



JNESO

DISTRICT COUNCIL 1, IUOE / AFL-CIO
the professional health care union

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For Immediate Release

Paying Tribute to Nurses who Give Back for Nurses Week 2019

North Brunswick, N.J. -- Nurses do more than just care for patients; they make a difference every day. In celebration of Nurses Week, May 6-12, JNESO, the professional healthcare union, is paying tribute to nurses who not only provide excellent care, but also spend countless hours volunteering their time, skills, and passion to help those in need locally and abroad.

“Nurses are dedicated, compassionate and do amazing work 24/7, but often go unrecognized for their efforts,” said Douglas Placa, Executive Director of JNESO. “We encourage everyone to celebrate Nurses Week by posting a ‘thank you’ or story of how a nurse helped make a difference to you, a loved one, or to your organization on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/JNESO>, and read the incredible stories of volunteerism by JNESO nurses at www.JNESOGiveBack.com.”

Many of JNESO’s nearly 5,000 members are vital volunteers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. “As an organization part of our goals are to serve the community and give back to those we serve,” said Thurese Calhoun, JNESO Community Organizer. “Our members volunteer throughout the year holding backpack and school supply drives, collecting clothing and food, staffing soup kitchens, participating in health fairs, and working with many local churches and community organizations.”

Many JNESO nurses also travel outside our borders to assist the victims of natural disasters and to provide health services for people in third-world countries.

Maria Suarez, a critical care nurse at St. Michael’s Medical Center has been a volunteer for Waves of Health for more than a decade to assist in caring for the people of Dajabon in the Dominican Republic.

“We see upwards of 1,000 people during the trip. These are people who need help and don’t have the resources or ability to go places for treatment,” said Suarez. “We bring medicine, vitamins, do health exams and provide education about issues like blood pressure control and diabetes,” explained Suarez. We are helping people on every level and the experience is amazing. I love what I do, and can’t foresee ever not doing it. Helping others is part of who I am.”

Over the past six years, Sharon London, an emergency room nurse at St. Michael’s Medical Center, has traveled to South America as a volunteer for the Guyana Medical Mission.



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“We spend eight days and visit seven different clinics, covering some 300 miles, to work with the underprivileged and underserved communities in Guyana,” explained London who coordinates patient registration, education efforts and makes sure the clinic runs smoothly.

“Some have never been to a doctor and will come in with extremely high blood pressure, so we have to check them, medicate them, and educate them about eating and diet. They are so respectful and are excited to know what they can do to fix this.” She added, “When you come back the next year and check their charts and see improvements, it is very rewarding to know you have had an impact on their lives. I feel full and rich knowing I can give back.”

Alvidia Ortiz a nurse and the local JNESO president at Hoboken University Medical Center joined a team of volunteers from The Life Christian Church in West Orange, N.J., to help victims of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico as part of the Convoy of Hope. On this mission Ortiz traded her stethoscope for a tool belt. “We manually mixed cement, carried lumber hammered up walls, put in floors and windows, everything needed to build a home in just one week,” she said. “Our group is planning to go back again, there is still a lot of work to be done.”

Diane Franecki, a critical care nurse at Virtua Hospital Marlton, has been a Multiple Sclerosis Society volunteer for more than 20 years. Her 2018 team for the MS City to Shore Bike Event in N.J., included family, friends and fellow JNESO nurses, and was recognized as one of the top fundraisers, donating \$2,800 to the cause.

“So many people supported the effort by donating money, serving as ground support during the race, or just being there to cheer us on along the 150-mile bike route,” said Franecki, who lost her sister and aunt to MS. “I have a lot of family and friends that have been affected by MS. Volunteering is a great way to bring awareness and financial support to research cures and provide services for people with MS.”

Empowering young women was the driving force behind the collection of more than 200 pairs of shoes to support the Girls On The Run-Pocono program. Annmarie Ruggiero who serves as a JNESO Chief Steward and Board Member and works as a nurse at Lehigh Valley Hospital – Pocono organized the drive. “The program provides afterschool programming for girls in grades three to eight. I raised three girls on my own and know how important it is for young women to have opportunities to learn how to be a strong and independent while growing up.”

This was her first drive, but she noted that Pocono nurses are extremely active volunteers. “JNESO and our Pocono nurses always look for ways to give back the local community, so this was a win-win for everyone.”

LVH-Pocono nurses have donated time, resources and expertise to benefit numerous local Pennsylvania organizations such as the Street2Feet day shelter and outreach program in Monroe



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County, Five Loaf House food pantry, Breast Friends cancer program, the Children's Advocacy Center, and participated in the Run 4 Red American Heart Association Marathon.

This past holiday season, JNESO members joined forces to hold the first Angel Tree Celebration to benefit 43 Essex County families. Members at Arbor Glen Care and Rehabilitation Center, Essex County Hospital, Newark Public Health and Saint Michael's Medical center held a luncheon for the families complete with face-painting, crafts, a visit by Santa, and of course gifts of clothes and toys.

"This was one of the largest events we have held, and we are looking forward to doing more large-scale projects in the future," said Calhoun.

"JNESO as an organization has been supporting and standing by nurses for more than 60 years. We provide opportunities for education, training and advocate to make sure our nurses are safe on the job and can provide the best care possible for their patients," said Placa. "We are proud to be able to give back to the communities where we work and serve."