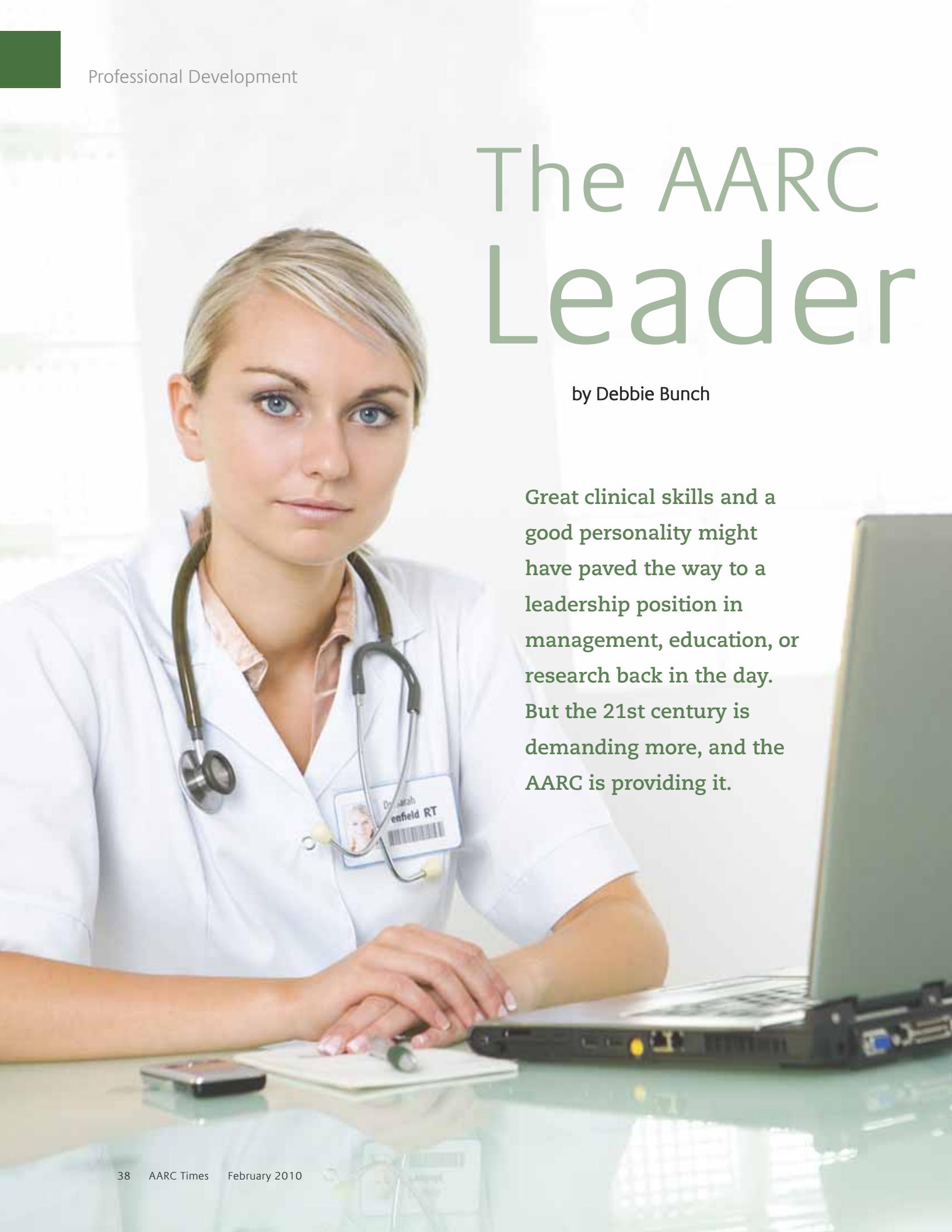


The AARC Leader

by Debbie Bunch



Great clinical skills and a good personality might have paved the way to a leadership position in management, education, or research back in the day. But the 21st century is demanding more, and the AARC is providing it.

ship Institute



**Education with real-world relevance,
coming soon to a computer near you**

Most of the leaders in respiratory care today grew up in a very different profession — one where a young person with a good clinical education and background could get into a leadership position and then grow right along with a department or program that was, in many cases, just as young as its new director. Those days are long gone. Respiratory therapy is now a solid part of hospitals and colleges across the nation, and administrators expect new leaders to jump in head first. In other words, it's sink or swim time — and to stay afloat, therapists need to get into the pool with the skills they'll need to succeed.

The AARC has a groundbreaking Leadership Institute in the works that is designed to equip the next generation of leaders with those skills and more.

Critical foundations

"Success and promotion of respiratory therapists within their work environment depends highly on leadership ability," says Toni Rodriguez, EdD, RRT, chair of the Leadership Institute Steering Committee and the AARC's past president. "Leaders bring more innovation, employee engagement, and winning performance to their organization and their profession."

Dr. Rodriguez says the AARC leadership believes strongly that nearly every clinician has the potential to lead, but realizing that potential depends on getting the right education and mentoring on the attitudes, behaviors, characteristics, and values that successful leaders often exhibit. That's where the new Leadership Institute can help. "This interactive online education program is



The Institute will kick off with a Fellowship for Advanced Skills Training ("FAST Track") program including communication, leadership, finance, and computer skills.



going to be designed for all busy respiratory professionals interested in career-focused education to facilitate career advancement through intentional leadership development."

Here's how it will work: Early next year, the Institute will kick off with a Fellowship for Advanced Skills Training program — called the "FAST Track" for short. This program is aimed at providing a core curriculum



■ Toni Rodriguez,
EdD, RRT

of topics related to a basic leadership skill set, including communication, leadership, finance, and computer skills. RTs who complete the core curriculum will then be able to engage in one or more of three specialty tracks in management, education, and research. A certificate of completion will be issued upon completion of the core curriculum and at least one of the specialty tracks. Ultimately, the Association would like to tie completion of the program to credits at degree-granting institutions.

"The AARC has embarked upon a mission to develop a formalized curriculum and mentoring process to advance the disciplines of management, education, and research as they relate to the profession of respiratory care," says AARC President Timothy Myers, BS, RRT-NPS. Once we have been successful in accomplishing our goals that have been set forth for this project, we will have developed a dynamic process to formally educate and mentor tomorrow's leaders in the critical foundations of our profession.

Go to the head of the class

Richard M. Ford, BS, RRT, FAARC, is heading up the Management Track and believes it

will help new managers close the gap between what they learned in respiratory therapy school and at the bedside and what they need to know to succeed as managers.

"Today's health care environment places more demands than ever on those who manage respiratory care departments," he says. "A common profile of a respiratory care supervisor/manager/director is an individual who earned a promotion by being an outstanding clinician. While the characteristics of outstanding clinicians are equally important in leadership, many learn about staffing, productivity, benchmarking, budgeting, information systems, human resource management, leading teams, and organizational management the hard way — by learning from mistakes and on-the-job training." The Management Track will offer aspiring leaders — or even existing managers who want to hone their skills — the opportunity to acquire a skill set that will set them apart from the crowd.

Linda Van Scoder, EdD, RRT, FAARC, chair of the Education Track, says educators are faced with much the same situation, and the Leadership Institute will also be a great way for them to bypass on-the-job training and proceed to the head of the class. "So many times people are promoted to an educator position, either in a program or a department, because they are excellent clinicians. Unfortunately, they may not have the skills to translate their clinical knowledge into an educational experience for their students or staff. The Education Track will be de-



■ Timothy
Myers, BS,
RRT-NPS

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—Toni Rodriguez, EdD, RRT



■ Richard M.

Ford, BS, RRT, FAARC the need for post-graduate education in respiratory research, and he particularly highlights the mentoring that will be incorporated into the curriculum. “Today’s health care environment isn’t conducive to mentoring because the focus on the bottom line has eliminated many of the job positions that traditionally provided mentors, while at the same time increasing the workload on everyone else,” Chatburn says.



■ Linda Van Scoder, EdD, RRT, FAARC

of this generation retire, there will be nobody left to be mentors and nobody with the time to be mentored. The respiratory care profession needs to do more to ensure that doesn’t happen. We need a formal academic succession plan.”

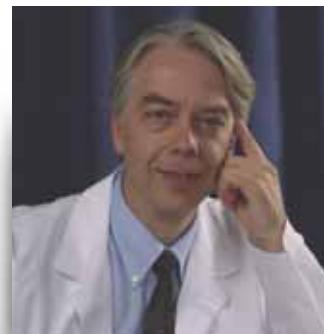
signed to give them those skills.”

The Management and Education Tracks are expected to be online by mid-to-late 2011, and the Research Track, being headed up by Robert Chatburn, BS, RRT-NPS, FAARC, will complete the trifecta sometime in 2012. Like his colleagues, Chatburn cites

With fewer and fewer mentors available to take newcomers under their wings, the next generation of leaders will require a more formalized process. “Today, the average department cannot even afford an educator position, let alone a research position,” notes Chatburn. “As people

Lifelong learning

Dr. Rodriguez believes the AARC Leadership Institute will fill the void. “To remain dynamic, a profession must update its practitioners to meet the needs of patients, the health care environment, and the profession itself,” she says. “The responsibility for formal education has always been the role of institutions of higher learning, but entities closer to the work environment, such as professional associations, employers, and providers, traditionally assume a major role in providing professional continuing education. The AARC is no different. We view our membership as consumers of professional education, and their status as lifelong learners as essential to the continued growth of the profession.”



■ Robert
Chatburn,
BS, RRT-NPS,
FAARC

It’s a classic win-win situation, and Dr. Rodriguez and her colleagues on the Steering Committee urge everyone in the profession to stay tuned for more information as the Institute takes shape over the coming year. “Therapists who take advantage of the Leadership Institute will improve their chances for promotion and salary increases, they’ll become more marketable in the field, they’ll find greater job satisfaction, and they’ll increase their knowledge in subject areas they’re interested in,” says Dr. Rodriguez. “Best of all, they’ll be able to access this convenient, flexible education with real-world relevance right at their own desktops — and they’ll earn AARC continuing education credit at the same time.” ■