



Supporting Recognition of Clinical Nurses With the DAISY Award

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What is meaningful recognition? As a nurse leader, are you prepared to answer that question? Understanding the implications and impact of recognition for nursing staff is a powerful tool for nursing leaders. The DAISY Award is used in more than 2,100 organizations around the globe to give meaning to recognition. Here is a glimpse of the power that recognition can bring to an organization, to its leaders, and most importantly to staff.

Scenario: It is 7:00 AM-shift change time in the intensive care unit (ICU), and nurses are transitioning care of their very sick patients from one registered nurse (RN) to another. The doors to

the ICU open, and in walk the hospital's chief nursing officer (CNO), chief executive officer (CEO), chief operating officer, several nursing directors, and members of the Professional Practice Council. They look for the ICU manager, who eagerly awaits their arrival. A nurse in the unit is receiving the DAISY Award this morning, and the manager is very excited for what is about to take place and what it represents to the individual and to the unit. Tim, an RN who has been working in the hospital for less than 2 years, comes around the corner, joining his colleagues, who are assembling around the nurses' station for a meeting. He spots senior nursing leadership, then the green DAISY bag, and the Cinnabons, and he knows that this combination can only mean one thing! Someone on the unit will be recognized with The DAISY Award today. He wonders who it will be.

The DAISY Foundation was founded 16 years ago by the family of J. Patrick Barnes to recognize nurses and the extraordinary care that they experienced as a family.¹ Patrick was 33 years old, the

father of a 6-week-old baby girl, when he was hospitalized with a severe case of idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP). Pat died after 8 weeks in the hospital from complications of ITP. His family was deeply grateful to the nurses who treated him and who cared for his family through their ordeal. So they created The DAISY Award for extraordinary nurses, for nurses like Tim.

Scenario: The CNO looks at Tim and says, "Today, Tim, you are being honored for the extraordinary care you gave to a patient. The nomination was written for you by the patient's wife." Tim immediately recognizes his patient, who was quadriplegic, ventilated, and loved music! After work one evening, he bought several CDs that he thought his patient would enjoy. Tim brought in a CD player and turned on the music from "Phantom of the Opera". His patient clearly responded to the soft music. When his wife came in that morning, she could see her husband was less anxious and more comfortable. It brought tears to her eyes, and she had to share how meaningful Tim's act of kindness—one of many Tim

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had offered to her husband—was to her and to her husband. She nominated Tim for the DAISY Award. To add to Tim's surprise, the patient's wife stepped forward. Her husband had passed away, but she needed to thank Tim personally not only for the music but also for all he had done for her husband. She said she would never forget him. As the CEO pinned the DAISY pin on, Tim reflected that he would not forget this day. A day that would continue to inspire his nursing practice.

It took just a few minutes for this proud team to stop and reflect on the special care one of its members delivered to their patients. They delighted together in the Cinnabon rolls brought to celebrate their unit and to remind them of how special they are, because they are nurses. It took just a few minutes for senior administrators to come to the unit and share in this reflection of why they had gone into healthcare to begin with. It took just a few minutes for all to think about this 1 example of all the "right" going on in this hospital every day. Yet the impact would last much, much longer. Tim would never forget this feeling of recognition. He would cherish his new standing as a DAISY nurse for life, sending the link to his DAISY Spotlight webpage to his parents in another state. His colleagues in the unit would share in the knowledge that their hospital genuinely cares about the human connections they make with patients and families, respecting the impact quality has on the financial bottom line. The nurses and all gathered that morning would see that the hospital's values are not just words on a sign and a Web site, but they are lived

by the staff and the C-suite, who took the time to celebrate them. The CNO and other nurse leaders would see that meaningful recognition impacts their staff and themselves. And very importantly, the patient's wife would have the opportunity to express her gratitude to the nurses who cared for her dying husband. This was part of her healing process. She would tell her family and friends about the special moments of recognition she shared with Tim in her husband's memory and show them the pictures taken with Tim and the hospital's leadership under the celebratory DAISY banner that would hang in the unit.

What had led up to this moment? Nominations for the DAISY Award had been collected from boxes located around the hospital and from the hospital's Web site. An administrative assistant had blinded them, removing the name of the nominees, assigning an identifying number to each of the 37 nominations received that month. The Professional Practice Council had reviewed the nomination stories, evaluating them against the criteria for the DAISY Award they had written when they started the program—criteria that fit their hospital's mission and their practice model. And they had chosen Tim to be honored that month. This was one of their most uplifting roles as a shared governance council. Every month, they received nominations for their colleagues. Reading these stories of extraordinary nursing made them proud of their peers, of their profession, and of their organization that valued them as professional nurses. Their council represented a culture that supports its staff with a healthy work environment retaining excellent

employees and ensuring they have what they need to do their best work.

What makes this organization's recognition program so meaningful? First, it focuses on what nurses do every day—how they provide clinically excellent and compassionate care to patients and their families. The organization's leadership is engaged, attending DAISY Award presentations in the unit, being visible among their staff, and sharing the honorees' stories publicly with their Board and their community. No one in this organization could say, "Our nurses have enough recognition." Leadership knows that nurses can never be recognized "enough." Nominations come from anyone in the organization, including physicians who enjoy watching nurse colleagues receive the recognition they deserve. The fact that nominations are blinded is symbolic of the transparency and trust engendered among the nursing staff. This is no popularity contest. This structured program takes place throughout the year, so the staff could depend on nominees and honorees being unveiled publicly on a regular basis.

As Maya Angelou famously observed, "I've learned that people

Table 1. *The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses*¹

Active in over 2,100 healthcare facilities
Operational in all 50 states
Celebrated in 15 countries
>65,000 nurses honored
>700,000 nominations written



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will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”² Meaningful recognition makes nurses feel pride, humility, loyalty to team and organization, commitment to their profession, and more. The DAISY Award is an international

award (Table 1), transcending cultures through recognition. Given the stress and demands of today’s changing healthcare world, why would an organization not ensure that every nurse has the opportunity to feel these emotions through the work to which they have committed their lives?

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