

All for One

Hispanic nurses express their collective power BY LUKE COWLES

It was about individual strength as well as the collective empowerment of a unified vision. That was the overall message that was enthusiastically delivered to the Los Angeles chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN) at its recent 14th Annual conference. The group gathered at the Los Angeles Endowment Center for the event, titled "Latino Nursing: Empowering Yourself and Your Community," to share experiences and provide valuable information to colleagues and patients.

On the Ready

With wildfire season well under way and earthquakes always a threat, Rosie Vasquez, BSN, RN, PHN, assistant program specialist at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, versed attendees on how they can prepare themselves and patients for any kind of disaster. Vasquez stressed that when civil support structures go down, some of the simplest precautions can make the most difference in the aftermath.

"Getting out of or away from danger is always your first priority," Vasquez explained. "If you have all your vital information in one place, one file, like copies of your social security card, insurance policies, passport, driver's license, your last tax return and even photos of your valuables, you just need to grab one file and go. It also will make putting your life back together after the fact much easier."

Vasquez also recommended nurses provide special advice to patients taking medications. If patients put aside just 2-3 pills per month, they can have a full, standby prescription available at no extra cost to them. She said most pharmacies would refill prescriptions before the previous one was completely empty. This would eliminate any gap in daily dosages.

Advocates in Action

"You have no idea you are one of the few people they will trust. You have the power to let someone know what their rights are and how to execute those rights. You are an advocate."

That's how Itzel Molina-Williams, health and safety specialist with the UCLA/UC Irvine



LATINO LEADERSHIP: As the Los Angeles NAHN board of directors, Mario Chavez, BSN, RN (left), Angela Flores, BSN, RN, PHN, Kelly Guzman, MSN, RN, President Angie Millan, MSN, RN, Sylvia Estrada, RN, WHCNP, Kathy Lopez, MSN, RN, PHN, Diane Sanchez, MSN, MPH, RN, CNS, Nancy Montoya, BSN, RN, and Sergio Aguirre, BSN, RN, PHN, CCRN, are leading the charge in making a difference for Latino nurses.

or even legal immigrants to receive benefits. Those working in private homes, such as nannies and housekeepers, are not eligible.

"Your concern, as a nurse, is to care for the patients," Molina-Williams emphasized. "Empowering them with this information is how you can do that."



ON PARADE: Flowers4theFloat committee members Suzanne Ward, MN, MA, RN, CNOR (left), Monica Weisbrich, BSN, RN and Sally Bixby, MS, RN, CNOR, raise support for the first Tournament of Roses Parade float featuring nurses.

Making History

Sally Bixby, MS, RN, CNOR, director of surgical services at City of Hope in Duarte, addressed the crowd as the future president of the 2013 Tournament of Roses Parade. Bixby shared that her role as the first nurse to helm the famous event wasn't the only history-making fact about the parade.

"This also is the year we will have a single float in the parade solely dedicated to nurses and what we do as a profession," Bixby explained. "This is an opportunity to expose nurses to the 40 million people all over the world who watch the parade in 25 different languages."

Bixby urged nurses to support this "first" of its kind event. Attendees were encouraged to make a donation to the float campaign by visiting the official Web site at www.flowers4thefloat.com.

Education & Research Center, described a nurse's role when dealing with immigrant workers and workers' compensation claims. Because nurses are usually first to see workers after they've been injured on the job, Molina-Williams stressed the importance of being familiar with the law so they can empower patients to do what's best for their health.

"It's vital that patients know they can pre-designate who they'd like to receive medical treatment from," Molina-Williams explained. "This can be done at any time, except after an injury has happened. Because immigrant workers can work in many different locations, it's not where they got injured that designates the responsible party, but who writes their paycheck."

Other vital information includes encouraging workers to report all injuries, even small ones. Documenting everything is essential for proper claims. Workers do not have to be U.S. residents

Strength in Numbers

Other highlights included an address by Tony Mendoza, 56th District assemblyman, and a student panel. Latino nurses will show their strength in even larger numbers when the Los Angeles NAHN chapter convenes for the national conference scheduled for July 21-24 in San Antonio, TX. ■

Luke Cowles is senior regional editor at ADVANCE.