



AAHFN Leadership Message

Connecting the generations to strengthen AAHFN



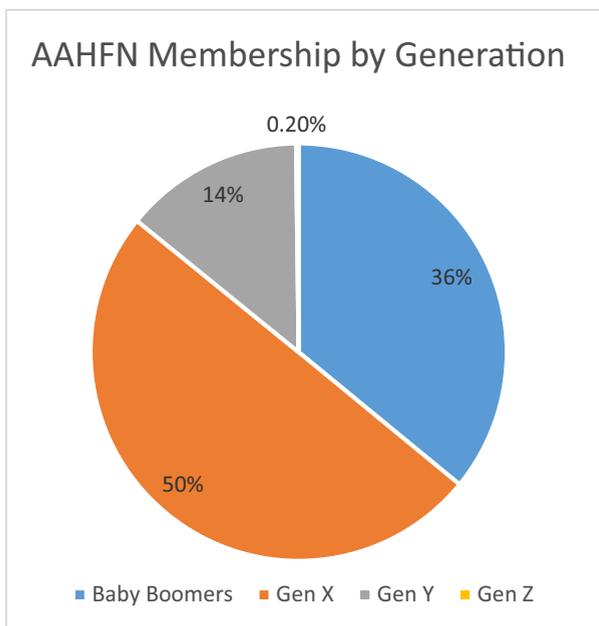
As nurses, we are probably well-versed in the statistics that the overall average age of a nurse is 50 and is continuing to climb. Worse, most nursing faculty are 52–61 years of age, and the average age of my graduating baccalaureate students is around 25. That means that as a profession, we have clinical nurses, leaders, researchers, and educators who span the generations: Baby Boomers (born 1944–1964), Generation X (born 1965–1979), Generation Y (born 1980–1994), and Generation Z (born between 1995–2015).

The question is how do we as a profession connect, and how can we engage to not only provide compassionate, quality care, but to work together to influence societal policy for healthcare? I think we can first start with reframing our focus on the unique strengths of each generation as opposed to differences. These include:

- **Baby Boomers:** *Strengths:* workaholics committed to their role, good team players, excellent mentors; like structure and discipline. Often the leaders in the workplace. *Weaknesses:* Less likely to embrace change.
- **Gen X:** *Strengths:* excellent at juggling various demands; considered excellent workers completing tasks efficiently. *Weaknesses:* Less likely to speak out against concerns.
- **Gen Y:** *Strengths:* are independent thinkers and workers; very concerned with ethics and social responsibility. *Weaknesses:* Less interested in teamwork.
- **Gen Z:** *Strengths:* The most tech competent and entrepreneurial; can multitask better than most with 5 screens running at any given time. *Weaknesses:* Less likely to stay with a company or activity if not being challenged/ motivated.

So can we capitalize on these strengths and in fact channel energy into generational engagement in organizations like AAHFN? And conversely, knowing potential weaknesses can we preemptively address? Some ideas we could consider to capitalize on the strengths of each unique generation and enrich AAHFN include:

- **Baby Boomers** are in general pushing the average retirement age of 62 but are extremely committed to their patients and their profession. Before they start to step away from clinical practice, we need them in AAHFN to contribute their organizational and leadership skills. Ideas to capitalize on their unique strengths include development of policies and support documents, contribute in leadership capacities, serve as mentors for abstract and research study development, and provide education.
- **Gen Xers** are our go to people for action. They can serve in leadership capacities and generate end-products because they know how to efficiently get the kids to soccer, make dinner, attend committee conference call, answer after-hours calls on patients, and write an article or book chapter before getting a few hours' sleep. Within AAHFN, our Gen Xers are some of our hardest working committee members, event organizers, and contributors.
- **Gen Yers** are a group we need to pull into the fold. While some are engaged, we have a real opportunity to personally invite them and make membership meaningful and individual. Nurses of this



generation could be instrumental in taking our advocacy committee to the next level and developing new models for sharing information and education. As an example, we need to keep a step ahead of trends and evaluate if big annual conferences are meeting the needs of this group or perhaps they would prefer web-modules and chatrooms. So we need involvement of Gen Y AAHFN members in every committee to start charting our future ☺.

- Finally, our newest *Gen Z's* are just now entering the workforce. Much like the Gen Y, we need to provide an organization that is responsive to their needs, will challenge them, and allow them an opportunity to become productive, fruitful members. Some immediate needs we have include updating our website and presence on social media. And there is probably so much more than this aging Gen Xer can imagine that can be done with technology to elevate AAHFN and provide greater connectivity and community.

So over the next year, AAHFN will be releasing a call for volunteers to serve in existing and new committees. Every nurse in AAHFN brings unique talents and gifts, and we need you. No matter your

level of expertise, practice site, or generation, we need you to help make this organization stronger and assure ultimately that we are meeting our mission of uniting professionals, patients and caregivers in the support and advancement of heart failure practice, education and research, thus promoting optimal patient outcomes.

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