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Szarek, Nancy, BSN, RN

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# An Opportunity to Share

By Nancy Szarek RN, BSN

One of my favorite activities, when I visit my hometown of Philadelphia, is to share what I do as an Operating Room Nurse. Each year my sister, an inner city elementary school teacher, invites me to talk to her third grade class ~ a sort of “Career Day.” Many of the children have family and friends who may have had operations. This was a chance to have the kids see the role of a nurse as much more than just giving them “shots”.

This year’s topic was “The Surgical Team”. I began by first talking about the team concept - an idea they could easily relate to through sports. Each member, or team player, has a different role to play, or job to do, yet all are united in a common purpose. The Surgical Team, made up of the Anesthesiologist, the Surgeon, the Instrument Nurse, and the Circulating Nurse, come together for one important objective: to provide the patient with a safe, positive surgical experience.

Next came putting it all together. This is the fun part for the kids playing ‘dress-up’! Suited up in O.R. garb and each one knowing their special part to play, the young volunteers

got ready. I enjoyed watching their enthusiasm build. Their excitement filled the classroom as their eager eyes gathered to watch the operation begin.

Our young anesthetist put the patient to “sleep”. The circulating nurse did the necessary preparation while the scrub nurse readied the instruments. The Team took a “Time Out” to verify the right patient, the right surgery, and the right site. The operation began with the surgeon making the incision. The Bovie or “fire pencil” was used to coagulate bleeding vessels, tissues were clamped and tied, and the diseased organ was removed or repaired. The wound was irrigated and sutured closed. The operation went smoothly! Our pretend patient this year was Shrek. He was safely transported to the Recovery Area (PACU). Thanks to the skills and teamwork of all the members, this experience was a big success. It was wonderful to see their young faces beam with satisfaction of a job well done!

This opportunity was so rewarding for me. It allowed me to watch young minds expand as the value of teamwork became real through learning, fun and play!



**Nancy Szarek RN, BSN** has been an RN since 1973. In addition to being an O.R. Nurse at UCSDMC since 1984, she currently is the Department’s Safety and Disaster Coordinator. She served in the Army Nurse Corps (Active Duty & Reserves) from 1974 to 2002 and is now retired from the military.

