The Gift of Gratitude
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In 2017, I had the unique opportunity to travel to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on a global health nursing fellowship to teach nurses the skill of precepting. This was an incredibly challenging and professionally rewarding experience during a pinnacle time in my nursing career. On one of my last days in Africa, after almost three weeks developing relationships and building trust, the nurses I had been teaching circled around me on a stage. Led by the most senior nurses, they all began to chant in Swahili while rubbing their palms together to generate warmth and finished by extending their hands outward towards me. I did not fully understand the meaning of the ritual, but I knew immediately that it was an act of kindness, mutual respect, and generosity. It was not tangible, but it was one of the most meaningful gifts of gratitude I have ever received.

I think about that moment often during moments of challenge and professional uncertainty as a nurse, a leader, and as President of ANAMASS. That experience taught me that the gift of gratitude is not a courtesy we extend only when time allows, it is a practice to build trust, inclusivity, and connect with teams to remind nursing colleagues that they work they do every day is tough but it always matters.

The lesson I learned in Tanzania is that gratitude should be practiced like any other leadership skill, regardless of your position or level of leadership. Whether you are a bedside leader caring directly for patients or a top executive leader, gratitude is an important skill to model for others. Committing to a gratitude practice and spreading kindness is a perfect start and always seems to make hard days better.

To all ANAMASS members who have volunteered, advocated, mentored, or simply shown up for a colleague: Thank You. Thank you for the time and effort you put into your professional nursing organization to make us all better nurses. Thank you for who you are and what you do every day to serve patients and their families.

In Tanzania, a circle of nurses showed me that warmth can be generated together, hand in hand. As we enter the holiday season, the winter months, and the busyness of this time of year, let us pause to recognize each other by extending continuous warmth.

With Gratitude,

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