

synova *Spotlight*

DECEMBER 2018



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1. Why do/did you choose to attend the NLF? And, what makes it different from other conferences?

Part of my responsibility as a leader is to role model continuing education and to stay up-to-date on best practices. With limited monies in the budget for conferences and continuing education, it's imperative that I'm strategic in my selections. Unlike other conferences where either neonatal/pediatrics or leadership is covered, every agenda item at NLF is pertinent to my practice area. The NLF is really the best of both worlds, NICU clinical practices and leadership skills, in one complete package. I love to connect with like leaders from across the country who understand my challenges as a nursing leader with a unique patient population.

2. What do you gain out of attending (i.e. new networks, up to date info, time to rejuvenate, etc.)?

Since the topics are timely with healthcare and leadership needs today, I gain new knowledge and innovative strategies in the keynote and breakout sessions that I can implement and share with my teams as soon as I get back to work. The interaction with my colleagues during the poster session is great, yet it cannot compete with the networking lunches. The lunches are arranged with groups of leaders in similar positions to discuss common issues and to develop solutions together. I have continued those conversations by email and over the phone long after I returned home. This theme of connectivity is woven throughout the entire conference – first time attendee and welcome receptions, social activities during the afternoon off, and an evening party. I've felt like a "number" at other conferences but never at the NLF.

3. How does what you learn impact your work (i.e. better leadership skills w your team, better retention rates, etc.)?

I've been able to confirm that my current unit practices are up-to-date, as well as, learn changes that need to be made based on new evidence. The sponsors understand neonates and I'm actually able to bring back samples that my team can evaluate for our patients. I've applied skills learned to improve communication with my team, staff, and executive leadership, as well as, change management, family-centered care, and self-care. I return 'fired up' with passion and purpose for being the best leader I can be and for achieving improved patient outcomes.

4. Since we are very close to 2019, what is your key goal as a leader professionally AND personally for 2019? Or, do you have a couple of tips that you'd share with a new nurse leader?

My aim for 2019 is to reduce the "drama" in the upcoming year. I want to learn new strategies to engage and empower staff to be invested in themselves, their practice, and the unit. I want to interact with staff in a different way to help them redirect their energies to rise above the "drama" and to focus on moving forward to achieve greatness. I continually remind myself and would share with new nurse leaders that your role can become your entire life if you're not careful. The needs of a 24/7 critical care unit never turn off and it's important that nurse leaders grow their team to be ready when needed to step up. Delegation is not dumping. By delegating, you are giving others growth opportunities, promoting succession planning, and allowing yourself a more manageable workload.

5. When you have a stressful day, what do you do to relax and rejuvenate? (i.e. music, read a book, a specific song, etc.)

I make it a priority to exercise in the morning as part of my prep to tackle each day – I anticipate the stress! I use that time to think through upcoming challenges and to process ideas before I get to the unit and need to hit the ground running. We all know the days that you are solving world peace before you even set your purse down!



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In an effort to be balanced in my approach, I also bake. I find it rewarding to bake and share the yummy goodness with people I care about.

6. Are there any new apps or other technology that you can recommend that help you do your job more effectively? Even if it is a personal APP that saves you time or that you love, share it!

My favorite apps are Overdrive and TED. Overdrive allows me to check out books from my local library. It provides me access to thousands of books and they auto return when due (no more late fees because I was too busy to take them back). The TED app lets me browse and listen to TED talks while on the go. It sorts them by newest, trending, and most viewed, has a search feature, and even keeps a list of the talks I've listened to and shared with others.



Stephanie participating in Read Across America Day.



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