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# Supporting Nurses With Disabilities

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Recently, my middle daughter and I submitted a [Letter to the Editor](#) ([http://journals.lww.com/nurseeducatoronline/Citation/publishahead/Importance\\_of\\_First\\_Impress](http://journals.lww.com/nurseeducatoronline/Citation/publishahead/Importance_of_First_Impress)) that was published in the professional nursing journal *Nurse Educator*. It was in response to a paper in the journal that emphasized the need for professional nursing to embrace and implement means for nurses with disabilities to contribute to excellent patient care.

The letter we submitted centered on a very positive and life-changing experience my daughter and I had when she first visited and explored Saint Louis University as a possibility for her to study nursing. Accompanying her on that visit as a parent, I was concerned about helping her find the right fit for her college education. We felt strongly that she should disclose her diagnosis of epilepsy during application, because it was going to present some challenges during her studies. We knew it was controversial and it might not be well received. We were also reasonably confident that if she completed the program and passed boards that she would find a position in which she could practice as a nurse even with the diagnosis.

We could not have had a more welcoming and accepting experience. The director we met with demonstrated excellence in nursing. She was nonjudgmental. She used nursing expertise to assess a situation and figure out how to prevent and solve potential problems. When we left the office that day, we experienced immense relief. Maureen knew there was possibility, and that she would be supported, if she decided to become a nurse. It was a life-changing day for both myself and my daughter.



Maureen ended up having an amazing experience at Saint Louis University, graduating with the highest honors, publishing other papers, playing the piccolo in the pep band at every home Billiken basketball game, and she made friends that will last a lifetime. She works as a nurse at Georgetown Medstar Hospital and is happily married. The entire time, she had the support and friendship of this amazing director of the undergraduate program.

Last week, I saw the director and once again personally thanked her for all she had done. She remarked that the particular day we remembered so well and described in the Letter to the Editor did not really stand out in her mind. The point is, she was doing what she perceived to be her responsibility. She does her job well. The lesson for all of us is that we should never underestimate the impact of our actions and words. Striving for excellence, even in the most usual and daily actions, may be more important than we often consider. Even if it seems mundane or routine to one, it can be significant or life changing for others—just as it was in a very special way for my daughter and myself that day.

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