

# the pulse of AALNA



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The American Assisted Living Nurses Association (AALNA) values . . .

## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference a Success

It was not so long ago that the idea of a conference dedicated to assisted living nursing seemed improbable. In fact, according to AALNA President, Josh Allen, in the industry's infancy, many argued whether assisted living nursing was "real" nursing practice.

Today, there is no doubt. Throughout the industry it is now clear that the work in caring for assisted living residents is "real" nursing. The level of autonomy, leadership, and care coordination demanded of assisted living nurses is greater now than ever before. Rightfully recognized, AALNA members from across the country recently gathered in Las Vegas for four days of education, advocacy, and action during the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual AALNA National Conference.

Held in conjunction with the American Healthcare Association/National Center for Assisted Living convention, highlights of

the conference included: the first ever Assisted Living Nurse Certification Exam Preparation Course, a roster of knowledgeable speakers, and numerous networking opportunities.

"Many of the conference participants benefited from the Certification Exam Preparation course," said Allen. "It is a challenging exam, having the opportunity to fine tune knowledge among your peers was time well spent."

The conference's full day of education included speakers on disaster response, national policy, and responding to violent situations. According to Allen, one of the most popular sessions of the day was led by Loretta Kaes, RN, C-AL of Chelsea Senior Living.

"Loretta led a vibrant discussion on managing higher acuity that began with that statement 'higher acuity is here to stay.'



Nearly every nurse in the room agreed, and for the next two hours participants shared insights and tips to help one another successfully respond to higher acuity challenges," said Allen.

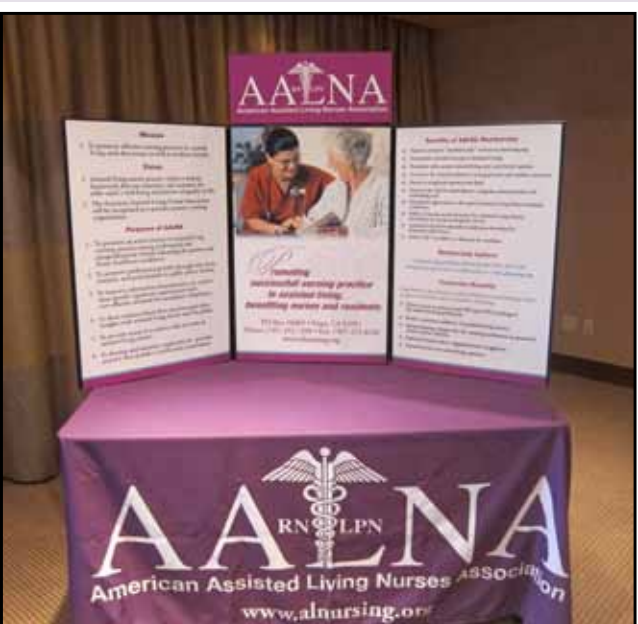
"The professionalism exemplified by our members during the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual AALNA National Conference in October was evident," said Allen. "Our profession has grown, and will continue to grow, along with the assisted living industry."

# Networking One of the Many Benefits of AALNA Conference

Networking has grown from a facet of job searching to a key activity to personal and business development. Having a network of associates to draw inspiration, energy and ideas from is vital – especially in an industry like ours that has the stigma of burn-out and caregiver overload.

During this year's AALNA conference most of the participants stayed for NCAL Day.

Always a popular component of the AHCA/NCAL convention, NCAL Day provides a wonderful opportunity for executive directors, administrators, operators, and nurses to network and learn together. The information networking session was focused on the role of nurses in assisted living and has sparked the creation of a joint AALNA/NCAL task force to continue ongoing dialogue and collaboration on this important issue. Those who took advantage of this networking opportunity benefited from the shared knowledge, new opportunities and connections.



“The level of expertise found in the room during the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual AALNA National Conference was inspiring,” said Josh Allen, AALNA Board president. “I am already looking forward to gathering once again in 2012 in Tampa, Florida.”

## You Passed!

Congratulations to the following professionals for successfully completing the Assisted Living Nurse Specialty certification exam this quarter:

**Terri Berrigan, LPN, C-AL**

**Gail Marshall, RN, C-AL**

**Ann McCannon, RN, C-AL**

**Rani Salter, RN, C-AL**

**Laura Steed, RN, C-AL**

**Raeann Voorhies, RN, C-AL**

## Career Center

Visit our free online Career Center to gain access to the best employers and jobs in the Assisted Living industry. Visit [www.alnursing.org/careers.html](http://www.alnursing.org/careers.html) to get started.

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Care AND Compliance GROUP

**AALNA is lead** by a diverse group of volunteer nurses from around the United States. Board of Directors:

Josh Allen, RN, C-AL  
(President)

Terri Berrigan, LPN, C-AL

Deb Choma, RN

Carol Feaker, RN, BSN

Calvin Groeneweg, RN,  
C-AL (CFO/Treasurer)

Loretta Kaes, RN, C-AL

Margo Kunze, RN

For more information about AALNA or to contact us, visit [www.alnursing.org](http://www.alnursing.org).

## A message from the Board

# Be heard! Be active! Be effective!

The AALNA Board of Directors has recently worked to develop a committee structure that will provide members and opportunity to actively participate in the work to meet AALNA's mission and goals of advancing the practice of assisted living nursing.

Please take a moment to review the committee descriptions below. If you're interested in nominating yourself for committee participation, email Calvin Groeneweg, RN at [calvin@alnursing.org](mailto:calvin@alnursing.org). Please be sure to include your name, email address and the committee you would like to work on.

**Commitment:** We respect your time and will ensure that committee participation is manageable for you. A commitment to participate in a committee will include regular conference calls (typically quarterly) as well as regular correspondence via email.

### Conference Committee

**Duties:** Develop the program of the AALNA annual national conference, including determining educational needs of membership, coordinating with the education committee, and other duties as assigned by board. **Chair:** Loretta Kaes, RN, C-AL

### Policy Committee

**Duties:** Identify policy for AALNA on national level, work with state chapters on issues, set "best practices", issue policy statements for AALNA, and suggest national issues/projects for AALNA and other duties as assigned by board. **Chair:** Josh Allen, RN, C-AL

### Education Committee

**Duties:** Develop educational opportunities for members, including webinars, certification exam preparation courses, and other duties as assigned by board. **Chair:** Terri Berrigan, LPN, C-AL

### Public Relations/Membership Development

**Duties:** Assist in AALNA public relationship and membership development efforts, including coordination with affiliate organizations, suggest changes to the AALNA website, marketing, and other duties as assigned by board. **Co-chairs:** Calvin Groeneweg, RN, C-AL/Carol Feaker, RN

### Chapter Development

**Duties:** Active state chapters and an important part of achieving AALNA's mission and goals. This committee will work closely with current and potential state chapters to aide in chapter development and provide ongoing support. **Chair:** Deb Choma, RN

### Certification/Exam

**Duties:** The certification/exam committee will review the content of certification exam at least annually, make updates when & where needed, suggest sites for on-going pre-course locations and work with Education & Conference Committee to carry pre-course out and other duties as assigned by board. **Chair:** Margo Kunze, RN

# Avoid Burnout with Delegation

By Vicki Anensen-McNealley, PhD, MN, RN, Director of Assisted Living for the Washington Health Care Association

Nurses burnout and leave their jobs in assisted living. As a consultant in an assisted living community, I see or hear about this on what seems like a daily basis. As the only nurse working part-time in a small assisted living community, I experience the burnout. Endless thoughts edge into my mind as I drift off to sleep at night, wondering what I may have forgotten to do...and what there is still to be done.

While an assisted living nurse's job is autonomous for the most part, s/he also feels like an island sometimes; the only

our work and the passion we once had for nursing in this unique realm of health care.

One word describes this revitalization effort: DELEGATION. I'm not referring to the formal definition of delegation, as Washington State nurses and others have come to know it. Teaching unlicensed assisted personnel to perform nursing tasks really is part of the job, and oftentimes cannot be avoided; these tasks are referred to as "formal delegation" and will be reserved for another article at a later date. What I am referring

to is more of an informal version of delegation – giving away, or at the very least sharing, those tasks that do not require a nursing license.

We have held onto non-nursing tasks for one reason or the other. When we do this, we set the expectation that a nurse must be the one – the ONLY one – to perform that task, whatever it may be. I know how it starts out, too. You have a few extra

*What types of tasks are you doing now that you could delegate?*

nurse in a huge sea of caregivers and residents. The overwhelming sense of responsibility serves as an anchor, weighing down on the buoy we call "nursing services." I've come to the realization that we assisted living nurses have created our own demise, but we do have the ability to revitalize



moments and offer to help someone out...then take it over...and never give it back. Over a long period of time, it becomes routine. The problem isn't the task itself but rather the multitude of them, stacking up and squeezing out the nursing role. We lose our nursing identities amongst the plethora of duties we could easily ask someone else to do.

It isn't just the tasks, either. Most folks don't really understand what a nurse does. The clinical and physiological knowledge a nurse holds is incredible and oftentimes unseen. Your nursing knowledge and skill allows you to connect the dots – put vague resident symptoms together, analyze them,

and predict what will happen next if you, THE NURSE, do not intervene. This "assessment" happens quietly and efficiently, and is invisible to the non-nurse eye. So what happens? Others feel we may not be working enough because they cannot SEE the effort and work put forth. Therefore, we add more "tasks" – to demonstrate our excellent work ethic. And so begins the cycle of burnout.

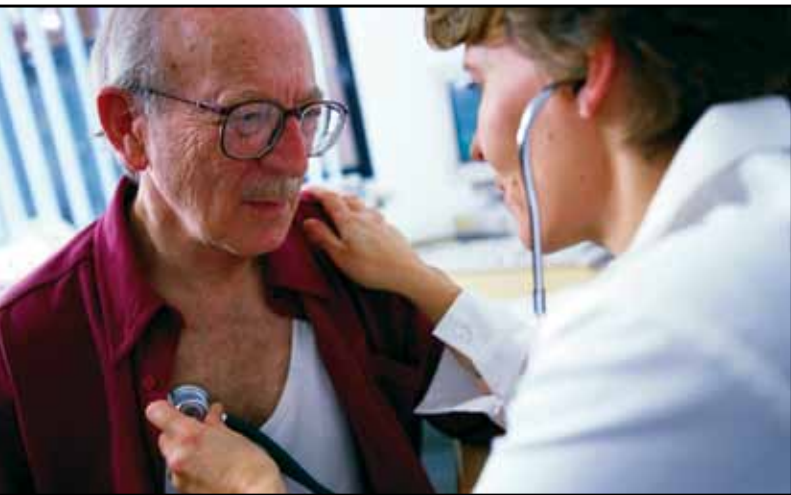
Delegating duties is not a bad venture, and you are not the only person in your assisted living community who may feel the burnout of your job. Unlicensed assisted personnel (nursing assistants, caregivers) often incur monotonous job

*Continued*

## Burnout (cont.)

duties with little variation. The addition of a different

role as the assisted living nurse. Delegate non-nurse



task, more responsibility, and recognition of their dedication certainly could serve both the nurse and the caregiver well. Seeking out talent in small places can lend to your eventual re-energized view of your

tasks to the talented others in your workplace!

What types of tasks are you doing now that you could delegate? Those things that do not necessarily require nursing knowledge

or skill; duties that you didn't learn in nursing school. Things like staff scheduling, investigating incidents (yes, I said it. Did you go to detective school?), folding clothes, serving meals, thinning resident charts, making physician appointments... the list goes on.

Some of the boldest nurses I know in assisted living have done the unthinkable – delegated the daily medication grind to a talented, organized, and dedicated medication aide. Can you imagine? No more ordering meds from the pharmacy...no more recapping MARs at the end of the month... no more passing pill after

pill. While we haven't quite figured how to get our hands totally out of the medication world, these nurses certainly seem to enjoy looking in from the outer edge of the med cart to see how it's all going and to provide advice as necessary.

Assisted living nursing is a rewarding profession with so much opportunity for creativity. Building the perfect care team begins with delegating the non-nursing tasks to the right people. By preparing these folks through training, mentoring, nurturing, and praising, your workload is sure to shift back to the role of the nurse. Satisfaction guaranteed.

## Join AALNA Today!

The American Assisted Living Nurses Association (AALNA) values your ongoing support, and we are committed to providing the best value possible for your membership. AALNA members receive the following benefits:

- **STAY CONNECTED!** As an AALNA member you will have access to a nationwide network of assisted living nurses.
- **MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!** - AALNA is actively involved in the national policy discussion, and provides assisted living representation on numerous national organizations, boards of directors, committees and initiatives.
- **DISCOUNTS ON CERTIFICATION EXAM** AALNA maintains and administers the exam for Assisted Living Nurse Specialty Certification.
- **SUBSCRIPTION TO GERIATRIC NURSING JOURNAL** AALNA membership includes a one-year subscription to the Geriatric Nursing Journal.
- **FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO NCAL FOCUS** Through our partnership with the National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL), AALNA members receive NCAL Focus each month.
- **DISCOUNTS ON CEUS AND STAFF TRAINING MATERIALS**
- **DISCOUNTS ON LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE**

**Benefit from being part of a nursing organization run for nurses, by nurses.**

**Start your AALNA membership today by visiting [www.alnursing.org](http://www.alnursing.org) or calling (707) 253-7299!**