

Thursday, April 6, 2000

CONGRESS NEWS

47th Annual AORN Congress
April 2-6, 2000 — New Orleans

GENERAL COLIN POWELL CAPTIVATES AUDIENCE

Addressing an audience that began gathering more than an hour before the doors opened, General Colin Powell, USA (Ret), was captivating. Thousands of attendees and exhibitors packed into Hall F of the convention center to hear the world-renowned military leader and advisor to three presidents make a powerful presentation at the Jerry G. Peers Lectureship Tuesday night. The lectureship was sponsored by the Exhibitors' Advisory Committee (EAC) with generous contributions from 5M Health Care.

After a warm welcome by EAC chair Matt Cavanaugh and a videotape introduction of the "authentic hero," Gen Powell excitedly took the stage.

Gen Powell opened by stressing the link between nursing and the military that was described in the opening video and commended nurses who serve in the armed forces. He recounted an incident in which his son, Mike, almost died and needed immediate surgery at a military hospital. With much emotion, he shared how his fear during the desperate situation was relieved by the upbeat personality and optimism of the nurse on duty. "One of yours took very good care of a very scared general, and I thank every one of you," he said.

Investing in our children

Revealing a genuine wit with a touch of sarcasm, Gen Powell shared further stories, including his playful competition with Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura and the creation of his Colin Powell action figure by Hasbro—a portion of the profits of which Gen Powell stipulated will go to the Boys and Girls Club of America.

Gen Powell explained that the work of this charity is in line with the organization America's Promise—Alliance for Youth, a focus of the third stage of Gen Powell's career. The organization, of which Gen Powell is chair, addresses his strong belief in the need to prepare and support today's youth.

"The reality is that 15 million of today's children are not on a path to success," he said. "We have to stop filling our jails by getting into the lives of our children."

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REGISTRATION

Attendees: 6,785

Exhibitors: 6,326

Total: 13,111

(as of noon yesterday)



PEERS LECTURESHIP

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He said America's Promise focuses on the following five areas.

- Mentoring today's youth;
- Providing safe places for children to learn and grow (eg, after school programs, YMCAs). "We need to teach our kids that there are better things to do than sit in front of TV and watch Jerry Springer," he said.
- Ensuring every child gets a healthy start (ie, vaccinations, proper health care);
- Teaching children marketable skills "so that no kid is left on the wrong side of the digital divide"; and
- Giving kids opportunities to serve people.

Writing his story

Gen Powell also discussed the second stage of his career, which involved the writing and promoting of his book. He said the book, which has sold almost two million copies, is popular not for the latter chapters about his military career, but for the early chapters of "the American dream." He said people are interested in the story of the poor boy from the Bronx who grew up to become a hero.

Always a soldier

Gen Powell said the first stage of his career was dedicated to being a soldier, which he's proud of having been 35 years. Sharing details of his rich military past, he described the first 28 years of his career as following a very coherent plan of "containment." He said his mission was always very clear and involved maintaining distinct red and blue sides of the map, adding that there was a certain comfort in having such a clearly defined enemy and mission. He said the next seven years of his military career were dramatically different due to the ending of the Cold War.

According to Gen Powell, at that time, "the red and the blue mixed" into a more complex world, and he shared the story of how Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev told him, "General, I am very very sorry, you will have to find a new enemy." Gen Powell joked that nowadays he and



General Powell was humorous and personal stories to encourage attendees to invest in our children.

the former Russian leader are on the same speaker circuit and that "he's doing better than me!"

He spoke of his experiences in Desert Storm and expressed pride in the young men and women who served in it. Gen Powell said America's admiration for the young soldiers was apparent in the media coverage and interviews conducted after the war ended. Reiterating the importance of investing in our children, he commended what the young soldiers were able to accomplish with our guidance and support and retermed the phrase Generation X as "Generation X-cellent."

He recounted a story in which a young soldier was being interviewed by journalist Sam Donaldson as he prepared for a tank engagement. The journalist asked, "Aren't you afraid?" The soldier replied, "No, I am not. We're going into this as a family."

Gen Powell stressed that if we have the power to give young men and women the spirit to go thousands of miles away from home and engage in battle as a "family," we can do it elsewhere. "We must be a family," he said.

Gen Powell concluded by telling attendees, "Believe as I do. We are here as the result of an act of a divine providence." His final statement, "Thank you for what you are doing and God bless you all," elicited a standing ovation and a round of cheers.

THREE POTENTIAL NEW SPECIALTY ASSEMBLIES

Many nurses have expressed interest in forming specialty assemblies for members who have interest and/or experience in multicultural and international nursing, plastic surgery, and alternative therapies. If you're interested, please contact Bonnie Denholm, AORN specialty assembly coordinator, at bdenholm@aorn.org for more information.

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