From the CEO

Focus on service

Service is an area where all members can work together to make a difference.

By Patricia E. Thompson

Four months have elapsed since we completed our energizing biennial convention in Texas. The board of directors, led by our president, Suzanne Prevost, created advisory councils and task forces to begin implementing the presidential call to action, "Give back to move forward."

In addition, the articles of incorporation for the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) were modified, expanding the organization's purposes to include a focus on service. Service is also integrated into the call to action, so the synergy between the two is strong. For STTI to be successful, the current call to action and our newly approved purpose—focus on service—require active involvement of chapters and members. The opportunities are exciting and endless.

Many chapters have already established successful service initiatives. For other chapters, service represents a new focus. The challenge for chapter boards is to develop a plan and a focus for these chapter activities, rather than allowing them to happen by chance. In light of the multiplicity of potential service opportunities available, implementation strategies also need to be developed, based on member interests and available resources.

Is your chapter interested in service activities in your local community, at the regional level or at the global level? Some initiatives may cross more than one level, but the key is that the board, with input from members, identifies a service focus and develops an implementation plan. One strategy a chapter board may consider is to establish a task force to explore options for service activities and provide recommendations for member consideration. Some chapters may choose to focus on more than one area of service, depending on interest and available resources.

Identifying an area of service is an effective way for your chapter to increase member involvement. Use your chapter's Web page on The Circle to connect with members on how they can get involved. Members are usually willing to volunteer time and expertise—service—to make a difference and improve the circumstances of others. This concept also fits the presidential call to action, "Give back to move forward," thus assisting us in meeting our organizational goals.

Access The Circle to learn how other chapters have developed successful service initiatives. Identify other chapters in your region with similar interests and collaborate for greater impact. As you identify and implement your area of service, do not forget to review how it relates to the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As a nongovernmental organization (NGO) associated with the United Nations since December 2009, STTI has established the goal of assisting that body in meeting its MDGs, from the member level to the international board level. Chapter service initiatives are a way to help achieve this goal. The MDGs focus on the needs of vulnerable populations, also part of the presidential call to action.

Service initiatives should reflect the broad diversity of chapter members, from students and new graduates to experienced clinicians and faculty members. Getting members involved from all categories, from the chapter to the international level, has been a challenge for STTI, but it’s an objective that is critical to achieve. Service is an area where all members can work together to make a difference. As members become involved in these service activities, they will gain interest and be inspired to volunteer for committees and be on the ballot for board positions.

Chapter initiatives related to service also meet the criteria for STTI's Spirit of Philanthropy Award and Chapter Key Award, so be sure to consider these initiatives as opportunities for chapter recognition at the next biennial convention, to be held in Indianapolis 16-20 November 2013. Also, be sure to include service activities in your chapter annual reports, as this report provides important information to the international board about the scope and impact of initiatives across the organization. In addition, these reports provide us with helpful data as we talk with external stakeholders and potential funders about the significant difference our members and chapters are making globally.

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