



ARKANSAS NURSE PRACTITIONER ASSOCIATION

Quarterly Newsletter



To Unite, Support, Educate, And Enhance The
Professional Identity Of Nurse Practitioners



ARKANSAS NURSE PRACTITIONER ASSOCIATION



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A Word from Our President

As we enter the fourth quarter of 2025, the Arkansas Nurse Practitioner Association (ANPA) is embarking on a new chapter. The



ANPA Board of Directors completed its rotation of terms, with several dedicated members concluding their service and new members joining our mission of supporting nurse practitioners (NPs) across Arkansas. I am humbled and honored to serve as the 2025-2026 ANPA President.

My transition into the role began on September 1st, as preparations were underway for the Fall Opioid Conference in Pine Bluff. The event featured distinguished speakers who provided attendees with a wealth of information, complemented by compelling personal testimonials from our expert panelists. Sponsored by the Attorney General, this conference exemplifies ANPA's ongoing commitment to our mission to educate and disseminate information to consumers and healthcare providers, while also offering valuable continuing education opportunities.

Following the Opioid Conference, the Board convened for our annual board retreat providing a unique opportunity for the board to connect in person, facilitate the transition of roles between outgoing and incoming members, clarify responsibilities, and conduct essential board business.

While most of our meetings are virtual, the retreat allows us to collaborate face-to-face and strengthen our working relationships. This year, the primary focus was reviewing responses from the recent membership survey. Our goal is to identify the priorities of our members so that we may continue to advance, support, and promote the high standards of healthcare delivered by NPs throughout Arkansas.

The retreat was instrumental in developing a strategic plan for the coming year, and I am excited about the direction we are headed. I look forward to the opportunities and growth the next year will bring. I hope to see all of you—and many more of our fellow NPs from across Arkansas—at our annual conference this spring in Hot Springs. Planning is already underway for an outstanding preconference session, two keynote speakers, updates from Shannon McKinney of the Arkansas State Board of Nursing, and presentations from numerous experts in their respective fields.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our profession and the patients we serve. Together, we will continue to advance the practice and impact of NPs throughout Arkansas.

Sincerely,
Rebekka Amick
MN, APRN, AGCNS-BC, AGPCNP-BC
President

Arkansas Nurse Practitioner Association

Congratulations to Our 2025 Fall Grant Recipient: Heather Rekhi!



ANPA is thrilled to announce that Heather Rekhi was selected as the recipient of the 2025 Fall Educational Grant. Heather's proposal stood out for its clarity, impact, and alignment with ANPA's mission to advance nurse practitioner practice, education, and patient care across Arkansas.

Please join us in congratulating Heather on this achievement! We look forward to seeing the outcomes of her work over the coming year and sharing updates with our members.

Thank you to all applicants and reviewers for your time and thoughtful submissions. The caliber of proposals was outstanding and reflects the passion and commitment of Arkansas NPs.

2025/2026 Committees and Leadership

We're excited to share the updated ANPA Committee Lists and Leadership for the 2025–2026 term! These committees play a vital role in advancing ANPA's mission through advocacy, education, and community engagement.

The link below provides detailed information on each committee and its leadership for the upcoming year. We encourage all members to review the list and connect with committee leaders to explore ways to get involved!

[Click Here: ANPA Committees & Leadership](#)

Member Spotlights

Do you know a deserving nurse practitioner, nurse practitioner business owner, or nurse practitioner student who deserve recognition? Scan the appropriate QR code below or click the link to recognize them.



2025/2026 Board Members



2025-2026 BOARD MEMBERS



PRESIDENT:
REBEKKA AMICK
APRN, AGCNS-BC,
AGPCNP-BC



MEMBER AT LARGE:
AMANDA CHEATHAM
DNP, APRN, AGACNP-
BC, FNP-BC, CCRN-
CSC



PRESIDENT-ELECT:
WANDA LUSK, MNSC,
APRN, AACNP-BC



MEMBER AT LARGE:
JESSACA HOPE DNP,
APRN, AGACNP-BC



**IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT:** LEONIE
DECLERK PHD, DNP,
APRN, FNP-BC,
FAANP



MEMBER AT LARGE:
NEIL LANGER, DNP,
APRN, FNP-C, CHC



SECRETARY: JALESIA
AUSTIN, DNP, APRN,
FNP-C



MEMBER AT LARGE:
TAYLOR KELAMIS, MSN,
FNP-C



TREASURER:
KAREN REYNOLDS MSN,
APRN, FNP- BC



MEMBER AT LARGE:
TERESA CLARK DNP,
APRN, FNP-BC, CRRN



**DISTRICT 1
REPRESENTATIVE:**
JESSICA S. MATTHEWS,
FNP, APRN



**DISTRICT 6
REPRESENTATIVE:**
MARK FOSTER ARNP,
DNP



**DISTRICT 2
REPRESENTATIVE:**
KATRENA GORDON
MNSC, APRN, AGACNP-
BC



AANP LIASION:
NYCOLE D. OLIVER, DNP,
MBA, APRN, RN, FNP-C,
ACNPC-AG, CEN, FAEN



**DISTRICT 3
REPRESENTATIVE:**
NAN MEANS, MNSC,
APRN, FNP-BC



**STUDENT
REPRESENTATIVE:**
ALLISON DAVIS, BSN,
RN, EMT-B (STUDENT)



**DISTRICT 4
REPRESENTATIVE:**
CHRISTY WUST APRN,
FNP-C



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
CAITLIN DEVORE, MA



**DISTRICT 5
REPRESENTATIVE:**
MARY LUNSFORD, MSN,
APRN

[Click Here: ANPA Board of Directors
Directory](#)

Meet Judy Leach, the First CNP in Arkansas

From the time she was a little girl, Judy Leach knew she wanted to be a nurse—it was her calling. She began her journey at Arkansas State University, graduating with an associate degree in nursing in 1973, before the university offered a BSN program. After gaining experience in a local hospital and a physician's office, she found her niche as a public health nurse with the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) in Clay and Greene Counties.

In 1978, the ADH supported Ms. Leach in completing a training program at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. She became a Registered Nurse Practitioner (RNP) in 1979 after intensive coursework and a preceptorship, prepared her for national certification as a family nurse practitioner. Returning to Northeast Arkansas, she worked with the ADH Maternal Infant Child Health Program, providing antenatal care and family planning services through county health units. Her career continued to grow. In 1993, Ms. Leach accepted an RNP position at Paragould Doctors Clinic, serving Paragould and her hometown of Rector. When her longtime collaborating physician, Dr. Len Kemp, established Paragould Family Care, she moved with him to the new practice. In addition to her clinical work, Ms. Leach played an important role in shaping advanced nursing practice in Arkansas. While serving on the Arkansas State Board of Nursing in 1995, she helped draft rules implementing Act 409, creating the Advanced Practice Nurse license. Having completed graduate-level coursework in advanced pathophysiology, pharmacology, and health assessment, as well as holding national FNP certification, she was the first nurse granted licensure as a Certified Nurse Practitioner (CNP).

Reflecting on that transition, Ms. Leach notes that while the role of RNPs was defined by strict treatment protocols and physician oversight, becoming a CNP allowed greater autonomy and flexibility. CNPs could decide on and write the prescription, making care more efficient and convenient for patients, and enabling CNPs to provide truly individualized, evidence-based care.



After nearly five decades of service, Ms. Leach retired in 2021. Some of her fondest memories come from practicing in Rector, where she made house calls and cared for neighbors, friends, and families she had known all her life. She found deep fulfillment in identifying health problems, developing management plans, and working with patients and their families to meet their healthcare needs. Of course, with that responsibility came the natural stresses, wondering if she had missed something or should have done something differently, but overall, she treasures her years of hands-on practice, providing healthcare for her community. Her advice to today's generation of CNPs is simple but powerful: *never stop learning*. While she did not pursue advanced degrees, Ms. Leach completed countless hours of continuing education and emphasizes that healthcare is always evolving. No nurse can know everything, she says, and the most important thing is to practice confidently within your area of expertise and to acknowledge when you need to consult with other providers.

I was honored to interview Ms. Leach and thank her personally for her service. Her career has left a lasting impact on the people of Clay and Greene Counties, and her legacy inspires nurse practitioners across Arkansas.

Leonie DeClerk

PhD, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, FAANP

Immediate Past-President

Arkansas Nurse Practitioner Association

District Updates



District 1 Representative: Jessica Matthews MSN, APRN, FNP-C

Thank you for trusting me to serve as your District 1 Representative. I'm honored to represent such a dedicated and inspiring group of Nurse Practitioners (NPs). I'm currently working on some programs in Searcy, so please be on the lookout for more information soon! We have several meetings scheduled, three in November and two in December. Be sure your member email is updated so you don't miss any announcements.

I encourage you to keep being a voice for our profession. Let's support one another and help other Nurse Practitioners build their voices. Together, we are stronger when it's time to head to the Capitol for topics that impact our practice.

Nurse Practitioner Week is near, please send me locations for proclamations to be signed. I'll begin scheduling those and sharing. Be sure to let me know your availability, so we can coordinate pictures with whoever signs your proclamation. It's always such a special moment to celebrate together!

Finally, don't forget to be on the lookout for Member Spotlights, Student Spotlights, and Business Spotlights. You may receive an email or even a text from me, so please stay tuned. Thank you to everyone who's been recognized — your contributions do not go unnoticed!

If you have any questions or ideas for meetings in your area, please don't hesitate to reach out. I want to make sure I can connect and attend events close to you.



District 2 Representative: Katrena Wilson MNSc, APRN, AGACNP-BC

We were happy to host the "Tackling the Opioid Crisis in Rural Arkansas" event, sponsored by Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin. Participants were inspired and we had an impactful day filled with learning, mentorship, and meaningful connections. The gathering brought together community leaders, healthcare professionals, and advocates who shared valuable insights and strategies for addressing the ongoing opioid epidemic in rural areas.

We were deeply grateful for the Pine Bluff Convention Center for providing such an ideal venue and Rice First Class Catering for serving delicious food that kept everyone energized and engaged throughout the day.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us, especially Pine Bluff Mayor Vivian Flowers, Representative Kenneth Ferguson, Representative Glenn Barnes, and Senator Stephanie Flowers who took time out of their busy schedules to show their support. Their presence and commitment served as a powerful reminder that, when we work together, we can make a real and lasting difference in communities across rural Arkansas.

The event not only fostered collaboration but also renewed our shared determination to continue fighting the opioid crisis with compassion, awareness, and collective action.

Be on the lookout for upcoming District Meetings.



District 3 Representative:
Nan Means
MSN, APRN, FNP-BC

Upcoming District Meetings

- November 6th time/location TBA
- December 4th ANPA Tri-Lakes (Hot Springs) Christmas party. We will play Dirty Santa with a \$10 gift.
- December 11 time/location TBA This will be a Christmas party. We will celebrate with a game of Dirty Santa, so bring a wrapped anonymous \$10 ornament or gift to play the game. *We encourage everyone to bring a friend who is not yet a member or an NP student to one of our meetings.*



District 5 Representative:
Mary Lunsford
MSN, APRN, FNP

I am thrilled to serve as the new District 5 Representative!

Upcoming District Meetings

RSVP: district5rep@anpassociation.org if you plan to attend

- GeneSight Dinner - Nov 4, 6:30 Ruth's Chris, Rogers
- Caplyta Dinner - Nov 6, 6:30 Uncorked, Fort Smith
- Uplizna Dinner - December 9, 6:00 Doe's Eat Place, Fort Smith

The same program will be in Northwest Arkansas on December 8, location TBD.



District 4 Representative:
Christy Wust
APRN, FNP-C

There are no upcoming events scheduled but stay tuned! Exciting announcements and new opportunities to connect are coming soon. Be sure member email is up to date, so you don't miss anything.

Keep an eye on your inbox and the ANPA website for updates.



District 6 Representative:
Mark Foster
DNP, APRN, NP

Upcoming District Meetings

Neil Langer is coordinating a presentation on compounded HRT, led by a pharmacist Tentatively scheduled for Thursday, November 13

Mountain Home (location to be determined).

More details to come! Ensure your member email is updated.

Fund our Future: Dr. Loretta Ford Scholarship



The Arkansas Nurse Practitioner Association believes in building a stronger tomorrow by supporting those who will lead it. The Dr. Loretta Ford scholarship honors our dedication to Arkansas's future nurse practitioners. This scholarship is more than financial support; it's a belief in success. The assistance helps talented NP students with financial challenges open doors to growth and ensures our profession continues to flourish with new voices, perspectives, and renewed dedication to patient care.

2025 Education Grant Awardees

We are thrilled to celebrate our 2025 Education Grant Recipients: Allison Davis is our Spring recipient who was elected ANPA's Student Representative. She is pursuing her FNP at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Heather A Rekhi is our Fall recipient pursuing her FNP & Master's in Nursing Education from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Their dedication, drive, and commitment exemplify the spirit of Dr. Ford - compassionate care and devotion to improving healthcare for all.

Join us in Making a Difference

Every contribution to the Dr. Ford Scholarship Endowment helps shape a brighter future for Arkansas NP students. Your support directly impacts students who are preparing to care for our communities. Together, we can ensure Dr. Ford's legacy of service, leadership, and innovation continues in Arkansas. We invite you to make a lasting difference by donating to the **Dr. Loretta Ford Scholarship Endowment**. A gift of \$50, \$100, or \$250 helps ensure that future nurse practitioner students receive the support they need to achieve their goals. Give today by visiting the **Dr Ford Scholarship Page**. Invest in the next generation—because when we support our students, we support the entire profession.

Julia Ponder

DNP, FNP-C, AGACNP-BC, CEN
ANPA Scholarship Task Force Chair

NP Business Owners Monthly Meeting

Join Us Every 2nd Thursday of the month @ 7PM - 8PM

Where: meet.google.com/vbp-dtzq-rkp

Join us at the next ANPA Business Owners Group's virtual meeting on Thursday, November 13. This Group is designed for nurse practitioner business owners and aspiring business owners to connect, share insights, and explore critical topics from staffing efficiency and profitability to regulatory updates and growth strategies. Whether you're establishing your practice, scaling operations, or fine-tuning your business model, Angela and Bill guides the conversation with practical advice and peer-driven discussion. To participate, simply join via Google Meet with the link above. If you're interested in the group or would like more information, please email director@anpassociation.org

Angela Simmons, APRN, FNP-BC & Bill Wells, APRN, FNP-BC
ANPA NP Business Owners Group Co-Chairs

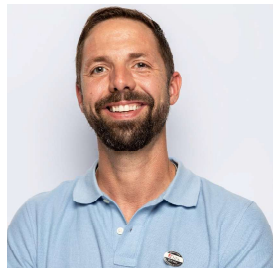
Health Policy Corner

This year has been exciting and productive for the Health Policy Committee as we re-launched the Nurse Practitioner (NP) Ambassador Program. The program has been met with tremendous participation and enthusiasm from our members across the state. Through several meetings and collaborative discussions, ambassadors have had the opportunity to learn and share best practices in representing the nurse practitioner profession, strengthen relationships, and build a unified voice that elevates our profession's visibility and impact.

ANPA ambassadors benefit from engaging conversations with Lance Eads, our Health Policy Consultant, as well as a few of our seasoned legislative advocates, who generously share their insight and experience. These interactions allow us to sharpen one another, reflect on strategies that worked well, and identify new ways to move forward effectively.

As we look ahead to 2026, the Health Policy Committee remains committed to building sustainable, meaningful relationships with legislators throughout Arkansas. With over 130 legislators across the state, this effort requires the continued engagement of nurse practitioners who are passionate about advocacy and advancing our profession. Our goal is for every legislator in Arkansas to have at least one NP Ambassador assigned by the start of the 2027 Legislative Session, laying a strong foundation for continued health policy success at the Capitol.

If you're interested in making a difference, we encourage you to join the NP Ambassador Program and be part of this impactful work! Email us: legislation@anpassociation.org if you are interested in joining this group.



**Neil Langer, DNP, APRN, FNP-C,
CHC**
Health Policy Committee Co-Chair



Karen Reynolds, MSN, APRN, FNP-C
Health Policy Committee Co-Chair

Get Involved – Volunteer with Us!

Looking for a way to make a difference? Join us to learn more about our volunteer opportunities! Whether you're looking for a small way to give back or want to dive into committee work, there's a place for you. The Health Policy Committee & Webmaster Committee are especially in need of volunteers — come find out how you can help support their important work!

Scan the QR Code or click the [link](#) to get involved!



Education Committee Report

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

2026 Arkansas Nurse Practitioner Association Annual Conference

Game Changers: NP Leading the Way to a Healthier Arkansas

**Hot Springs Convention Center-Hot Springs, AR
April 16-18, 2026**

Share Your Expertise!

We invite nurse practitioners across Arkansas to present at the 2026 ANPA Annual Conference. Inspire your colleagues and showcase your passion for advancing NP practice.

Podium Session (30, 60, or 90 mins)
Hands-on workshops (2-3 hrs)
Poster Presentations
Primary Care-Acute Care- Pediatrics-Women's Health-Mental Health-Older Adult Care- Professional/ Practice

Submit Your Abstract Here:

Key Dates:
Abstract Deadline: November 15, 2025 (5:00 PM)
Acceptance Notifications: January 1, 2026

Abstract Requirements
Title (<15 Words)
Author(s) with contact info & affiliation
Session type & Category

Questions? Contact the ANPA Education Committee: education@anpassassociation.org

In ANPA's recent member survey, continuing education was ranked as the third most important function of the organization, with 63% of respondents expressing interest in additional learning opportunities. The Education Committee is actively working to meet those needs. In the coming months, we plan to launch enduring online CE focused on opioid-related topics to expand educational content available to our members.

The call for abstracts for the 2026 ANPA Annual Conference is open through November 15. We encourage you to submit an abstract and share your expertise or passion. This conference is an excellent opportunity for both new and experienced speakers to engage and inspire their peers.

Leonie DeClerk, PhD, DNP, APRN, FAANP
ANPA Education Committee Chair

Webmaster Committee:

Strengthening Communication and Member Engagement

The ANPA Webmaster Team works with the ANPA Board of Directors and Committees to assist with their IT needs. This team includes a diverse group dedicated to ensuring ANPA's online presence is engaging, informative, and responsive.

Our team includes:

- Karen Reynolds, Social Media Chair
- Michelle Boone, Email Chair
- Taylor Kelamis, Conference Website Chair
- Teresa Clark, Newsletter Editor

We help curate and distribute messages via eBlasts and social media to inform the ANPA community. This helps foster connection and growth of our membership by sharing information about events, engagement opportunities, and organizational updates. While there are limitations to our website, we recognize there are opportunities for improvements to make the site more effective, interactive, and user-friendly. If you have experience or knowledge in website design, content management, or user experience, we encourage you to join the webmaster team and share your skills by contacting webmaster@anpassassociation.org. Your perspective can help strengthen our digital communications and enhance member engagement.

Member Opportunities

The quarterly newsletter is a platform for learning, inspiration, and member engagement. We appreciate those who contribute practice articles and thought leadership pieces that spark important conversations. This is a great opportunity for all members, including student members, to share their academic or research work for publication, gaining visibility and experience in professional writing. Submit your articles and other content to director@anpassassociation.org for consideration. Whether you're sharing clinical insight, innovative practice strategies, or community engagement highlights, your contributions enrich our profession and showcase your talent with ANPA.

Your Engagement Matters

Member engagement strengthens ANPA's mission to unify and elevate nurse practitioners voice across Arkansas and beyond. Through communication, collaboration, and innovation, we build a stronger network. Every post, article, and idea helps shape our presence for years to come.

Julia Ponder, DNP, AGACNP-BC, FNP-C, CEN
ANPA Webmaster Chair



Sponsored By:



Tackling the Opioid Crisis in Rural Arkansas:
Continuing the Conversation

This one-day seminar unites state and local community leaders, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and other key stakeholders to discuss ways to tackle the opioid crisis in Arkansas.



09:30 am - 02:00 pm
26 September 2025



1 Convention Center Plz,
Pine Bluff, AR 71601



Registration Fee: \$10
**Students register for FREE!*



Seminar Features:



Current Trends



Back & Forwards



Community Resources



Meaningful Conversations

Continuing Education
Information Coming Soon



Register Here



Tackling the Opioid Crisis: Pine Bluff Conference

The Arkansas Nurse Practitioner Association (ANPA) was proud to welcome nearly 100 participants to Tackling the Opioid Crisis in Rural Arkansas: Continuing the Conversation in Pine Bluff on September 26. Arkansas has the highest per capita opioid prescribing rates in the nation. The misuse of prescription opioids—as well as the use of fentanyl, methamphetamines, and other substances for nonmedical purposes—remains a serious challenge across our communities. Nurse practitioners are well-positioned to lead efforts in addressing this ongoing public health crisis.

This program was made possible through a generous grant from Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin. Attendees included APRNs, nurses, pharmacists, students, and community stakeholders from across the state who gathered to hear an outstanding lineup of speakers.

Morning sessions featured presentations from Brian Parks, PhD, on the science behind substance use disorder; Arkansas Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Director Jamie Turpin, PharmD; Arkansas Drug Director Tom Fisher; Arkansas Opioid Recovery Partnership Director Kirk Lane and Deputy Director Tenesha Barnes, who discussed their statewide initiatives; and Elizabeth Riley, DNP, APRN, who shared insights from her naloxone training program. The afternoon featured a powerful panel discussion featuring individuals personally impacted by the opioid crisis—a highlight that deeply resonated with participants.

Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. One pharmacist noted that the conference “radically informed and changed the hearts and minds of all of us in that room.” ANPA remains committed to promoting and advocating for excellence in practice. Stay tuned for more opioid education opportunities.

Leonie DeClerk, PhD, DNP, APRN, FAANP
Immediate Past-President ANPA

A group of five women standing together for a photo in front of a white banner featuring the ANPA logo. The women are dressed in professional attire, including blouses, jackets, and a red dress.

A wide-angle shot of a large conference room where many attendees are seated at round tables covered with black cloths. The room has a high ceiling with recessed lighting and large windows in the background.

A group of approximately ten people, including men and women, standing for a group photo in front of an ANPA banner. They are all wearing lanyards, suggesting they are participants or staff at the conference.

A group of young people, likely students, posing for a photo in front of an ANPA banner. They are wearing white t-shirts with blue designs and lanyards.

ANPA 2026 Spring Conference



2026 ANPA Spring Conference

Game Changers: NPs Leading the Way to a Healthier Arkansas

Education • Innovation • Advocacy



April 16-18
at Hot Springs
Convention Center

- Expert Speakers
- CE Opportunities
- Networking Sessions
- Vendor Expo



134 Convention Blvd,
Hot Springs, AR
71901

**This education activity will be submitted to the American Association of Nurse Practitioners® for approval of up to 14 contact hours of accredited education.*

Keynote Lineup

Thursday – Pre-Conference: innovating you NP Practice - Adding Value to you Practice

- **Keynote:** TBD

Friday – Conference Day 1

- **Keynote:** AANP President – Valerie Fuller PhD, DNP, AGACNP-BC, FNP-BC, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN

Saturday – Conference Day 2

- **Keynote:** Transformational Speaker & Best-Selling Author – Cody Byrns, Life Coach
- **Topic:** TBD



Call for Abstracts: Share Your Expertise!

Abstract Deadline: November 15, 2025 (5:00 PM)
Acceptance Notifications: January 1, 2026



Submit Your Abstract Now



Podium Session (30, 60, or 90 mins)

Hands-on workshops (2-3 hrs)

Poster Presentations

Primary Care - Acute Care - Mental Health

Pediatrics - Women's Health

Older Adult Care - Professional/Practice

For conference updates, follow us:

@arnursepractitioner

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@ANPAAssociation

Arkansas Nurse Practitioner Association

Scan the QR Code
to Register:



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