



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Making a Difference

May/June 2001

Susan Shelander, RN, CPAN
ASPAN President 2001-2002

The baton has been passed; the connection has been made. A new team of board members, committee chairs, and component leaders is now responsible for continuing our journey, advancing our practice, creating our legacy, and ultimately making a difference for our patients, our members, and our specialty. A renewed leadership is significant as it generates new energy and momentum for connecting to visionary ideas, advancing our gains, and seeking unexplored ventures. Our past and current accomplishments have provided the reasons to carry our mission forward and strive to make a difference for the next phase of our legacy.

Obviously, some steps are harder to take than others and all steps lead us toward greater possibilities for the American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses. We are already Making a Difference – the journey continues everyday as we seek new opportunities for our society. As your President, I am committed to our mission and our vision; however, it is important that we rethink our own perceived smallness. We must focus on our capabilities, push our walls, and raise the bar so our specialty will triumph with purpose, significance, and continued vision into the 21st century. It is important that we are challenged to think the unthinkable, that we bring clarity to our vision and we expand our capacity to dream. Our dreams will shape our reality. We must learn to move outside the confines of our box and allow ourselves to feel the squeeze of risk in order to overcome insouciance and sameness. The world is different every day. We must be willing to look for the seeds of new ideas and plant new beginnings to be harvested by future generations of perianesthesia nurses. Cultivating opportunities at every level along our journey and being alert to the seasons of change will promote our success as a society. Change is essential for the fulfillment of our vision, our mission, and our strategic plan and defines our reference points and framework so we can realize our fullest potential. Our willingness to embrace this magnitude of change will be the factor that empowers us to make a difference for all we serve. Making a Difference becomes our charge and challenge this next year as we continue to affirm our direction and preserve our legacy.

Allow me to share a simple story about a beachcomber and a starfish – a story you may have heard and overlooked as not having personal meaning for you. Early one morning, on an isolated and very beautiful seashore, a young beachcomber was seen ritualistically dancing and tossing something into the rolling ocean. Curiosity brought a distant bystander to the shoreline as the beachcomber was observed to be retrieving and tossing starfish back into the foam-covered surf. Puzzled, the bystander challenged the beachcomber and stated, “You are wasting your time. There are so many starfish still on the beach, what difference will it make if you throw a few back.” The beachcomber reached to pick up another starfish and gently tossed it into the ocean and watched the current take it into soft waves and wash it out to sea. “It made a difference for that one,” he replied. And the dance continued leaving the bystander to ponder and observe.

This story is simple and has many possible interpretations as sometimes in life we are the beachcomber, the bystander, or the starfish. At some point in our career someone has gently picked us up and placed us in an environment that gives us another chance and makes a difference in our life so we may make a difference in someone else's life. Sometimes we are the beachcomber and seek to explore new shores and scout for new talent and take risks and create debate and challenge the existing balance. We become the difference as we stretch and maneuver our clinical shores. Sometimes we are the bystander, just curious and, because we are in the right place at the right time asking the right questions, our lives

are changed forever because someone shared a vision and included us in a plan. Does all of this sound vaguely familiar? Using today's terminology of preceptor, mentor, follower, or leader, it should be familiar. So I ask, "Are you a beachcomber, a bystander or a starfish? Do you bring honor to your role and do you choose to make a difference when given the opportunity?" Be mindful of the image you project as a professional nurse for others are observing and learning from YOU when you least suspect scrutiny.

It is not about just making a difference or even being the difference, it is understanding you ARE the difference. YOU are the creator of our nursing heritage for our patients, our professional society, our communities, and our nursing future. YOU are the nurses that will impact the nursing shortage and allow your positive example to be the difference for an interested citizen or dedicated nursing student. YOU are the momentum that will advance our specialty and establish our standards in hospitals, ambulatory units, and office-based practices throughout our component societies. YOU have the knowledge and skills, so share your talents willingly. YOU, the professional caregiver, are the best investment in healthcare today. Setting healthcare policy, creating standards of care, and furthering professional practice demands nursing input and nursing contributions. YOU have a voice, so let that voice be heard. Making a Difference in our political system is up to you. Policy should not happen without nursing at the table influencing healthcare decisions. We are scattered throughout this country and have the potential to make the difference in our own communities.

Be the starfish that made it back to the sea and felt the renewal of the ocean waters and the tug of the currents and the flow of the tide. Sometimes the victory is in the struggle to survive rather than the will to win. Swim with the opportunities presented to you by the beachcomber and make a difference for those with whom you collaborate every day. Walk the halls of your healthcare setting and determine the need for connecting to those persons and processes that require your expertise. ASPAN has the resources to support your efforts. Employ the curiosity of the bystander and ask the hard questions that will distinguish your own growth and potential. YOU are the difference between mediocre and excellent in your clinical setting. YOU have the responsibility to Make a Difference for all in your circle of contact and care. So you see, making a difference is not that hard as the opportunity is regularly presented to us without much effort. However, being the difference requires commitment and desire and a realization of all that is in our grasp. Do not overlook your chance. Most importantly, understanding YOU ARE the difference requires focus, trust, values, and vision and becomes tangible over time. This year I am asking that you join our team and 'Make a Difference' wherever your nursing career challenges you to practice. It is single seconds and simple encounters that will merge into magical moments and start you on your journey of "Making a Difference" for yourself and others as we place honor on our legacy. In the words of Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Now is the time for our nursing community to take action and make a difference as many are listening to our struggles and our possibilities.

Begin to expand your own circles and let perianesthesia nursing stir the passion in your soul. You CAN make a difference. You CAN create a nursing legacy for each and every patient, citizen or nurse whose life you touch. You hold the resources, knowledge, commitment, and desire to stay motivated, informed, and prepared. Making a Difference is not as profound or difficult as it may sound when we all work together. The Difference begins with the bedside nurse. Commit to not just Making a Difference, or being the Difference, instead truly Believe You ARE the Difference. Today is your chance to impact tomorrow and your chance to Make a Difference begins one starfish at a time.

It is with great honor and privilege that I serve as your President in the coming year. I look forward to the challenges and the opportunities presented to our Board and our Society. Most importantly, I look forward to hearing from you and understanding the uniqueness of your journey as we all strive to understand 'we are the difference' that makes the American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses a most unique specialty. So stay in touch. Continue to Make a Difference for all in your range of possibility. And always remember, your life is your message - live it with honor! Making a difference depends on all of us.