Filipino Nurses at Continuum: A Decades-Long Passion for Patient Care

Nori Yaun, RN, Nurse Manager, NICU, Roosevelt Hospital, remembers the moment she wanted to become a nurse. It was when, as a high-school student in her homeland of the Philippines, she listened with great interest to student nurses who had visited her class to speak about the profession. “They talked about such fascinating cases, I instantly became enamored,” she says.

Today, Ms. Yaun is a veteran nurse with almost 29 years of service at Roosevelt Hospital, after immigrating to the United States in 1982. She also is one of the hundreds of Filipino nurses who have joined the Continuum family over the past several decades—and who continue to deliver high-quality, compassionate and outstanding patient care.

During the nursing shortage of the 1970s and 1980s, many Filipino nurses looking to start their careers and adult lives in America were recruited by hospitals nationwide. While they arrived armed with nursing degrees, very often they required assistance with living arrangements and, in some cases, even securing winter clothing.

“They came as very young nurses and built a life here, raising their families and developing a community within the NYC community,” says Sonja Tennaro, RN, EdD, NEA-BC, FACHE, Senior Vice President, Clinical Operations, and Chief Nursing Officer at The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, where 64% of the per-diem and full-time nursing staff is Filipino. “They grew up with the doctors and became senior nurses with advanced degrees.”

“It was an interesting cultural phenomenon that was happening all over the city,” adds Mary Walsh, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, CEN, Continuum’s Corporate Senior Vice President for Nursing, Standards and Practice, and Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer for Beth Israel. “They came with nothing, but all had four-year nursing degrees and that’s helped us from an academic perspective.”

What also has helped is a pride in nursing that has been passed on to subsequent generations. Arlene Antolin, RN, joined her first cousin, Warlita Antolin, RN, on the Pre-op/Post-op Unit at NYEEI early this year. Having worked in medicine in the Philippines, she chose to continue in the field in America and served as an ophthalmology technician while studying nursing. (continued on page 2)
There are many directions you can take in the nursing profession and my cousin was very supportive,” Ms. Antolin says. “In the Filipino culture, we are very hospitable, friendly and patient, which makes nursing a good career choice.”

For many of Continuum’s Filipino nurses, the commitment to care is long-lasting, as demonstrated by their tenures of 20, 30 and 40 years. And as for their role in care delivery? “They have first-hand experience relative to their own journey of leaving homeland and family behind. With our first-generation patients, that sensitivity translates in a very caring way,” notes Joanne Miller, RN, MSN, NEA-BC, Senior Vice President, Patient Care Services, and Chief Nursing Officer, St. Luke’s and Roosevelt Hospitals.

Marguerite Corda, RN, MSN, Vice President, Patient Care Services, Beth Israel Brooklyn, agrees. “They understand language barriers and know how to negotiate an unfamiliar environment. They bring that viewpoint to their patient interactions and have excelled in many areas as a result.”

Such success stems in part from a love of their culture and a desire to give back to their colleagues and the community. Case in point: Bella Soriano Locsin, RN, Recovery Room, and Ruth Samalca Manligoy, RN, ICU, at Beth Israel Brooklyn, who founded the Filipino Arts and Music Ensemble (FAME) in 2003. FAME features many children of BI associates and was formed to present the distinctive music and dance of the Philippines. This past June, the group entertained at a Site Diversity Council Filipino Cultural Heritage Day.

Whether through special events like the one at BI Brooklyn or unit parties at Continuum’s various hospitals, “we celebrate their diversity with them,” says Ms. Walsh of the Filipino nursing staff.

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Our culture is so rich and we work hard, follow through and enjoy challenges,” remarks Ms. Yaun. “And we love to cook. For us, whenever there’s a celebration, there’s a lot of ethnic food!”
Partnerships

Interns Welcomed for Summer Learning Experience

Student summer internships continued this year at Continuum, as part of the organization’s pledge to give back to the community. Partnerships with the Greater New York Hospital Association (GNYHA), the All-Stars Project, the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Ladders for Leaders, and Prep for Prep exposed more than 20 college and high-school students to various areas of Continuum’s hospitals, from Professional Billing and Hospital Administration to Real Estate and Ambulatory Care. While some students sought organizational experience and others a bird’s-eye view of care delivery, all gained valuable knowledge about the operations of a major health care system. In this issue, we profile two of the interns who spent the summer of 2012 at Continuum.

Deanna Browne
High-School Student
Internship program:
Ladders for Leaders
Internship area:
Public Affairs and Marketing

Responsibilities: I organized the photo archives, went on photo shoots, attended meetings and visited other Continuum sites every week.

What did you hope to get out of your internship? I wanted to determine what I want to study in college, probably communications. I learned a lot about the business, marketing and public relations aspects of a hospital.

How was the experience? It was very good and hands-on. I loved that they made me a part of everything they did, and that I had the opportunity to offer my viewpoints.

Best part: Meeting a lot of physicians and learning how they got to where they are.

Christopher Williams, Jr.
College Graduate,
Business Administration
with Concentration in
Health Care Management
Internship program:
GNYHA
Internship area:
Human Resources

Responsibilities: I concentrated on two projects—examining best practices for diversity and recommending ways to improve Destination Diversity, and promoting CHPFit among employees throughout Continuum.

What did you hope to get out of your internship? I wanted to gain experience in human resources and learn about managing hospital employees.

How was the experience? It was very challenging, very rewarding and a great foundation that I will take with me throughout my career. I saw how different policies and initiatives are implemented at all the Continuum hospitals.

Best part: Being exposed to so many mentors and people in health care administration who have guided me in what I want to do in the long run.

News Brief

Mentoring Update

In July, Continuum launched the fourth round of its Mentoring Program with eight pairs of mentees and mentors. This time around, senior management played a more integral role in the application review, and additional criteria were established for both the mentors and mentees. Mentors underwent more extensive screening by Organization Development, Education and Talent Management (ODETM), and mentees were required to attend a preview session to fully understand commitment to the program. Mentees also had to have satisfactory performance reviews and verified authorization from their supervisors to participate, and could not be enrolled or planning to enroll in a formal degree program. Following their mentorships, they now are asked to submit a summary about their experiences. The fourth round will run until December, and the new process will continue moving forward. (continued on page 6)
The month of June heralded not only the beginning of summer, but also Continuum’s ongoing commitment to the lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender (LGBT) community, both at its hospitals as well as in the neighborhoods it serves. The organization participated in several activities just before and during New York City’s annual Pride Week (June 17-24), starting with a party and ending with a parade.

For the first time, Continuum was among the lead cosponsors of the yearly Garden Party hosted by the LGBT Center of New York City, considered a “hub” for the LGBT community on Manhattan’s West Side. The event, a traditional kickoff for Pride Week, was held on Monday, June 18, at Hudson River Park’s Pier 46 at the foot of Christopher Street, and welcomed more than 1,500 friends and supporters. Attendees, including Continuum Trustee Janet Green and her partner Marsha Stern, and Barbara Warren, PsyD, Director of LGBT Health Services, Beth Israel, were treated to an open bar, delicious dining and a culinary silent auction.

To bring together LGBT members of the Continuum community, the organization held a social on Thursday, June 14, at Elmo Restaurant and Lounge in Chelsea. More than 100 LGBT associates and colleagues attended. A second social took place on June 21 in Roosevelt Hospital’s 14th floor boardroom, under the auspices of the SLR LGBT & Friends Committee, chaired by Ellen Engelson, EdD, Research Associate, Division of Gastroenterology. Some 30 attendees enjoyed drinks and music and a special message by SLR President Frank Cracolici, who recognized the committee’s efforts and expressed his pride at leading such a diverse institution.

Culminating the week was the annual Pride March, one of New York City’s biggest parades. The first March was held in 1970, and since then “its purpose has broadened to include recognition of the fight against AIDS and to remember those we have lost to the illness, violence and neglect.” More than 100 Continuum staffers and their families and friends were led by BI President Harris M. Nagler, MD, and his wife, Freema. The Continuum group wore scrub tops representing the different colors of the rainbow (the traditional symbol of the LGBT community).

Also noteworthy was the announcement during Pride Week that Beth Israel, St. Luke’s and Roosevelt Hospitals all received leadership designation and “top performer” status in the Human Rights Campaign’s (HRC) 2012 Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) Report. The HEI, a joint project of the HRC and the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, is a rating system used to gauge how LGBT-inclusive and friendly a hospital’s policies and practices are. The report focuses on such areas as patient non-discrimination, hospital visitation, decision-making rights, cultural competency and employment benefits. This year’s designation marked the third in a row for BI and the second in a row for SLR.
Continuum Visits Clybourne Park

Destination Diversity met Broadway on June 20, when Continuum associates who have contributed significantly to the initiative attended a matinee performance of Clybourne Park. The two-act play, which earned the 2012 Tony Award for Best Play and 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, presents a twist on racism. It begins with a white family selling its home to a black family in the 1950s, and picks up 50 years later when the neighborhood is going through a gentrification and a white family wants to move into the home, much to the consternation of the black couple representing the neighborhood organization. The outing provided the Continuum associates with a unique opportunity to learn about and experience diversity through the theater.

“This is our second year thanking staff for their stellar work on Destination Diversity with a special outing, and Clybourne Park was especially relevant to what inclusiveness is all about,” notes Pamela Y. Abner, Chief Cultural Diversity Officer and Human Resources Administration.

Here we share some of the attendees’ thoughts about the play and the world we live in today.

“Underlying racial discrimination of the past is still played out today with more subtle socio-economic innuendos. We all need to clearly communicate with each other and have the ability to confront our own preconceptions in order to truly appreciate and embrace our diversity.”
— Dennis M. Held, CPM
Director of Materials, Logistics and Biomedical Engineering
St. Luke’s and Roosevelt Hospitals

“Clybourne Park is full of poignant ironies and hilarious confrontations about the issues of racism and class. Despite persistent racial and ethnic gaps in health care and health status in the past decades, awareness of such disparities remains low among the general public.”
— Lucia Sau Chan
Assistant Director, Asian Services Center
Beth Israel Medical Center

“Clybourne Park is one of those plays that said things that one should never say but are needed to be said, and the humor really helped the message. I love how it gave great volume to the stereotypical ways in which whites, blacks, Latinos and other races are seen through the eyes of the other races. It definitely heightened my awareness of someone being a racist and not even knowing it.”
— LaToya Selby
Administrative Assistant, Cardiology
St. Luke’s Hospital

“Amid all the humor and hilarity, Clybourne Park brought to light many of the racial and stereotypical undertones that still define our society. The play emphasized that while society has come a long way since the 1950s with regards to racial equality, in the 21st century, the conversation isn’t just about race anymore; rather, it has expanded to include topics such as sexual orientation and cultural diversity. Living in the melting pot that is New York City, for me, the play raised the following questions: How much do we (as a society) really accept diverse populations, and have we come as far as we think we have?”
— Shana Dacon
Diversity Program Manager
Continuum Health Partners

From left: Jacqueline Cruz, Financial Administrator, Human Resources; Joan Leonardini, Director of Logistics, Nursing Administration, SLR; Shana Dacon, Diversity Program Manager, Human Resources; Dennis Held, Director, Materials, Logistics and Biomedical Engineering, SLR; Lucia Sau Chan, Assistant Director, Asian Services Center, BIMC; LaToya Selby, Administrative Assistant, Cardiology, SL; Astrid Lopez, Manager, Materials Management, SL; Yesenia Perez, Executive Assistant, Administration, Beth Israel Brooklyn; Christopher Williams, Jr., GNYHA Intern, Human Resources; Pamela Y. Abner, Chief Cultural Diversity Officer and HR Administration.
News Brief (continued from page 3)

Mentoring Update

The pairings include:

- Irina Bangiyeva, Senior Accountant, with mentor Jill Emblér, Corporate Vice President, Financial Planning.
- Manuel Enecilla, MD, Attending Physician, Medicine, St. Luke’s and Roosevelt Hospitals, with mentor Denise Pelle, Senior Vice President, Corporate Initiatives.
- Marlo Gantt, Education Manager, ODET, with mentor Carlos Maceda, Corporate Vice President, Procurement.
- Eldon Gillett, Assistant Manager, Private Units, with mentor Dennis Murtagh, Administrative Director, Surgery and Neurology, St. Luke’s and Roosevelt Hospitals.
- Raymond Guzman, Manager/Supervisor, Engineering/EMS, St. Luke’s Hospital, with mentor Greg Calliste, Chief Administrative Officer, St. Luke’s Hospital.
- Ulrick Vieux, DO, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, St. Luke’s Hospital, with mentor Marian Scott, Director, Community Health Initiatives.
- Moet Wood, Property Manager, Real Estate, with mentor Vai Fa‘agata, Administrator, OB/GYN, Beth Israel Medical Center.

Glossary of Terms

Common Diversity Terms

- **Affirmative Action**: A legal mandate that attempts to correct the social injustice of denying certain populations opportunities for jobs and promotions.
- **Cultural Competence**: A set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that enable a system or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.
- **Equal Employment Opportunity**: A legal protection built into the system that protects all employees from discrimination and harassment.
- **Managing Diversity**: The art of balancing the needs, aspirations, contributions and unique qualities of the organization with those of each individual in the organization.
- **Workplace Diversity**: People with different characteristics brought about by life experience, race, age, culture, gender, religion, physical abilities, work experience, sexual orientation or other unique qualities.