Special Students, Special Toothbrush
By Anne-Marie Crawford, RN MSN NCSN

We all realize that oral hygiene is an important part of being healthy. This is especially true for students with special healthcare needs. Children with special needs have higher rates of poor oral hygiene, gingivitis, and periodontal disease than the general public¹. Medications and special diets, along with oral motor habits can cause oral health problems in this population¹. This makes oral hygiene and tooth brushing an excellent topic for the special education classroom. Many of the classes in my building teach how to brush teeth and include this task as part of the daily routine.

Brushing teeth can be difficult for some students though, especially students with special needs. Sensitivities to scents, tastes, and textures can make it difficult to tolerate. Other students may have difficulties with motor skills. But even students who don’t tolerate brushing their teeth very well still need to do it every day. We have found an ingenious tool to help complete this task.

The Dental School at the University of Pittsburgh has a Center for Patients with Special Needs. It was there that I learned about the Surround Toothbrush. This special toothbrush has bristle pads on three sides. This allows you to brush all sides of the tooth at the same time. Simply being able to do all sides of the tooth at once greatly decreases the amount of time needed to brush teeth. So, if a student cannot tolerate tooth brushing for very long, at least it can be as efficient as possible.

Continued on Page 5

By Lori Kelley MSN, RN, CSN

Stephen King once wrote “there’s no harm in hoping for the best as long as you're prepared for the worst.” I think that for most school nurses, a mass casualty situation from a school shooting or stabbing or any other disaster is among our worst nightmares. We watch those scenarios play out in schools across our country as well as in locations within our community. This hits particularly close to the hearts of Pittsburghers. We not only had a local school district experience one of these awful scenarios a few years ago, we just recently watched the gut wrenching events that took place at Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill.

For school nurses, we not only feel the inexplicable pain of our community, we feel a deep responsibility to prevent and prepare for such a hideous event. Many school nurses look to our professional organizations for training and advice for these situations.

On November 3rd, 96 nurses attended a School Emergency Triage Training (SETT) at Saint Thomas More School in Bethel Park. As is consistent with the character of school nurses, these nurses came from as far away as Virginia and Ohio and gave up a Saturday, in order to be sure that they were able to care for their students in the event of a crisis.

Continued on Page 5
Welcome back! With two months of the school year already behind us, and holiday events in this month’s calendar, we are already in full steam ahead mode as we power through a new school year. I hope you have entered this year refreshed from the summer, and ready to meet its new challenges. Hold on to that energy! It’s easy to feel overwhelmed at times as you look ahead to the tasks that await. It helps me to have a mantra for the year. This year’s I’ve taken from this summer’s 2018 NASN conference theme, “Power of past, force for the future.”

PASNAP continues to embrace initiatives and take on new endeavors that will showcase school nurses as a force for their students and school communities.

What’s news and in the works:

Each year NASN holds a pre-conference session, the NASN Leadership Academy, to educate affiliate leaders on concepts to benefit their state-level organizations. This year NASN asked each affiliate to invite a Millennial School Nurse to the session, to seek fresh ideas, new perspectives, and expose this generation potential future nursing leaders to what goes on behind the scenes. PASNAP stepped up. We sponsored Alison Jocean, RN, a CSN from the Pleasant Valley School District. Ali shared overwhelmingly positive feedback. I know this will benefit PASNAP’s future.

PASNAP has been invited to serve on the State-Level Leadership Team for the Healthy Adolescents Promoted by Partners for Youth (“Happy”) Project, initiated by the PA Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV). Thank you Lori Kelley for representing PASNAP on the state-wide team.

PASNAP has increased members’ involvement in research. By assisting with the distribution of surveys to school nurses across PA, we promote research designed for the specialized practice of school nursing. We promoted 4 research studies this past year, and already have 3 new requests to distribute surveys. We need your participation! Go to the PASNAP website, “News and Announcements” section. Check out these opportunities. Help create evidence-based resources for future nurses.

Executive Board members had a productive meeting with Dr. Rachel Levine, Secretary of Health, in August. Issues of concern to CSNs and our students were discussed.

Morgan Plant, our Legislative Consultant, continues to track legislation relevant to school nursing, and advise us when actions are needed. In May, Day on the Hill provided a venue to voice our positions on these bills with legislators.

Current, relevant resources are necessary to do our jobs well. PASNAP, working in collaboration with DPS, SNS, and the Division of School Health, is laying the ground work to revise the outdated Vision Manuel. We will keep you posted on our progress.

The creation of new Special Interest Groups (SIGS) are on the horizon. Stay tuned!

As CSNs, you have to opportunity to impact children’s lives daily. You can make the difference, “elevating the standards” of school nursing for your students, peers, communities, and yourself.

Continued on page 4
Save The Date

The Annual PASNAP Conference: School Nursing: Elevating the Standard

Friday March 29, 2019  Pre-Conference
Saturday March 30-31, 2019 Conference

Book your room at the Penn Stater today

using the code PAAC19A
President's Message Continued from Page 2

Never forget that as a school nurse, you ARE a force in your school. YOU are the health expert, with the credentials, knowledge, and experience to advocate for your students by sharing ideas, collaborating with peers, making decisions, and voicing concerns. I am thankful for your ongoing efforts.

A peer and long time, wonderful friend shared this quote with me in a moment when I could only see the mountain, not the valley ahead, “Don’t let anyone dull YOUR sparkle.” This plaque is now displayed prominently in my office.

Wishing you a wonderful fall and sparkly holiday season,

Kathy Verbel

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This training was made possible through a collaboration of PASNAP and the Allegheny County Certified School Nurses Association, and with the help of the Bethel Park Community Foundation and Saint Thomas More School. The Bethel Park Community Foundation provided a grant for up to $3500.00 to defray the cost of the program and Saint Thomas More provided the venue for free. Both of these organizations made it possible to attend this nationally recognized program for only $35, including lunch.

The information was presented by NASN’s Deborah Strouse, MEd, MSN, CNP, NCSN, FNP-C, one of the original writers of the SETT training. The program reviewed the triage algorithms, emergency preparedness in schools, psychological considerations during a crisis, triage sorting, documentation and handoff, building an emergency response team, emergency response team leader concepts and covered practice triage scenarios. Ms. Strouse was a dynamic speaker that packed all of that information into 5.25 hours.

Many nurses commented on the quality of the NASN prepared course. Renee McEwen of Betel Park School District stated “I was excited for the opportunity to attend such an important training and I learned a lot.”

The dedication shown by the nurses at this training demonstrates that school nurses will place their students’ needs above their own and are happy to give up their free time to ensure the health safety and well-being of the schools that they serve.

Bridgett Bilenski and Leslie Vrotney of North Allegheny School District at the SETT Training
Welcome Our New Region Reps!!

Southwest—Valerie Zanotti

As school nurses all know, sometimes we get volunteered for things and we have a hard time saying “No!” Besides saying “Yes” to my new role as the Southwest Region Rep to PASNAP, I have said “Yes” to VP and President of the Westmoreland County School Nurses’ am now a Building Rep, which I had also been prior to being Secretary. I have also been the PACE Chair for my local. In the little community of Hyde Park in which I reside, I am now in my 3rd year as a Council Member. I have also served as Parish Council member in my church, as well as lector, and involvement with Children’s Liturgy. My husband, Keith, also seems to be involved in a lot! And we have three children that are my pride and joy: Anthony(28) married to Heidi, Vicki(26) and soon to be married to Zack, and Paul(23) who is serving in the Navy. Prior to working as a School Nurse, I worked on a postpartum unit with the new mothers and their newborns – a job I also loved! I have been working as a CSN since 2004 and I truly enjoy my job! While I see a lot of ill and injured students at my Upper Elementary, I also see a lot of students who might just be having a rough day and need a “time out” to go to the Nurse’s Office. I hope that I can make a difference in their lives as I let them each kAss essay roles, and am now in my second year as past President. In my school district, Kiski Area, I have said “Yes” to the role of Secretary of our teacher’s Union in which I just finished serving 4 years and now that I care about them!

Southwest—Eileen Wallace

Eileen Wallace is a Certified school nurse who works in the Bethel Park school district at the elementary level. She joined the district over 8 years ago. Eileen is also currently serving in a new role as Nurse Facilitator.

Prior to joining the Bethel Park school district, Eileen worked in the Magee Women’s Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for 23 years where she was the daylight charge nurse.

Eileen earned her nursing degree from Allegheny Community college. She earned her bachelor's in nursing from the University of Pittsburgh and her school nurse certification through Slippery Rock University.

Eileen enjoys spending time with her husband, three children and two fur babies cheering for PENN STATE. Eileen also enjoys exercising and gardening.

In addition to the 3 bristle pads, the Surround toothbrush is entirely coated in a soft material. This coating protects the mouth if the student moves unexpectedly or tries to bite on the brush. The head of the brush is designed to bend. Additionally, the brush has a long handle to allow a person brushing the teeth of another to keep a safe distance from the mouth. The toddler version has a chubby handle that is good for students who have motor difficulties.

We have had success using this toothbrush for some students in our multiple disabilities classroom, autism support classroom, and life skills classroom. The brush is available as singles or in a multi-pack. You can purchase them from Specialized Care Co, Inc at specializedcare.com. The website also offers a great educational video titled How to Brush Another’s Teeth.

For additional resources check out:

- Toothbrushing at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia’s Center for Autism Research

Continued on page 7
NASN Conference 2018
The PASNAP Pulse

Do you have a story, anecdote or ‘aha moment you are willing to share with your peers?

- a heart warming narrative
- a student comment that made you grin from ear to ear
- a wonderful resource in the community, on the web, or for your smart phone
- a new way of doing something (or an old way that still works great!)
- an award or accomplishment that made you proud

Send to NurseCallas@gmail.com “attention Pulse newsletter “

References:

1 National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, Practical Oral Care for People with Developmental Disabilities (Bethesda: NIH, 2009), 1.