



**NURSE Mrs. Danna Knight, BSN, RN GIVES BACK TO HER COMMUNITY  
BY Merla Phillips, BSN, RN, CMC**

**“To whom much is given, much is required.”** This is the scripture that governs Mrs. Danna Knight’s life. On June 14, 2016 in attendance at the honors night program at the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, I was pleasantly surprised when the mistress of ceremony announced that there was a nurse who had a presentation, but needed to leave on time to get to work and was moved to an earlier time slot.

Up stepped this petite young lady to the podium and blew me away with her presentation. Mrs. Knight announced that she was giving five students who were matriculating in nursing \$1000 each and she would also give an additional thousand dollars to a young man for a total of \$6000. She reported that this money was from her own funds and she worked really hard to save this money.

I was awestruck and beaming with joy. I felt like a mother who was extremely proud of her child. Here was a young Nurse who evidently cared about her community. As she came off the stage, I greeted her with open arms. I did not know her, but what she had just done for our profession was noteworthy. This information had to be shared with her colleagues in the upcoming VISNA’s newsletter.

Contact was made with Mrs. Knight that night at work and this is a synopsis of my conversation with her the following day. Danna is a 2006 graduate of the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School. She attended the University of the Virgin Islands from 2006 to 2008 then transferred to InterAmericana University of Puerto Rico - Metro Campus from which she graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing.

In 2011, Mrs. Knight began her nursing career at Schneider Regional Medical Center as a Registered Nurse. She is presently assigned to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

According to Mrs. Knight on the tenth year anniversary of graduating from High School she felt a responsibility to give back to the students at her Alma Mater and to her community. She discussed this with her husband, who totally supported her. Originally she planned to give \$500 to five student, but did not think this was sufficient, therefore she decided to increase her donation to \$1000.

The applicants were required to write an essay “On their commitment in pursuing a career in the field of nursing”. She received eight applications and with the assistance of her husband, five students were chosen. They were Deshanna Maduro, Kayla Webster, Terika Creque, Graysel Stuart and Murielle Dodin. Danna also gave an additional \$1000 to Sherwin Williams a young man she knew since he was a young child. Mr. Williams is a well-known saxophone player and the brother of her classmate. Danna is highly impressed of the young man he has become and felt the need to assist him with his education.

Mrs. Knight, on behalf of the Virgin Islands State Nurses Association District 11, I would like to thank you for your generosity as you assist deserving students in their quest to become members of our noble profession – Nursing. We appreciate you and VISNA as well as the students you helped will never forget you. You are indeed special. Job well done!!!!

### STUDENTS IN THE BSN PROGRAM, U.V.I.



### Greetings from VISNA President Charlene Jones

I bring greetings to our valued VISNA members and friends throughout the Virgin Islands from the VISNA Board. I trust that your year has been going well and will continue to do so.

Last year we focused on Ethical Practice in nursing and the newly revised *Code of Ethics for nurses with Interpretive Statements*. This year's theme, "Culture of Safety - It Starts with You" should do much to help us refocus our attention on the ethical obligation the nurse has to prevent and manage medical errors and enhance nurses' wellbeing by improving workplace deficiencies. Patient care errors and adverse events which continue to threaten patient safety erode trust among the public who have placed us in the number one position as trustworthy professionals for the past 14 years. Nurses rank 5<sup>th</sup> fifth among all occupations for the highest rates of musculoskeletal injuries from manually lifting patients resulting in missed work days and loss of income.

You might ask what is a "culture of safety"? ANA describes it as "core values and behaviors resulting from a collective and sustained commitment by organizational leadership, managers and health care workers to emphasize safety over competing goals". It is call to action for nurses to better understand the culture of patient safety and to identify with greater clarity the unique contribution nurses can make in decreasing adverse events and nurse injuries, regardless of whether we work in clinical practice, academia, or policy arenas. Effective safety cultures have been described as those in which there is shared commitment to safety as the highest priority, *where engaging in safety-promoting behaviors is encouraged and reinforced by leaders and peers without shifting to blame, where there is transparency and accountability, and where near misses are valued as opportunities for learning and improvement*. When a healthy work environment is cultivated for nurses, the quality of the overall health care of patients/clients improves.

If we commit ourselves to this "culture of safety" we must focus our attention on

1. Implementing and following safe practice
2. Creating a reporting system that honors nurses' confidentiality
3. Continuously advocating for "no lift" work places
4. Disclosing the error to the patient when made.
5. And, reporting, to the appropriate person, nurses who commit unethical, unlawful, or incompetent acts.

It does truly start with each one of us.

On another note; I believe that nurses need to be more active in pursuing creative educational opportunities, facilitating change in health care delivery through various channels, achieving equal participation in all areas of clinical practice, exploring fundamental and current professional issues, mentoring new nurses to bridge the gap between nursing education and practice, and participating in a professional organization directed toward these goals.

To accomplish these ambitious goals, we need the continuous support of all VISNA members. Thank you for your advocacy, leadership, and commitment to advancing the quality of care, and look forward to your support of your professional association. Together, we can create a health care system that puts patients at the center of care in the VI and enhances collaboration, high-performance and positive outcomes.



## Guest Editorial

### PROFESSIONALISM

These days we often hear, discuss, belabor and lament how the current generation are no longer involved or committed to an organization or display those attributes of a “professional.”

Webster’s 9<sup>th</sup> new collegiate Dictionary defines Professionalism- “the conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or make a profession or professional person.” The acclaimed hallmark characteristics or attributes of the nursing profession are caring, compassion, competence, commitment and collaboration.

Why are we focused on new graduates, incoming students or colleagues with their seeming lack of interest to the nursing profession when near 90% of those nurses practicing today exhibit and often demonstrate and articulate a sense of apathy and lack of professional involvement?

The American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Nurses, Provision 6 reads: The nurse participates in establishing, maintaining and improving the healthcare environments and conditions of employment conducive to the provisions of quality healthcare and consistent with the values of the profession through individual and collective action. (The professional association is where your individual and collective action is facilitated.)

Our nursing community is not getting stronger. I am astonished by how much the Virgin Islands State Nurses Association (VISNA), the recognized Territorial voice of professional nursing has and accomplishes through a dedicated few (and often recycled) volunteer leaders.

“Responsibility does not only lie with those who have been elected or appointed to a particular job. It lies with each of us individually.” (Dalai Lama)

Your commitment and activism help (a) build membership; (b) increase the overall strength of our association and (c) the effectiveness of its voice.

VISNA is your professional voice and needs you to be heard. It pays to join your professional association.

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Verna Christian-Garcia, BSN,RN is former Executive Director, past president of VISNA and The Caribbean Nurses Organization (CNO) and contributing Editor, VISNA News.



Good evening Senator Vialet, Chair of the Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services, other Senators present, viewing and listening audience, and those present here tonight. My name is Charlene Jones and I am the President of the Virgin Islands State Nurses Association. I have been asked by Senator Vialet to testify on recent developments at the Juan F. Luis Hospital regarding the Hospitals Board of Directors' decisions as it pertains to personnel and the lack of leadership in the various Chief Officer positions.

Yes, some nurses are expressing that because of the recent changes by the Board in the hospital's leadership positions they are afraid of what might be coming next. Some have put off buying a house because they know not when CMS, lurking in the background, may be back. Rumors and melee are understandably affecting morale. Rumors, spread by special interests, and negative press are creating an uncomfortable, unstable environment and contributes to employees who feel that they are working in vain to fulfill their mandates.

At present there is no nurse representative to the Board leaving the nurses they feel, without any voice attentive to their needs. The Nursing Department's leadership position, Chief Nursing Officer (CNO), has been filled by Mrs. Jacinta Stephens, MSN, yet, there is a perception that due to how things have been progressing there is always a chance that that will change at a moment's notice; that it is only temporary. They feel that she and others placed in temporary positions will be there as placeholders and still more changes will be coming. They have expressed concerns that with each change in a management position they have to adjust to a management with new styles and this, in itself, can be very disruptive. This instability on the part of management, the lack of consistency and the questionable expertise of the Board members are all contributing to the low morale of the nurses. No matter how altruistic one may be, low morale takes its toll. And, while the CNO has told me there have been no resignations as a result of the present situation, this instability unfortunately, has some nurses weighing that possibility. They are not going to wait for the next shoe to fall; they are not robots, they have feelings and emotions, but they are afraid to speak up because they fear retribution.

The CNO, Ms. Stephens, is qualified for her position, she has the experience and education, she was the number two in the department and knows what is necessary to continue the good quality of care that is being provided at the Gov. Juan F. Luis Hospital. Nursing concerns are always patient safety and workplace safety. They know their job

and they are doing what they know to do and that is, focusing on patient care and safety. Hopefully, nothing will detract them from this focus. They are looking for leadership!

Concerns are not really on the middle management level, these nurses know what to do to continue what is necessary to fulfill the mandates of CMS and other regulatory bodies. It is a stable upper management that the staff needs to feel centered. There have been nine CNO (six since 2012) and ten CEOs in 25 years; this does not represent stability.

Nurses need to feel appreciated. Demeaning, veiled threats, as some have perceived, do nothing to advance the feeling that “we are all in this together”. Nurses cannot just be attuned to” nursing issues” alone as has been suggested in a recent memo. Health care influences all who are contributors to the system – upper management to front line employees.

As far as the Chief Executive Officer’s position, nurses have expressed that Mr. Okolo made people accountable for their actions. Since he has been gone some staff are again becoming lax in performing their jobs. In general, nurses reported to me that morale has deteriorated due to Mr. Okolo’s departure because they feel that he was in their corner as far as dealing with long standing issues and they saw movement towards improvement in these areas. They were aware that his addressing of some of these issues was also creating a degree of conflict with upper management, but they felt the positive outcomes on their behalf was worth it.

Attorney Evangelista’s appointment to temporarily fill the position of CEO and Human Resources Director along with his position as Hospital Counsel has given a sense of calm in the midst of the storm. But how can one person fully focus his attention on three different positions at the same time? It would be more advantageous to all to not only quickly fill these positions, but to fill them with competent individuals.

Politics needs to be removed from the health care arena. Nurses are concerned with how all this fanfare will affect how CMS views the hospital just as they were making great strides in their recovery and developing their strategic plan.

Rumors, rumors. Someone needs to take the initiative to sit with the nurses and all the employees at the Gov. Juan F. Luis Hospital and truthfully address the myriad of rumors floating around if they are truly interested in trying to get some degree of stability. Thank you.

STUDENTS IN THE ASN PROGRAM, U.V.I.



## NIGHTINGALE TRIBUTE 2016

*HYACINTH GEORGE, NAGIB  
MALEEK, ELLEN EMANUEL,  
GLORIA KILPATRICK, CHERYL  
HOLMBERG, ESTHER FRANCOIS,  
ALEXIA GIBSON*



When needed at the patient's  
side.....they were there  
Now at the Great Rewarder's side.....  
they are there

## DISTRICT NEWS

### VISNA DISTRICT 1

May 2016

The past year for District 1 has been very challenging. The executive board have been working very hard to get a slate together for election of new officers, due to the fact that all offices are up for new officers.

Nurses week started off with the usual Candle Light Service on the patio of the VICC. It was a wonderful service and the Pastor of Altona Baptist Church Pastor Will Woods delivered an inspiring service and concluded with the blessing of the hands of all the nurses.

There were educational sessions held during the week and gifts were given to the membership. Membership is increasing, with the new nurses showing interest in learning about the association. During the month of May we have signed up about 10 nurses, both new and nurses who were working for a while. Mrs. Marin Vice-president is doing a wonderful job getting the nurses to sign up for membership.

The call has gone out again for members to run for office with the hope of having a full slate for elections soon.

Four of our Nursing Scholarship recipient graduated this year with one being awarded and inducted into The Golden Key Honor society. Unfortunately, a Scholarship was not offered this year due to unforeseen circumstances.

As we go through these difficult days the leadership hopes to offer support and encouragement to the nurses as we continue to deliver excellent care to the patients and community that we serve.

Please like District 1 on Facebook at VISNA DISTRICT 1.

PLEASE CONTACT [kelleyCopleyRN@gmail.com](mailto:kelleyCopleyRN@gmail.com) for further information.

Evet Rivera RN  
President

# District 02 2016 Nurses Beach Picnic



## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION DISTRICT 11 RALLY

BY Merla Kimball,  
BSN, RN, CMC & Velma Freeman, MSN, RN

**Are you a member of your professional organization? More importantly are you active in your Nursing Association?** These are two questions being asked of our colleagues due to the apathy and lack of interest in Virgin Islands State Nursing Association (VISNA). Nurses only attend VISNA meeting when salaries are being discussed. Money is important, but it is not the only source of job satisfaction.

To encourage the nurse involvement in VISNA, a decision was made to have a Nurses Rally on April 19, 2016 to discuss the status of our association and to provide information of the status of Nursing in the Territory. Invitations were extended to all Registered Nurses on island.

A strong believer in the adage you don't know where you are going until you know where you came from, Ms. Verna Garcia, BSN, RN (Past President of VISNA) was asked to provide the history of VISNA.

Some of the highlights from her presentation were:

- VISNA should be the voice of professional nurses in the Virgin Islands.
- Virgin Islands Nurses Association (VINA) was established in 1949.
- 1952 the Nurses Code was formulated.
- 1954 V.I Code Bill No.37 established the V.I Nurses Act.
- 1958 Bill No. 682 allowed for high school students to receive nursing scholarships.
- 1965 was the endorsement of technical programs for associate and bachelor degrees. Nursing salaries also increased from \$4,000 to \$6, 500.
- 1967-1972 Act. No. 1440 supported VI Labor Law and allowed for the birth of the Collective Bargaining Union for Nurses.
- 1974 was the first contract between the VINA and the VI government. National Labor Relation Board was amended for nurses and hospital workers to negotiate for their wages.
- 1976 VINA filed a Letter of Incorporation and became a (non-profit) 501C organization. The Nurse Practice Act was also revised and the VI Board of Nurse Midwifery was removed from physician oversight.
- May 2002 St. Croix hosted the National Staff Nurse Caucus.

The status of the Board of Nurse Licensure should also be important to us as Nurses. Our difficulties with our renewal of licenses in December of 2016 can still be remembered; therefore Mrs. Cynthia Stapleton, RN, CNM, interim Director of the Board was invited to provide an update on the status of the Board. This is a synopsis of her report:

- She began by stating the mission of the Board of Nurse Licensures "Public Protection and Safety".
- She encouraged nurses to report unsafe acts to the board and stated it can be done anonymously.

- The Board's website is up and running and it offers a wide variety of information and access to documents. The website is [theVIBNL.org](http://theVIBNL.org). The telephone number is (340) 776-7397.
- The Board is working with National Council to enable nurses to renew their licenses online by December 2016.
- She spoke about some challenges this past year in getting RN licenses processed on time included Property and Procurement (P&P) not providing postage stamps on time. As a result, some staff members including herself bought stamps in order for nurses to receive their licenses on time.
- Another challenge was requesting that nurses bring in their tax clearance. In the past a stamp copy of the application receipt was accepted but it was changed to require the actual tax clearance letter.
- The Board is in need of members. The board needs 11 members and 6 members must be present in order to establish a quorum. Senator Kurt Vialet will submit new legislation to amend the number of members needed for the VI Board of Nurse Licensure from 11 members to 9 members. The composition of the Board will remain the same for inclusion of educators, LPNs, RNs, consumers and Nurse Midwives.
- Attorney Su-Layne walker is now on staff and has been extremely valuable.
- There are presently only three staff members and The Board is seeking funding through the legislature to hire another employee.
- Senator Vialet will hear testimony on a bill he is proposing to do background checks on all medical personnel prior to hiring them.
- The current office of The Board of Nurse Licensure is in disrepair. They have looked at two other locations but they were not feasible.
- Mrs. Stapleton is on a contract which began January 1, 2016 and is in the process of hiring an Executive Director for the Board of Nurse Licensure.

Next on the program was Ms. Charlene Jones, President of the State Chapter of VISNA. She highlighted some of her accomplishments and her goals for VISNA.

- Mrs. Jones, RN reminded nurses that the Code of Ethics guides nursing practice wherever nurses are employed.
- One of her goals was to establish a database for nurses in the Virgin Islands which was completed but there has been a challenge has been in keeping the database up to date.
- She has requested help from nurses who are familiar with social media to include Instagram and blogging.
- Another goal was re-establishing contact with nursing students at the University of the Virgin Islands and it was also accomplished. She met with seniors last year and invited them to become members of their professional organization once they become nurses. She is scheduled extend the same invitation to the University of the Virgin Islands (Nursing) Class of 2016.
- She stressed the importance of having an election of new officers because many of the present officers and board member's terms have expired.
- She has attempted to have an insurance company offer malpractice insurance for nurse in the territory but was

unsuccessful. Currently only nurses who are employed by the Government of the Virgin Islands are covered through the government's malpractice insurance.

- The American Nurses Association (ANA) took a poll and has endorsed Hillary Clinton for President of the United States.
- New member can join ANA by registering online at ANA.org.
- Retired members who are unlicensed cannot be a member of ANA but they can be members of VISNA.
- Nurse license plates will soon be available for purchase.
- She would like to see a bill pass through the VI Legislature addressing "Safe Staffing for Nurses" and "No Lifting".

As President of District 11 of VISNA, I then provided an update on the District.

- The need for an election was reiterated because officers have been serving since 2010.
- District 11 is presently without a Vice President and a Secretary.
- The function of VISNA is to provide networking, education opportunities, and access to a mentor, mentoring, a forum for how to improve the nursing profession, access to publications, annual conventions and unity (Nurses speak in one voice), and assist with personal and professional growth, career assistance, support and lobbyist.
- Nurse Managers were encouraged to be considerate to nurses in scheduling them around events that may be important to the nurse.

#### Highlights of accomplishments

- Adopting a family for Christmas and providing children with gifts
- Nurses were sent off island to conferences.
- Scholarships were given to high school students who planned to major in Nursing. Students were required to write an essay on "why he/she were interested in becoming a Nurse".
- Retirement breakfasts were held for retiring nurses.
- VISNA purchased fruit baskets for retired nurses and nurses who were honored and ads were also purchased for their booklets.
- District 11 members marched with nurses on St. Croix and St. Thomas in support of the LPNs who were fired at the Juan Luis Hospital on St. Croix.

#### Needs

Nurses were encouraged to give back to the community, by volunteering their services at Health Fairs, Soup kitchens, American Red Cross etc.

- Outreach in the schools to encourage students to major in Nursing.

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Mrs. Charlene White-Hewitt, RN, treasurer of District 11, provided attendees with the Treasure's report.

- Mrs. White-Hewitt, RN stated that revenues are generated by dues and fundraisers.

- Fund raising monies were used for scholarships. Presently we are in need of funds for the scholarship.
- Some funds were also used to pay for post office rental fees.
- Mrs. Verna Garcia, RN suggested creating a reserve account for scholarships and her suggestion was well received by Mrs. White-Hewitt, RN.
- A copy of the Treasure's report was distributed.

A reception followed the conclusion of the meeting. **Again colleagues it is extremely important that you become involved in your professional organization.**

Merla Kimball



Velma Freeman



The ANA position statement on Nursing Credentials issue "Credentials for the Professional Nurse: Determining a standard order of credentials..." recommends the order of credentials to ensure consistency and professionalism across nursing settings.

<http://nursingworld.org/Credentials-for-the-Professional-Nurse-Determining-a-Standard-Order-of-Credentials-for-the-Professi.html>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### CNO BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 16<sup>TH</sup>-22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER, 2016, ANTIGUA

Nurses and Midwives: Pioneers in Healthcare

Go to Antigua and Barbuda Nurses Association website for more registration information.

### VISNA midterm educational offerings October, 2016

Dates to be announced

## ANNOUNCEMENT

**Doctor of Nursing Practice** Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing/Case Western University.

For more information and how to apply contact Kristi Lehmer at [kx1488@case.edu](mailto:kx1488@case.edu)

THE STAFF and RNLU collective bargaining units are invited to submit articles for this newsletter. An invitation is also extended to the School of Nursing, U.V.I.

VISNA ATTITUDE CHECK. "A bad attitude is like a flat tire. You can't go anywhere until you change it." (anonymous)