

# **Connecticut Association of Public Health Nurses [CAPHN]**

## **2004-2005 Annual Meeting**

### **President's Report - Philip A. Greiner, DNSc, RN**

I wish that I could be present for this Annual Meeting, but a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came up that I could not miss to spend time with my son in Italy. The past year has flown by quite rapidly. Yet in this year our organization has made significant strides of which you, as members, should be aware.

First, the organization began the process of filing for non-profit 501 (c)3 status last year. The initial response was that our organization needed a broader membership and focus in order to qualify. On the basis of that input, we withdrew our application and the Board began work on revising our By-Laws. The revisions include:

- A more succinct Purpose statement.
- A revised definition of a member that reflects the APHA/Public Health Nursing Section Definition and Role of Public Health Nursing and will be consistent with the new ANA Scope and Standards of Public Health Nursing Practice due out in 2006.
- A revised definition of an Associate Member that extends membership beyond nurses.
- The addition of a Member-at-Large position from the ranks of the Associate Members of CAPHN, allowing for the Associate Members to have voice and vote.

The revised By-Laws will be presented to you tonight for approval, having been approved by the Board of Directors. These revisions are a major step in our plans to re-apply for 501 (c)3 status in the future.

Second, the Board decided to emphasize the role of CAPHN in educating public health nurses and others about public health issues. The Education Committee has been very active this year with our successful Networking Meeting and through partnerships with the Connecticut Nurses Association and Public Health Workforce group in providing the well-received PHN training courses in Connecticut.

Third, the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH) requested our participation in two initiatives this past year. We did agree to support legislation to require every health department or district to have a full-time health director, with the understanding that they will support us in future legislation that will require a full-time PHN in every health department or district. In addition, we have received additional requests for input from other organizations, indicating that CAPHN is now recognized as an important organization in Connecticut.

And fourth, Monica Farina, Andrea Lombard, and I met with the Commissioner of Health (Dr. Galvin) on April 12, 2005. At this meeting we asked:

- That the Department of Health identify a senior nurse to represent the State at the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing (ASTDN) meetings. Connecticut has not been represented in the past eight years. ASTDN is a key resource for information and support for official public health nursing agencies in the United States.
- That the Department of Health partner with CAPHN in the education of public health nurses and other public health representatives in Connecticut.
- That the Department of Health, through the Commissioner, support an infrastructure within the Department of Health at the state and local health levels to identify and network public health nurses regardless of their job title or position.
- That the Department of Health recognize the need to support the education of future public health nurses in Connecticut.

- That public health nurses be included in state task forces and committees as they are being formed.

This meeting with the Commissioner was brief, due to the roll-out of the new branch structure in the Department. However, we did continue to meet with key staff for an additional 40 minutes to expand on these concerns. In general, the Commissioner and staff are very supportive of public health nursing.

There are challenges that continue to confront us. These include:

- Retaining public health nursing positions in local and state health departments.  
Retention is a key issue as PHN's reach retirement age and towns begin to offer attractive retirement incentive packages to employees. CAPHN will need to work with legislators and other organizations to identify ways to address this concern.
- Attracting new qualified nurses to public health positions.  
Public health nurses need a unique skill set that is different from hospital nursing. We need to help local health departments to recognize the education and training needs of PHN's and hire accordingly. Local health departments need to find ways to include student nurses in their activities so that these students see public health as a career option.
- Developing a legislative agenda.  
CAPHN needs to work with other organizations to advance political agendas that are compatible with our beliefs. We need to educate our membership on how to be politically active in educating elected officials about the need for public health nursing at the local and state levels.
- Attracting new members to CAPHN.  
The growth of any organization depends on the current membership actively recruiting new members. If our new By-Laws are approved, we can begin to attract nurses working with a population focus to our organization, regardless of where they are employed. It will continue to be the role of the organization to educate our members and the public about public health nursing. We can also attract Associate members from our contacts at work and at home.

In closing, CAPHN is growing into a recognized organization within Connecticut. A speaker from a regional consulting group in Boston recently spoke at the Connecticut Primary Care Association on lobbying activities. She recognized nurses, specifically public health nurses, as one of the two most influential groups in local and state politics. Why? Because everyone knows or has a relative who is a nurse and because nurses have the highest level of trust of any profession in the United States! We need to capitalize on that perception and build support for public health nursing in Connecticut. Each one of us needs to take every opportunity to talk about what we do and who we represent as public health nurses.

In early June the Association of Community Health Nursing Educators (ACHNE) will hold its Spring Institute in Hartford, CT. This group is the national organization for those who educate the next generation of public health nurses. Please contact Sandy Brennan at the University of Hartford for further information on this event.

Thanks you for your continued support of CAPHN. It is through your support that we can continue to make a difference for public health and the people of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Philip A. Greiner, DNSc, RN

President