

2024 ASPAN National Conference – Orlando, FL

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This year I had the wonderful opportunity to receive one of the ASPAN National Conference Scholarships. Educational funding from various workplaces continues to be a challenge for many, which is why it is so important to encourage our colleagues to get involved and apply for scholarship monies. Once you have been to a conference, you will never think of perianesthesia nursing in the same way. I still remember my first conference many years ago, walking into a space with more perianesthesia nurses than I could have imagined. I understood immediately that “these are my people”, and I wanted to have that feeling of unity again and again. I was addicted to ASPAN National Conference. As a seasoned nurse, with many ASPAN conferences behind me, it never ceases to amaze me that each year I learn new information whether it involves new surgeries, new evidence, or new ways to look at old problems like staffing ratios. (Never ending!)

As the nurse attending conference from my facility/component, it becomes my responsibility to bring this information back to peers. I want to share best practices, support nursing excellence, as well as advocate for adherence to our standards and guidelines.

Each of us attending becomes the source of perianesthesia truth, taking the opportunity to discuss new ideas with peers, working with them to solve problems (we all have them) which in turn supports teamwork, staff and patient satisfaction. I have found so many things can happen when we come together and start thinking outside our current boxes. To quote May Angelou, “*If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude. Don’t complain.*” (medium.com, accessed 5/17/24) Conference provides the opportunity for change. I have never left conference without having new ideas, laced with excitement and potential. This year was no different.

One of the most important aspects of conference that is sometimes overlooked is the potential for networking. It starts in small ways, whether it’s discussing what you do at your place as opposed to my place. There are certain things I feel passionate about and ASPAN provides space for me to participate in committees and growth opportunities. This is the boost I get from conference. A few adult beverages never hurt the creative process.

The most joyful part of my time at conference is the chance to meet up with so many ASPAN friends. These are the members I have been on committees with, engaged with, or just had fun with year after year. It is a remarkable gift to spend time with like-minded nurses that share similar visions of nursing excellence through education and practice improvements. This year I reached out to friends and colleagues from California, Arizona, Mississippi, Maine, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma and Tennessee, just to name a few. Although we are so far apart geographically, we remain close, tied together through ASPAN.

I come to conference for many reasons, but if you are like me, chances are you want to be the best nurse you can be. You may want to be actively participating in how to improve where you work. You want to take pride in the successes you can share for best practice or innovative practice changes. Whatever your reason, I encourage each of you to experience a national conference. Each year it lifts up my nursing spirit and allows me to return rejuvenated and inspired.