

Leader to Honor

Maureen Swick, RN, MSN, PhD, NEA-BC

Amy Brown, MS, RN, NE-BC

Dr. Maureen Swick began her nursing career by earning her associate degree in nursing from Brookdale Community College and BSN from Monmouth University. She has worked as a staff nurse and clinical nurse specialist, and held various leadership positions, including chief nursing officer and chief operating officer. Dr. Swick currently serves as the system chief nurse executive for Inova, the largest not-for-profit health care provider in the Washington, DC, area.

Dr. Swick earned her MSN from Columbia University and her PhD from Kennedy Western University. She is a strong nurse advocate and leader, and is committed to transforming the nursing profession. Dr. Swick possesses expertise in optimizing clinical operations, strategic planning, organizational development, critical decision making, and transformational leadership. She has recently developed and implemented a patient-centered care delivery model within the Inova system that was featured by the advisory board in 2014.

Dr. Swick served on the American Hospital Association (AHA) board, representing the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) from 2012 to 2014. She is a member of numerous professional organizations, including the American Nurses Association; the American College of Healthcare Executives; AONE, where she served on the Region 2 board of directors for 2 years; and the Organization of Nurse Executives of New Jersey, where she spent 13 years as a board member including president. Dr. Swick brings this wealth of experience in to her new role as president of AONE beginning in 2016.

Dr. Swick has been married for 30 years and has 4 children. One of her daughters is an RN, and one of her sons is in school pursuing a career in nursing as well. Her current position is senior vice president, chief nurse executive of Inova Health System.

AB: What are you looking forward to the most as you begin your role as president of AONE?

MS: As I begin my term as AONE president in 2016, I eagerly look forward to working with the best and brightest nurse leaders serving on the board with me, as well as the incredibly talented AONE staff. I learned a great deal this past year under Linda Burnes Bolton's amazing leadership. Her shoes will be extremely tough to fill, but I take comfort in knowing Linda will be there to support me and the board as past president. A valuable lesson Linda taught me is to always keep our mission and vision in our line of sight. As a board, this will guide our decision making and conversations as we carry out AONE's strategic plan.

AB: What most excites you about the future of AONE and the future of nursing leadership?

MS: What excites me most about the future of AONE and nursing leadership is that we have an extremely engaged and diverse membership representing nurse leaders from across the country as well as globally. In spite of the very chaotic environment we are all working



in today, as an organization, we remain united in focusing our efforts on shaping health care through innovative and expert nursing leadership. Having recently participated in AONE's strategic planning committee, I am confident that AONE is moving in the right direction to keep us ahead of the curve while increasing value to our membership.

AB: How would you describe your career journey that put you where you are now?

MS: I am frequently asked this question by nurse leaders in my organization. I often chuckle as I sometimes think our

nurses believe we were hatched into our executive positions. My leadership journey began during my childhood. As the eldest daughter of 10 children, I always felt that I needed to lead by example. I certainly wasn't perfect, but I tried. I attended nursing school a little later in life and was immediately drawn to a leadership position. I attained my first leadership role within 2 years of graduating from school. From that point on, I was addicted and continued to develop myself by attending graduate school and ultimately receiving my first CNO [chief nursing officer] role at the same hospital where I began my nursing career.

AB: Who are some of the leaders that inspired you along the way?

MS: I am fortunate to have been exposed to many inspiring leaders along my leadership journey. My first and most impactful inspiring leader was my mother. After raising 10 children, she returned to school and fulfilled her dream of becoming a nurse. We spoke nightly about her work as a bedside nurse, and [she] would share with me the things she felt I as a leader needed to improve for our profession.

She never knew how much I viewed her as the true leader with her unrelenting advocacy and devotion to her patients. She lived her dream as a nurse until she lost her battle with colon cancer at the age of 64.

I have been blessed by many leaders who have and continue to inspire me, but I would be remiss if I did not mention former AONE president Kathy Sanford. I will always remember the day she came to speak to our chapter at ONE/NJ about AONE and its strategic plan. Her incredibly confident presence and passion for AONE left me wanting to be a part of this great organization. Who knew that many years later she would be the one to pass the baton to me when I became AONE's representative on the AHA board in 2012?

Once on the board, I was embraced by yet another inspiring nurse leader, past AONE president Rhonda Anderson. She held my hand and continuously offered insight and advice through my first year of serving on the AHA board. The rest of the AHA board members also inspired me greatly, and I am grateful to each of

them for the role they played in my life and career.

AB: Can you describe common characteristics among those you consider inspirational leaders?

MS: Inspirational leaders have passion for what they believe in; it is palpable when you are in their presence. They inspire you to want to be part of something bigger than yourself. For me, inspirational leaders are approachable and transparent. They listen and are able to connect with you on a personal level while instilling trust. Inspirational leaders are accountable for their actions and can readily admit their mistakes. Inspirational leaders have high standards and expectations, and are there to support you in achieving them.

AB: I am certain others would name you as an inspirational leader in their lives and careers.

What have you found to be important in developing mentoring relationships?

MS: The most important thing is to be present. There are so many distractions in our work environment, it can be challenging to put all of that aside and



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