

Fostering Well-Being Through Community Engagement: The Perioperative Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) as a Bridge between Staff and Community

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Abstract Background Information: Nurse well-being is essential for patient safety, retention, and organizational outcomes. In perioperative care, where staff face high acuity and workflow pressures, supporting staff thriving requires approaches beyond the clinical environment.

Volunteering and community outreach improve well-being, foster purpose, and team connections. Within this context, the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), with institutional leaders and community partners, created opportunities for perioperative staff to participate in community-focused initiatives

Objectives of Project: It aims to support perioperative staff's well-being by engaging them in structured community outreach programs, while simultaneously addressing community health needs.

- **Process of Implementation:**

The CNS partnered with unit leadership and institutional community outreach coordinators to integrate volunteer opportunities tailored for the pre- and Postoperative staff across four units. External partnerships involved The Bowery Mission, Turn to Us, and a residential building serving as the toy collection hub for the holiday toy drive.

- Internal partnership included engaging unit champions, who helped encourage staff participation and supported colleagues during events.
- Volunteer opportunities were shared through emails and staff huddles to engage 6–8 staff members per event.
- Team activities, such as cooked meals and baking cookies, were organized to raise funds for purchasing ingredients for the women's shelter dinners.
- Briefings and debriefings were held before and after each event to promote coordination and continuous improvement.

Statement of Successful Practice: Over 20 staff members participated in the initiative. Informal feedback during debriefings reflected increased satisfaction, personal fulfillment, and team camaraderie. Participation levels demonstrated sustained interest among the staff, with representation from all four units across multiple events. The Bowery Mission expressed appreciation for the hospital staff's ongoing presence at local events, strengthening institutional-community ties. Measured outcomes included >200 vital health screenings, such as BP and vision tests, education for community members, and the collection and distribution of 450 toys for children in a public school. Additionally, two teams of 8 volunteers each prepared two full-course meals for 40 residents.

Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing: CNS-led community engagement effectively promotes nurse well-being, teamwork, and professional fulfillment in the perianesthesia setting.

Future research should examine the long-term effects of community engagement on nurse thriving and identify best practices for embedding CNS-driven outreach within hospital well-being frameworks.