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Message from the The Chief Clinical Officer



My Professional Journey

My aspiration to become a professional nurse began in high school at age 16. I was working as a part time physical therapy assistant after school and loved connecting with my patients, hearing their stories, and helping them attain their restorative goals. I attended a private, all girls high school and met with my guidance counselor. She advised me that I wasn't college material and should look into a trade school. This consultation put me on my path to prove her wrong and pursue my bodacious goal of becoming a nurse. I studied hard, passed my exams, and was accepted into Molloy College Nursing Program. I graduated in 1978 with my BSN. Never doubt the power of a dream.

I began my career in a teaching hospital – North Shore University Hospital (NSUH). I worked the evening shift on a 30-bed medical/surgical/oncology unit. I quickly saw that nurses didn't have the knowledge or resources to provide excellent care. After 2 years at the bedside, I chose to go up the administrative track with the dream of creating an exemplary professional practice environment and pursuing clinical excellence.

I went back to school to get my MSN, and during that time made my next bodacious goal of becoming the CNO for NSUH and having an international influence in nursing practice.

My dream came true, and as the CNO for NSUH, I learned of the



This picture taken in 1983, working the evening shift as a house supervisor.

Magnet Recognition Program, our nurses embraced the idea, after which we began our Magnet Journey. We were recognized in 2001 as the 18th Magnet Hospital in the United States.

The ANCC attended our Annual Nursing Research Conference and were overwhelmed with our nurses' knowledge of evidence-based practice, research, and the number of research studies that had been completed and disseminated. Thus, I was asked to join the ANCC as an independent consultant. I visited organizations throughout the United States and several international hospitals. I taught them about the program and conducted many Magnet workshops.

My husband retired in 2004, and we began to spend time in San Diego. This was when I learned of an upcoming CNO opening at UC San Diego Health. I applied and was very excited to hear during the interviews that senior leaders, medical leaders, and nurses at all levels in the organization wanted to pursue Magnet Recognition. I got the position in July 2006 and we began our Magnet journey. In 2011, we received our first designation with exemplars in evidence-based nursing and research!

I have always been dazzled by the nurses, medical staff, and all team members at UC San Diego. I have stayed because every day they all exceed my expectations and challenge me to become a better leader. Working here the last 18 years has given me, as a person and as a professional nurse, many opportunities to learn and grow. I feel cared for, and have a sense of belonging.

Wishing you all a wonderful journey, and a reminder to never doubt the power of a dream! With patience and hard work, they really can come true!

With Gratitude,
Margarita

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Forging a Path in Nursing

