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# A Nurse Who Calls Her Own Shots

Posted March 26, 2013

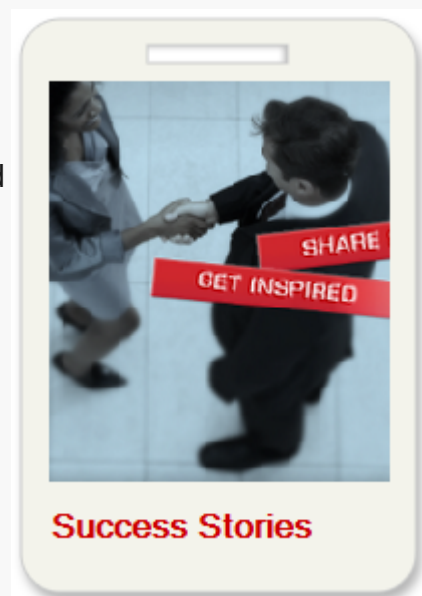
Even from the time she was a Girl Scout, Lynne Shaw knew her calling. She didn't wince when her fellow Girl Scouts approached her for help with bloody injuries in the wilderness. She was known as the go-to scout for all things "boo-boo." She also routinely helped her mother, who had several health problems and often ran the family household. When Shaw was just 15, she decided to become a nursing aide at a nursing home.

"I was used to going to hospitals – they weren't scary places for me," said Shaw, RN, BSN, CNA, MBA, MEP (master exercise practitioner), CHS-III (certified homeland security level 3). "I've never been afraid of a crisis situation."

That fearlessness is exactly why Shaw went to school to be a nurse; specifically, a trauma emergency room nurse. She then went on to earn an MBA so she could work in nurse management.

## Work without limits

Today, Shaw, 57, is pursuing her dreams. She's the administrative coordinator of nursing at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center in Boston, a 252-bed teaching hospital aligned with Tufts University School of Medicine. On her night or weekend shifts, she supervises anywhere from 150 to 200 nurses and staff and has to round through 20 different areas in the hospital.



Not an easy task, especially for someone with widespread osteoarthritis. Shaw has had two knee replacements and one neck spinal fusion surgery since beginning work at St. Elizabeth's 17 years ago. But her can-do attitude has pulled her through the pain, fatigue and a lot more. And the hospital has been immensely supportive along the way, she says.

When Shaw had her first total knee replacement surgery in 2000, St. Elizabeth's bought her a scooter that she used for about a year and a half at work before and after the surgery. She even was affectionately called, "Scoot" from her young staffers. "The idea of the scooter was really embraced at the hospital," says Shaw. "There was no attitude that, 'she can't do her job because she's in a scooter.'"

### **A swift return**

Because of that accommodation, Shaw says she was able to go back to work after several weeks, rather than several months – and was able to return to the same level of work. She had a second knee replacement eight years later, and recently, had a C5-6 spinal fusion to remedy a collapsing vertebra in her neck from the arthritis. She was back to work within a month.

With every surgery, it's been Shaw's goal to work around her coworkers' schedules and to get back to work as soon as possible. "I really don't like to miss work," she says enthusiastically.

Her enthusiasm is evident on the job, too. "Lynne is a proactive individual who juggles multiple roles, expectations and challenges adeptly while maintaining a positive attitude around her own limitations," says Suzanne McLaughlin, RN, MBA, chief nursing officer and vice president of patient care at the hospital. "She is a team player and a resource for our staff."

### **Tough decisions**

Accepting her limitations hasn't always been easy. Shaw says she ultimately had to leave her role as a trauma nurse because of her worsening arthritis. But she refused to leave the nursing field. "I decided that although I can't do the level of bedside nursing I used to do, I can still care for patients by making sure the right staff is there, that they have what they need and I can still make patients comfortable," she says.

Her love of trauma is still apparent, too. When she's not working, Shaw is running her own company, Quabbin Healthcare Consulting, helping police departments, hospitals and entire towns prepare for disasters and emergencies. (She is a former firefighter, and has emergency medical training.) She also serves as the emergency manager of the town of Petersham, Mass., where she resides.

## Marching through

Shaw says perseverance is key to her success, and credits having grown up in a disciplined military family. “My dad [was a retired colonel and] raised me with the idea that when you hit a barrier, you back up, regroup and continue to march. And that is where I am in my life,” she says. “There’s nothing that you can’t overcome. You may not go down the same road you originally thought you were going down to get there, but there is a way to continue to march through life.”

Whether the march is on foot or by scooter, Shaw is certainly breaking down barriers. As one of the first employees at her company to use a mobility scooter, she says other workers have become more comfortable asking for accommodations, including a medical intern who uses a wheelchair. “I think I helped start the awareness that you can have other disabilities and still do your job,” she said. “And do it well.”

**SMART POLICY WORKS** (formerly Health & Disability Advocates)

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