
Leadership Academy Reflections

By LTC (ret) Jim Reed, DNP, MSN, CRNA; 2019 Leadership Academy Graduate

As a class we voted on who would be giving this speech at Convention. There were seventeen participants in the Leadership Academy, sixteen women and one man; I don't know about you, but I believe I've been hoodwinked. Nursing is after all, like a team sport, and my teammates felt it would help me to have an additional opportunity to excel. Or perhaps, because I had my own room for all three events, this speech might be the payback.

I know I can speak for the entire group in thanking Mary Graff for her mentorship and being an outstanding example of what a nurse leader is throughout this entire endeavor. Our state, this association, and our class were fortunate to have her with us. No one is more credible and passionate about nursing advocacy than Mary.

During the last few months we enjoyed each other's company while learning and honing our leadership skills in Wrightsville Beach, Greensboro, and in Chapel Hill. We came from all over our state. Our group is made up of Staff Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Nurse Managers, Case Managers, Chief Nursing Officers, Nurse Anesthetists, and Chief Nurse Anesthetists. Along the way we have become friends and respected colleagues. We are certain these friendships will be long lasting.

Collectively, we have practiced nursing for nearly 300 years. It is safe to say we have cared for tens of thousands of patients over the course of our careers. With that experience an indomitable spirit has come forth in each of us and we will positively impact those we work with and in our communities. We are confident and empowered to move our profession

forward by force multiplication. We are justified and our cause is righteous. We are motivated to do the hard right over the easy wrong. Our focus is in the interests of those whom we care for and those that rely upon us every day. We know the challenges of the day are significant: a diverse range of problems from opioid addiction, disease prevention, to rising healthcare costs. We are up to the task and boldly say we are the solution.

Recognizing that we are all leaders in our respective fields, the Leadership Academy has helped us to develop, perfect, and hone those skills to be even more effective. The fruits of these labors will be seen in our workplaces and beyond. Therefore, the effort is worthwhile. Among this group, as in past Leadership Academy classes, are future elected public servants, chief nursing officers, board members, and other positions of influence. The Leadership Academy represents an investment in ourselves and we are certain that it will pay dividends to our profession, our patients, and the people of this state.

Nurses by our very nature, are about action. Clearly, as the most respected profession in America people recognize that. We are doers in one of the most active and complex industries ever conceived. On that note, I will leave you with a lesson taught to me when I was a young Second Lieutenant working the surgical trauma intensive care unit at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas circa 1993. An outstanding nurse and my mentor, whose name was Jim Owen, told me that I should remember two things for success in the unit. First, nurse is a verb. Second, Versed works good. ■

