

Leader to Honor

Linda Burnes Bolton, DrPH, RN, FAAN

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Dr. Linda Burnes Bolton is an extraordinary nurse leader: visionary, purposeful, committed to mentoring and sponsoring nurses in multiple roles and locations, including advanced practice nurses. An accomplished author, speaker and educator, Linda truly exemplifies “servant lead-

ership.” A long-tenured senior nurse executive at Cedars-Sinai Health System, Linda balances local community leadership with her national and international nursing leadership activities. A special view into Linda’s success begins with following her “true north” or guiding light, centered on human caring.

ASB: You were the third nurse leader featured in this journal. Over the past 12 years, what has occurred that has contributed to your growth as a leader? What do you consider the key accomplishments you have been involved in and led in the past 12 years?

LBB: “Time flies when you’re having fun!” Honestly I’ve so enjoyed every experience I’ve had during these past 12 years. I’ve focused my core value of “human caring” on how I can help others through use of my knowledge, skills, and networks. This is why I went into nursing in the first place. As I think back over the years, I reflect on the journey which Roxane Spitzer helped launch for me. I began as a clinical nurse specialist and assistant director of nursing education; with Roxane’s guidance and mentoring, I realized I could move into executive leadership to make a broader impact.

As I widened my network, opportunities to create and contribute emerged outside Cedars-Sinai and California. I value the ability to “call the circle” of people who care about advocating for patients and all

humankind, raising consciousness through communication. I try to role model respectful, dignified, open, and inclusive leadership, soliciting others’ ideas. I am especially interested and involved in the goal to insure equitable access to care and health information to help make good care decisions for themselves and their families.

ASB: You have served as a key leader in a number of organizations. What motivates you to do so with your very busy schedule?

LBB: I really enjoy leadership in academic, practice, and educational arenas, so that’s my motivation. In addition to being chief nurse at a superb health system, I have the honor of being elected as president of the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) to serve in 2015. I have previously served as the president of the National Black Nurses Association and the American Academy of Nursing. During my tenure with the Academy, I worked on an initiative to improve the clinical practice environment, first in acute care settings, then across the entire care continuum. That led to being involved in the early

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation work on Transforming Care at the Bedside with Sue Hassmiller and Risa Lavizzo-Mourey. I first met Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey when I was working on the National Advisory Council for the Agency for Healthcare Policy and Research. Through these connections, I also had the wonderful opportunity to work on three National Institute of Health advisory councils, under Secretary Sullivan of Health and Human Services. An early connection which led me to other leadership opportunities was Sigma Theta Tau, where I worked on a study to increase educational opportunities for nurses. I had the distinct honor of chairing the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Commission on Nursing for the chief nursing officer (now retired), Cathy Rick. Through Cathy, I had the chance to meet other VHA leaders. Our work on improving the practice environment for nurses expanded with “Aligning Forces for Quality” at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. As I became more involved with the AONE board and board committees, I was fortunate to meet many nurse



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