



A League of Our Own: Creating an Internal Recognition Program for OR Staff

Authors: Juana Buergo, BSN, RN, CNOR; Lori Chavez, BSN, RN; Kelsey Eugenio, BSN, RN;
Lisa Floyd, BSN, RN, CNOR; Rebecca Norton, MSN, RN, BA, CNOR

Introduction

When morale was lowest in the OR at our 250 bed community hospital with 10 surgical suites, one of our OR nurses thought of a way to raise the spirits of the entire team. She founded a new employee recognition committee, which came up with an idea modeled on the baseball season. They titled the initiative “A League of Our Own”, based on the famous baseball movie. This group created a fun-filled recognition program for all OR staff members which had a positive impact on the team.

Assessment of Problem

Winter of 2022 seemed dismal. Since COVID was still a prevalent issue, multiple employees were affected with depression and burnout, losing sight of a sense of purpose in coming to work each day. Simultaneously, the facility was going through a multitude of changes including a new health system partnership and the adoption of a new EMR, which led to additional stress. The loss of talented nurses to other facilities and travel agencies seemed to be another recurring issue. The routine for new graduate hires became: Hire. Teach. Ready for Call. Resignation. Staff was getting frustrated.

Operating room staff can also feel that their contributions to patient safety and teamwork go unacknowledged. The OR is separated from the rest of the hospital due to attire and traffic restrictions, and patients are typically unable to remember their OR experience. As hospital recognition programs frequently rely on patient letters for nominations, OR staff often feel left out.

Looking forward to a better spring, one nurse, Juana B., decided to change the mood and bring some hope and happiness to the staff.

Forming the Team and Formulating a Plan

First, Juana made a call for help to all the nurses and other staff in the operating room who would like to join a new employee recognition committee. The idea was to increase morale by recognizing each other for the “above and beyond” things that we do daily. Six nurses in our department signed up to help with the preparation and planning.

The new committee brainstormed ideas of how we could creatively recognize individuals on our staff for their contributions to teamwork and safety. The baseball themed initiative “A League of Our Own” was born. Spring means baseball season to a sports fan, therefore, why not have a baseball themed morale “booster?”

Rules for Contest

At our kick off meeting and on our display boards, the team shared the criteria. Anyone who worked in the OR department such as RNs, CSTs, ORAs and radiology techs, etc. would be eligible. The nominees had to go “above and beyond” their usual job responsibilities. A box would be placed in the OR lounge for nominations to be submitted. Nominations could be submitted by co-workers, surgeons, vendors, leadership, etc. The committee would review the nominations each month to ensure nominees met the criteria, and winners would be announced at our monthly staff meetings over the six months of our baseball season.

The team created a score board, complete with a baseball diamond with bases to hang in our staff lounge. Each winner had their face Photoshopped onto a baseball card, and the cards moved around the bases if the staff member received more than one nomination during the campaign duration. Winners also received a goodie bag filled with baseball themed items and gift cards. At the end of the “season”, nominees who make it to “home plate” were eligible for a grand prize drawing for Most Valuable Player!



A League of Our Own
Kick off Party



Leader board for contest



Every month different themed gift bags were given to nominees



Nominees were celebrated
at monthly staff meetings



Unit secretary Sharon G was
nominated
for helping a co-worker in an
emergency



Each nominee had an individualized
baseball card made to hang on the board



RN Cliff M. had multiple
nominations for coaching and
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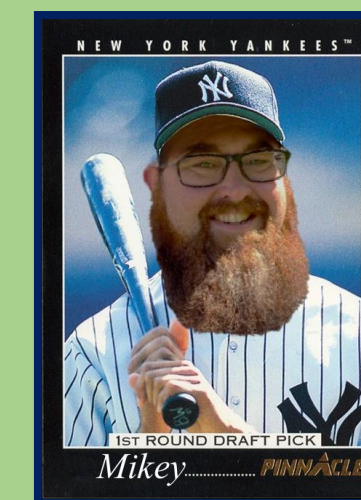
Scrub tech Tatyana I. was
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Our Grand Slam MVP Prize winner
scrub tech Tatyana I.



Recognition Team meeting



Our lead Radiology tech, Mike S.
created the individualized
baseball cards



The Recognition Committee



Baseball themed
gift bags &
dessert!



Unit secretary Sharon G.
celebrating her nomination

LEAGUE OF OUR OWN RECOGNITION FORM:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Situation: _____

Types of Impact (examples below, but not limited to):

- ☐ Exemplary Performance
- ☐ Superior Accomplishment
- ☐ Patient Care
- ☐ Community Service
- ☐ Consistent Professionalism
- ☐ Effective Leadership
- ☐ Individual Initiative
- ☐ Dependability
- ☐ Innovative Solutions
- ☐ Teaching/Training/Mentoring
- ☐ New Employee

Other: _____

Nomination Form

Outcomes

From the beginning, the staff really enjoyed the program, and each month more and more employees nominated their peers and enjoyed celebrating one another. In all, over 20 staff members were recognized by their peers, for things ranging from coming in on a day off to help out with a tough case, catching a stretcher with broken brakes prior to a patient move, or catching a patient's copper allergy that necessitated using an alternative type of orthopedic cement. As the league continued through the season, a sense of purpose began to spark. The nominees felt honored to be recognized and appreciated. The monthly award ceremonies created an increased sense of comradery, with staff sharing laughter and triumphs.

A Survey was sent out to the staff after the program was completed. 55% of the staff surveyed participated in the program in some form. Of those surveyed, 95% thought it had a positive impact on staff moral, one person thought it had no impact. Everyone surveyed thought the program should be repeated next year, with 80% saying they would definitely participate, and another 20% saying they may participate, even if they had not participated this time. Comments included “It was really something to look forward to,” “Loved it!” and “We had so much fun and positive emotions!”

Implications for Periop Nursing

The whole process of nominating and celebrating their co-workers was a huge hit with our OR team. Everyone on our team takes pride in doing their best in a demanding and fast paced environment, but someone taking the time to notice those efforts is extra motivating.

With “A League of Our Own”, our OR acknowledgement team has started a creative and innovative program for employee recognition. Other OR units could look at this as an example for starting their own program to help their team stay engaged and motivated, showing their pride in what they and their coworkers do.

Authors

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Juana graduated from Mountainside Nursing School/Montclair University in 1986 and received her CNOR in 1996. She attended Brookdale College, Ocean College and Kean University to achieve a BSN. Juana moved up the ranks from charge nurse to assistant manager, then manager and interim educator of the OR. Currently, she is a staff nurse in the Operating Room at CentraState Medical Center. Juana is proud of her 38 years of nursing experience and enjoys attending charity walks for multiple causes such as the Alz.org, Sharing Network of New Jersey, Brain Injury Alliance, and Making Strides for Breast Cancer.

Lori A. Chavez, BSN, RN

Lori has been a Registered Nurse for 37 years. She was a floor nurse for five years, a care manager for one year, then a head nurse on an inpatient surgical unit for one year. Lori has been an Operating Room nurse for 30 years and is currently a Robotic Coordinator, Charge Nurse for Urological Surgery, and Charge Nurse for Pain Management.

Kelsey Eugenio, BSN, RN

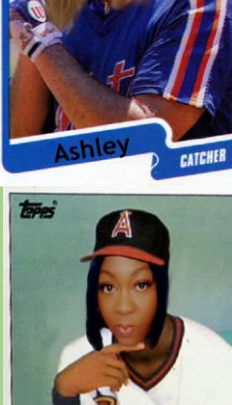
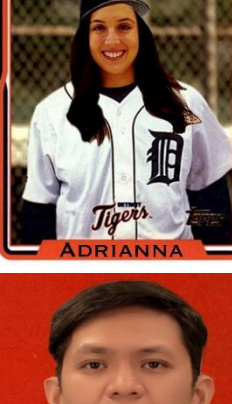
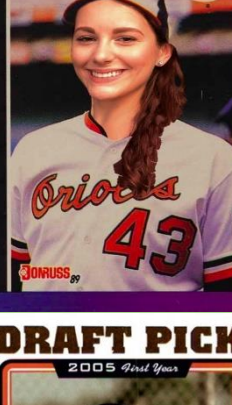
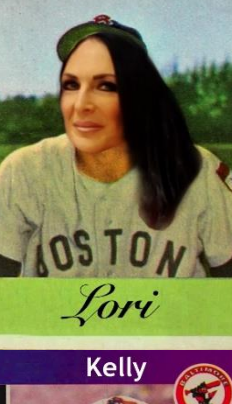
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Lisa has been an OR nurse for over 20 years gaining experience and proficiency in circulating and scrubbing orthopedic and vascular cases, which led to her current position as team lead of those specialties, along with neurology for the last 10 years. She is an active participant on numerous hospital committee such as Safety Coach, Periop council member and co-chair of instrument meetings with our sterile processing department. As a member of the National Council of Negro Woman and team captain of Operation Share, raising awareness of the NJ Sharing Network, Lisa's community involvement is just as important to her.

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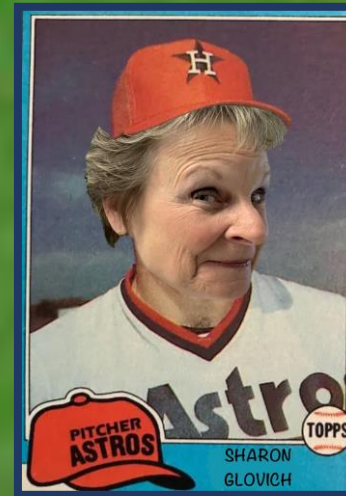
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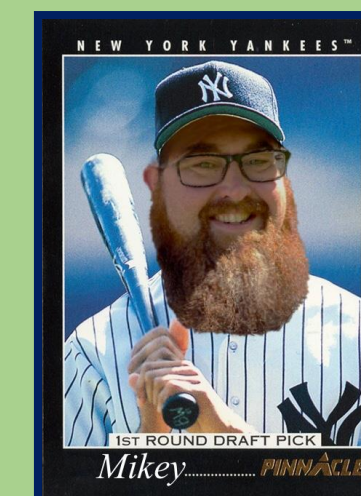
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Signature: _____

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