

Why We Stay Strong For Nurses

by Bonnie and Mark Barnes

On the early afternoon of November 6th, 1999, we stood in our Patrick's hospital room, holding his hands. Holding our hands was a nurse whose name we don't know, but whose face and touch we will never forget. It was she who turned off Patrick's ventilator, and then she turned her loving attention to us. She is among Pat's nurses we always hold in our hearts. From that most horrible, saddest day of our lives to 21 years later, in Patrick's memory and in honor of the care we experienced, The DAISY Award® for Extraordinary Nurses lives – as a way we and untold others around the world say “thank you” to you, our nurses.

Why was saying thank you to nurses so important to us? At 33 years old, Patrick had been in the hospital for 8 weeks, being treated for an auto-immune disease, ITP, that had come on very suddenly. At the end of those worst weeks of our lives, Patrick died. Right afterward, with Patrick's wife Tena and their newborn daughter Riley swinging near our dinner table, we talked about how we could fill the gaping hole in our hearts that Patrick's death had left. We needed to find some positive thing that would help us keep his special spirit alive and help us go forward in a purposeful way. There was only one positive thing we could think of - the care of Patrick's nurses. Their clinical skill was excellent, just as we expected it would be. But it was their sensitivity, kindness, compassion – their art of nursing – that took our hearts. For the huge life-saving things nurses do (and we experienced during Pat's hospitalization) and for the little things you do every day, we felt compelled to express our gratitude.

We set up The DAISY Foundation™ – an acronym for Diseases Attacking the Immune System. To deliver our mission of gratitude, we created The DAISY Award to provide ongoing recognition of direct care nurses. We asked the medical center whose nurses had cared for Patrick during the last weeks of his life to pilot this recognition program. Unheard of in 1999, it would honor nurses for what you do every day, for your compassionate care that makes such a big difference to patients and families. The concept we proposed was based on our assumption that no one knows nurses' work better than nurses. So, we asked the hospital to have their nurses nominate each other for The DAISY Award. We figured that in observing each other's practice, nurses could describe how a nominee's care made a difference to a patient or family member.

After a few weeks, when we called the hospital to see how the nominations were coming in so we could schedule an award presentation, we were stunned to hear that they were not getting any nominations! Our assumption was wrong. Nurses observing other nurses providing the kind of care we experienced with Patrick were seen by their co-workers as “just doing their jobs.” Just like they didn’t ask for honor and recognition for themselves, they were reluctant to ask for it for other nurses. We talked this over and came up with what we thought might work. We suggested that the hospital invite patients and family members to nominate their nurses as a way to say thank you, just as we wanted to say thank you for the care we experienced. That made all the difference! The stories of how nurses made their patients feel by their acts of compassion, not to mention skill, were powerful. It was clear that, while nurses may feel they are just doing their jobs, we as patients and families surely do not. At last, we were able to make the first DAISY Award presentation and start working on bringing DAISY to other hospitals.

Fast forward 21 years: today, we partner with over 4,600 healthcare facilities and schools of nursing in all 50 states and 28 other countries, honoring extraordinarily compassionate care, those who create environments in which it thrives, and those who nurture students to provide it. Two million times, a patient, family member, or co-worker has taken the time to nominate a nurse for The DAISY Award, sharing emotional stories of how a nurse made an important difference in a patient’s care. We read in those stories how nurses were strong for their patients and their patients’ families in their advocacy and caring. It is only right that every day, as we promote and foster meaningful nurse recognition, we at DAISY stay strong for nurses.

We urge you to see in yourselves and in each other what you mean to the rest of us, to know that you matter to us more than our words can express. Please see in yourselves and in each other what we as patients and families see - not only what you do but especially who you are. As you endure these many months of COVID-19 and the awful stresses it is putting on nurses throughout the world, please never forget the tremendous impact you are having, one patient at a time. One family member at a time. One moment at a time. When shifts are especially tough, let this message take you back to why wanted to become a nurse to start with.

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Finally, we extend our deepest gratitude and sincere wishes for your safety, good health, and continued courage and strength to keep doing what you do every day. I hope you know that all of us at DAISY are holding you in our hearts always. We stay strong for nurses!



Hospitals have many creative ways to recognize their DAISY Nurses

Bonnie and Mark Barnes, FAANs, are the co-founders of The DAISY Foundation and the authors of [Shining a Light on All the Right: Celebrating the Art of Nursing Around the World](#).

[Website](#)

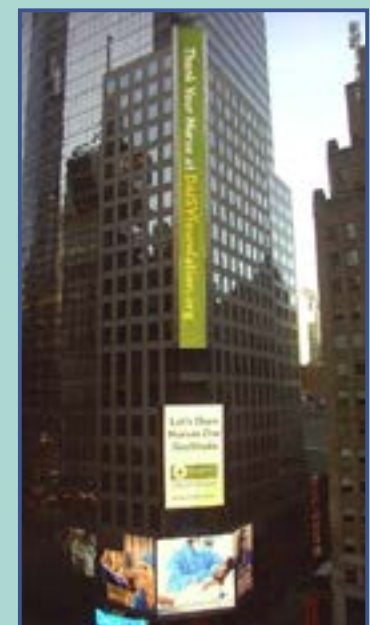
A Note from Joe

Mark and Bonnie Barnes and the rest of the DAISY team have done more to promote recognition for excellent nurses than anyone else. They point out that whenever a nurse is recognized, they will most likely say something to the effect that they are just doing their job. Anyone who has ever tried to congratulate Mark and Bonnie and other members of their team has heard them say something to the effect that they're just doing what they can to recognize the real heroes – the caregivers. They are an outstanding example of what leadership expert Jim Collins calls Level 5 Leadership: a paradoxical blend of intense determination to accomplish big goals coupled with a sincere sense of personal humility.

ABOUT DAISY

[The DAISY Foundation](https://www.daisyfoundation.org/)™ was established in 1999 in memory of J. Patrick Barnes. Patrick died at the age of 33 from complications of Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP), an auto-immune disease. (DAISY is an acronym for Diseases Attacking the Immune System.) The care Patrick and his family received from Nurses inspired the creation of The DAISY Award® for Extraordinary Nurses, an evidenced-based means of providing Nurse recognition and thanking Nurses for making a profound difference in the lives of their patients and patient families. In addition to the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses, the Foundation expresses gratitude to the nursing profession internationally in over 4,000 healthcare facilities and schools of nursing with recognition of direct care Nurses, Nurse-led Teams, Nurse Leaders, Nursing Faculty, Nursing Students, Lifetime Achievement in Nursing and through the J. Patrick Barnes Grants for Nursing Research and Evidence-Based Practice Projects and Medical Mission Grants. More than two million nurses have been nominated for DAISY Awards.

A campaign urging the public to say Thank You to nurses who have cared for them, their family members or friends kicks off with signs in Manhattan's Times Square on Friday, January 8, 2021. The campaign is running in out-of-home media in New York and other key markets.



DAISY billboards in New York's Times Square