

## Feature Article

## Outstanding Professional of the Year (for Nursing), 2014



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### Leah Primitiva S. Paquiz PhD, RN Opted for Legislative remedies for Health and Nursing Reforms

Motherly, energetic, passionate, dedicated, Nurse Leah, as she is fondly called, has nursing in her system ever since she was a young girl. To date, she has not ceased looking for strategies to help nurses gain their dignity as a person and as a professional, which she did at different levels of engagement.

#### Passion for Nursing and Teaching

After finishing her secondary schooling in her hometown in Mindoro, she took up Nursing in a prestigious school, the Trinity University of Asia, Cathedral heights in Quezon City in 1973. After obtaining her license from the Professional Regulation Commission, she returned to her hometown, and worked as a staff nurse at Oriental Mindoro Provincial Hospital in 1973, a sort of return-service to her province where she grew up and dreamed to be a nurse. With this experience, she started to realize the plight of nurses—overworked but low-salaried professionals. Her experience was just in one province, what about in other provinces? She had the opportunity to work as a public health nurse at the Division of City Schools in Quezon City.

In 1985 she continued her nursing career by taking up Master of Public Health at the College of Public Health, University of the Philippines. Then preparing herself for administrative and leadership position, she took up Doctor of Education, Major in Educational Administration in 1990-94 at the University of the Philippines College of Education, and Master of Arts in Nursing, Major in Nursing Education in 1995-97 at School of Advanced Studies, Trinity University of Asia.

Equipped with managerial and leadership skills, she was hired as acting Dean then eventually as Dean of her

alma mater, St Luke's College of Nursing, Trinity University of Asia. This college produced eleven 100% passing rates in National Licensure examination for nurses. Nurse Leah is not only a NURSE but also a TEACHER. For the latter, she took licensure exam for professional teacher in 1992.

#### Continuing leadership in nursing

Recognizing her leadership potentials and her advocacy, she was elected national President of Philippine Nurses Association in 2007 where she fought against exploitation of nurses, especially those working abroad of OFW. She envisioned to work for their upliftment of their working conditions of nurses towards an empowered workforce. HER BATTLE CRY is and was TAMANG TRABAHO! TAMANG SUWELDO!

But it seems the response is still nowhere to be heard and found. Hence she thought of forming an organization, ANG NARS, inc, a socio-political group that is "the vanguard for the rights of health workers and health stakeholders committed to stand as one voice for them to be heard, and empower them to protect their rights and dignity to deliver safe and quality health care for the Filipinos". She had many ideas in her mind but strategies did not move much so she thought of opting for legislative remedies for the needed health and nursing reforms. This

group( Ang Nars) was later transformed into a partylist, called ANG NARS PARTYLIST. Fortunately, she won a seat in Congress.

### Nurse Leah in Congress

Even as a newcomer in Congress, she was able to file significant Bills on her first day, which include the Comprehensive Nursing Law, Freedom of Information Act, Security Tenure for Government Employees, Whistle blower Act, and Civil Service Code of the Philippines. More Bills were filed in days to come including, Picture-based Health Warning Law, Plastic Bag regulation Act, Health Workers Incentives and Reform Act. To answer the call for “No to Privatization of Government Hospitals and health Services”, Nurse Leah filed House Resolution 819: a resolution directing the Committee on Government enterprises and Privatization to investigate in aid of legislation, the Privatization, Corporatization and Modernization of Public Hospitals such as its infrastructures, facilities, health Human resource, operation and maintenance in relation to RA6957 as amended by RA7718, entitled “An Act authorizing the financing, construction, operation and maintenance of infrastructure projects by the private sector, and for other purposes” and other related laws.

With her, the nursing and health sector has a VOICE in the House of Representatives working through legislation to bring reforms to Filipinos' health. To support her

battlecry of 'Tamang Trabaho, Tamang Sweldo, she formed the KatipuNARS-PSLINK, the first union of nurses in the Philippines.

### NURSE LEAH'S CONTINUING CALL: NURSES AND HEALTH WORKERS, LET'S UNITE AS ONE WITH ONE VOICE!!

Nurse Leah delivers more than she promised. As a professional and a leader with her deep-seated love of God, country, environment and people, she was awarded the OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL AWARD OF THE YEAR (in Nursing), 2014, with the following citation inscribed in her plaque:

*For her outstanding public service and achievements as a nurse that has taken to the hall of Congress; for utilizing her undying passion for reforms in the health sector to attain primary health care and health human resource development thereby becoming the champion of health workers and Filipinos' health; for her valuable assistance to the organization, ANG NARS, that progress to ANG NARS' PARTYLIST, for her pioneering efforts in the formation of KatipuNARS-PSLINK, the first union of nurses in the Philippines supporting her”TAMANG TRABAHO, TAMANG SWELDO' advocacy, and for her sterling service as Philippine Nurses Association president and now a congresswoman for health bringing pride to the nursing profession”.*

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