



Nurses: A Cut Above the Rest

Banding together for the 2013 Rose Parade

by Geneviève M. Clavreul, RN, Ph.D.

The Rose Parade holds a special place in the hearts and minds of many Southern Californians, especially those who call Pasadena their home. Whole families, companies and communities band together to raise money for their float of choice, and many others volunteer an untold number of hours helping decorate them.

These volunteers share in a unique experience and often return year after year to be part of the frenzy. They can also attest to the sheer feat it is to pull off such a monumental task, where collaboration and cooperation are essential to bring the float to completion. Now, come 2013, nurses and their supporters will join the ranks of volunteers before them and watch with pride as their own float graces Colorado Boulevard during the 124th Annual Rose Parade.

The Bloom of an Idea

I first learned of Flowers 4 the Float while attending a California Board of Registered Nursing meeting in Bakersfield. My interest as a writer was immediately piqued, and it wasn't long before I began my research for this column, starting with: How did a float honoring nurses come to be entered?

It all began with an idea. And Sally Bixby, RN, CNOR and director of surgical services at City of Hope, who had just been elected president of the 2013 Pasadena Tournament of Roses, was the woman behind it. With this election, Bixby became only the second woman to hold this honor, and she'll be the first RN.

As the notion to have a float to honor nurses began to germinate, it eventually led to the "planting" of Bare Root, Inc., a nonprofit corporation formed to raise funds to design and build the nurses' float. Thus, plans for Flowers 4 the Float began to flourish.

I decided to share their exploits with my readership for a couple reasons. First, because I understand from prior experience what a monumental and singular act these nurses are attempting. Second, I also know how passive and thrifty nurses can be when asked to support causes. When I wrote a column last year on the nurses elected to political office, most shared that their peers were the last to step up with financial contributions; and when they did, their contributions were usually very small in relationship to those contributed by the general public.

Planting the Seed

As you might remember, I'm a mother of four: two daughters and two sons. My eldest, until just a few years ago, worked in the entertainment industry, generally in a support capacity, and through that she got involved with the Pasadena Jaycees, a civic-minded group that at one time claimed 500 members and was one of the largest chapters in the country. During her tenure as a board member, their chapter joined forces with a sister chapter in Kasukabe, Japan, to enter, raise money for, design and have a float in the Rose Parade. So began two years of cajoling, fundraising and planning, all of which en-

countered hurdles. But when all was said and done, the elation and jubilation that morning when the the Pasadena Jaycees' float rolled into its appointed spot for the 105th Annual Rose Parade was indescribable.

It costs a lot to have a float in the Rose Parade; and the cost isn't only of monetary means, but of human capital as well. The Jaycees, like our intrepid band of nurses, made the bold decision to take the helm of this float-building experience. My daughter will be the first to admit that the Jaycees got a late start on their float. After deciding to submit their request at nearly the last possible moment, they had just over one year to do all the work, including fundraising, but they were young and full of vim and verve and thus attacked the problem with fearlessness.

Their plans were simple enough: They had sponsors whose money allowed the Jaycees to have space for eight children on the float; they sold flower vials for a dollar each so both companies and individuals could contribute something very real to the float itself; and in true Jaycee tradition, they hosted several cocktail fundraisers to round out their efforts. Given the skills nurses use to do their job, our collective nursing body — with all our work, community and network connections — should be able to assist Bixby and Bare Root Inc. in raising the necessary financial and human capital needed to make the nurses' float a reality.

Helping It Grow

Yes, the actual parade is nearly two years away, but a great deal of work must be done upfront if the float is to become a reality. As I think of ways we can help, I'm reminded of the origins of the March of Dimes. FDR made a radio appeal asking everyone in the nation to contribute a dime to fight polio, and this effort helped launch one of our nation's most successful foundations. Imagine what just one dollar from every California RN and LVN could generate! (Hint: there are just over 350,000 active RNs, another 18,000 inactive RNs, and who knows how many LVNs.) Nurses could easily help make the float a reality, and then we can all share in the pride and joy of such a creative and singular way to recognize our profession. Here are some ways nurses can help make it happen:

Make a donation to Bare Roots, Inc. To learn more about who and what they are, I encourage you to visit their website at www.flowers4thefloat.org. You'll find a wealth of information, including a link to their Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages.

Invite your nursing colleagues and friends to become a fan on the Flowers 4 the Float Facebook page and other similar social network sites. You can find links to them, plus downloadable information, at www.flowers4thefloat.org.

If you're a member of a professional association, consider asking them to support the effort with a monetary donation.

For example, the California Nurse Practitioners and many chapters of the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses have already responded with financial donations.

Have a birthday or special event coming up? Ask the special people in your lives to make a donation in your name for the float.

Does your hospital have a nurse practice committee or similar nursing body? Consider asking the group's representative to approach the hospital administration about being a sponsor. This could be an excellent way for them to honor the nurses that work at their hospital, perhaps as an early celebration of Nurses' Week.

And, as I wrote earlier, the nurses' float doesn't just need financial capital; they'll also need human capital. Generally, one month before the Rose Parade volunteers are needed to help affix the nonperishable vegetation to the float. Then, just after Christmas, affixing all the perishable and live flowers begins. If you've never decorated a float for the Rose Parade before, I highly recommend that you consider doing so; it's a most memorable experience. You can find a list of tasks for which volunteers will be needed, including hosts for out-of-town nurses, at the Flowers 4 the Float website.

Watch It Blossom...Together

This can truly be an opportunity for nurses to shine and participate as a group. It can be a way that we honor fellow nurses; a way for members of the public to honor nurses in their lives; for hospitals to show appreciation for the nurses that make up their health care teams; for physicians to thank the nurses who allow them to provide care to their patients; and so forth. It can also be an opportunity to highlight not just nurses in America, but nurses the world over. The Rose Parade attracts an untold number of international visitors, and what a great opportunity this could be for our international sisters and brothers to support the float.

Let me share something that my friend, Robert, said to me when I picked his brain for background information on the Rose Parade. His father was Victor Ell, who was a longtime member of the Tournament of Roses Association, and he said a float dedicated and organized by nurses was a perfect fit since nurses have jobs that require nurturing and a great deal of TLC toward patients. And the float, with its all-organic materials and living flowers, need those same things in order to thrive and flourish.

I know what I'll be doing to help make the float a reality. And I know where I'll be the weeks leading up to the 2013 Rose Parade. What about you? 



Genevieve M. Clavreul RN, Ph.D., is a healthcare management consultant who has experience as a director of nursing and as a lecturer of hospital and nursing management. She can be reached at: Solutions Outside the Box; PO Box 867, Pasadena, CA, 9102-2867; (626) 844-7812; gmc@solutionsoutsidethebox.net.