

## Partners in **NURSE ADVANCEMENT**

### OUR MISSION

Partnering to enhance nurse competencies and advancement in assisted living environments through education.

### What brought you to AALNA?

I met AALNA's president, Calvin Groeneweg, through a mutual colleague. He outlined AALNA's initiatives and they were aligned with my goals, as well as with the clinical programs our organization was working on. It seemed like a great opportunity to join a network of like-minded individuals. And one of the big benefits was having additional resources for my nurses at the community level.

### What drew you to geriatric nursing?

I started my nursing career in critical care and trauma. I loved the adrenaline and the patient care. I wanted to learn – everything was a puzzle to me. Then, life circumstances changed. I wanted to pursue graduate studies, so I needed a job that would allow me the time to pursue my master's degrees. So – most people who've worked in skilled nursing will laugh at this statement – I thought that taking a job as nursing director in a skilled nursing environment would be a 9 to 5, Monday through Friday gig. I was so, so incredibly wrong about the demands of the role, but I learned so much.

From skilled nursing, I ventured into long-term acute care, working as chief clinical officer at an LTAC. When the hospital closed its LTAC services, they wanted to retain me – that's how I got my feet wet in home health and hospice services. That experience has served me well in the role that I'm in now because we work closely with our ancillary partners that provide those services to our residents. After leaving home health and hospice, I came over to assisted living with Morningstar. I started as a regional director then worked my way up to regional vice president. When my predecessor left, I took the senior vice president role.

### What is the biggest concern right now for nurses in assisted living?

I think the shortage of nurses is the real problem in assisted living. It's not a secret that nursing industry ebbs and flows from having a surplus of nurses to not having enough nurses to go around. Depending on the geographic market, some areas are more affected than others. I've got communities with really strong directors, but if they're having a hard time finding additional wellness nurse support, they'll burn out.

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**– Ashley Guido RN,  
MSN, MBA**

Senior VP of Wellness,  
Morningstar Senior Living

*Member, AALNA Advisory Council*

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### How is AALNA helping to address this concern?

AALNA has a lot of great resources and clinical initiatives that are helping to drive the assisted living industry as a more recognized career path. They're working to make the role of nursing in senior housing and assisted living more appealing, so the nurses we have in the market are that much more likely to apply and be retained in this industry.

I can't speak for every nurse, but I'm always looking for educational opportunities, for what's next in my personal and professional development. I imagine other nurses are similar and want to know there's room for growth. AALNA has really helped to put a spotlight on the things you can gain from being a nurse in this industry, namely, that working with seniors is incredibly rewarding.

### How important is it for assisted living nurses to have a professional network?

The healthcare industry is constantly evolving – regulations are changing, clinical best practices are changing, the labor market is changing. I think it's really important that assisted living nurses, because we're such a specialty group, have a network of similar professionals that they can commiserate with, they can bounce ideas off of, and they can pick up the phone and say, "I'm having a problem with this particular regulatory agency" or "I'm having a problem developing policies and procedures," or "what are your best practices?" I think it's very important to have an entourage of colleagues you can lean on in tough times and you can be a mentor to when things are going well.

### Why is the partnership between AALNA and PharMerica important?

I think the obvious reason is that both entities are nationally recognized and have a solid footprint everywhere senior housing exists. PharMerica has a plethora of very talented professionals who are always looking to build out new models to benefit the industry. Even though it's a large, nationally recognized organization, PharMerica is not what I would consider a vendor to their clients, it's a strong partner. I think AALNA and PharMerica go hand in hand when you're talking about not just nursing and clinical initiatives, but the pharmaceutical industry as it relates to assisted living, best practices, and different programs and resources. In partnership with AALNA, PharMerica can get those resources out to the broader community.

**To learn more about how PharMerica is supporting DONs, other nurse leaders, and nursing staff in assisted living, visit [PharMerica.com/who-we-are/nurse-advancement](https://PharMerica.com/who-we-are/nurse-advancement).**

[PharMerica.com/who-we-are/nurse-advancement](https://PharMerica.com/who-we-are/nurse-advancement) | 800.564.1640

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