Grant and Award Winners Reflect on Being Recognized through the ANNA Awards Program

In the last issue of the ANNA Update several recent ANNA scholarship recipients shared how their education and nephrology careers were progressing. In this issue we are highlighting some ANNA grant and award winners from the past 2 years. Grants are awarded to ANNA members for several reasons — to fund projects, support education, and recognize excellence in clinical practice. ANNA awards are presented to individuals and chapters for outstanding achievements in nephrology nursing. Recipients of ANNA's awards are usually nominated by another individual, which makes receiving the award, that much more special.

Joan Aiello of Dix Hills New York, received the Jeffrey Bacin Excellence in Clinical Practice in Prevention of Diabetic Vascular Complications Award in 2002. Joan reports: “As award recipients we were able to jump start our Foot Patrol program and further expand our emphasis on diabetes care in the dialysis center. The majority of the funds were spent on a Diabetes Education Fair and on updating our foot patrol materials. Thanks again for this opportunity.”

Anne Harty, currently serving as ANNA North Central Legislative Advisor, was awarded the Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) Grant in 2003. She writes this about her experience: “I searched every ANNA Update that came in the mail. When were they going to make it available? Finally in the September/October edition, there it was, on the front page, ‘Grants Available for the 2003 NIWI Program!’ I heard about the Nurse in Washington Internship when I attended the ANNA Legislative Workshop last year. I knew that I just had to apply! By the grace of God, and perhaps only two of us applied, I was chosen as one of the two ANNA members to receive a grant for the 2003 NIWI. The purpose of NIWI is to provide ‘nurses the opportunity to learn how to influence health care through the legislative and regulatory processes.’ We, about 150 nurses from around the country working in many different areas, learned from a faculty made up of health policy experts and government officials. We had the fantastic opportunity to network with other nurses and on the final day, went to the Hill to visit members of Congress. The internship was 4 days. A highlight of the experience was having a roundtable dinner with Congresswoman Lois Capps. She is a nurse and represents the San Luis Obispo area in California. She introduced the Nurse Reinvestment Act (NRA) and saw that it made it though the legislative process until it was signed into law. Even though it was signed into law, the NRA was appropriated only $15 million of new money, and it was budgeted for $250 million. So, she asked us to take a message to the Hill and explain that in order for the NRA to be fully enacted, which is designed to relieve the nursing shortage, we must receive more money. The experience was one in a million!”

A Bioethics Grant was awarded to Debra Castner, a nurse practitioner with Ocean Renal Association in Forked River, NJ, in 2003. “I used the grant to take a certificate course on palliative care at Villanova University. It was very inspiring to be with others who care for chronically ill patients, cancer, heart disease, lung disease, and children with terminal illnesses. It made me realize that dialysis is the ultimate palliative care and brings us the responsibility to inform and encourage patients about life planning. We need to look at how we should adjust end-of-life care to renal patients because the present system of no dialysis to be eligible for hospice does not work. Having attended the course gave me more background to assist the private dialysis company where my patients receive care to change their policy on recognizing DNRs in the unit. We have a new policy to roll out and are in the planning stages of developing an ethics committee for the outpatient units. Receiving the grant helped to make me be seen as a resource to the unit staff and it certainly helped me in caring for patients.”

Cindy Richards, Renal Transplant Coordinator at Children’s Hospital of Alabama, was the recipient of ANNA’s Rehabilitation Award in 2003. Cindy reports: “This money helped to sponsor our week-long camp for solid organ transplant recipients this summer, and our first ever weekend family camp. It is so rewarding to see the teenagers interact with each other and to have a chance to attend camp. We had 15 transplant recipients, their siblings, and parents (or grandparents) attend. We had volunteer counselors who interacted with the kids while the parents participated in group activities. Several families said that this was the first time they felt able to allow their child to be away from them for an hour or 2 and not worry since they had been transplanted. It is wonderful to be able to be a part of this, and ANNA helped us to be able to provide this to the families in part because of the Rehabilitation Award.”

In 2003, Jean Colaneri, Clinical Nurse Specialist at Albany Medical Center in Albany, NY, received the Fujisawa Award for Outstanding Contributions to Transplantation Nursing. She shares her thoughts on this honor: “I have been fortunate to have had many rich and varied experiences in nursing. I was incredibly honored to receive the Fujisawa Award for Outstanding Contributions to Transplantation Nursing. The reason it was such an...
Karen Prussing is Director of Renal Services and Apheresis at St. Alexius Medical Center in Bismarck, ND. In 2003 she received the Nephrology Nurse Manager Award. “Certainly this award validates a culmination of many years of work in all aspects of nephrology nursing for me personally and professionally. It is something tangible to show for continuous diligence and commitment over many years to not only my staff and patients but to all patients through my speaking and writing on behalf of ANNA’s contribution to nephrology nursing and ultimately better patient outcomes. Being the first to be awarded this in the state of North Dakota also honors and recognizes our state and our fine talent and work ethic. It brings a sense of pride and recognition not just individually but also speaks to the support that our Medical Center has shown throughout the years to me as well as our dialysis units in the context of state-of-the-art equipment, continuous educational opportunities, and support for the time I contributed to speaking nationally and regionally for ANNA, planning ANNA ACTION meetings, Centennial Chapter meetings, etc. Furthermore, I believe the staff realizes that ultimately this award is evidence of their commitment and caring for our patients. This award is as much theirs as it is mine in our quest for meeting and exceeding our patients’ needs and expectations both in the past and in the future. I believe that there are many nephrology nurse managers deserving of this award, and it takes a special person to recognize the achievement of someone and for that I am humbled and grateful.”

Saguaro Chapter member Gladys Benavente was nominated for and received ANNA’s Nephrology Nurse Educator Award in 2002. Gladys recalls this memorable event: “It was a great honor for me to be recognized for something that I truly love and enjoy doing as part of my job. I believe that we can make a difference in our clients’ lives by empowering them with knowledge. For me being acknowledged by my colleagues and then by a national organization was very humbling. When I returned to my job with my award, it was promoted in various veteran newsletters and also in our in house mail. Many of our volunteer veterans stopped me in the hall to congratulate me. I shared my news with a renal fellow who took it further — a month later I received an award from the nephrology community in Tucson acknowledging my national award. I was presented a community plaque at a surprise luncheon in the presence of my Service Chief. This ceremony was then photographed and circulated in our hospital newsletter. It is very emotional for me, as I have felt truly honored and respected. As for my career, I have now started some renal education groups where basic kidney information is presented with a follow-up appointment scheduled. I am hoping to reach out to more clients this way and also encourage preservation/self-care to prolong ESRD. I will be the renal nurse practitioner in our VA, which has been a role that we have slowly been creating, but it is almost here! I am looking forward to some exciting changes. This award has been a highlight in my career; it is very special to feel the warm fuzzies.”

I want to thank the above ANNA grant and award recipients for sharing these stories with us. It is inspiring to see that each one does not view their honor as a culmination of a career goal, but rather as a meaningful highlight in their continuing journey as a nephrology nurse and ANNA volunteer.

Sandy Bodin
Awards Committee Chairperson
Gitchee Gume Chapter

ANNA Member Earns Doctoral Degree in Nursing

Carol Headley, Nephrology Advanced Practice Nurse at the Veteran’s Affairs Medical Center in Memphis, TN, was the recipient of the Ernestine Lowrie Memorial Fellowship in 2002. The purpose of this fellowship, which included a $25,000 grant, was to support an ANNA member in pursuing a degree in nephrology nursing at the undergraduate/graduate level. Carol was enrolled in the doctoral nursing program at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis, TN. In the fall of 2003, she successfully defended her dissertation entitled “Relationship of Real-Time Ultrasound with Physical Examination Measurements in Determining the Accuracy of Hemodialysis Catheter Placement and Size.” She was awarded a clinical doctorate of science in nursing (DNSc) on December 5, 2003.

Carol is grateful for the support received from ANNA through the Ernestine Lowrie Memorial Fellowship and collegial encouragement during the school term. The academic program allowed her to continue working full time at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Memphis while enrolled in the long-distance program. The medical center granted work schedule flexibility, which allowed her to complete the clinical residency as a requirement of the program. Carol states that she is “grateful to the many who assisted me in obtaining this academic career goal.”