Professional nursing organizations are integral for generating proactive work and creating opportunity for energy and creativity for professional growth (Matthews, 2012). They create a milieu for advocacy, coaching, mentoring, and a spirit for advancing the nursing profession. The National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN) has been a platform for bringing together Hispanic nurses to forums for addressing population health concerns, professional mentoring and advocacy for culturally congruent care in healthcare. The four New England Chapters (Mass-NAHN, NAHN-Western MASS, NAHN-Hartford, and Connecticut-NAHN) united to communicate efforts on creating environments for such professional development.

The MASS “Boston” Chapter of NAHN developed the Aspiring Nurse Leader Fellowship in 2015. The program is designed to promote a “lived experience” for learning leadership attributes through mentorship with an experienced nurse leader. Claudia Ascencio (the first fellow), in collaboration with Joan Vitello, PhD, RN and Joan Russo, MSN, RN, brought forward the forums of nursing salons for Claudia to expand upon her leadership attributes and skills. Nursing salons were developed by Marie Manthey as venues for nurses to speak and discuss issues within an informal “safe” settings. They promote nursing wellness and engagement to find best ways to approach nuances within the profession. Two sessions have been held with 18 attendees. A post evaluation revealed; 18 (100%) felt an essence of connection and sharing of learning, exploring and developing strengths; 18 (100%) felt the salon set a stage for a stress free environment conducive to meaningful nursing dialogue; 18 (100%) felt that nursing salons helped them to regain composure, reform their thoughts and re-engage in nursing work; 18 (100%) believed that colleagues would benefit within such forums and would highly recommend them.

In 2013, LifeChoice organized its first BlueGreen Walk to raise funds to educate the Connecticut and Massachusetts communities about the critical need for individuals to join the Donor Registry and continues to make strides in raising awareness for the organ donation and transplantation community as evidenced by a record high fundraising effort of $102,814. The National Association of Hispanic Nurses, Western Massachusetts Chapter, team “Be the Cure”, have been an active participant of the BlueGreen Walk since its inception in 2013. Each year the professional nursing organization recruits chapter members, nursing students, allied health care representatives, and family and friends to join them in promoting the need to increase registered Hispanic organ donors. A recruitment goal of 15 walkers for 2016 proved to be a greater accomplishment as the team was able to surpass that goal and recruit a total of 33 walkers. The collaborative efforts of walkers and the support from eight additional chapters of National Association of Hispanic Nurses, resulted in the ability to raise over $3,000. The decision to partner with LifeChoice Donor Services for the BlueGreen Walk was influenced by members having personal and professional experiences with organ donation and transplantation. As a bilingual-bicultural organization who care for diverse communities, the commitment to impact public knowledge, in order to increase potential donors for the 23,000 Hispanics who are waiting for an organ transplant, aligns with the organizations value statement to “engage in respectful, collaborative, purposeful and positive dialogue in the interest of a healthy organizational culture that creates value for the organization and the community.” The BlueGreen Walk not only allowed for a platform for Hispanic Nurses to bring awareness to the donor registry, it allowed for the opportunity to address chronic diseases such as diabetes, liver, and renal disease.

The NAHN-Hartford Chapter’s motto, Promoting a Healthier Hartford, focuses on the health and wellbeing of the community. The Muevete USA Project is an educational program developed to reduce childhood and adolescent obesity. It was inspired by First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” and was
designed as a pilot by national’s past president, Angie Millan, to raise awareness for childhood obesity and encourage Hispanic youth to maintain healthy lifestyle. In 2012, there was a slight decline in obesity among low-income children. Eight percent of children, ages 2-5 years were obese in 2012 compared to 12% in 2004. These changes may possibly be related to the initiatives of obesity prevention (Tavernise, 2014). Continued efforts will hopefully result in improved health outcomes. NAHN-Hartford Chapter collaborated with the UCONN’s school of nutrition and Saint Joseph Nursing students to implement the Muevete USA program. One lesson (total of five), were introduced weekly to the 2nd grade classes at the Global Academy School during their health and nutrition course. Children learned about food groups, portion control, how to read labels, how often to exercise, and how to make simple goals in order to change lifestyle. A pre and post-test was given to the children in order to measure outcomes of learning. The children demonstrated an increase of knowledge in all five lessons. Data was submitted nationally and is currently being analyzed.

Health disparities, especially among minorities persist in the United States. Obesity is a national concern and the combined effect can be significant for families and populations. The Connecticut NAHN developed a partnership with Southern Connecticut State University in 2013 to deliver the developed Muevete USA project. Muevete USA (from the Spanish verb for “to move”) features five lesson plans on healthy lifestyles for children and their families. The focus of this collaboration with SCSU was to mentor nursing students to deliver a culturally competent program to the Hispanic population. The members of CT NAHN educated students and mentored them as they prepared their lessons plans noting cultural beliefs and values. The goal was to deliver a culturally appropriate program that addressed health disparities among Hispanics respectfully and within cultural context. The collaboration with Connecticut NAHN promoted students’ satisfaction in being able to implement the program at the local level. The participants also reported satisfaction, as was evident by the comments received within an evaluation. The official data from the pre and post test results continues to be gathered by the NAHN, however, the highlight of this project was the development of the mentorship and collaboration between SCSU and Connecticut NAHN which has continued even after completion of the project. Educating nursing students through experiential learning sessions promotes meaningful learning that is valued within the practice of nursing for individualized patient centered care.

Professional organization provide an avenue in which nurses can obtain professional growth, mentoring, coaching, and education. They provide practice resources, networking, recognition and leadership opportunities and all are essential for Hispanic nurses to grow in confidence, knowledge and skills.

References:
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