



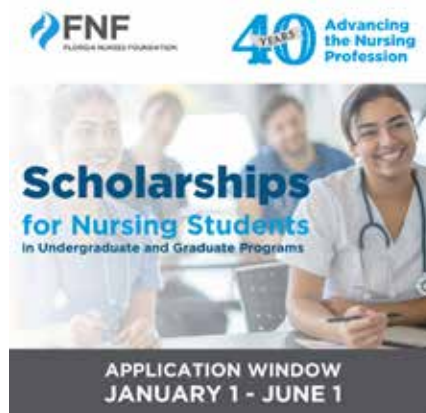
Florida Nurses Foundation: Supporting Nurses

The Florida Nurses Foundation continues its mission to support Florida's nurses in meaningful ways. In response to the devastation caused by Hurricanes Milton and Helene, the FNF relaunched its Hurricane Relief Fund, part of the *Nurses in Need Fund*. This effort has provided critical financial assistance to nurses affected by the storms, helping with emergency needs like housing, transportation, and essential expenses. Applications were processed in November and nine nurses were awarded with grants to help them on their path to recovery.

Looking ahead, FNF is preparing to

open applications for its annual scholarships and research grants in January. These opportunities are designed to support the professional development of nurses at all levels, from students to seasoned professionals, and to encourage innovation and research in the field.

Whether through disaster relief or fostering career growth, the Florida Nurses Foundation remains dedicated to empowering nurses and strengthening the nursing profession. For updates on relief efforts and scholarship opportunities, visit the Foundation's website at www.floridanurse.org/Foundation. ■



Recognizing the Extraordinary Effort of Nurses During Emergency Preparedness

Katy Wendel, MHA, BSN, RN, CENP, ACRN



When hurricanes hit Florida, the spotlight is often on the devastation—damaged homes, flooded streets, and downed power lines. However, there is another story that rarely makes headlines yet plays out in hospitals and community health centers across the state: the extraordinary resilience of nurses. As the winds howl and rain pours, these healthcare profes-

sionals remain steadfast, ensuring that the most vulnerable among us continue to receive care, even as their own lives hang in uncertainty. In times of crisis, nurses often go above and beyond, ensuring that patients and clinics are ready for whatever may come. Whether preparing supplies, creating contingency plans, or staying extra hours to ensure everyone's safety, their dedication is unmatched.

Take, for instance, the nurses at CAN Community Health, where they care for individuals living with HIV. During hurricanes like Milton, which recently struck Sarasota and the surrounding areas, these nurses do everything in their power to protect life-sustaining antiretroviral medications. Without these drugs, patients risk dangerous interruptions in

treatment, which could compromise their health in the long term. These nurses work tirelessly to safeguard medication supplies, coordinating with pharmacies and insurance companies, even as roads close and power is lost. They ensure that their patients continue receiving the care they need—no matter the obstacles in their way.

This effort reflects the broader role nurses play during hurricanes. In hospitals, nurses face their own set of challenges when hurricanes approach. They often stay on-site for days, working through extended shifts to care for their patients. Many of them leave behind families and homes, not knowing if the storm will destroy everything they have built. Nevertheless, they remain on the front

lines as healthcare providers and as lifelines for those who need them most. From planning ahead to being on the front lines when emergencies hit, our nurses play an indispensable role in keeping our community safe, healthy, and cared for. The extra steps they take—from securing medications to coordinating with local emergency teams—are a true testament to their compassion and commitment.

The toll on these nurses is immense. Research shows that prolonged disaster work leads to stress, fatigue, and emotional strain (Nix & Caldwell, 2018). However, nurses consistently rise to the challenge, driven by a solid duty to their patients and communities. Studies also show that having a sense of purpose and the support of colleagues helps them persevere (Gillespie, Chaboyer, & Wallis, 2007).

Florida's nurses are, without question, some of the most resilient professionals in healthcare. From community health settings like CAN Community Health to large hospital systems, their ability to continue delivering care under extreme circumstances is a testament to their strength and commitment. It is time we recognized the role they play—not just as healthcare providers but as pillars of our community during Florida's most challenging times.

The next time a hurricane looms, remember this: while the storm may be fierce, the spirit of Florida's nurses is fiercer. They are quiet heroes who ensure that our healthcare system endures, no matter the storm. They deserve our admiration, gratitude, and unwavering support. By recognizing the extra effort they put in—from planning to recovery—we can better

appreciate the critical part nurses play in keeping our healthcare systems strong and ready for whatever comes next. ■

References

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Nix, M., & Caldwell, D. (2018). Natural disasters: A Louisiana gulf perspective of maintaining patient care. *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 22(4), 460-463. <https://doi.org/10.1188/18.CJON.460-463>

Katy Wendel is a nursing executive with over 20 years of experience in HIV care, behavioral health, and emergency services. She leads innovative, nurse-led models at CAN Community Health and is dedicated to advancing nursing leadership, mentoring, and improving healthcare access for underserved populations.

Seasonal Plans? Include Vaccine Protection!

Debbie Hogan, RN, BSN, MPH



We all look forward to the holiday season. Unfortunately, because the weather is colder and we are coming together inside with friends and family, there is also the possibility of exposure to contagious diseases like Flu and COVID-19.

We know that vaccines save lives! Data shows us that over 50,000 adult deaths were attributable to vaccine preventable diseases. These deaths can be prevented. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic and misinformation that is spread on social media, vaccine confidence - the trust people have in vaccines - is

impacted. Adult vaccination rates remain below the Healthy People 2020 targets for Flu and several other vaccines.

What can we, as nurses, do to help? Nurses can be a resource for providing credible and science-based information on vaccines and resources for vaccines to our patients. This education can be lifesaving and lead to increased vaccination rates with fewer illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths for our patients and family. Sometimes it just takes hearing the recommendation from a trusted provider to make a difference in compliance.

What about our own health? Vaccine protection is important in maintaining our health as caregivers too. The American Nurses Association, the nurses' professional organization, stresses the professional and ethical responsibility of nurses with regards to vaccines. In addition to protecting ourselves and our clients, we model the importance of vaccines and foster trust. We have an essential role in protect-

ing our patients' health with vaccines.

Resources about recommended vaccines can be found on the CDC website at [cdc.gov/vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines). Many health insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid, cover the cost of Flu and COVID-19 vaccines, as well as children's vaccines. It is hoped that, with advocacy, the Federal government will one day provide a "Vaccines for Adults" program, as they do a "Vaccines for Children" program now. ■

References online:

myamericannurse.com/?p=410897

Debbie Hogan is a retired Public Health Nurse who has devoted her career to promoting community health issues and preventive healthcare. She has presented numerous programs to Florida Nurses Association members on public health issues, as well as articles in the "Florida Nurse" on preventive health issues, the importance of vaccines and the critical role of public health professionals.

