

A Message From the Chief Nurse

Nurses,

On November 1, 2005 I assumed the helm as Chief Nurse Officer with a humbling privilege to serve you. My four term of office now comes to a close.

I believed then, as I do now, that the Chief Nurse exists only because of the nurses that this role serves.

I have witnessed the untiring dedication and commitment of your work at the bedside, in communities, in policy and research in caring for our nation's people. Your work makes me proud to be a nurse.

In these past short 4 years, I have worked with you in order to build the future of nursing in public health and the next generation of nurses who will serve our nation.

My tenure has been filled with much personal and professional growth.

Together we gave visibility to the important work that nurses do.

We initiated career development, mentoring, counseling and recognition programs;

We built partnerships with the professional and federal nursing community;

We strengthened the use of research and evidence in our practice;

We increased our nurse officer workforce by over 10 % and remained the largest category of Commissioned Corps Officers (1500);

We exerted leadership in the transformation of the Commissioned Corps and increased nurse readiness to respond to public health emergencies to an unprecedented rate of over 95%;

We weathered storms – like Gustav and Ike- to ease the suffering of those who needed help the most.

We stepped up to meet global humanitarian needs to assist remote communities across the world.

We persevered in our mission to protect, promote and advance the health and safety of our nation.

And most importantly our nation is better, stronger and healthier because of the excellence and selfless service of nurses.

Despite these accomplishments, there is much left to do –such is the work of nursing.

There are so many more lives to touch, challenges to conquer, barriers to overcome, bridges to cross and lessons to learn in our crafting a healthier nation.

I have many people to thank who shared this four year journey with me.

I am grateful for the many, many sacrifices that my husband and family have made to allow me to serve.

I am grateful to the NIH and the Office of the Surgeon General who made it possible for me to accept this role and provided support throughout my term.

I am grateful to those who walked *before* me to shed light on my journey and blaze paths for me to follow. The past Chief Nurses and my many mentors are too numerous to mention. I am here because of their greatness.

I am grateful to those who walked *beside me* – all the nurses and non nurses who shared and supported our mission to keep America healthy. You have given me precious memories and moments of inspiration.

I am grateful to those who *follow me* --who will learn from our experiences and build on the foundations that were laid.

My four year journey has given me the most exciting experiences of my professional career. I thank all of you who touched my life and challenged me to be better. I continue to believe that nursing is the Lantern for the future of human health and that Nurses will light the way to improve the health and safety of our great nation and the world.

As my tenure ends, I hand down the Chief Nurse responsibilities to my successor, **RADM Kerry Nessler**.

I ask that you give her the same dedicated support that you have shown to me. Her commitment and passion for nursing assures me that our future is in caring and competent hands. Join me in saluting her leadership and welcoming her as our new Chief Nurse.

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Office of the Surgeon General
Former Chief Nurse Officer