The days are leading up to our Nurses Week celebration in early May. Nurses Week is a wonderful time to recognize the tremendous work our 4,000-strong nursing workforce does literally 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Being a nurse is something that ties us all together. We are members of the most trusted profession, one of the most recession-resilient professions and have the honor of making a profound impact in people’s lives. We do this on behalf of Vanderbilt University Medical Center, a Magnet-designated hospital system and a national leader in health care. We measure success by the quality care we provide patients and their families determined by the ingenuity, talent and dedication of every Vanderbilt nurse.

Nursing is also one of the most challenging professions, because the health care world keeps changing – sometimes in historic ways as with the federal health care reform law. It is always an adventure, and there are always opportunities.

We want every Vanderbilt nurse to feel valued and appreciated for their many contributions, so make sure to read the comments about our nurses from Vanderbilt leaders, review the list of Nurses Week activities, and make developing clinic- or unit-based Nurses Week celebrations a priority.

I hope you enjoy this issue,
establishing the first Nurses Week. VUMC traditionally marks Nurses Week with the State of Nursing Address and Awards and Recognition Ceremony, in addition to the local unit and clinic celebrations that take place across the institution. This year, another special event has been added – an encore performance of “Hey Florence!”

“My wish would be that we would all take the time to recognize each other,” Ford said. “We do great work every day of the year, but this is a special time to point that out to each other.”

**TIPS FOR PLANNING UNIT CELEBRATIONS**

While we recognize Nurses Week across VUMC, it is best celebrated at the local level because every unit or clinic is different.

Planning a unit/clinic celebration doesn’t have to be a daunting task, says Karen Robinson, R.N., M.S.N., coordinator of Case Management Practices.

“Managers should remember that they don’t have to plan everything. They can pick an enthusiastic person or several celebration champions on the unit to help plan or lead the activities,” she said. “It’s just important that everyone takes some time to have a little fun and recognize our wonderful profession.”

For 2010, Case Management is continuing a recent tradition of giving back to another group during the week. Last year, Nurse Case Managers brought in treats to make baskets for families in the Vanderbilt University Hospital waiting area. This year, they also have a talent show and baby picture guessing contest in the works, in addition to a top-secret surprise.

Connie Ford stresses that unit/clinic celebrations don’t have to be elaborate or expensive parties.

“Just writing a note means a lot. Think about all the positive contributions nurses have made over the last year and let them know,” she said.

In past years, her unit has had themed days, including a Hawaiian Day, where nurses wore leis and served fruit punch, and a Fiesta Day, where they ate chips and salsa.

Other celebration ideas:

- Have a dessert decorating bar – bake cupcakes or sugar cookies and set out frostings, candies and sprinkles for decorating.
- Organize a field trip to go as a unit to Nurses Week main events, such as the State of Nursing Address, Awards and Recognition Celebration, poster presentations or a Blessing of Hands ceremony.
- Create a crossword puzzle or word search about the nurses in your unit using online programs (click here for one). First to solve it gets a prize.

For more tips and ideas, visit the Vanderbilt Nursing Web site.

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**NURSES WEEK MAIN EVENTS**

**State of Nursing Address**
May 4, 8:30-10 a.m., 208 Light Hall.

**Awards and Recognition Celebration**
May 6, 2-3 p.m., Langford Auditorium, reception immediately following.

Both events will be streamed live at the Nursing Web site, and a Webcast will be available for later viewing.

**Hey Florence! Encore Performances**
May 7, 5:30 and 7:30 p.m., Langford Auditorium, all tickets are $10 and available at the door.

**Nursing Research Poster Presentations**
May 11, noon-2 p.m., North Lobby of Light Hall.

See a complete schedule of events here
## WHAT VUMC LEADERS SAY ABOUT VANDERBILT NURSES...

Nursing is part art, part science and all compassion. The quality of care that our VUMC nurses provide to patients and their families is tremendous, and the capacity for learning that our nursing students have is endless. I have several titles at this point in my career, but my proudest is that of nurse.”

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“As the national conversation on health care reform continues as one of the most debated and pressing issues facing our country today, there is one topic on which we can all agree, and that is the important role that nurses play in the health care arena. The skill and compassion that Vanderbilt nurses bring to the critical work of caring for the sick and helping patients achieve optimal health lies at the very heart of our mission. I am very proud to recognize your inspiring and invaluable contributions to the institution and to society-at-large.”

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When patients hear about personalized medicine, what often comes to mind is the compassionate care that nurses have been delivering for generations. Today I am humbled by our nurses’ tireless devotion to bringing our patients and their families expert, compassionate care.”

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“Every day, every patient, every time, our nurses at Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital make compassion and caring a way of life.”

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“We are fortunate to have such outstanding nurses and nursing leadership at Vanderbilt. Few organizations have achieved what our nursing division has accomplished, especially in such a dynamic and changing environment. Our nurses make a real difference in the lives of our patients and families.”

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“Our nurses are truly outstanding — they are the essence of the Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital. I’m grateful to all the nurses who chose our hospital as their work home.”

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“We nurses are the heart and soul of Vanderbilt. Thank you for your innovation and skill and for your endless devotion to our patients and families.”

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“Nurses are experts at meeting the complex physiological, emotional and social needs of patients. That’s the power of nursing. Thank you for all you do and for choosing to practice nursing at Vanderbilt.”

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**KUDOS TO CLARE THOMSON-SMITH**

Clare Thomson-Smith, R.N., M.S.N., F.A.A.N.P., J.D., has been selected as a 2010 Fellow of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners. The FAANP program was established in 2000 to recognize nurse practitioner leaders who have made outstanding contributions to health care through clinical practice, research, education or policy.

“Clare’s appointment is truly an honor and reflects her commitment and contributions to the work of Advanced Practice Nursing,” said Marilyn Dubree, R.N., M.S.N., N.E.-B.C. “We are so fortunate to have her wisdom and talent at Vanderbilt and congratulate her for this achievement.”

Thomson-Smith is director of the Center for Advanced Practice Nursing and Allied Health.
A LOOK AT THE STRATEGIC PLAN’S LEADERSHIP GOAL

As VUMC Nursing finalizes its strategic plan, one of the three main goals will focus on leadership development, ways to provide health care leaders the most beneficial environment, tools, evidence and skill advancement during a time of reforms and continual transitions.

The Leadership Development Committee, part of the Be the Best, Keep the Best initiative, has been hard at work addressing ways to take Vanderbilt’s rich culture and intentionally develop pathways for growth. The 24-member group is co-chaired by Betty Sue Minton, R.N., M.S.N., 3M Recovery Room, and Robin Steaban, R.N., M.S.N., administrative director for Vanderbilt Heart and Vascular Institute.

The group’s approach is methodical. They have relied on key competencies of leaders developed by VUMC Nursing, used various committee members’ expertise in organizational behavior, and combed through leadership development literature from successful organizations such as General Electric.

“Our most valuable resource is our people,” Steaban said. “Leadership development can help each individual make a difference where it counts the most.”

The committee’s aim is to focus first on the role of nurse managers as the anchor of any unit or clinic, and the position largely responsible for human resource management, employee morale, staff retention, finances, quality, service and satisfaction and universal problem solving. The group has taken key competencies developed by the previous committee and is translating those competencies into specific behaviors desired for nurse managers.

The key issue has been realizing that there are different types of leadership – all necessary and valuable. For the purposes of its work, the Leadership Development Committee is focusing on transactional leadership versus transformational leadership. The committee defines transactional leadership as the everyday, every patient activities that are important to keeping the unit or clinic running and meeting expectations. Transformational leadership is defined as the opportunity to inspire people and develop new visions for nursing care.

“It’s about legitimizing roles in nursing by helping people fulfill their core competencies and then giving people a way to grow into transformational leaders,” said Steaban.

Steaban believes this work is extra important as health care reform will likely put new emphasis on “pay for performance” approaches to hospital reimbursements and it is crucial since leadership development is embedded in each of the Medical Center’s elevate pillars – people, service, quality, growth/finance and innovation.