

## NIWI 2015 Scholarship Recipient Report: Nancy Elliott, MSN, RN, Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs

Being selected for a NIWI scholarship was an honor. I went to the conference wanting to learn all I could and so I could be prepared to visit with the legislators from my district and state. The NIWI provided me an opportunity to meet and network with nurses from different specialty areas and from other areas of the country. No matter what state we were from or what area of nursing we worked; we all had one thing in common. We were all there to learn how to advocate for each other and the patients to whom we provide care to in our home states.

As a member of the Nurses Organization of Veteran Affairs (NOVA) Board of Directors, I have participated in three Legislative Roundtables so far. I will hopefully have opportunities to represent NOVA on Capitol Hill when issues arise where we want our voices heard. In June NOVA is holding their annual meeting in Washington, DC. There will be an opportunity to visit Capitol Hill during the conference. I will definitely not feel the apprehension and anxiety I felt prior to attending NIWI. NIWI has provided me with the confidence to meet with legislators or their assistants. I am nowhere near a pro at going to Capitol Hill, but I can provide my colleagues with an idea of what to expect when they have an opportunity to visit the Hill.

Locally, I have one item I am planning to present to my state representative. I feel that my experience at NIWI has prepared me with the knowledge and poise to call upon representatives within my state when I see a need to speak up for nurses, other healthcare providers, and the patients to whom we provide care. I have an increased awareness of how important constituents are to the legislators. They need to hear from us so they know the needs of nurses and other healthcare professionals. They need to know what we need to provide quality and safe care to healthcare consumers.

At my place of employment I responsible for coordinating two hospital wide programs, and sometimes have to meet with the Executive Leadership. I have "Asks" each time I meet with them. Those "Asks" are related to improving the programs. Attending NIWI has reinforced that if I can do this at work, I can do it just as well on Capitol Hill when talking to members of Congress.

NIWI is an experience nurses from all specialty areas would benefit from attending.