October 2026

NAINA Celebrates 20 Years of Nursing Excellence at 10th Biennial Conference.

Embracing Diversity, Celebrating Excellence

COPPELL, TEXAS — The National Association of Indian Nurses of America (NAINA) celebrated its 20th anniversary at its 10th Biennial Conference, held October 1–3, 2026, in Coppell, Texas. Hosted by the Indian American Nurses Association of North Texas (IANANT), the gathering brought together nurses, educators, researchers, and healthcare leaders to exchange and share knowledge, strengthen professional connections, and celebrate the contributions of nurses of Indian origin to healthcare and the nursing profession. Under the theme "The Power of Nursing: Leading the Future through Excellence, Resilience, and Innovation," the conference featured educational and scientific sessions on leadership, emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and nurse well-being. The event provided a platform for learning, collaboration, and inspiration, reinforcing the vital nurses play at the forefront in advancing healthcare, improving patient outcomes, and shaping the future of the profession. The conference was organized by the leadership of National Convener Liffy Cherian, IANANT President Dr. Mahesh Pillai, and Chapter Convener Angel Jyothi, alongside the dedicated organizing team and volunteers.

NAINA President Umamaheswari (Uma) Venugopal guided by her presidential theme "Engage, Educate, Empower," emphasized professional growth, leadership development, and collaboration as essential to advancing the nursing profession. Distinguished keynote speakers Dr. Kenya Beard from New York, a nationally recognized leader and co-founder of Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing (ADLN), Dr. Virginia Lynch, the Mother of Forensic Nursing, and Lee Mathew, CNO, Dallas, Texas, shared insights to inspire nursing excellence, leadership, resilience, and innovation. The conference featured educational and scientific sessions on clinical knowledge, leadership, artificial intelligence, emerging technologies, and nurse well-being. The gala was honored by the presence of Dr. Stephanie Woods, Dean of Texas Woman's University, as Guest of Honor, recognizing the importance of academic leadership, nursing education, and collaboration in advancing the nursing profession.

The gala also welcomed American Nurses Association (ANA) leaders Dr. Katie Boston-Leary and Holly Carpenter, along with Cat Olguin, President-Elect of the Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA), Dallas, Texas, and Reyna Avila and Hector Arias, representing the Dallas chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN). Their participation reflected NAINA's two-decade commitment to building bridges, strengthening partnerships, and fostering collaboration across nursing organizations and diverse professional communities.

The conference souvenir further celebrated this collaborative spirit through messages from nursing leaders, including ANA President, Dr. Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, Dr. Jacqueline Idun, representatives of G-DNA & African- Diaspora Nursing Alliance and the PNAA national president, among others. A congratulatory letter from Coppell Mayor Wes Mays added

recognition to this important milestone. Together, these contributions highlighted the power of nursing organizations and leaders united by a shared purpose.

Two decades of Shared Purpose

During a special 20th-anniversary reflection, NAINA founding president Sara Gabriel and current president Umamaheswari (Uma) Venugopal traced the association's growth from six founding chapters in 2006 to 22 chapters. They highlighted NAINA's continuing commitment to professional education, mentorship, advocacy, leadership development, and collaboration with nursing organizations in India. As NAINA celebrates two decades of achievement, its 10th Biennial Conference reaffirmed the enduring power of nursing leadership, diversity, and collaboration in advancing the profession and shaping the future of healthcare.

NAINA Leadership Academy Launched

A major milestone was the launch of the NAINA Leadership Academy (NLA), guided by the motto "Lead, Drive, Inspire." Bringing the current term theme "Engage, Educate, Empower" into action, the academy aims to prepare future nursing leaders through four pillars: leadership development, healthcare system navigation, cultural strength integration, and mentorship and sponsorship. Enrollment opened at the conference for a competitive inaugural cohort of up to 10 current or incoming NAINA and chapter governing board members.

Awards and Scholarships Recognize Nursing Excellence

NAINA recognized outstanding contributions to nursing through several awards, including the $1,000 Dr. Omana Simon Research Award, presented to Anju Wadhawan of New Jersey; the Trailblazer Award, presented to Dr. Solymole Kuruvilla of New York, a member of NAINA's Advisory Board; and the Chapter Excellence Award, awarded to the Indian Nurses Association of Illinois under the leadership of Dr. Simi Jesto Joseph. NAINA also awarded scholarships to members and student nurses in India to support their education and professional development.

Inaugural Award Recognizes Nursing Excellence in India

A highlight was the presentation of NAINA's inaugural Nursing Excellence in India–Global Award to Dr. Gopichandran Lakshmanan, a neuro-nursing educator and researcher at NIMHANS in Bengaluru, India. Designated for members of the Trained Nurses' Association of India (TNAI), the award recognizes excellence in nursing practice, education, research, leadership, innovation, advocacy, and international collaboration.

NAINA Inducts 2027–2028 Governing Board and Honors Leadership Legacy

The conference marked the induction of NAINA's 2027–2028 Governing Board, led by President elect Liffy Cherian, alongside Executive Vice President Dr. Munira Wells, Vice President Dr.

Nisha Mathews, Secretary Elizabeth Sunil Sam, and Treasurer Dr. Sheela Sajan. The Advisory Board will be chaired by current President Uma Venugopal, with Dr. Suja Thomas, Dr. Lydia Albuquerque, Dr. Jackie Michael, and Sara Gabriel as members. Dr. Grace Samuel will serve as ANCC Director, while Tara Shajan, Violet Monis, Mary Biju, Dr. Fatima Arastu, Dr. Maya Joseph, Dr. Shyla Roshin, Dr. Sujayalakshmi Devarayasamudram, Saramma Ipe, and Dr. Jessica Varghese will lead national committees.

The induction ceremony featured remarks by President-Elect Liffy Cherian and a special presentation by current President Uma Venugopal, who presented Liffy Cherian with NAINA's Presidential Leadership Legacy Perpetual Plaque. Engraved with the names of NAINA's past presidents and incoming president, the plaque symbolizes the continuity of leadership, service, and commitment that will carry the organization forward. It also proudly bears NAINA's enduring tagline: "Embracing Diversity, Celebrating Excellence" — Established December 2006.

Vision for NAINA's Next Chapter

The incoming president, Ms. Liffy Cherian, shared her vision for NAINA's next term, anchored in her motto: "Connecting Our Community, Empowering Leaders, and Elevating Nursing Excellence." With a spirit of unity and shared purpose, she envisions bringing our NAINA family closer, nurturing the next generation of nurse leaders, and elevating nursing excellence through collaboration, education, innovation, and service.

Sponsors and Partners Acknowledgement

NAINA extends its sincere gratitude to the conference sponsors and partners whose generous support contributed to the success of the 10th Biennial Conference and 20th Anniversary celebration. Their commitment to nursing education, professional development, and leadership reflects the shared vision of advancing nursing excellence.

The conference culminated in NAINA's 20th Anniversary Gala, celebrating two decades of nursing excellence, leadership, and collaboration. As NAINA enters its third decade, its commitment to engaging, educating, and empowering nurses—along with expanding leadership development and international partnerships—will continue to shape its future and strengthen its impact on the nursing profession.

About NAINA:

National Association of Indian Nurses of America | www.nainausa.org

NAINA's 10th Biennial Conference https://biennial.nainausa.org/home



Traditional Lamp Lighting Ceremony by our Delegated Guests of Honor



Conference participants gather during NAINA's 10th Biennial Conference in Coppell, Texas, October 1–3, 2026.



Dr. Gopichandran Lakshmanan receives NAINA's inaugural Nursing Excellence in India–Global Award during the 20th-anniversary celebration.



The incoming NAINA 2027–2028 Governing Board participates in the induction ceremony.