

**Richard Levin, President and CEO
The Arnold P. Gold Foundation**



**Remarks at the AACN 50th Anniversary Gala
October 19, 2019**

What a spectacular evening! To all of you, to AACN, happy 50 years! Last year, the Gold Foundation celebrated our 30th anniversary, and that felt like an unbelievable achievement. Here you are, at a half century of supporting, of elevating academic nursing and nurses and it is a wonderful achievement. I'm honored to be here in your company, in a room filled with boundless dedication and compassion.

We have been very fortunate at the Gold Foundation to have close and special links to the AACN. It began with the amazing Polly Bednash who made possible our expansion to nursing from our beginnings solely in undergraduate medical education. After her incredible 27 years at the helm, she joined our Board and brought with her such clarity, intelligence, and deep insights. We thought we were getting her in mid-career, a very young lady, but then she was off to the rescue again, helping steer the new, national, Common Spirit Health into being. Our loss, but the country's gain.

And then, to be followed up by Deb Trautman!

Deb has been a spectacular force and advocate for nurses and humanism in healthcare and a wonderful partner. She joined us in June at our Gala to deliver a stirring introduction of Elaine Adler, who is a passionate supporter of nurses, and has funded our joint initiatives with you since the very beginning.

The Gold Foundation is very proud to be a small part of the magnificent 50 years of the AACN. Together, we have expanded the White Coat Ceremony to more than 350 schools of nursing.

And two years ago, we expanded our annual student essay contest to nursing students. With your help, winning essays from medical and nursing students, are now published side by side, in both the *Journal of Professional Nursing* and *Academic Medicine*.

These shared milestones, and the countless other giant achievements from your 50 years of work, deserve tonight's celebration.

But I also want to recognize the COURAGE it took simply to begin.

To start with a small cohort of deans who wanted a network to support their schools, with all of their challenges. To stand up and say, we can do better. We can support the health of this nation and the future of nursing. And to step up and do it against the currents then and now.

This is no small feat.

Over and over again, in your 50 years, you showed such courage.

You were not afraid to stand up for what nursing and nursing students needed.

To reinvent nursing education and raise that horizon.

To propose innovative solutions and champion national standards.

To rally behind the nurturing, caring, essential impact of nurses while expanding the opportunities for research and graduate training.

To unite your colleagues in nursing schools and healthcare institutions across the country and rally the forces in Washington.

To grow the membership from 20 to the hundreds and hundreds of member schools and institutions today speaks to the immense value you have created.

You have changed the course of nursing education and the lives and careers of countless nurses for the better.

Tonight, we celebrate your humanism and courage and all your accomplishments over the past half century, but what about the next?

The future will challenge us all, there is no question. We already feel the great push to do our work with greater speed and accuracy and efficiency, with robotic technology and artificial intelligence and all sorts of coming inventions we can't fathom yet.

If we feel the unbearable pressure of the disruption now, what will be coming next? Will we survive? Well, some of the professions will.

There are many awful tales of our demise and one of my favorites is Star Trek. Any Trekkies here? I see a large number. If the sci fi writers got it right, by the year 2371, doctors will have been replaced by infallible, always available, seemingly affable, algorithmically synthesized holograms. Maybe, but that sci-fi doctor was only meant to supplant, not replace humans, and so it must be. Doctors might be gone, but what about you?

The futurist, scientist, cardiologist, author Eric Topol thinks in his new book *Deep Medicine* about the future of AI and humanism.

And he writes of you: "One group that it is hard for me to envision ever being replaced in the deep medicine future is nurses, the real people caring for the sick."

From 50 years ago to 50 years into the future, and beyond: the human connection, the touch, the nurturing, caring, science-based profession of nursing will not, indeed cannot be, replicated or replaced.

Nursing is the essence of humanism in healthcare. And nurses are the epitome.

Chuck Stepanek said it first and now it's on T-shirts: "When you save one life, you are a hero. When you save a hundred lives, you are a nurse."

Thank you all for sustaining the modern chapter of this story.

May we be partners with you for the next 50 years, and far beyond.

Thank you, and congratulations.