

2026 ASPAN National Conference - San Francisco, CA

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Moving to the Future and Accepting the Challenges

I have been fortunate to attend ASPAN's National Conference (NC) annually since 1996. This year I was honored to be the recipient of an ASPAN national conference scholarship.

I recall my first NC in 1996 in Phoenix. While I had been a PACU nurse for over a decade and an ASPAN member for many years, I did not have many connections within the national or component level. I recall sitting in sessions surrounded by fellow perianesthesia nurses who were strangers; many became and are friends today. I learned so much from both the speakers and my peers.

My life within the ASPAN family is somewhat different now compared to thirty years ago. I am connected, I feel that the leaders in the ASPAN organization are my friends and the ASPAN National Office staff is on speed dial. I also rather amazingly am on the podium, hopefully doing as good a job as those speakers I first heard so many years ago.

There is truly no experience like NC. There is a sense of belonging and connectedness that is palpable as soon as you arrive in the hotel lobby to check in: you are in the midst of a fleet of perianesthesia nurses. You see more in the elevator, hotel hallways and the registration desk. Opening ceremony reflects the community that is ASPAN, from the National Anthem, to the Presidential address and the presentation of awards. Jenny Kilgore was truly amazing as she sang for us, invigorating renewed pride in our country. President Mellinger spoke very eloquently and frankly, about the amazing journey ASPAN had undertaken to ensure stability and strength in our organization. Opening ceremony provided a reflective opportunity under the tutelage of gifted speaker Donna Cardillo. My sense of connectedness continued as I sat in a room surrounded by nurses like me facing challenges and carving a new way forward.

I was honored to present several sessions in the days that followed and was enriched tremendously by the dialogue with those who attended my sessions. The Whova app allowed me to post an open-ended survey for several of the sessions and I incorporated those responses into some slides and some lecture content. I attended sessions following my own, enjoying research and advances in clinical practice amongst all phases and all ages of our perianesthesia care continuum.

I also want to mention that I attended the morning session of the Representative Assembly. I was in the gallery section amongst old and dear friends from across the country; I only see them once a year and it was a joyous reunion. I appreciate the opportunity to observe the governance aspect of our organization and the transparency of the leadership presentations.

The experience of NC is invigorating and professionally enriching and I always depart feeling inspired to share the knowledge I acquired with my colleagues and change the world of perianesthesia nursing. I thank ASPAN for this scholarship opportunity. It provided a wonderful opportunity for me to learn, to grow, to connect and perhaps in my own way to contribute to the future of our profession.

I have and will encourage others to apply for this scholarship. It provides valuable financial assistance in attending conference and is a wonderful aspect of our membership in our professional organization.