

*The Exceptional Nurse Newsletter*

October, 2008

[www.ExceptionalNurse.com](http://www.ExceptionalNurse.com)

Happy Fall to all Exceptional Nurses, students and supporters,

**Meet a nurse with a disability and a "hooRAy" blogger!**

This nurse isn't going to let Rheumatoid Arthritis keep her down.

Visit her new blog at <http://muffyjornhoora.blogspot.com>

**Save the Date!!**

Take a break from holiday preparations

Nursing Spectrum has generously offered to host another online chat about "Nurses with Disabilities" on Wednesday, December 17, 2008 from 8-10 p.m. EST. I will be the featured guest during this chat. Please consider joining in. You will be able to meet other nurses; ask questions and share experiences, practical suggestions and resources. Register for the chat at <http://nurse.com/chat/>.

**Chart Comparison of differences between the ADA and ADAAA**

(ADAAA passed September 25, 2008)

Courtesy of Georgetown University Law School

<http://tinyurl.com/5o2tsl>

**Book Reviews of "Leave NO Nurse Behind: Nurses working with disabilities"**

"The book presents an interesting oxymoron; nursing as a helping profession outright rejects those who fight to enter the discipline....Eleven different nurses describe the denial to accessing the profession that they admired and sought, the frustration, and their breakthrough to rediscover their own creative expression and professional engagement.... The authors provide an

analysis of how professionalism and activism mesh to create something new; that is, the realization that it is possible for the person with a disability to be a health care professional.”

*--Alice Tse, PhD, APRN, RN*  
*The Review of Disabilities Studies: An International Journal (2008),*  
*4, (3).* <http://tiny.cc/pBuux>

“Open skies, endless horizons, and freedom to fly. The cover of *Leave No Nurse Behind* illustrates the teamwork of birds who instinctively realize that it takes less work to fly in formation than it does to fly alone, and when one bird tires another bird will temporarily take the lead. The authors understand this premise, stating that instead of discriminating against tired/disabled nurses, nursing should realize their abilities and utilize their skills to fill gaps created by the nursing shortage. With the increasing international nursing shortage, this book serves to describe an innovative approach to lessen the burden of the nursing profession by employing disabled nurses.”

*--Paula A. Stangeland, BSN, RN, CRRN*  
*Family & Community Health (2008), 31, (4).*  
<http://tiny.cc/l38sW>

**Need CEUs? ExceptionalNurse.com is a continuing education provider**

“Teaching Nursing Students with Disabilities” by Donna Maheady, ARNP, Ed.D.

“Writing Your Way to Health and Healing: An interactive workshop for nurses with disabilities” by Connie Adleman, RN

“When your student is Deaf” by Martha McElyea, MSN,  
Rockhurst/Research College of Nursing

Visit the Continuing Education page of ExceptionalNurse.com for details.

**Drum Roll for Beka Serdans!!!**

Press Release (Oct 20, 2008 )

NYC RN-NP, Beka Serdans won the 2008 NY Times Tribute for Nurses'

Award. For the past 5-6 years, the Times has provided this award to nurses who inspire others to join the profession of nursing. The Award will be presented to Beka on Dec 2nd 2008, yet information about the Awards with photos will be presented in a special NY Times Issue. To learn more about Beka, please read the following. If you would like to reach her for an interview with her neurosurgeon, Dr. Kaplitt or to write a story, please email her at [infoc4d@aol.com](mailto:infoc4d@aol.com).

"Beka Serdans says, "I'm just a normal person." She is not. She is an extraordinary nurse, patient and human being. Beka Serdans, is a tribute to nurses and serves as a role model for anyone who doesn't think that they can fulfill a dream or make the most of their life.

She wanted to go to art school but how lucky we all are that her father said, "No way." Beka still is a photographer and does watercolors but nursing and "giving back," is her life's mission. Mentored by two marvelous physicians when she was in school, Beka Serdans considered going to medical school, and was even accepted, but life got in the way...she developed the cureless movement disorder called dystonia, the third most common movement disorder next to Parkinson's disease and Essential Tremor. 40 million Americans suffer from one of the above disorders in the US alone today. Source: [www.wemove.org](http://www.wemove.org).

Through years of being improperly diagnosed while she was in constant pain and making involuntary movements associated with twisting and bizarre postures, Beka Serdans did not stop to feel sorry for herself. Self-pity has never been a characteristic for her. She "made that lemon into buckets of lemonade."

Beka Serdans became a critical care nurse with special empathy for her patients. Helping in her own diagnosis since the disease is that rare, and because of her analytical mind and tremendous curiosity, she went on to complete her master's degree (with a 4.0 average) in the midst of having deep brain stimulation (brain surgery) between semesters, a non FDA approved surgical procedure intended to maintain her functional status, according to her neurosurgeon Dr. Michael G. Kaplitt, MD, PhD, Director of the Surgical Movement Disorder program at Weil-Cornell. Not surprisingly, Beka Serdans can, according to Laurel Schroth, "communicate and relate with patients about chronic illness as one who has 'sat in the patient role' herself on a daily basis." She can't "imagine being something else and is afraid of only one thing, not being able to do my job. My greatest fear is not being able to be a nurse. Once a nurse, always a

nurse. It's within my soul. Not all people are meant to be nurses despite the increasing nursing shortage. Nursing isn't about a salary, nor should it be ever."

Beka Serdans' job is not only her bedside nursing but also her continuing research in neurology and dystonia. To that end, she created the grassroots, non-profit patient advocacy group called Care4Dystonia [www.care4dystonia.org](http://www.care4dystonia.org). using her own yearly nursing salary to cover out of pocket costs for patient education material and website development. She is a powerful, well-educated, pro-active nurse who plans on attending law school so that she can become even more of a voice for people with disabilities through the legal system and introduce legislation, with the guidance of Civil Rights Attorney and Activist, Norman Siegel, to hold employers accountable to the American Disability Act of 1990 with a special focus on disabled persons.

Beka Serdans has made numerous media-related appearances (she is also a published writer) to promote dystonia awareness; and it may be time for all of us to give a bit back to this nurse who donates 110% of her life to others.

Amazingly, Beka Serdans has no medical insurance and the battery that helps stabilize her movements requires replacement at the time of this printing.

Beth Polazzo (writer for NY Times Special Edition) Copyright. NY Times. 2008

### **Bike4Beka: DYSTONIA Cycling 2008 Event**

Dear Friends and Cyclists:

Before Dystonia struck, I was a capable cyclist. I loved to ride along the Erie Canal in upstate New York and covered up to a hundred miles each week. Picking enough Black-eyed Susans to fill our household collection of Ikea Vases!

Today, I can no longer ride a bicycle, or even run. A few weeks ago I even lost the ability to walk while at work (mind you it was in the ICU setting), despite successful Deep Brain Stimulation surgery years ago. The effects of not being able to walk, frightened the wits out of me and left me lying in bed for a week. Never a day goes by, when I do not worry about experiencing

falls and the reoccurrence of symptoms that prevent my walking or my hope that I will ride ONCE again.

The charitable donations contributed, will be distributed to a variety of projects and researchers. Post-Graduate & Doctoral RNs, PhD.s, Neurologists and Pain specialists etc. who are focused on gene therapy, new treatment options, rodent models that display new multiple and varied forms of dystonia, new drug development and on mental health , coping skills, medication use, overall healthcare outcomes as they relate to dystonia.

Please join in this exciting effort with me!

~~~~ Beka Serdans, RN, MS, NP Visit: <http://tiny.cc/b2eK0>

### **Drum Roll for Auna Charters!**

Auna Charters, a junior in the BSN program at the University of Virginia, is the winner of the ScrubsGallery.com/ExceptionalNurse.com \$1,000.00 scholarship award. Auna is an excellent student who is an active volunteer with Operation Smile. Auna is not going to let her disability get in the way of her goal of becoming a pediatric nurse. Way to go Auna!!

Our sincere thanks to ScrubsGallery.com for making this scholarship award possible. \*\* Need a new pair of scrubs? Visit [www.ScrubsGallery.com](http://www.ScrubsGallery.com) \*\*

### **Research Study Call for Participants**

A study of work instability in RNs in the US with hearing, vision, or communication deficits is being conducted by the Yale University School of Nursing. To participate in this study, email [Leslie.neal-boylan@yale.edu](mailto:Leslie.neal-boylan@yale.edu) or call (203)785-3337.

Imagine the possibilities if....

**“Leave No Nurse Behind: Nurses working with disabilities”  
became a best seller!!**

Potential nursing students, current nursing students and practicing nurses with disabilities need to know that a career in nursing is possible. Can you help out by calling your local public, hospital or university library and making a suggestion for purchase of this book?

*“Leave No Nurse Behind: Nurses Working with disabilities”* by Donna Maheady. Eleven nurses who defied disability tell their personal stories of courage and determination to continue to practice. The nurses have a wide range of disabilities including MS, arthritis, HIV, spina bifida, mental illness, vision loss, d/Deaf, back injuries, tremors, dystonia, an limb loss. The book is available at [www.iUniverse.com](http://www.iUniverse.com) and at other online booksellers for 14.95. ISBN is 0-595-39649-6.

Order a personalized, autographed copy of *Leave No Nurse Behind: Nurses working with disAbilities* directly from ExceptionalNurse.com. Email: [ExceptionalNurse@aol.com](mailto:ExceptionalNurse@aol.com).

#### Need a Holiday gift?

Country Joe McDonald’s CD Thank the Nurse is available. Songs include: “The lady with a lamp”, “Clara Barton” and “Thank the Nurse”. Cost is 15.95 (includes \$4.00 for S/H). Mail a check to ExceptionalNurse.com, 13019 Coastal Circle, Palm Beach Gardens, Fl 33410. Proceeds will be used for the ExceptionalNurse.com Scholarship Fund.

#### Donations Needed

If you have found this newsletter to be helpful, please consider making a donation to assist with expenses of providing it for you. Even a \$1.00 is appreciated. You can donate using the Amazon Honor System. Click on the “Make a Donation” page of the web site. <http://tinyurl.com/2adzle>

#### Mentors

Exceptional Nurse is always looking for mentors. If you are interested in helping others, please email [ExceptionalNurse@aol.com](mailto:ExceptionalNurse@aol.com). Only email addresses are listed on the web site. In addition, a reminder to our current mentors, if you change email addresses, please remember to let us know.

### Volunteer opportunities

<http://www.redcross.org>, <http://www.missingkids.com>, <http://www.nod.org> ,  
<http://www.mobilityproject.org/>,  
[http://www.uniteforsight.org/intl\\_volunteer](http://www.uniteforsight.org/intl_volunteer), [www.invisiblechildren.com](http://www.invisiblechildren.com),  
[www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org)

Keep the faith and get involved in our advocacy efforts. Please forward this newsletter to colleagues. Subscribe/ unsubscribe to this newsletter at [www.exceptionalnurse.com/maillist.htm](http://www.exceptionalnurse.com/maillist.htm)

*Make a difference! And remember to vote!*

*Donna*

Donna Maheady, Ed.D., ARNP

Founder and President

Contact me with news, ideas or suggestions for future newsletters.

[ExceptionalNurse@aol.com](mailto:ExceptionalNurse@aol.com)