



A labor of love for Queens nurses

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The job of a registered nurse is all-encompassing, including catering for the sick or the infirm, exhibiting compassion as well providing support or advice to patients and family members, and educating patients and the public about different medical conditions.

While nursing can be considered a demanding career, the gratification that comes along with aiding a patient can be very recompensing.

While some nurses may be driven by the remunerations that a nursing career proposes, others are motivated by the fulfilling sensations derived from providing the best possible care to sick and injured patients. This is why for Nurses' Week we take the time to acknowledge extraordinary nurses contributing in providing healthier lives across the borough.

One of such nurses includes Maria DeMarinis Smilios of Flushing Hospital: clinical nurse specialist, director of nursing maternal child health and medical surgical.

Smilios had her first exposure to nursing as a volunteer at the age of 14. Since then she has broadened her skills and experiences by working in numerous nursing units, which include neonatal intensive care, maternal and a specialty in child care. Driven by the satisfaction received from parents and family members when contributing to the life of a patient, her income is an infinitesimal factor for the purpose of choosing her nursing career path.

Far more important is the affection she has for helping people and being in a position to comfort

the traumatic experiences patients might be dealing with. With the aptitude to mold families, Smilios hopes to have an impact on how children are reared and to preclude infections. Though nursing is a very reputable and highly regarded career, Smilios believes nurses do not get the esteem they deserve.

"Nurses are not the Betty Boop characters that are often portrayed; I would like to enhance the way nurses are regarded," she said.

Smilios admits that the most challenging part about being a nurse is realizing she has so many personalities to deal with. Even so, Smilios continues to prosper in meeting those challenges with her very indispensable technique: proper communication.

"I pride myself in being a good communicator. It is very important for me to open up a line of communication between myself and my patients, figuring out the problem first and then confronting the problem head-on," she said.

When asked what advice she may have for establishing nurses, Smilios said, "Firstly, one must identify why he or she would choose nursing as a career choice. Simply ask yourself, is it because of passion or is it for the money? Many a times the answer to that simple question alone may provide answers to several other unanswered questions. As a nurse, it is important to receive satisfaction from being and connecting with patients, building unbreakable trust."

Beth Palmas, another exemplary nurse from Jamaica Hospital, was initially motivated by witnessing the love different nurses extended to patients. She has worked in different capacities, continuously learning, growing and bettering herself as a nurse.

Palmas describes her relationship with her patients as a journey. For new or nursing mothers the journey begins when they were pregnant and carries on even after they deliver.

"I see my job as an opportunity to be a role model and a mom, to share information and to maintain wellness," Palmas said. "I enjoy having personal discussions with my patients, discussions that they may not be open enough to discuss with other people. It has taught me to be a better communicator."

Like every other profession, attaining success in a highly-esteemed field comes with hardships. Palmas has certainly had her share, hitting a climax when her mother had a very severe stroke in 2008. While this is a traumatic experience for anyone, Palmas was able to overcome by using her experiences and knowledge as a nurse to help save her mother's life.

This easily became one of many other reasons why Palmas loves her profession, indicating that she has absolutely no regrets, nor would she ever think twice about being a nurse. When asked what advice she may give to other aspiring nurses, Palmas says to look at the bigger picture.

"Begin with a position that may not be exactly what you want if that is what is being offered to you," she said. It builds resume and provides experience, be patient. Engage in an outside activity to make life less stressful. Be creative and explore different avenues."

Her only fear with regards to nursing is people going into it for the wrong reasons.

"Nursing is a labor of love," Palmas said. "There's no other profession to be in."

