



WONL October 2026 News Horizons

Message from Our President

Reflect. Evolve. Lead.

By: Dennise L. | WONL President

Dear WONL Members and Colleagues,

Our September 16–18 conference in Green Bay, “**Championship Mindset: Building the Nurse Leader Playbook for Winning Teams**,” lived up to its name! With **close to 250 registered**, we **celebrated a record turnout for our WONL team** and a winning combination of learning, connection, innovation, and celebration. Where better to huddle up with Wisconsin nurse leaders than in Titledown? We kicked off the event with our welcome reception and tailgate at **Lambeau Field**. Thankfully, enthusiasm was the only athletic qualification required!



Thursday’s opening lineup delivered. **Barbara Khozam** started strong with *The Leadership Playbook for Patient Experience: Moving from Good to Great*, reminding us how consistent, thoughtful interactions strengthen trust and elevate the patient experience. **Ann Zenk** brought us the Wisconsin legislative update, helping us understand the policy playing field affecting nursing and healthcare. We also celebrated Ann’s longstanding service as the **Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) representative on the WONL Board**, her advocacy for nursing, and her role in strengthening the **WHA–WONL partnership** as she prepares for retirement.

Jackie Gaines kept the momentum going with *The Ties That Bind: The Importance of Trust in Leadership* and *Pushing Through Overwhelmed*. Her sessions reminded us that strong teams depend on trust—and even the most dedicated leaders need a timeout to regroup and recharge.

Our **poster board presenters** brought fresh ideas to the field, showcasing the knowledge, creativity, and innovation of our nursing colleagues. Thank you for sharing your work!

During our **WONL Business Meeting**, we reviewed the game plan guiding our work: **Workforce, Advocacy, and Professional Development**. These strategic priorities focus on psychological and physical safety, strengthening nursing’s voice in policy and legislation, and supporting growth through education, webinars, and scholarships. There is a place for every member on this team, and I encourage you to get involved.

Friday’s “second half” continued with **Dr. LaTivia Carr’s** *The Courage to Become: Leading with Authenticity Through Transformation*. We also gave LaTivia a well-deserved shout-out for completing her doctorate, writing a book, and receiving our Nurse Executive of the Year award.

A special thank-you to **Dr. Michael Stadler, Jill Lindwall, and Kristin Waite-Labott** for their *Caring for Wisconsin’s Caregivers* presentation. Their message reminded us that caring for our team is essential to caring for our patients. Caregiver well-being belongs in every leadership playbook.

Kelly Swanson took the field in the fourth quarter with *Story Driven Life*, delivering a strong finish filled with humor, heart, and inspiration. She reminded us that the stories we tell ourselves shape how we lead, connect, and face challenges. Her message sent us back to our teams ready to flip the script, bring fresh energy, and keep moving the ball forward.

And in true Wisconsin fashion, we couldn’t finish without a **fifth-quarter celebration!** Prizes, raffles, and the silent auction capped off our time together. Thank you to our planning team, board, speakers, award honorees, exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees. You made this record-setting gathering a true team effort and a celebration of Wisconsin nursing leadership.

Let’s take this energy back to our organizations, keep supporting our teammates, and move leadership forward—one shared success at a time.

** Visit our Photo Gallery on the WONL site [HERE](#).

With a Championship Mindset,
Dennise Lavrenz, MBA, RN, CENP
President, Wisconsin Organization of Nurse Leaders



Conference Feedback

Your Voice Makes the Event Better — Tell Us What You Think!

For any attendees still needing a certificate of completion for CEU's, please email the WHA Education Office at education@WHA.org and your certificate will then be emailed to you.

If you attended and haven't fill out the online survey, please follow this link to complete the evaluation regarding your experience.
[2026 WONL Annual Conference Survey- Hyatt Regency in Green Bay](#)

Completing this survey is critical to WONL Planning Committee in continuing to provide relevant and timely information. Only with your feedback, can we continue to provide valuable knowledge. Thank you again!

Nurse Well-Being: Caring for Those Who Care for Others

Taking Care of You | Support Resource

WisPAN
**Nurse Mental Wellness
Peer Support Meeting**

Supporting Nurses Through
Postpartum Depression & Psychosis -
Professionally & Personally



Email
wispan2021@gmail.com
for the link

We understand. The recent case may be
difficult, and we want to offer support.

Join our fun, informal peer support session!
Wednesday, October 7th @ 7pm CT
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Connect, share, and find support
with your fellow nurses!

In Partnership



It's Scholarship Season

Stay tuned for more information

WISCONSIN



It's WONL Scholarship Time!

Take the next step in your nursing leadership journey.

2026 Scholarship Application November 1, 2026

WONL awarded five \$1,000 scholarships to support nurse leaders.

wonl.nursingnetwork.com

Support future scholarships with a Nurses Change Lives license plate.

Nurses Change Lives

Spotlight on WONL 2026 Nurse Award Honorees Thank you for your service and congratulations on your award!



Nurse Executive
Dr. LaTivia Carr MSN, RN, BS, NCEA-BC, FACHE

La Tivia Carr exemplifies the highest ideals of nurse executive leadership through her visionary, innovative, and service-driven approach as **CNO at Aurora West Allis Medical Center**.

She has over 30 years of experience in healthcare! She has demonstrated a sustained commitment to advancing nursing excellence over the years by transforming care delivery, strengthening workforce stability, and improving patient outcomes through evidence-based practice and operational innovation. Congrats LaTivia and thank you for your service.



Nurse Leader
Jo Kowalczyk RN, BSN

Jo is a Team Leader in the Observation Unit of Emplify Health | Green Bay. One of Jo's greatest strengths is her ability to bring people together around a shared vision. She leads with energy, optimism, and purpose, inspiring those around her to focus not on what stands in the way, but on what is possible. She creates a culture of engagement, accountability, and ownership—empowering her teams to accomplish things they may not have thought possible.

Jo approaches every challenge with a true “what’s possible” mindset. Thank you and congratulations on this well-deserved honor.



Rising Star
Abby Reagan MSN, RN, RNC-MNN

Abby Reagan is an innovative and compassionate nurse leader whose commitment to nursing excellence, professional development, and mentorship has made a meaningful impact across Advocate Health and beyond.

As a Clinical Supervisor within the Wisconsin Division Resource Team, she serves as a key leader in the **Nurse Leader Relief Program**, helping prepare emerging leaders for future roles. Keep reaching for the stars Abby! Congrats!

Online Board Voting | Due Friday, October 9

Help Shape the Future of WONL

By: Laura H. | Nominations Chairperson

Nominations are now open for 2027 Board Positions:

- President Elect (1-year term)
- Treasurer (2-year term)
- (4) At-Large Directors (2-year term)

Please take a minute to review the roles and place your vote [HERE](#). One vote per WONL member. Questions email WONL@badgerbay.co (not com).



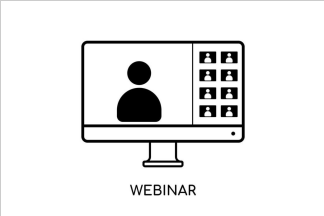
WONL License Plate

Celebrate a Nurse
By: Sharon W. | License Plate Chairperson

You can show your support by ordering a **"Nurses Change Lives"** license plate online or at any DMV office. Personalization is optional, but makes it easy to display your nurse pride. Revenue from WONL license plate income is used for education purposes and speakers.



Order Plates Here



WEBINARS | Save the Dates

Transitions to Leadership | Oct 6 | Leah Bergstrom MSN, RN. NEA-BC, CENP, Kayla Hinch, MSN, RN; Cassandra Loose, MSN, RN, CEN, CPN

WisPAN Partnership | Investing in Our Workforce | Nov 10 | Kristin Waite-Labott BSN, RN, CARN, CPRC

Well Being & Balance in Leadership | Dec 8 | Kelsey Lund, MSN, RN

Register/Info: [HERE](#)



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