

VOICES OF EMPOWERMENT: 25 YEARS OF NFP IN PA



In 1999, three Pennsylvania counties—Berks, Erie and Luzerne—received funding to initiate evidence-based home visitation in the state, now known as Nurse-Family Partnership.



230 NFP nurses, supervisors and administrators came together for the 20th annual Statewide Meeting and Education, celebrating NFP's 25 years in Pennsylvania.



NFP nurse, Rhonda Yates, BSN, RN, has been a home visitor for 25 years through Erie County Health Department.

Twenty-five years ago, Barb Werner, MSN, RN, noticed a new job posting that she was interested in. “It was back at the time when you read the newspaper to find job advertisements,” Barb recalled. “The newspaper listing was for a part-time supervisor to implement a new home visiting program,” she said.

That posting led Barb to become the nurse supervisor and a nurse home visitor for the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)® in Berks County, Pennsylvania—one of the first three locations to pilot the program in the state.

In 1999, Pennsylvania embraced an innovative approach to maternal and child health with the Prenatal and Early Childhood Nurse Home Visitation program, now known as Nurse-Family Partnership. Barb explains, “Berks, Erie and Luzerne counties received funding to initiate evidence-based home visitation in the state. The initial funding for the program in Pennsylvania was through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.”

Twenty-five years later, Barb has remained with NFP in varying roles. Now she serves as executive director of Community Prevention Partnership, a nonprofit that oversees NFP in Berks County and

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Schuylkill County. In this role, she also functions as the NFP administrator for both locations.

NFP home visitor Rhonda Yates, BSN, RN, joins Barb as one of the most tenured NFP nurses in Pennsylvania. “I had been a nurse in a pediatric department for 10 years before I was recruited to the Erie County Health Department to help implement NFP in 1999,” Rhonda remembers. “I have now been a home visitor long enough that I am enrolling daughters as new moms from some of my original clients!” she said.

Since 1999, NFP nurses like Barb and Rhonda have worked to grow the program in Pennsylvania. Twenty-five years later, NFP provides services to 72% of the state, which includes 48 of the 67 Pennsylvania counties through 18 locations. Currently, there are 3,610 families enrolled in NFP in the state.

Both Barb and Rhonda note the ongoing challenges for first-time parents in Pennsylvania, including mental health issues and socioeconomic barriers. Rhonda shares, “The most common difficulties our clients face are access to housing, transportation, food insecurity – and daycare. Daycare is such a double-edged sword,” she said. “Parents can’t get daycare without a job, but they can’t get a job until they have daycare.”

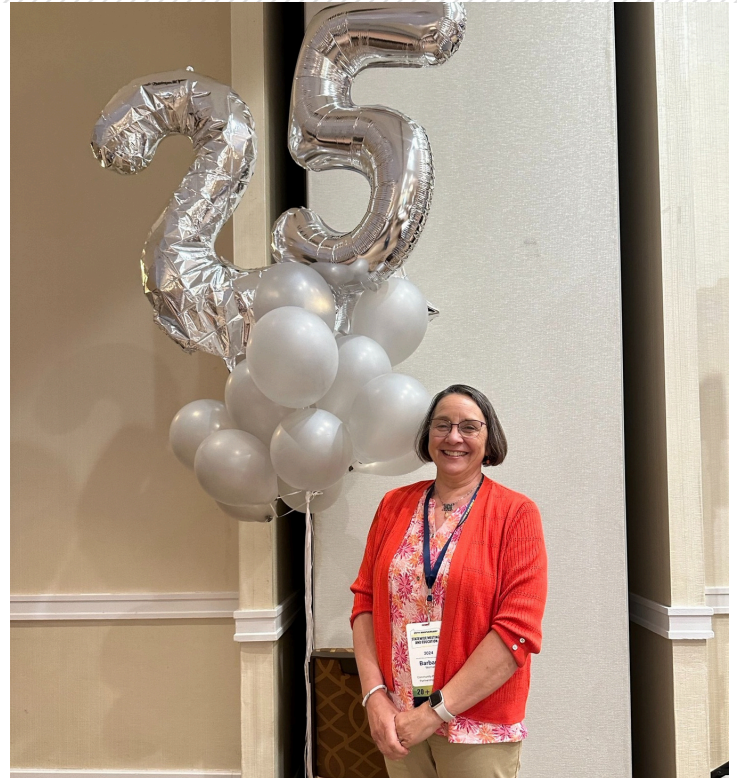
Barb adds, “I see racial and ethnic inequalities and bias that create barriers for the families to receive care, be valued and have a voice.” Rhonda shares a recent encounter with a former client. “She went to the hospital because she wasn’t feeling right, but no one was listening to her because she doesn’t speak fluent English and they sent her home.” Rhonda continued, “She called me and I told her if something was wrong, to go back to the hospital—don’t just call—go back. And I’m glad I did, because she had a retained placenta.”

Barb shook her head in response to Rhonda’s story and said, “Women in general are often dismissed, but particularly women of color and women who may be living in poverty. Their voices aren’t valued, and that is disturbing to me.” Rhonda added, “This is why an NFP nurse is so important – we support new parents in advocating for themselves.”

While nurse home visitors like Rhonda advocate for the family, the role of a nurse supervisor and administrator like Barb is to advocate for the NFP nurse. Barb said, “My role now is to advocate for my staff so that they can do their job well.” Barb continues, “Because if I don’t provide them with the resources they need to do their job well, then they can’t serve the clients. And that is what is nearest to my heart—serving the clients.”

Both Barb and Rhonda recently joined 230 fellow NFP nurses, nurse supervisors and administrators to celebrate NFP’s 25th anniversary in the state during their 20th annual NFP Pennsylvania Statewide Meeting and Education event.

The event featured a chance for NFP nurses to join in the fun with a segment called “You know you’re an NFP nurse when...” Nurses took



Throughout the last 25 years, NFP administrator, Barb Werner, MSN, RN, has also served as an NFP home visitor and nurse supervisor for Berks County and Schuylkill County.

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turns sharing humorous anecdotes, such as, “You know you’re an NFP nurse when you can locate all the nearby public restrooms,” and “You know you’re an NFP nurse when you have an educational doll securely fastened in your car seat, and the police mistake it for a real child.” Another example is, “You know you’re an NFP nurse when you can truly feel the impact you’ve had in positively changing someone’s life.”

Barb finished the celebration by addressing the crowd, “NFP in Pennsylvania is a 25-year legacy which began in 1999 and will continue to grow and prosper with the dedication of Pennsylvania nurses like you!”