

2023 ASPAN National Conference – Denver, CO

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I count myself as one of the most fortunate of PeriAnesthesia nurses. Multiple factors in my life have prevented my attendance at our national conference for the past ten years. This year, ASPAN awarded me its scholarship to attend ASPAN 42nd National Conference: Heart and Science of Caring in Aurora, Colorado. That was the catalyst to reignite my passion for my specialty. Little did I know my anticipated expectations would be far and above exceeded!

Representative Assembly! My friend and I arrived a day early because President Connie Hardy Tabet appointed us to serve. My conference room mate, travel companion, Lynda Lepp assisted in credentialing each state's representatives. I was asked to serve as Timekeeper. I was a bit nervous but had the support and assistance of Katherine Simpson. (The New Mexico nurse and the Texas nurse had fun getting acquainted.) It is such an honor to be a part of the election of ASPAN's Board of Directors. As PANANM President 2006, 2007, I remember my previous solemn duty to represent New Mexico at RA. It is truly inspiring to hear the candidates speak about their intents to strengthen ASPAN through unique talents and dedication. This year, I felt joyous excitement as my good friend Connie Hardy Tabet presided over the proceedings. What a celebration of all newly elected members including PANANM President Teri Baughman for ASPAN Treasurer!

Opening Ceremonies on Friday morning brought me another surprise. I was called up by President Connie Hardy Tabet to accept an award of appreciation for the University of New Mexico Hospital Clinical Education Department for the support her colleagues have given during her term. Her sincere words of gratitude touched me deeply. Even more deeply felt was Connie's message of belonging, inclusiveness and connection with all living things. She told the scientific story of our interdependence with our environment and each other. Connie taught us ways to actively effect change in our environment to arrive at the heart of wellness. The unified positivity was palpable throughout the room and set the mood for the rest of the conference. Of the 1200 nurses in attendance, sixty percent were first time attendees. Our keynote speaker, Kari Knutson covered an especially important topic that all nurses can relate to, change. Through sharing her embarrassing but funny experiences she guided us through ways to not just survive but thrive through the inevitable.

The ABPANC Certification Luncheon is an event that I always attend during ASPAN Conference. Certification is a passion for me and has been since I was first certified in the early 1990's. The American Board of PeriAnesthesia Nurse Certification holds the event to honor and support our specialty certifications. I was happy to be seated at a table with my three friends Connie, Lynda, and Teri who are dually certified. Together with Vonda Fitch, ABPANC RN, CPAN, CAPA, Certification Council Chair, Ex-Officio Member ABPANC Board, we were glad to represent PeriAnesthesia Nurses Association of New Mexico. PANANM received the Shining Star Award! Lynda Lepp received the ABPANC Certificate of Appreciation for contributing to the vision, mission, and values of the organization in her work as a certification coach. It was a special treat to meet Zelda Williams, ABPANC Program Assistant, who has served at ABPANC for 20 years. Zelda has helped many nurses, including myself, to be able to coach other nurses who strive to become certified. The ABPANC Advocacy Award is a highlight of the event. It is awarded to a nurse who exemplifies leadership as a patient advocate. As I listened to the nomination story, I was totally surprised to hear my name announced! My supervisor nominated me and all my friends at the table with me kept it a secret! I am still so amazed at the love bestowed on me with this honor!



Photo credit: Lisa Eason



Four New Mexico Nurses have received the ABPANC Advocacy Award
L to R: Connie Hardy Tabet, Valerie Boatwright, Vonda Fitch, and Lynda Lepp

Photo Credit: Connie Hardy Tabet

New innovative ideas abound at ASPAN National Conference! Saturday and Sunday were brimming with education. I attended sessions about a variety of new proven ways to better care for our patients. These lectures were presented by perianesthesia nurses for perianesthesia nurses. Nurses shared the evidence that new ways of caring for patients improved outcomes. I soaked up the information as I became excited about how I would share it with my colleagues. The Vendor Exhibit Hall provides a wealth of new product information on everything from self-care products to new rescue medications for PONV to better wound dressings. Since returning to work, I have shared all the exciting things I discovered. Some of my colleagues are seriously considering attending next year's conference in Orlando.

PeriAnesthesia Nurses really know how to have fun! Rocky Mountain PeriAnesthesia Nurse Association and the National Conference Strategic Work Team really did a wonderful job of putting together "The Happening," which was a chance to relax, unwind and get to know colleagues from across the country. We were able to have a large but casual gathering with delicious food and libations while listening to an eclectic, entertaining live musician.

The President's reception kicked off with an enthusiastic welcoming of the guests. The ASPAN Board of directors



formed a dual receiving line. Guests proceeded through a spontaneous celebration of joyous clapping, dancing, high fives, and cheers that lasted a full fifteen minutes! We fueled up on a delectable dinner just before the DJ cranked up the tunes. The party was on the dance floor which was full to the brim from beginning to the end.

Photo credit: Cherie Baker

The Closing Ceremony came too fast! Monday morning began with a full delicious breakfast and some time to say farewell to some old and new acquaintances. Our places were set with a parting postcard from President Connie Hardy Tabet; caring healthy environment for us and those we touch daily including daily intentions, gratitude, and delicious recipes. The installation of our new President, Alphonzo Baker was heartwarming as he shared his gratitude for his family and the members of ASPAN and his intent to be an agent of advocacy. The closing act, Brad Neider MD showed us that Laughter is the Best Medicine. He showed us that children laugh so many times more during the day compared to adults. He proved to us how much better we feel if we just let ourselves laugh!



I am grateful to be a perianesthesia nurse! The opportunity to advocate and provide care for my patients is the reason I have made this my nursing specialty. The opportunity to attend ASPAN National Conference has rekindled my excitement to advocate for collaboration to achieve our purpose to give excellent care that comes from the heart. ASPAN has provided me resources to accomplish this goal.

Photo credit: Connie Hardy Tabet