

# Nurse Retention Toolkit

*Everyday Ways  
to Recognize and  
Reward Nurses*

Lydia Ostermeier, MSN, RN, CHCR  
Bonnie Clair, BSN, RN



# Nurse Retention Toolkit

*Everyday Ways to  
Recognize and Reward Nurses*

Lydia Ostermeier, MSN, RN, CHCR

Bonnie Clair, BSN, RN

HCP Pro

*Nurse Retention Toolkit: Everyday Ways to Recognize and Reward Nurses* is published by HCPro, Inc.

Copyright © 2008 HCPro, Inc.

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN: 978-1-60146-244-2

No part of this publication may be reproduced, in any form or by any means, without prior written consent of HCPro, Inc., or the Copyright Clearance Center (978/750-8400). Please notify us immediately if you have received an unauthorized copy.

HCPro, Inc., provides information resources for the healthcare industry.

MAGNET™, MAGNET RECOGNITION PROGRAM®, and ANCC MAGNET RECOGNITION® are trademarks of the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The products and services of HCPro, Inc. and The Greeley Company are neither sponsored nor endorsed by the ANCC.

HCPro, Inc., is not affiliated in any way with The Joint Commission, which owns the JCAHO and Joint Commission trademarks.

Bonnie Clair, BSN, RN, Contributing Author

Lydia Ostermeier, MSN, RN, CHCR, Contributing Author

Cameran Erny, Editor

Jamie Gisonde, Executive Editor

Emily Sheahan, Group Publisher

Patrick Campagnone, Cover Designer

Mike Mirabello, Senior Graphic Artist

Michael Roberto, Layout Artist

Audrey Doyle, Copy Editor

Liza Banks, Proofreader

Darren Kelly, Books Production Supervisor

Susan Darbyshire, Art Director

Jean St. Pierre, Director of Operations

Advice given is general. Readers should consult professional counsel for specific legal, ethical, or clinical questions. Arrangements can be made for quantity discounts. For more information, contact:

HCPro, Inc.

P.O. Box 1168

Marblehead, MA 01945

Telephone: 800/650-6787 or 781/639-1872

Fax: 781/639-2982

E-mail: [customerservice@hcpro.com](mailto:customerservice@hcpro.com)

**Visit HCPro at its World Wide Web sites:**  
*[www.hcpro.com](http://www.hcpro.com) and [www.hcmarketplace.com](http://www.hcmarketplace.com)*

08/2008  
21512

---

# Contents

List of Figures .....	vi
About the Contributors .....	vii
<i>How to Use Nurse Retention Toolkit: Everyday Ways to Recognize and Reward Nurses</i> CD-ROM .....	ix
Introduction.....	xi

## Part 1: Free and budget-friendly rewards

Chapter 1: Celebrate Nurses without Breaking the Bank.....	3
On-the-Spot Recognition.....	3
Build Collegial Relationships.....	8
Nurses Week Celebrations .....	16
Personalize Gifts and Party Favors .....	22
Chapter 2: No-Cost, Everyday Ways to Recognize and Reward Nurses..	25
Crafting a Caring Environment.....	25

## Contents

Make the Most of Staff Meetings.....	27
Publicize Your Nurses .....	29
The Simple Act of a “Thank You”.....	35
Honor Excellence with Awards .....	39
The Power of Relaxation and Fun Activities .....	42

### **Chapter 3: Reward and Recognition Tips to Appeal to All Generations ..... 45**

One Retention Tip Does Not Fit All .....	45
Nurse’s Most Valued Work-Related Recognition .....	52

## **Part 2: Foster a retention culture focused on nurses’ needs**

### **Chapter 4: Keep New Nurse Graduates at the Bedside ..... 59**

Show Appreciation from the Start.....	59
Open the Feedback Door.....	64
Mentoring Programs Provide Vital Support .....	66
Soak in the Knowledge .....	75

### **Chapter 5: Be a Leader: Build Relationships, Promote Autonomy, and Listen to Nurses’ Needs ..... 77**

Nurse-to-Manager Relationships.....	77
Staff Schedules to Please All Generations .....	84
Keep an Open Ear .....	87
Pay Attention to the Beginning and the End .....	91

### **Chapter 6: Team Building: The Road to a Positive Work Environment .. 93**

The Link: Happier Nurses Equal Better Outcomes.....	93
---	----

A Relationship-Building Culture..... 94  
 The Perfect Getaway: A Nursing Retreat..... 97  
 Nurse-to-Nurse Communication..... 103

**Part 3: Long-term strategies for retention**

**Chapter 7: Build A Retention Budget ..... 109**

Managers Should Have a Retention Budget..... 109  
 Steps for Creating a Budget..... 110  
 Obtain Buy-In from Upper Management ..... 111  
 The Other “R”: Recruitment ..... 115

**Chapter 8: Take It to the Next Level: Advance Nursing**

**Professional Development ..... 117**

Support Nursing Professional Development..... 117  
 Career Advancement Opportunities ..... 118  
 On-Site Educational Forums..... 123  
 The Worlds of Speaking and Publishing..... 124  
 Performance Reviews Measure Professional Development ..... 126

**Chapter 9: Professional Nursing Culture: Retention Benefits**

**of Achieving Nursing’s Highest Honor ..... 131**

How Designation Helps Organizations Stand Out..... 131  
 Retain Nurses by Force ..... 133  
 Benefits of Designation..... 136

**Nursing Education Instructional Guide..... 143**

---

# List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Excellence in Direct-Patient Care Award.....	19
Figure 2.1: Newspaper “Bragging” Story Template .....	31
Figure 2.2: Certificate .....	39
Figure 2.3: You Got Caught!.....	41
Figure 4.1: Nursing Web site Bookmark.....	63
Figure 4.2: Mentor Application Form .....	68
Figure 4.3: Mentor Relationship Guide.....	69
Figure 5.1: Calendar.....	82
Figure 5.2: Sample Employee “Favorites” List .....	83
Figure 5.3: Retention Survey .....	88
Figure 5.4: Nursing Satisfaction Questions.....	90
Figure 6.1: Praise a Peer!.....	96
Figure 6.2: Team-Building Retreat Agenda .....	98
Figure 6.3: Team Assessment.....	100
Figure 7.1: Retention Strategic Plan.....	111
Figure 7.2: Retention Budget Planning Worksheet .....	113
Figure 8.1: Goals Worksheet.....	128

---

## About the Contributors

### **Bonnie Clair, BSN, RN**

**Bonnie Clair, BSN, RN**, is the retention project manager at CoxHealth in Springfield, MO. She has been a nurse for 27 years, and her clinical background includes staff nurse, charge nurse, preceptor, nurse manager, neonatal flight nurse, nursing educator, and nursing school administrator. Her bedside nursing experience encompasses medical-surgical, neuroscience, and neonatal intensive care.

Clair recently facilitated a group of staff RNs in researching and developing a clinical ladder to recognize and reward nursing excellence. She has also been involved with a steering committee to research and implement a shared governance model at CoxHealth. Clair is passionate about improving the bedside practice environment for nurses and patients.

### **Lydia Ostermeier, MSN, RN, CHCR**

**Lydia Ostermeier, MSN, RN, CHCR**, is the director of nurse recruitment, retention, workforce development, resource allocation, and customer service at Clarian Health in Indianapolis, IN. She joined Clarian in 1987 and has been in her current role since 2002. In addition to recruiting and retaining more than 5,000 nurses,



## About the Contributors

Ostermeier manages contingent labor resources for the Clarian system, providing 350 internal resource pool nurses to Clarian's urban and suburban hospitals.

Ostermeier currently serves as the North Central Regional Chair for the National Association for Health Care Recruitment and is president of the Indiana Association for Health Care Recruitment. She was one of the first in the state of Indiana to become certified in healthcare recruitment. Additionally, Ostermeier spoke about the aging healthcare work force at the 2006 ANCC Magnet Recognition Program® Conference and published an article on reengineering nurse recruitment and retention for the American Organization of Nurse Executives.

---

# **How to use *Nurse Retention Toolkit: Everyday Ways to Recognize and Reward Nurses* CD-ROM**

## **How to use the files on your CD-ROM**

To adapt any of the files to your own facility, simply follow the instructions below to open the CD.

If you have trouble reading the forms, click on “View,” and then “Normal.” To adapt the forms, save them first to your own hard drive or disk (by clicking “File,” then “Save as,” and changing the system to your own). Then change the information to fit your facility, and add or delete any items that you wish to change.

The following file names correspond with tools listed in the book:

<b>File name</b>	<b>Document</b>
Fig 1-1	Figure 1.1: Excellence in Direct-Patient Care Award
Fig 2-1	Figure 2.1: Newspaper “Bragging” Story Template
Fig 2-2	Figure 2.2: Certificate
Fig 2-3	Figure 2.3: You Got Caught!
Fig 4-2	Figure 4.2: Mentor Application
Fig 4-3	Figure 4.3: Mentor Relationship Guide
Fig 5-2	Figure 5.2: Sample Employee Favorite List
Fig 5-3	Figure 5.3: Retention Survey

<b>File name</b>	<b>Document</b>
Fig 5-4	Figure 5.4: Nursing Satisfaction Questions
Fig 6-1	Figure 6.1: Praise a Peer!
Fig 6-2	Figure 6.3: Team Assessment
Fig 7-2	Figure 7.2: Retention Budget Planning Worksheet
Fig 8-1	Figure 8.1: Goals Worksheet

The following file name is only on the CD-ROM:

<b>File name</b>	<b>Document</b>
A-Quotes	Inspirational quotes
B-Giraffe	Sticking your neck out award

### Installation instructions

This product was designed for the Windows operating system and includes Word files that will run under Windows 95/98 or greater. The CD will work on all PCs and most Macintosh systems. To run the files on the CD-ROM, take the following steps:

1. Insert the CD into your CD-ROM drive.
2. Double-click on the “My Computer” icon, next double-click on the CD drive icon.
3. Double-click on the files you wish to open.
4. Adapt the files by moving the cursor over the areas you wish to change, highlighting them, and typing in the new information using Microsoft Word.
5. To save a file to your facility’s system, click on “File” and then click on “Save As.” Select the location where you wish to save the file and then click on “Save.”
6. To print a document, click on “File” and then click on “Print.”

---

# Introduction

Although there may not be a quick fix to the nursing shortage, as a nursing leader you can stop the revolving door and retain your top talent.

Nursing turnover can cost as much as 6% of a hospital's operating budget. Thus, organizations are feeling mounting pressure to retain their nursing staff.

But in a healthcare environment of ever-increasing difficulties ranging from more acute patients to diminishing reimbursement, where nurses report being busier and more stressed than ever before, how can organizations keep nurses happy, engaged, and most important, retained at their facility?

Research has shown that nurses who feel valued, appreciated, and respected—and who enjoy professional communication and working relationships—will stay at an organization and remain engaged in their profession. And there is evidence linking the highest nursing excellence award—American Nurses Credentialing Center Magnet Recognition Program® designation—to increased retention rates (Aiken 2002). Although a culture of nursing excellence is valuable to keeping nurses at the bedside, managers also play a key role in creating a culture where nurses want to stay, as well as building relationships where nurses feel important and vital to the team. Recognizing and rewarding nurses does not have to be complicated, time-consuming,

## Introduction

or expensive. And it just got easier with this book, which offers quick and simple tips to show your nurses you value them. By learning straightforward ways to promote nursing excellence, create dynamic and supportive teams, and encourage professional development, you will foster an environment where nurses feel important and appreciated every day.

Whether you're looking for unique ways to say thank you or opportunities for some fun, keep this book on your desk and refer to it for practical tips and tools you can use every day. And for quick, inspiring ways to recognize nurses, flip through the "proven pearls," a selection of best practices from your peers.

*"Human beings need to be recognized and rewarded for special efforts. You don't even have to give them much. What they want is tangible proof that you really do care about the job they're doing. The reward is really just a symbol of that."*

—Tom Cash, senior vice president for American Express

## Reference

---

Aiken, L.H. (2002). "Superior outcomes for magnet hospitals: The evidence base." In M.L. McClure & A.S. Hinshaw (Eds.), *Magnet Hospitals Revisited: Attraction and Retention of Professional Nurses*. Washington, DC: American Nurses Publishing.

# Part 1

*Free and  
budget-friendly  
rewards*







## Celebrate Nurses without Breaking the Bank

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the participant will be able to:

- Identify budget-friendly ways to reward staff nurses
- Demonstrate how to build relationships with other organizational departments
- Identify Web sites that offer personalized gifts
- Recognize ways to celebrate Nurses Week

### On-the-Spot Recognition

Recognizing and rewarding nurses should not be a once-a-year event during Nurses Week; it should be a part of every unit's culture. But don't fret about stretching your department's meager budget. Many nurses enjoy receiving small gifts such as movie tickets, scented lotions, or gift certificates. Because whether you are showing recognition to nurses in your department or building relationships with other departments, recognition can be cost effective.

This chapter discusses low-cost strategies to help you celebrate your nurses' success, thank them for a job well done, or just let them know you're thinking about them.



### ***Post-it power***

Post-it notes are an indispensable tool for managers, allowing you to leave quick reminders for yourself or notes for others. Use the same tactic to leave a note that says something nice. Post-it notes are available in an array of designs to fit many personalities and interests. What do your employees like? Find Post-it notes that feature dogs, kittens, cooking, or sailing, or customize your own (check out Vista Print at [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com)), and then leave your employees a note thanking them, telling them you noticed they did a good job, or simply letting them know you're glad they're on your team.

You can also personalize Post-it notes (check out Personalization Mall at [www.personalizationmall.com](http://www.personalizationmall.com)) with a nurse's name or a simple inscription saying something like "Great work!" Write a quick note of praise to the employee on the top sheet and then place the entire stack in the employee's mailbox or on his or her desk. Every time the employee uses those notes, he or she will remember your thank you and will know that you appreciate him or her.

### ***Proven Pearls***

---

We are starting a banner that will be placed in the cafeteria. Anyone can write a little note on theme-shaped Post-it notes to recognize someone who did something positive on the unit or anywhere in the hospital; they can then place the note on the banner. Every quarter we plan to remove the notes and change the theme. The Post-it notes will be passed out to that employee's supervisor to be placed in a thank you card and given back to the employee.

—Carolee Hager, RNC, staff education coordinator at Pratt Regional Medical Center in Pratt, KS

### ***Sugar magic***

It's easy to make people smile if you give them treats. But don't just bring in a box of doughnuts—personalizing the treat makes it meaningful and memorable. Take a look at the following tips, some of which you can prepare in advance so you are ready whenever a member of your team goes above and beyond:

- Attach a handwritten thank you note to a basket filled with candy bars. The recipient can share the treats and the note can be posted for everyone to appreciate.
- Give a roll of Life Savers candy to a staff member who comes in to work an extra shift, and tell the staff member he or she is a “lifesaver.”
- Provide a Nestlé Crunch bar to a nurse who went above and beyond his or her usual duties, along with a note saying “Thanks for helping out in a crunch!”
- Place a bunch of bananas (and other assorted fruit) in the staff break room at the start of each shift with a note saying “You are a great bunch to work with!”
- Recognize nurse involvement in interdisciplinary patient-centered organizational committees by holding a pizza party for the unit.

## *Proven Pearls*

---

During Medical-Surgical Nurses Week we celebrate every day with pizza, ice cream sundaes, a home-cooked buffet, and goodie bags. I also have a \$25 budget line for each nurse, so I have around a \$500–\$800 budget that I can do what I want with. But our nurses want a luncheon, so that's what we use the money for. During the luncheon we give away humorous awards, such as who had the most falls, and the nurse is presented with a picture of herself falling.

—Beth Kessler, RN, director of a med-surg unit at  
Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network in Allentown, PA

### ***Points mean prizes***

A program that takes a little more effort to put together, but can pay huge dividends, is a recognition and reward point system. You can create a simple one among the staff on your unit, or work with the organization as a whole to create a more elaborate program that can be used across the facility. Points can be awarded for behavior such as helping out in a staffing emergency or for helping out, without being asked, a new staff member who is still getting used to your unit. Points could also be tied into professional development, such as rewards for passing certification or just for bringing in an evidence-based article the person found interesting and sharing it with colleagues.

Whatever the criteria, the points must be tied to rewards, which can be as simple or elaborate as you want. If the point system is just on your unit, consider using buttons or marbles as points, and having rewards be relevant to your unit, such as having you cover their shift for a half hour so they can take a break or a subscription to a nursing journal covering your speciality.

If the point system is more elaborate, consider having nurses save points to cash in for awards such as cafeteria coupons or certificates for a local spa. Consider these best practices:

- Make the point system an on-the-spot recognition program in which nurses can earn points for specific behaviors and can reward each other points for jobs well done or for helping each other out
- Consider options to earn points for performance improvement initiatives or professional development achievements, which can be cashed in for gift cards to local merchants, restaurants, or theaters
- Keep a stash of \$5 gift cards on hand to reward floating nurses who may not be part of the point program

### *Proven Pearls*

---

We are working on a point system where [employees] can earn points for doing good things such as working an extra shift, helping out in another unit, or floating without complaint. These bonus points can be turned in for items they can order from a book. Or, they can save up points to attend a national seminar in their specialty.

—Carolee Hager, RNC, staff education coordinator at Pratt Regional Medical Center in Pratt, KS

We have a system of acknowledging colleagues and coworkers for acts of kindness and helpfulness by giving a “value check,” which is a 3 x 7 piece of blue paper with room to write in comments and commendations. Associates can then collect value checks and cash them in for items such as \$5 restaurant cards, \$5 department store cards, movie tickets, lunch bags, and so forth. When an employee receives a value check, it is noted in the employee’s files.

—Cecilia Lanuto, RN, BSN, clinical educator at Nemour’s Children’s Clinic in Orlando, FL

### Build Collegial Relationships

Working in a collegial environment is a key part of creating a positive workplace and improving retention, and small rewards or group activities help foster relationships.

Focus on building relationships between your unit and other departments with whom you work or interact:

- Have your team create a basket filled with goodies for another department in the hospital to show your appreciation for something they did. Have your entire staff sign a card and write their comments of appreciation. Some items you can include in the basket are microwave popcorn, pretzels, crackers, mini cans of soda, and aspirin. Benefits from this one act of kindness may include increased patience and respect among departments, along with an improved work relationship.
- Develop rapport among departments and build morale among the staff with a cookie exchange. Choose two or three departments your unit interacts with regularly and designate a day to exchange cookies.

### *Proven Pearls*

---

We have placed baskets of blank praise cards, thank you cards, congratulation cards, and so forth in every unit of the hospital for peers, as well as patients, to send a note to an employee who was [seen] doing something praiseworthy.

—Carolee Hager, RNC, staff education coordinator at Pratt Regional Medical Center in Pratt, KS

To foster team spirit on your unit, purchase a large puzzle and give each nurse one piece of the puzzle during a meeting or place the puzzle piece in his or her mailbox. Explain that you need everyone's participation to symbolize the team fitting together. Have a designated place for the staff to begin working on the puzzle until it's completed. When it's completed hold an ice cream social in appreciation for everyone's contribution—provide the ice cream and have staff bring in their favorite toppings to create an ice cream buffet.



Glue the puzzle together and hang it in the unit as a reminder that the team cannot work together without everyone's input.

Build collegiality on the unit by being proud of its members. Have your staff smile for the camera and ask someone who is creative or is an amateur photographer to take candid digital photos of the staff (be careful to avoid patient faces as your staff interacts with them). Print a mix of 8 inch x 10 inch and 11 inch x 14 inch photos and purchase an assortment of frames that complement the photos. Hang the photos on a wall in your department so they are easily visible to the staff and patients. You want your patients and visitors to know that this is a great place to work, and you want potential employees to know you have a team that celebrates each other.

## *Proven Pearls*

---

As an ANCC Magnet Recognition Program® (MRP) recipient in 2006, the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System in Richmond, VA, MRP champions committee wanted to educate the organization about how staff nurses exemplify the 14 Forces of Magnetism. A 10-minute video that could be shown throughout the organization was the answer.

The MRP champions found an internal videographer who understood our MRP culture and visited nursing units to film and interview staff nurses. Copies of the video are available on all nursing units for review, and they're used during nursing orientation to help newly hired nurses understand our MRP culture. The video is also given to local recruiters who are speaking with student nurses interested in coming to work for the organization.

**—Rebecca Shermer, RNC, MS, clinical nurse IV, labor and delivery, and MRP champion at Virginia Commonwealth University Health System in Richmond, VA**

### ***Holiday spirit***

The holidays are a time when people want to be with their families, so help them feel like their work family is important too. Sign and bake for the holidays:

- Personally sign cards during the holidays. Check outlet stores for boxed cards that are inexpensive, and allow enough time to sign each card and to write an employee name on each envelope.
- Once you are done signing the holiday cards, tie candy canes to the outside of the card with a red or green ribbon. Candy canes are available in fun and tasty flavors, such as cherry and raspberry. You can also tape Almond Joy fun-size bars to the envelope and write inside the card, “Joy to you and your family this holiday season.”
- Bake or purchase loaves of bread, such as poppy seed, banana, pumpkin, or zucchini, to bring in during each shift and type the recipe on cardstock to

give each nurse. This idea also works well for batches of cookies, muffins, or candy.

- Fill a holiday-themed jar with candy for a perfect gift!

### ***Fun money***

Many nurses will appreciate rewards where they can feel it most: in their wallet. Monetary recognition can take many shapes:

- Give a monetary bonus for achieving a specific percentile rank in your patient satisfaction scores.
- Give a monetary payout based on employees' individual pay scale when the organization meets its operating budget.
- Give a monetary incentive for reaching goals in the employee wellness program. (If your organization doesn't have a wellness program, have your nurses start one.)
- Give a monetary incentive for perfect attendance.

Monetary rewards don't only have to be about cold, hard cash. The payment could be in the form of a trip to an educational seminar or a bonus day or two of earned time off.

## ***Proven Pearls***

---

We have a perfect attendance program that gives all nursing and non-nursing staff members an opportunity to win monetary awards on a quarterly and annual basis for no missed days of scheduled work.

—Marian A. White, RN, MSN, BC, Magnet Recognition Program® project coordinator  
at Memorial Hospital in Belleville, IL



### *Proven Pearls*

---

We started a campaign where if you recruit a nurse, pharmacist, physical therapist, or physician you will receive \$1/hour bonus pay for every hour you work, for up to two years, as long as that person remains on staff. So, if you recruited someone, you will work hard to keep him or her happy so that he or she will stay.

—Carolee Hager, RNC, staff education coordinator at Pratt Regional Medical Center in Pratt, KS

#### ***Fun and games***

Establish an informal reward that can be handed out every month. For example, try a “sticking your neck out” award and give a nurse a toy giraffe for going beyond his or her usual job duties. To avoid it becoming a popularity contest, set some ground rules (e.g., no one can win more than two times per year). Be creative! A model brain could represent a “quick thinking” award; a pouch of toy gold coins can represent “you’re a treasure”; and play money could represent “your actions are worth a million.”



**NOTE:** *Make this reward into a certificate (see the CD-ROM) with fun clipart!*

Give the stamp of approval. Create a passport from construction paper and hand out to each nurse. Nurses can get each page of the passport stamped (use a rubber stamp or stickers) by correctly answering questions regarding the unit’s care-delivery model, a policy such as fall prevention, or how the unit exemplifies quality care. Once nurses receive 10 stamps, reward them with gift cards such as a free car wash.

## *Proven Pearls*

---

We have a Friend of Nursing Gala that's just like the Academy Awards. Nurses are nominated and then interviewed, and winners receive monetary prizes from donors and grants. Our unit won \$2,000, and we used that money to send nurses to conferences that cost less than \$100; we also paid for nurses to join professional organizations. This award gave our staff an incentive to want to get more rewards.

—Beth Kessler, RN, director on the med-surg unit at  
Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network in Allentown, PA

### **RETENTION GEM: CASE STUDY**

---

#### **The Academy Awards for Nursing Excellence**

On every ordinary day, nurses perform extraordinary service. The CNO of Grady Health System in Atlanta wanted to recognize nurses for this achievement, so Rhonda Scott, PhD, RN, created a five-star event—the Academy Awards for Nursing Excellence—to celebrate staff nurses' outstanding performance and practice.

Grady Health has been working toward creating an environment that reflects the 14 Forces of Magnetism by implementing a shared governance model, improving the image of nursing, and focusing on nurse-to-patient ratios. “We are doing all the quality expectations that go along with having an ANCC Magnet [Recognition Program® status] environment, and with this I wanted to make sure we recognized our nurses,” says Scott. “We put a lot of reward and recognition activities in place with our Critical Care Nurse of the Year, Perinatal Nurse of the Quarter, and DAISY (Diseases Attacking the Immune System) Award, but our most anticipated event is our Academy Awards for Nursing Excellence.”

**RETENTION GEM: CASE STUDY**

**Nominating the champions**

Grady Health is a public institution, so funds for the recognition awards were raised and donated through the hospital’s foundation. In-house marketing involved save-the-date cards, flyers, posters, and brochures that were distributed throughout the hospital and to the foundation’s contact list to find sponsors.

Scott created nomination forms that were distributed on every unit and anyone at Grady could nominate a staff nurse, even family members. The forms asked four questions:

1. What is the nurse’s role at Grady?
2. Tell us why you think this nurse role-models nursing excellence.
3. What has this nurse done to contribute to the nursing profession (e.g., involvement in associations, national organizations, or local chapters)?
4. What else about this nurse makes him or her excellent? (For example, one nurse at Grady taught CPR to a Boy Scout group.)

Nurses could be nominated in several categories:

- LPN
- APN
- Community Service
- Education and Teaching
- Nursing Leadership
- Clinical Care

Awards were also given to nurses with outstanding contributions in ambulatory, critical care, emergency, long-term care, med-surg, oncology, perinatal, perioperative, psychiatric/mental health, and surgical areas.

## RETENTION GEM: CASE STUDY

### Tallying the votes

More than 200 nominations were received and distributed to 10 judges for review. The judges included a pharmacist, a nutritionist, a case management social worker, unit directors, and a businessperson from the community who was familiar with Grady nurses. Nominees' names were obscured on the forms so that the judges did not know who they were reading about, and each of the four answers from the preceding questions was individually scored. Each nominee had to be a staff nurse at Grady for two years and a full-time employee in good standing for his or her nomination to be reviewed.

Scott wanted an objective tallying of the votes, so she sent the scores to an accounting firm to be totaled. "I always want our nurses to be able to trust the integrity of this program and really believe that everyone has a chance of winning based on what they bring to the table in terms of excellence," she says. The accounting firm certified the top three finalists and the winner in each category. Out of 239 nominations, the list was narrowed to 37 finalists. Scott knew who the three finalists were for each category, so she filmed them working and took a picture for the program booklet.

### Rolling out the red carpet

The 37 finalists and their guests had free admission to the awards ceremony at The Four Seasons Atlanta Hotel, whereas other attendees paid \$100 for their tickets. Scott had hoped that 250 people would attend, but the event was so popular that almost 300 people attended. "A few of our physicians even wrote checks for \$1,000 and told me to send 10 nurses from their unit to the awards ceremony," says Scott.

The finalists and their guests enjoyed a cocktail hour until the ballroom doors opened for the finalists to triumphantly parade in, accompanied by Tina Turner's song "Simply the Best." The event was a glittering occasion, and guests wore formal attire, which perfectly suited the red carpet that was rolled out in the ballroom and the lavish five-course

### RETENTION GEM: CASE STUDY

meal. After dinner, the finalists were escorted down the red carpet by tuxedo-dressed chief nurses from each unit the finalist represented. “I told Dr. Scott that I have been a nurse at Grady since 1968, and I don’t ever remember nursing being honored,” says Angelle Vuchetich, RN, CANP, manager of the infectious disease program, and winner for outstanding contributions in advanced practice nursing. “Being honored as a Grady nurse is exciting!”

The event also featured a video of all 37 finalists stating why they enjoy being a nurse at Grady, as well as a slide show of the nurses in their work environment. Following a drum roll, Scott opened the sealed envelopes where the winners’ names had been written in gold ink.

“When we announced the critical care winner she began to hyperventilate and couldn’t get out of her chair to come on stage,” says Scott. “I thought she was going to pass out!” The overall winners of each category received a personalized glass trophy, flowers, and \$500, which came from the funds that were raised. The runners-up received a plaque and a bouquet of flowers. Scott had each winner make a speech and the critical care winner could hardly speak because she was emotional, says Scott. “She had the whole room in tears; the overall speeches were priceless.” After the awards ceremony, everyone took to the dance floor until midnight when the ballroom doors closed.

*Source: HCPro’s Advisor to the ANCC Magnet Recognition Program®, 2007.*

## Nurses Week Celebrations

For many nurses, Nurses Week is the highlight of their year. Many feel it is the one time of year they are confident of being appreciated and recognized for their hard work. As this book discusses, retention activities should be conducted year round

and nurses should frequently hear they are appreciated and recognized. But that doesn't mean you can forget about Nurses Week! This is still a very special week, and the time of year you need to put even more thought into nurse recognition:

- Have a craft fair where nurses can bring in quilts, scrapbooking pages, jewelry, and so on for staff to purchase.
- Serve ice cream during lunch breaks.
- Invite a guest speaker to discuss professional advancement or quality care.
- Serve breakfast, lunch, or dinner for each shift.
- Distribute a bag of popcorn to every nurse.
- Have a potluck where nurses bring in their favorite dish.
- Bring a massage specialist in for a few hours and give each nurse 15 or more minutes for a massage.
- Hand out gifts such as totes, thermal lunch bags, or water bottles.
- Create T-shirts with the hospital's logo or fun nurse sayings (check out Cafe Press at [www.cafepress.com/nursing](http://www.cafepress.com/nursing)).
- Make a DVD of your staff in action by making a slide show from digital photos. Ask the staff to e-mail you digital pictures of their peers (minus the patients) and then e-mail the photos to your IT department. Choose songs for background music and run the slide show during Nurses Week.
- Increase the visibility of nursing and nurses in your community by talking with local media.

### *Proven Pearls*

---

We discovered that nurses wanted the chance to celebrate and recognize another unit in the hospital, so each unit was given a different unit to highlight during Nurses Week. They took pictures, interviewed nurses, gathered fun statistics (e.g., number of patients treated, longevity of nurses, and total years of experience), and with this they each made trifold posters. On Wednesday of Nurses Week, we displayed all of these posters in our auditorium and invited everyone to come down and look at them. The week after Nurses Week we displayed the posters in our main lobby. A lot of pride went into these posters, and it gave nurses an opportunity to go out and learn something about another unit.

**—Gina Boring, MSN, RN, NE-BC, Magnet Recognition Program® director  
at Aultman Health Foundation in Canton, OH**

During Nurses Week, we celebrate excellence in direct patient care with an award (see Figure 1.1). Our quality of work-life council devised the award for all nurses at Fairview Ridges Hospital to recognize and award their professional behaviors and achievements. All staff nurses must be nominated by a peer and meet specific criteria, and the council reads the nominations and selects the winners (all nominees' names are blinded during the selection process). The winners are announced during Nurses Week, and they receive the opportunity to attend a national conference of their choice. And due to the high number of nominees, we have one nurse winner per cluster of units (i.e., critical care cluster, medical-surgical cluster, etc.), so we end up with eight nurses attending a national conference.

**—Sue Miller, RN, MS, CNABC, director of professional practice, applied research,  
and innovation at Fairview Ridges Hospital in Burnsville, MN.**

Figure 1.1

**Excellence in Direct-Patient Care Award**

**Name of care provider:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Job class:** \_\_\_\_\_

The above named person is being nominated for the Excellence in Direct-Patient Care Award for the \_\_\_\_\_ dept. of [insert hospital]. Please provide detailed examples that describe how this individual meets the criteria for each category. Comments are required for each section.

**Effectively manages time**

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Fosters teamwork**

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Works to build a wide knowledge base**

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Takes a positive “can do” attitude**

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Figure 1.1

**Excellence in Direct-Patient Care Award (cont.)**

**Demonstrates problem-solving skills**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Demonstrates the importance of a diverse approach to patient care**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Provides consistent and exceptional patient and family education:**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Demonstrates critical thinking**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Demonstrates understanding of the nurse's role as a patient advocate**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 1.1

**Excellence in Direct-Patient Care Award (cont.)**

**Demonstrates ability to coordinate care for patients**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This employee has no performance problems or work-rule violations.

Manager's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff member's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*Source: Sue Miller, RN, MS, CNABC, director of professional practice, applied research, and innovation at Fairview Ridges Hospital in Burnsville, MN. Used with permission.*

### **Personalize Gifts and Party Favors**

During Nurses Week and beyond, when it's time to celebrate nursing excellence with gift certificates, lapel pins, or fun gifts such as a stethoscope pin, the gift will mean even more if it's personalized, and there are many helpful Web sites where you can personalize all your nursing needs. And don't forget about party celebrations for birthdays or for Nurses Week where you will need themed items and prizes.

The following Web sites offer personalized gifts, party favors, and stress relievers.

#### **Baudville ([www.baudville.com](http://www.baudville.com))**

Let your nurses know they are appreciated with a variety of sizes and styles of lanyards, certificates, stickers, key chains, personalized greeting cards, tote bags, lapel pins, and much more. And don't forget to sign up for Baudville's free retention tips e-newsletter.

#### **Positive Promotions ([www.positivepromotions.com](http://www.positivepromotions.com))**

For those times when you want to give unique rewards, Positive Promotions has stethoscope lapel pins, badge holders that say "Nurses touching lives one person at a time," and buttons that say "Committed to excellence," along with gifts you can personalize.

#### **Select-A-Gift ([www.selectagift.com](http://www.selectagift.com))**

If you want to start a point system for perfect attendance or professional development, use Select-A-Gift's point system and give nurses the opportunity to choose their own prize. Select-A-Gift's points are valued at 50 cents each, so if a nurse earns 5,000 points, it equals \$25 that he or she can redeem online.

**Fun Express ([www.funexpress.com](http://www.funexpress.com))**

Celebrating nurses' birthdays or throwing a themed party for appreciation just became more exciting with Fun Express, because you can find party decorations to go along with the theme, as well as party favors.

**Trainers Warehouse ([www.trainerswarehouse.com](http://www.trainerswarehouse.com))**

Trainers Warehouse will help you ease new-nurse jitters with ice breaker games, or give nurses a way to relieve stress with unique stress toys in a variety of shapes, including a star, hot potato, and light bulb.

**Branders ([www.branders.com](http://www.branders.com))**

Everything you want to personalize for nurses is just a click away, from pens, stress balls, and hats to apparel, Post-it notes, mouse pads, and much more.

**Identity Links ([www.identity-links.com](http://www.identity-links.com))**

If you want a site that specializes in promotional nurse-specific rewards, Identity Links is your go-to place, offering ambulance stress relievers, nurse memo holders, heart-shaped pedometers, and many more nurse-specific ideas. Your nurses will be sure to thank you.

**Motivators ([www.motivators.com/Promotional-NursesWeek-Products-61.html](http://www.motivators.com/Promotional-NursesWeek-Products-61.html))**

Prepare for Nurses Week with these nursing promotional items. Whether you choose the chocolates, nurse business card sculpture, or relaxation aromatherapy kit, this site is a great way to celebrate nurses.

### RETENTION GEM: BUDGET-FRIENDLY GIFTS

Twenty budget-friendly gifts for any occasion:

- Pocket or wall calendar
- \$5 gift certificate to the hospital gift shop
- Coupon for a free ice cream in the cafeteria
- Potted plant
- Ball cap for a local sports team
- Coffee mug
- Logo pens
- Candle
- Magnets for the refrigerator
- Nurse-themed book or bookmark
- Keychain
- Scented soap, lotion, or bubble bath
- Stationery
- Homemade cookies
- Microwave popcorn
- Disposable camera with a photo album
- Gourmet nuts
- Journal
- Address book
- Gas card