

Bridging the Diversity Gap: Nurses Leading Change, Advancing Health



August 27, 2014 was a historic day in Illinois, as member leaders of Illinois minority nurses associations participated in open dialog about growing the diversity of the nursing workforce, strengthening our associations & opportunities for partnership (see picture above). A special thank you to Barbara Nichols, MS, RN, FAAN, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)/Center to Champion Nursing in America (CCNA) Diversity Consultant for energizing the meeting with her keynote presentation: ***Diversity and the Global Nursing Workforce***.

The Illinois Center for Nursing (ICN), Co-chair of the Illinois Healthcare Action Coalition (IHAC), in partnership with the Illinois Hispanic Nurses Association (IHNA), convened a meeting with multiple purposes.

The afternoon began with a warm welcome from Jay Stewart, Director Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR), followed by a welcome from Maureen Shekleton, PhD, RN, DPNAP, FAAN, ICN Vice Chairperson, Illinois Nurses Foundation (INF) President; INF is the fiscal agent for the IHAC RWJF SIP Grant. We began the meeting with Nurse Nichols' presentation highlighting the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) National Diversity vision.

Susana Gonzalez, MHA, MSN, RN, CNML, IHNA President and Carmenza Millan, AARP-Illinois Associate State Director, Advocacy and Outreach, presented on their successful spring 2014 partnership which created an ACA education outreach program, successfully reaching approximately 300 community members in 2 months time.

The final presentation was Kathy Waligora, MSW, Manager Health Reform Initiatives, EverThrive Illinois – offering to present resource information about ACA enrollment – the sign-up sheet was filled with requests for participation before the end of the day. Pam Robbins, ANA-Illinois chaired the day's activities. Kathy Benjamin, MSN, RN, NE-BC, MacNeal Hospital Chief Nursing Officer spent time with us at the beginning of the day.

The day wrapped up with a round-table discussion facilitated by Linda B. Roberts, MSN, RN, ICN Manager, about the uniqueness of each participating organization, options for information sharing, opportunities for partnership, collaboration, and leadership development, strengthening our associations and growing the diversity of nursing and health care workforce.

Member leaders present for all or part of the day were from the following Illinois minority nurses associations:

- Illinois Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses
- Chicago Chapter National Black Nurses Association
- Philippine Nurses Association of Illinois
- Illinois International Polish Nurses Association
- Chicago Bilingual Nurse Consortium

Additional organizations present: University of Illinois College of Nursing Alumni Association, Jonas Scholar Rush University College of Nursing, ANA-Illinois, Illinois Center for Nursing, Illinois Society of Advanced Practice Nurses, IDFPR Board of Nursing, City Colleges of Chicago, Instituto Del Progreso Latino, Chicago Area Health Education Center, Illinois Nurses Foundation.

As CCNA Diversity Consultant Barbara Nichols encouraged at the end of the day to the collective group: we must continue our "relationship" – to build on the energy of the day - what sage advice.

Thank you to Kathy Benjamin, CNO MacNeal Hospital for providing such a welcoming place to meet; to Susana Gonzalez for hostessing and presenting; to panelists Carmenza Millan/AARP-Illinois, Kathy Waligora/EverThrive Illinois; to Pam Robbins, ANA-IL for chairing the event and for taking pictures; to Linda B. Roberts for outreach and organizing, to Barbara Nichols for beginning the day with such a powerful presentation, and a special thank you to ICN and IHNA for coordinating this historic event.