



# Nebraska Nurses Foundation - Lasting Legacy Interview Series

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**THE NNF IS PROUD** to continue our Lasting Legacy Interview Series by featuring Tara Whitmire, DNP, APRN-NP, CHFNP, ACUE, currently President of not one, but two nursing organizations, the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses and Tau Tau Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau. She is also the Past-President of the Nebraska Nurse Practitioners (NNP) and currently serves as the coordinator of the Scholarship/Awards Committee for NNP.

Dr. Whitmire currently serves as the Director of the BSN to DNP Program at Nebraska Methodist College and works weekly in a casual status as an nurse practitioner for Methodist Department of Cardiothoracic

Surgery. This mix of roles works perfectly, "I love the mix of students and teaching and seeing them learn and grow, and I also like taking care of patients." She has a legacy of 'bird' school mascots in her past with a BS in Psychology from Iowa State University (cardinal), BSN, FNP, and MSN from Creighton (blue jays) and a DNP from the University of Iowa (hawks). She came to nursing by a unique pathway, but once she discovered her passion there has been no stopping her.

**TA: How did you select nursing as your career path?**

**TW:** I don't know. I didn't feel like I had a calling to it or knew that I was always going to be a nurse all

my life. I knew I wanted to help, be a helper. I was a helper already, so it just seemed like the best place. I started at Iowa State University right after high school and was a pre-med major. I didn't do great in a few classes, so I switched my major to Psychology. Before my junior year I decided to transfer to a different college (Briar Cliff College) and major in nursing. I enjoyed it, but I missed my college boyfriend so went back to ISU to finish my Psychology degree. Right before I graduated, a high school friend shared about Creighton's Accelerated Nursing degree program. I graduated from ISU in August 2001 and the next week moved to Omaha and started the

accelerated program. I graduated the next summer! [FYI, she didn't marry the guy from Iowa State.]

**TA: How did you get involved in ANA/NNA?**

**TW:** I joined NNA initially after starting my first job but due to limited funds, I didn't renew my membership and forgot about it. Years later after I finished my nurse practitioner program, I started helping with the Nurses Day at the Legislature and met NNA members through that event. When I became involved with NNP it was beneficial to be a member of NNA as well because both organizations were working closely together. As I tried to join the NNA, I discovered then that I had an account and have been a member of both since that time. I strongly believe it's necessary for all nurses to belong to a professional organization of their choosing - either their national/state organization or a specialty organization. We are stronger together and with a unified voice!

**TA: When you think of all those years in NNA and your involvement what are the top three memories that come to your mind?**

**TW:** The first that comes to mind is the networking and making connection with nurses who have now become good friends, like Douglass Haas. The second are the joint NNA/NNP education conferences. It was so successful bringing the levels of nursing together in the state so that we learned from each other. The third is being part of the planning committee for Nurses Day at the Legislature for several years. It was rewarding to help plan an event that brought us together with our state legislators and allowed our voice to

be heard. The NNP has had a goal in our policy and procedure manual about a legislative breakfast, but it never came to fruition. But as part of the Nurses Day at the Legislature it is a good opportunity to guide the topics and to work with different people to promote the nurse practitioner role. I think advocacy is one of the most important things we do as a nurse. That's why we have professional organizations, and that's why you need to be involved in them.

**TA: You are currently serving as the president of not one, but two nursing organizations and as president of the NNP in the past, what drives you to become an officer?**

**TW:** I have this internal drive in me to just make things better or just to be involved. I don't have a better explanation than it's just this internal thing. I've thought about it before. In high school, I was involved in the student council, and then when I was at Iowa State, I got involved with planning VEISHA. I was the secretary of one of the committees and was involved in the student alumni council. I just want to help and do better.

I think nurses come to leadership roles in steps. First getting involved. In the heart failure association, I was on a committee, then I became a committee chair, then I joined the board as a Director. Then I was the secretary. They're saying, "All right, now we want you to be the president." I was, "But wait.," and they said "No, you need to be the president.," so "Okay."

**TA: What does the NNA/NNF bring today to nurses or the public in the state?**

**TW:** These organizations bring us together as a profession for us



to keep our seat at the table and allow our voice to be heard. We are the most trusted profession, and this is because we are able to meet patients where they are, advocate for issues that matter and keep nursing care safe and accessible.

But it also provides us tools for professionalism. Education, networking, and mentoring. It helps us be better professionals when you belong to NNA, or any professional organization. It gives us that 'extra bit' that really sets us apart from regular people.

It also protects the public because we must adhere to our scope of practice and standards. We're monitoring legislation so that everybody stays safe, providing great care, and preventing harm to anyone.

**TA: Tara, this has been my pleasure and I know that with you as a fellow nurse in Nebraska, we will see you involved in the years to come. And what a gift you are to us!** 🌈