

Past Presidents Share Their Thoughts on Being a Leader

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Nominating Committee Member and ONS Past President (1998–1999)

Running for national office can be very daunting; winning can be even more so! However, the opportunity to help shape the face and form of ONS and oncology nursing and to gain new perspectives about oneself are unparalleled! Many who have attained an ONS elected position never dreamt about being involved at the national level when they entered oncology nursing. Just being involved as a member, or perhaps as a chapter officer, seemed sufficient. However, along the way, our past and present leaders became a little more involved, first in a chapter or special interest group or on a committee or project team and then in other projects that would move the Society and oncology nursing forward.

For our early leaders, establishing the specialty, creating the Society, and maintaining its viability were paramount. For those who came later, understanding and managing the complexity of a growing organization; ensuring that the mission, vision, and values of ONS could be integrated into care and remain pertinent as oncology nursing and cancer care evolved; and preparing to take on expanding public and political roles have remained dominant.

As ONS national presidents, we have had the opportunity to help shape oncology nursing and ONS as well as the privilege of representing the membership in public, professional, and political arenas. In the process, each of us has gained new perspectives, knowledge, skills, and attributes that have affected our personal and professional lives. As we begin to think about the slate of candidates for ONS office in 2005, it seems pertinent to share the thoughts of our past presidents with you.

On being involved:

I think most of us wanted to be involved because there was so much that needed to be done for patients and the profession, and I believe that applies today as well, even though from a different perspective.—
Connie Henke Yarbrow (1979–1983)

On running for office:

*I think running for office is the easy part, but still, it involves taking a risk—the risk of losing, risk of losing face, etc. So, it takes courage to even put your hat in the ring.—*Pamela J. Haylock (1997–1998)

*Running for office in ONS gives individuals a chance to think about where they would like to see oncology nursing in the future as well as to use and develop skills that they might not otherwise use in their current job.—*Paula Trahan Rieger (2000–2002)

On being a leader:

The experience of being a leader in ONS resulted in skills being finely tuned that are so applicable to many other settings! The overall sense of achievement and accomplishment can never be taken away.—
Barbara Britt (1990–1991)

*The opportunity to represent cancer nurses in the United States is an honorable position. It does, however, take a great personal and professional investment. . . . The advantages are innumerable, but planning must be done on the front end so that everyone is prepared.—*Dolores Esparza (1989–1990)

On the benefits of serving:

*The leadership experience through ONS changed how I perceived myself as a nurse. It opened up a new world by showing me aspects of health care that I had not experienced, particularly in policy and international areas.—*Roberta Strohl (1999–2000)

On voting:

If people could pick one issue that they care about or read the bios and statements of the candidates, maybe they would find someone or something worth voting for (or against).—Deborah K. Mayer (1987–1989)

Everyone needs to vote, as it is your opportunity to affirm your support for ONS. Even if you don't know the people who are running, you still can read their statements and background information and vote for those who share your values and concerns.

. . . Voting is a core responsibility for everyone who loves and has benefited from ONS.—Kathi Mooney (1996–1997)

Please consider running for ONS office. The opportunity to have a role in ensuring quality cancer care for all while growing both personally and professionally is truly incredible!

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