

Sue Fabian presents:

Towards 2005 From a Perspective Beginning 1988

It has been a privilege over the last 16 years to know many school nurses from around our state. WSNA has been the vehicle for that to happen. We have been so fortunate to have nurses like Shirley Lee, Chris Smalley, Babs Blair, Sally Prigge and many others who have lead our organization through the years. Shirley and Babs were even national leaders when NASN was beginning. And we are still an organization abounding in leadership and talent. It is an honor to be the WSNA president for the next 2 years with the dedicated nurses who are our members.

The nurses of WSNA have "filled my cup" with information and ideas and incentive. It has been an active, productive organization that has pushed for change and accomplished it! In the 80's school nurses worked with the State Health Department to strengthen immunization laws and developed a school health manual for Wyoming. In the 90's school nurses worked together to establish minimum guidelines for school health screenings. And all along they have sponsored education for school nurses. Yet, perhaps the most valuable gift from WSNA has been just getting to know other nurses and sharing our experiences. Sometimes we feel so isolated in our practice. Mingling (networking sounds so cold) with nurses from all over Wyoming gives a better sense of community and shared mission.

And of course, our mission is always to improve opportunities for our kids at home. I have a simple agenda over the next couple of years to do just that. First of all, school nurses are using way too much of their time and energy doing immunization paperwork instead of working directly with other programs to help kids and families. Immunization compliance is obviously important, but there has got to be a better way! After the last several years of immunization law weakening due to resistance over Hep B, the time may be ripe for needed change. The State Health Department has been understandably reluctant to reopen the statute due to fears of pressure from the anti-immunization faction. But now that the religious objection is interpreted so broadly as to be a philosophical objection anyway, there is less to lose. And I hope there is a lot for us to gain. The 30 day grace period has been an albatross around our necks for too long. It has shifted the responsibility for immunization compliance from the parents to the school itself ; and that means the school nurse. I propose that we seek to eliminate the 30 day grace period and require an immunization record to be provided before the student can register at school. We will still need to do follow-up on immunizations in progress, but we would eliminate all those hours of tracking down records from previous schools and doctor's offices.

The State Health Department and Immunization Program, through John Jones and Sunny Kaste, has approached our organization just this last month over the immunization registry and the law. As incoming WSNA president, I met with Dr. Sherard and the other department heads just 2 weeks ago about the immunization registry. In another week we meet again about the immunization law itself. The registry sounds like a wonderful help to us and supposedly will start to be implemented through some school nurses yet this year. Goshen County is to be the first county on line with the private MD providers in Torrington AND with school nurses. The registry is an on-line program that provides immunization records from around the state and allows us to input new records too. We should have both

read and write privileges. You will definitely be hearing more about this program! I will e-mail you as more information comes down the pike.

My other mission while in office is to do something about the obesity epidemic with kids. I have ideas, but not a formulated plan. If there are others of you who are also concerned that we do something coordinated through WSNA, put on your thinking caps and help me to develop that plan. Do we need to form a coalition? Do we need to develop a position statement? Should we collect and distribute research on the topic? If any of you are already making inroads, let me know what you are doing and how you did it. Come to our Fall meeting to help and learn more.

So let's continue to work together and to have some fun together too! Those dinners in Casper on the night before workshops and meetings have been such fun in the past. Let's do them again! Join us everyone.