, ranging from in-home to major hospitals. They also work in physicians' offices, nursing care facilities, correctional settings, schools and in the military.

They are versatile enough to handle multiple patient cases at once, along with administration duties, vital signs monitoring and care plan development that comes with the job.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Registered nurses generally obtain a bachelor's degree in nursing, an associate degree in



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nursing or a diploma from an approved nursing program.

In all states, nurses also must possess a license. To acquire this designation, you must graduate from an approved nursing program. Check in with your state to find out spe-

cifics on nursing requirements, and do so prior to pursuing a license to avoid any surprises in the process.

WHAT NURSES DO

Think you have what it

takes to be a nurse? Here are some chief responsibilities of the professional:

- Gather, record and maintain crucial patient information, such as vital signs, medical histories and symptoms;
- Work collaboratively with

physicians to build and implement sophisticated care plans; and

- Build positive relationships with patients and parents, ensuring prompt service and responsive communications.

A Nursing Shortage?

If you've ever thought about joining the nursing profession, now may be the perfect time. The U.S. is projected to experience a shortage of registered nurses, according to The American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

This could put a premium on the position and make it a position with great job security for many years.

THE ISSUE

According to the "United States Registered Nurse Workforce Report Card and Shortage Forecast" published in the January 2012 issue of the American Journal of Medical Quality, a shortage of registered nurses is projected to spread across the country between 2009 and 2030.

In this state-by-state analysis, the authors forecast the RN shortage to be most intense in the South and the West.

THE CAUSE

One of the main indicators that predicts a nursing shortage is the amount of aging baby boomers. Two million to 3 million are entering Medicare each year, according to the American Nurses Association.

A new emphasis on covering more Americans through the Affordable Care Act also could put a strain on the nursing profession, as the number of patients needing care is outpacing the number of graduates from nursing schools.

Faculty shortages at



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American colleges also is a major issue. Nearly 79,000 qualified applications were turned down in 2013 from nursing programs because schools simply didn't have enough staff members to accommodate the learning needs of that many students.

SOLUTIONS

In October 2010, the Institute of Medicine released its report on The Future of Nursing. It called for increasing the number of baccalaureate-prepared nurses in the workforce to 80 percent, as

well as doubling the population of nurses with doctoral degrees.

The report stated that the current nursing workforce only fields 55 percent of registered nurses prepared at the baccalaureate or graduate degree level, leaving much

room for improvement.

Encourage your children, peers or friends to join the nursing profession if they can find openings at their college of choice. Doing so can take the nursing industry one step closer to compensating for future increases in patients.