Maureen Flak RN, BSN

2017 Granger Westberg Leadership in Faith Community Nursing Award

Maureen Flak exemplifies excellence in professional practice and mentorship in every role she undertakes. For many years, she traveled the world as a military wife and nurse, developing a passion and understanding of different cultures. After settling in our community, she became a nursing supervisor in the inpatient behavioral health hospital. After an early retirement, Maureen found that she still had gifts to share and a passion to be a change agent in her community, so she sought out opportunities to be of service. She now serves a dual role as a faith community nurse for her home congregation and as a congregational nurse in their outreach ministry working with resettlement agencies and refugees from all over the world.

Maureen consistently provides whole person nursing care using evidence based practice principles for those in her clinical practice. She also serves as a mentor for senior nursing and social work students. She seeks to instill a passion in them to address whole person care, not just disease management, and to value all individuals regardless of life circumstances.

Maureen is a vital change agent in our community, often giving voice to refugees who feel marginalized and invisible. They have often endured significant losses and unimaginable horrors in escaping war torn lands or long term existence in refugee camps. She seeks to build trusting relationships and break down barriers of language, culture, and economic hardships. Her goal is to empower clients to positively impact their health status by providing nursing assessments/interventions. She works to assure that everyone has a primary care provider and remove barriers such as food insecurities, inability to obtain medications and transportation.

She is viewed as an expert bridge builder in our community in developing referral opportunities with a variety of primary care providers, service and non-profit agencies and faith community leaders. Last year, a new refugee on dialysis was assigned to our community from the State Department. Timing for the man's care was critical as he would need dialysis within twelve hours of arrival. Maureen contacted community agencies and the health system to develop a plan of care. He was met at the airport and taken by ambulance to the emergency room, admitted to the hospital and received dialysis that evening. After several days of hospitalization, he was admitted to a skilled care facility due to multiple medical co-morbidities. Had Maureen not been in place to advocate on this man’s behalf, the outcome may not have been so positive!

In 2015, a staff member at the church was in an automobile accident, killing her 10-year-old son. This family was particularly close to the pastor and his wife who have no children. They considered this child their grandchild. Maureen found herself not only trying to provide caregiving for the family and her church members but also for the minister who was broken. Maureen described this time as a sacred walk of faith during unimaginable suffering. She has also been involved with a committee developing a program for teens entitled *Me, We and HE*. It was created to address sexual issues with teens and parents that includes STD’s, discussion of HIV, sexting and abuse. This has been a collaboration between a faith community and a local agency working with HIV and AIDS.

Maureen has also been a change agent in her faith community by supporting back pack programs for children that provide meals over the weekend for food insecure children. She has also helped coordinate volunteer support within the faith community to assist the local YWCA in providing shelter to homeless families. Within the refugee community, she has coordinated four free influenza clinics per year and set up registration events for the Affordable Care Act and our local Orange Card Program that offers primary care, dental care and medications to those at 200% of poverty or below.

Maureen is a vital part of the Congregational Nurse Program for our health system. She regularly attends monthly meetings, is proactive in maintaining mandatory licensure/trainings, and consistently volunteers to help with community health screenings or to mentor new congregational nurses. She seeks out local and regional continuing education opportunities to enhance her skills and assure that she is offering evidenced based practice health teaching for both individual and group programs. As a nurse with expertise in emergency preparedness she has offered programs for her church as well as others in our community.

Maureen has a servant heart – her professional work is not a job but a passion and a calling. She readily shares those words with anyone who asks. She consistently states that she is honored and awed to walk with members and clients across the age continuum in their life journeys. Maureen feels humbled that individuals and families allow her to share in their joys and challenges. She would share that life is about relationships and that she gets much more than she ever gives!