



2024 VNA & VNF SPRING CONFERENCE
Re-Engage: Reigniting Passion, Revolutionizing Practice



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The 2024 VNA and VNF Spring Conference, [*Re-Engage: Reigniting Passion, Revolutionizing Practice*](#), brought nurses from around the commonwealth together with the use of virtual technology. Nurses in attendance were encouraged by VNA/VNF CEO Janet Wall to “rediscover, reignite, and revolutionize the essence of nursing practice!”

VNA President Dr. Sherri Wilson welcomed the 200 plus live attendees and introduced the keynote speaker for Day 1, Geoffrey Roche. Roche’s presentation, *Getting into “Good Trouble” to Advance Nursing*, encouraged nurses to embrace courageous leadership, foster community, and value continuous learning. As the son of a nurse, a hospital administrator, and educator, Roche understands the challenges faced by nurses in today’s healthcare setting and knows that “good trouble” is necessary to bring positive change and increased value to the profession.

Nikki Akparewa spoke to the power of nurses to promote healing in her presentation *Breaking Boundaries: Nurses as Architects of Hope, Healing, and Health Equity*. Akparewa is the founder of Transform Nursing and is a published author. She uses her platform to coach and lead nurses, promote health equity, and well-being in nursing. She encouraged participants to think globally while creating environments where team members feel a sense of belonging and of being valued. Akparewa further supported nurses to be advocates for civility, inclusivity, and restored relationships.

Continuing to focus on the well-being of health professionals, the VNF President, Dr. Phyllis Whitehead, introduced Dr. Stefanie Simmons, CEO of the Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation, who spoke about *ALL IN: Caring for Virginia’s Caregivers*. Many healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth are facing burnout and depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. She presented information from the work being done by the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation and the ALL IN: Caring for Virginia Caregivers initiative, a collaboration with the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, the Medical Society of Virginia, and the Virginia Nurses Association & Foundation, to improve the professional well-being and mental health of healthcare workers.

Wrapping up an exciting Day 1, four rapid-fire presentations were presented on best practices to Re-Engage in Nursing.

- Frankye Myers, Senior Vice President and System Chief Nursing Executive at Riverside Health, and Jaime Cook, System Director of Total Rewards at Riverside Health, presented *Safe Haven Well-Being at Riverside Health*.
- Elizabeth Womack, Director of Nursing for Lewis Gale Behavioral Health presented *Lewis Gale Behavioral Health Direct Admission for First Responders and Frontline Caregivers*.
- Rhae Newbill, Critical Care Nurse with Centra Health, presented *Serenity Cart: Improving the End-of-Life Experience for Patients, Families, and Caregivers*.
- Tiffany Covarrubius Lyttle, VNA Board Secretary and Patient Education and Nurse Wellness Coordinator for Centra Health, presented *Wellness by Design: Nurturing Healthcare Teams Through Healing Environments*.

Day 2 started with the engaging presentation on the *Power of Nursing* by Deb Zimmermann, the Chief Executive Officer for the DAISY Foundation, the worldwide leader in the meaningful recognition of nurses. Zimmermann shared stories of nurse innovators from leaders to educators, researchers, and direct care providers. The impact of nurses on practice and healthcare as well as their influence on the patient experience was explored through examples of DAISY Award winners. Attendees were encouraged to promote the story of Nursing, so the public is aware of who nurses are and the work accomplished.

Ann Tardy, founder of MentorLead in 2003 which brings mentoring-as-a-solution to healthcare, shared on the power of mentorship. Her presentation, *Unlock the Power of Mentoring: Accelerate Your Growth on the Path to Nursing Excellence*, explored the mentor-mentee relationship as well as the data and outcomes supporting the use of mentorship to grow one's career and personal life. Whether engaging in formal one-on-one mentorship or group mentorship, all nurses can benefit!

Another round of rapid-fire presentation brought additional best practices to the participants.

- Jennifer Bath, Trauma Clinical Nurse Specialist with Carilion Clinic and Laurie Wolf, Human Factors Research Advisor with Carilion Clinic, presented *Interprofessional Design of ED Trauma Bay: Using Human Factors and Mockup Simulation to Improve Architectural Design Layouts*.
- Jill Horner, Nurse Wellness Program Manager, Catherine Williams, Director of Central Nursing Operations, & Simmy King, Chief Nursing Informatics and Education Officer at Children's National, presented *Utilizing a Technology Based Mentorship Platform to Enhance Leadership Skills at the Bedside and Build Meaningful Connections Amongst Nurses*.
- Kathleen Russell-Babin, Vice President of Professional Practice at Inova Health, presented *Results of a Study on the Psychometric Properties of the Broset Violence Checklist Beyond Behavioral Health and Emergency Departments*.

- Mesha Jones, VNA Commissioner on Nursing Practice and Ambulatory Float Pool and EWYL Medical Assistant Manager at UVA Health, presented *Charting Success! VNA's Mentorship Program for Nursing Students*.

Dr. Ashley Apple, VNA's Board Commissioner on Government Relations facilitated a fantastic panel discussion on *Nurses as Advocates* with guests Dr. Suzanne Bowser, Dr. Amy Johnson, Dr. Cindy Rubenstein, and Dr. Dana Woody. As guests shared their personal advocacy stories, participants were encouraged to consider their own story of how they advocate for patient care, for the nursing profession, and for health across the Commonwealth or the Nation.

Presenting on *Cultivating a Culture of Caring: Top Practices for Healthcare Teams*, Dr. Renee Thompson of the Healthy Workforce Institute challenged participants to build healthy work environments by ending the culture of cruelty and disrespect. Opening doors for kindness, for peace, and for welcoming attitudes, nurses are able to encourage colleagues, protect sacred spaces, and build relationships between shifts and units.

This year's Spring Conference was an encouraging opportunity for each attendee to grow, to learn, and to "Re-Engage"!

Thank you to the amazing sponsors of this year's conference! Your support makes events like this one possible.

- Diamond Sponsors: Centra Health and the George Washington University School of Nursing;
- Gold Sponsors: UVA Health, Sentara Healthcare, and Riverside Health System

Missed the conference? Watch On Demand!

No worries! The Spring Conference will be available on demand after May 10. [Register here for on-demand access!](#)

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the **virtual Legislative Summit** on September 26! To register for this remarkable event, please [visit the Legislative Summit page](#) for more information. Registration opens soon! Our voice is stronger when we are together and our actions louder.

Remember the in person **VNA/VNF Nurse Staffing Summit** will be held in person November 22-23 at the Hilton Hotel & Spa Short Pump. Registration for this highly anticipated event is limited and open through November 15 on the [Fall Conference page](#). The cost is \$300 for VNA members and \$389 for nonmembers.

Have a best practice that you would like to share with your colleagues? VNA is looking for rapid fire presenters and we're accepting submissions for our in-person Nurse Staffing Summit through July 15, 2024. [Learn more or submit your idea!](#)

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