



Finding inspiration from Nurses With A Purpose

It can be easy to lose focus of why you became a nurse. Passing the boards, commuting to work, dealing with difficult patients, fitting in with coworker cliques, and struggling through exhausting days can drain anyone. Then your personal life, with your family, your car troubles, and that ever-expanding credit card bill, piles on to the mountain of stress. Simply put, life gets in the way. But what if there was a way to get that focus back? What if there was an organization that helped you to put it all in perspective?

Nurses With A Purpose does just that.

The new non-profit organization based in Colorado sends registered nurses to impoverished areas around the globe to help deliver much-needed healthcare. The trips last from 1 week (local and national trips) to 4 weeks (international trips) and are slated for Biloxi, MS, Ethiopia, and India this year.

"Nurses who have been on medical missions have spoken volumes about how it has been life-changing for them," says founder **Patricia Guenther, RN**, on the organization's introductory video on the Web site. "It

just made them feel like they had gotten back to the actual service of humanity, which is the basis of nursing."

Guenther started Nurses With A Purpose, which will also provide scholarships for student nurses, last November after a few years of working in the for-profit arena. Her staffing company, then known as Stat Nurses International, was receiving misguided emails from nurses about trips around the world. A light bulb went on in Guenther's head, and Nurses With A Purpose was born.

This year, 20-30 nurses are expected to go on trips, where they'll provide care and comfort to people in need. The visits to Biloxi are ongoing, while the Ethiopia trip (June) and the India trip (July) have been planned months in advance. Guenther has already conducted assessment trips to see the poverty and hardship first-hand. She says she met children in Africa who contracted HIV during birth, and that administration of a drug that costs 10 cents a day could have helped prevent the illness.

"It's mind boggling how much poverty there is, and how little delivery of healthcare there is," she says.

Along with the obvious value of such a trip, Guenther says she also sees the journeys as an opportunity for hospitals to increase retention. Upon returning, nurses are refreshed and revitalized, she says.

"It was really refreshing for me," Guenther adds. "I was really proud of being a nurse, of delivering healthcare at a primal, basic level."

Any registered nurse can go on a trip, Guenther says. The applicant volunteers his/her services, the employer pays half, and then the organization matches the other half. Guenther says she will present the information to any nurse employers who are interested in employer sponsorships. "They are sent to educational conferences for that much," Guenther says. "And it's a good opportunity for nurses that can't be gone too long. It's a win-win situation."

And as an additional win, the organization has started to create scholarships for student nurses. Guenther says she was helped a great deal by charitable organizations when she earned her degree, and wants to give back.

"Our goal here is to recruit new nurses into the profession and retain the nurses that we have," she says.

The organization is still getting on its feet and is always fundraising. "We're just starting on a shoestring budget," Guenther says. "The only thing holding us back is our resources."

So, how do you get involved? It's easy. Go to the Web

site (www.nurseswithapurpose.org), click on the volunteer link, and open yourself to a whole new world.

"The fact of the matter is, there's such a need," Guenther says in summation. "There's room for anyone that will help."