

'only' A CNA

When I visit in our nursing centers, I like to spend time talking with our certified nursing assistants. Why? They inspire me with their passion for the work they do.

Our conversations are never long – although polite, they remind me they have work to do, and they are off down the hall to see the next patient.

These are the men and women who build the reputation of Life Care, one resident, one patient, one family at a time.

What make a great CNA? Their professional skills are important, of course, but the best ones are driven by the heart. Residents look to CNAs as angels of mercy.

Perhaps the best definition of a great CNA comes from one who is a practitioner. Dawn Mazzola is a certified nursing assistant at Life Care Center of New Port Richey, Florida, where she has worked for 11 years. In a conversation with a family member in 2008, during the discussion, the lady said, “Never mind; you’re just a CNA.”



“Well, there’s a lot more to it than that,” Mazzola said. “I went home that evening and wrote a poem – it just came to me – entitled *Only a CNA*,” to which she has copyright. Since then, it has circulated on the internet.

“Dawn is a definite asset to our facility, said Christopher Sefjack, the executive director. “She is one of our mentor CNAs, and does all the orientation for new ones coming in for training.”

As a teenager, Mazzola accompanied her mother, who was a volunteer for hospice, on occasions. “Once, she asked me to go with her to a local nursing home. I did, and I fell in love with the residents. That set my career path.”

Her father pushed her to become a nurse, she added. “I told him I see nurses and what they do, and I respect that. But for me, as a CNA, I get to be with the patients more, and that’s what’s important to me.”

Here is Mazzola’s poem:

Only a CNA?

Who are you to refer to us
As “only” a CNA?
We’re the ones who wash and dress
Our patients for the day.

We’re the ones who take the time
To listen to them speak.
We listen about their lifetime,
In a forty-hour week.

(more)

We also give our hands to hold
When someone's feeling scared.
It's not easy being a patient,
You're never quite prepared.

We take the time to listen
By lending both our ears.
We listen to their worries,
Or how they've spent their years.

Our arms were made to reach,
And even wrap around,
To give our patients hugs
When they're feeling a little down.

We help our patients do the things
They used to do on their own.
Everybody needs some help,
Even when we're grown.

So who are you to refer to us
As "only" a CNA?
We do our best to meet their needs
Within our working day.

We choose to do this job,
The job did not choose us.
We sympathize and empathize,
Compassion is a must.

We try to keep them comfortable,
And free of any fear.
We sit along beside them
When that time is near.

We hold their hand, stroke their hair,
Just making sure they know
They're not alone, an aide is there;
It's OK for them to go.

To all the CNAs:
Keep your head held high.
We're not "only" CNAs,
We're angels in disguise!

Dawn Mazzola, that's well said. We can but add: Amen!

– Beecher Hunter