

Student Perspective

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84th Biennial MONA Convention

Before attending the MONA convention I had very little knowledge about state professional nursing organizations or the importance of belonging to one. I attend Blessing Rieman College of Nursing which supports state nursing organizations. Blessing Rieman College of Nursing has certainly proven that the school is full of supporters of MONA. It was evident that this school has supporters because of faculty attendance at this event. Unfortunately, a nursing student's life is so full of assignments and chaos; that many students do not have the time or make the time to really become informed on the importance of professional nursing organizations. The convention was held from Oct 2nd-Oct 3rd at Tan-Tar-A on the Lake of the Ozarks. The convention theme was based around preserving Missouri's greatest asset, and that is Missouri Nurses. At first I was not sure of what to expect, but I gained far more from this experience than just a grade. I was able to fully appreciate the meaning of belonging to a professional organization, even though I was not a member. I was treated with respect and dignity and they welcomed me as if I was one of them. This was an honorable experience and I am grateful and thrilled that I was able to be a part of this enlightening experience.

What is MONA and why it is important?

MONA stands for the Missouri Nurses Association. MONA is a professional nursing organization that resides in the state of Missouri. The MONA convention discussed several current and emerging issues that are affecting nursing, nursing practice, patient care, and the strategies that are being used to improve the workplace. MONA stands behind the nurses in the state of Missouri and works with the other professional nursing organizations such as the ANA, to promote change in nursing. MONA is important because it allows nurses to become involved together and unite as one unit working toward the same causes. It allows for these members to work as change agents and continue improving the field of nursing. Professional organizations can also serve as a place for socialization with different nurses from all locations. This socialization allows for the exchanging of ideas and the making of lifelong friends and colleagues. At this convention there were several key note speakers that discussed several hot topics in the field of nursing, and we were even lucky enough to get to meet the President of the American Nursing Association herself. Meeting Rebecca Patton was an honor and we even got to take a picture with her in front of the MONA logo. MONA is important and so are all of the professional state organizations. It is a shame that only 10% of Registered Nurses actually belong to these organizations. Just think if all nurses in all states belonged to these organizations, nurses would have great power and be able to work together to make changes throughout the United States and the world. If nurses were truly informed on what belonging to a nursing organization means and why paying the fees are worth it. I feel more nurses would join and work toward making change, if they really were informed of the benefits.

What was learned from this experience?

Prior to attending the MONA convention, the students were given a list of objectives to meet during the convention. Throughout every session I felt I learned so much and the speakers were absolutely phenomenal and so passionate about the topics that they discussed. I found that it was much easier to stay focused on a topic when the speaker truly keeps the interest of the audience. The MONA organization strives toward making the nurses of their state aware of how much they value them. While attending the MONA convention, I had the pleasure to interview a MONA Leader. Barbara Brazos was the individual interviewed and her insights were very intriguing. Having a prior degree in Psychology hearing about her experiences working at Fulton State Hospital was enlightening. It was amazing to hear the first hand experience of an individual working in that type of environment. The need for funding for Psychiatric hospitals is crucial. Many patients are being turned away because of lack of room, when these patients are truly in need for more intensive therapy. If there was sufficient funding to help rehabilitate the mentally ill, we may not see as many people come through the revolving door. During our discussions we thought of different ways to improve the quality of care for our patients, and one way is improving the interior and design of the patient rooms. As a student with clinical experience on a Psychiatric unit can agree with her completely. We discussed issues with Barbara and, suggested that the rooms be individual, have pods with cameras, and possibly some color. There is no need for the rooms to be so plain and lacking in life. I understand that for safety reasons some items must be excluded, but a little color never hurt anyone. There should also be a separation of children and adults on these units. I also learned that I as a student can make a difference and when I become a registered nurse I can join the professional nursing organization in the state of my practice. By doing so, I can continue to work together with my peers to make changes in the health care industry. I have learned that one person does have a voice, and if I choose to utilize it, I can be an advocate for all who are unable to or those who are just unwilling to speak up and make a difference. I know that no matter how many times I have to try eventually I will get my message across and make a difference. It has been shown in many cases throughout history that one voice can rise above the crowd and reach all those who are willing to listen.

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The future as deemed by a nursing student.

One major theme that continued to be brought up throughout the seminar was the idea that new nurses need to continue to work together to bring improvement to the field that they are joining. With the mean age of nurses being around 42, it is clear that the need for new nurses is crucial. The nurses of the new generation need to continue to follow in the footsteps of the pioneers from the past and continue to work together to make change in the field of nursing. One way that this can be done is joining a professional nursing organization. By joining a professional organization, an individual can take the necessary steps toward making change. Professional organizations are knowledgeable of the hot topics and issues that exist in the field of nursing today and can serve as change agents for the issues at hand. Change does not happen just because one may want it to happen; change requires dedication, research and countless hours of time being devoted to the topic at hand. As a future nurse I know that I can make a difference, and because of MONA I now understand how I can go about and do this. I have a more developed knowledge on the policies and rules that exist in professional organizations, and I know that I can be an advocate for the field of nursing as well as for the patients I care for. Despite the fact that I am a Generation X-er, I have learned from the examples from my wise elders (not saying that they are old in any way). Just that they are seasoned in the field of nursing and can teach me and prepare me for my journey through nursing, as they have already been there. In closing it is up to new nurses to continue to make change, recruit and retain nurses, and be passionate about the field that we chose.