

NIWI Scholarship Recipient Report 2013 – Pat Lane MBA, RN

This past March I attended the Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) an experience I will always treasure. I was the humbled recipient of the Alliance registration scholarship. I was honored to represent the voice of the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses (AANN).

I had the opportunity to meet 86 nursing colleagues across the United States ranging from Maine to California representing over 30 diverse organizations, it was powerful! It was enlightening to hear the challenges we face as nurses and the passionate testimonials verbalized of experiences in health care and the expectations of the conference were compelling.

The Nurse in Washington internship solidified the significance of the Nurses' voice on Capitol Hill. The presentations emphasized the consistent voice of nursing is essential to leverage our profession and organizations, to transform needed changes in health care. Before presenting the highlights of NIWI I want to share my objectives for attending NIWI and tell you the NIWI experience exceeded my expectations!

One of my primary goals for attending Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) was to learn how to have a sustainable influential presence in public policy for AANN. Learning strategies and tactics to promote the voice of Neuroscience nursing practice is vital to the neuroscience community. The Institute of Medicines Future of Nursing report had specified the importance of having nurses in the boardroom and at the table to influence health care delivery. Furthermore the report stated the importance of continuing education to assist with not only secondary prevention but also primary prevention.

Our organization was one of the first to write a "white paper" on the Future of Nursing Recommendations and correlate it to the mission and vision of neuroscience nurses. Naturally I was delighted the first panel session was entitled "Professional Nurse Advocates – Addressing the IOM Future of Nursing Report as it Relates to Policy and Scope of Practice". The presenters reinforced the fabulous work AANN had done. It became evident if nurses are to make a difference, a unified voice embracing these recommendations and asking the legislatures for these recommendations to be supported were the essence to health care transformation and the objective for this internship.

NIWI afforded me the fundamental knowledge and strategies to share with AANN membership and prepared me with the best practices and strategies to advocate for the Neuroscience community. In the robust two and half days we were provided with toolkits “briefing” us on hot topics such as sequestration, appropriations and budgetary landscape. These terms were new to us but essential language spoken on the hill and we needed to understand the terms to help us in preparing for our “ask”!

The first day set the stage and really engaged us in networking and provided us with tools and resources. The morning of the second day was motivating with inspirational speakers sharing their experiences from NIWI and how their lives have changed because of the internship. We were fired up and ready to go which was a great emotion for us to have as we entered our break out sessions for Advocacy 101 or 201. Advocacy 101 and 201 is where the rubber met the road! These sessions provided perspective on how Congress worked, correlated why nurses are a strong voice for messaging, tips for Capitol Hill and strategies for sustainable voice. Key takeaways – be prepared, organized and have that elevator speech down to a science! So what does that mean for nurses - it is easy relate it back to the nursing process! Also think about the SBAR it prepares us for the elevator speech, be fast, on point, be prepared and affirmative tell them what you want!

Just like when in nursing school we had clinical experience to practice and prepare us so did NIWI. The afternoon sessions focused on role playing simulations and preparing for our visits. I don’t know if any of you have seen the movie Drum line but the next key message resonated with me from a line in that movie “One Sound One Voice”. We were all going to see our legislatures from different areas with a unified message to support three key initiatives from the future of nursing recommendations. While our recommendations were the same it was our testimonials that made the individualization and would be the link to those we spoke with remembering the nurses’ voice and impact, advocacy at its best. The visits were phenomenal! We were prepared and we were passionate and we were heard!

As you recall one of my objectives was sustainability. Some of the pearls that NIWI taught me were to be involved at the local level to stay engaged at home office and remind them you are a constituent. In addition suggestions were made to attend town hall meetings and request to be on the newsletter list and

utilize social media exchange such as Facebook and twitter. Connecting with the staff in the legislative offices was also key messaging particularly those in the health area and appropriations. We were also taught to not to forget to utilize your local newspapers and Op-Ed's are a wonderful tool to advocate.

In closing since NIWI I have shared my experience with AANN and recommended that two persons attend from the organization in 2014. I have also spoken as the voice for health care on a panel for my City on the Affordable Care Act. We are also working on a toolkit for our organization and we are embracing strategies to connect us with the Nursing Community. I would like to thank the Alliance for the registration scholarship and again I will always treasure this experience.

Pat Lane

AANN Advocacy Chair