

District Three Nurses Association's inception was in 1918, when Ohio Nurses Association (ONA) was divided into regions to encourage more participation and better communications among nurses within the state. Minutes from the first organizational meeting showed a discussion encouraging members to help with the Red Cross and home defense in support for WWI efforts. Edna Womer, the first president, was a Red Cross nurse. Always patriotic, the association participated in defense efforts during WWII and all military conflicts since with some members joining the military or being reservists and activated during conflicts.

From that first year to this one, District Three has been committed to its mission: "to advance professional nursing practice in Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana counties in service of quality health care." Members were provided and supported in educational endeavors and encouraged to voice their expertise in nursing and healthcare issues locally, state-wide, and nationally. In addition, members were encouraged to volunteer in their local communities' healthcare activities. Some community needs that were served annually included:

- Flu immunization clinics (Salk and Covid, too)
- Information sharing/screenings at health clinics
- Health assessments, advice, and referrals for troubled youths at the Daybreak Care facility for 35 years
- Donations to and assistance at the Food Bank
- Receptions to congratulate and celebrate graduating nursing students from nursing schools within the three counties
- Nursing student recruitment activities
- Provision of scholarships to nursing students within the three counties
- Blood pressure screenings at the Canfield Fair for over six decades
- Guest lectures at area nursing schools
- Healthcare lectures to community organizations, and
- Working with local and state government officials regarding nursing and healthcare legislation issues.

This long and rich history of advocacy and caring for area citizens and their own welfare has enshrined District members' efforts into nursing history. In 1965, RNs organized a mass resignation of nurses when a contract could not be negotiated at

Youngstown Hospital Association's (YHA) two hospitals, Northside and Southside. At the time, RNs were expected not to engage in a strike because of the American Nurses Association's "No Strike Policy," which changed in 1968. Proprietors of YHA, had issued a wage increase of 10¢ to full-time RNs, but only 5¢ to part-time nurses, who were most of the nursing staff. The action of these local staff RNs resulted in the creation of the first ONA Collective Bargaining Unit, which was the first RN Collective Bargaining Unit in the state of Ohio and the second RN Collective Bargaining Unit in the U.S. Local newspapers termed this action "the most expensive nickel ever!"

Leading this effort for staff nurses' role and rights in determining their own economic and general welfare within the healthcare work environment was Mary Ellen Patton, RN, a staff nurse. She later became the Executive Director of District Three. Until her death in 2022, she was an inspirational role model mentoring and speaking to nurse leaders and nursing organizations regarding improvement of their work environment. Her motto for all members was "one nurse can make a difference" and she was certainly one that did. In 1972, Mrs. Patton became the first staff nurse to be elected to the American Nurses Association (ANA) Board of Directors. She was a founding member of the Institute of Constituent Member Collective Bargaining Programs and the ANA Staff Nurse Caucus. In 1995, her advocacy led to ANA's establishment of the **Mary Ellen Patton Staff Nurse Leadership Award** in her honor with her being the first recipient. This award is now known as the Distinguished Direct Patient Care Award recognizing an "individual RN who provides exemplary direct patient care and contributes to the advancement of nursing practice by demonstrating a commitment to personal leadership development and serving as an inspirational role model for others." Through her dedication, commitment, and advocacy, Mrs. Patton received many other awards and, in 2014, was honored by being inducted into ANA's Hall of Fame. She was truly **ONE NURSE WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE!**

As director of District Three, she established scholarships to assist members and local nursing students in their educational endeavors. Her legacy and District Three's will continue in perpetuity in the establishment of nursing scholarships for nursing student residents of Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana counties and attending local universities in the three counties. Throughout its 105 years history, many members have held or currently hold positions in nursing

organizations as well as other local and state healthcare organizations. We were always political activists for patient care and professional nursing issues.

Additionally, District Three worked with Wendall August Forge to develop medallions commemorating nurses in historical events. These medallions were sold as gifts and/or collections to provide monies for members to attend state and national professional meetings or continuing education programs required for license renewal. These heirlooms medallions are displayed or framed in numerous healthcare personnel's offices and libraries, as well as pictured and written about in several nursing books. A member was the artist for the medallions.

Although the dissolution of District Three is bittersweet, we are happy that our legacy will continue through immortalizing these scholarships and donating our artifacts to the Melnick Medical and Labor Museums. Our membership enhanced our lives, our profession, and our counties. We are NURSES WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE!