

A Long Way from Henry Street

ACTING UPON A NURSING INSTINCT

By Rayleen J. Bradley, RN, IBCLC

Routine lice screening is a major part of my school nurse duties, and also gives me a great opportunity to see my students on a regular basis. As each of them steps up for their hair to be examined, I observe skin conditions, evaluate hygiene, notice stitches or bruising, and have a bit of conversation.

As I greeted each 4th grade student prior to the “toothpick exam,” my eyes were drawn to a particular young lady. Her flat affect, pallor skin tone, and listlessness aroused concern about her medical well-being. I took my time looking through her hair and struck up a conversation. It was mostly one-sided, due to her lack of participation. I finished the exam and watched her somberly return to her seat.

Upon returning to the main office, I sat down with the staff that has known this class of students since kindergarten. I asked if this particular girl had any current medical conditions, or was being treated for an illness that I was unaware of. There was nothing in her record.

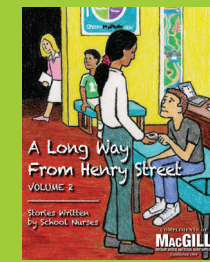
“My nursing instinct kicked in, and I decided to call the student’s parents. I asked if anything seemed different about their daughter. The father answered almost immediately with a sense of relief.”

“We noticed that she grows tired quickly, and has lost her appetite,” he stated. We talked some more, and he continued to explain, “She also has lost interest in activities she normally enjoys.” I described what I saw in the health room during lice screening. The father then said, “She is not her same old self. We thought about calling her doctor, but haven’t gotten around to it yet. I’m going to call their office today!”

I received a phone call from her parents within a few days with results of the doctor’s exam. Test results revealed a severely low thyroid function. The doctor began treatment immediately. The parents were extremely grateful for my call, as it gave them an objective point of view that confirmed their observations.

As I was preparing to start instruction for the 4th grade girls’ health class in the spring of that school year, I spotted the young girl at her desk. What an amazing transformation I saw before me! Her skin had a beautiful pink glow; she had a beaming smile and a happy demeanor! She came up to me after class and told me how great she was now feeling.

That is why I became a school nurse...for moments like that!



This story was originally published in the book “A Long Way From Henry Street Volume 2” © MacGill. The stories were written by school nurses about their own experiences of keeping children healthy and happy. If you’re interested in owning a copy of “A Long Way from Henry Street Volume 2”, you can add one to your next MacGill purchase, free of charge (Item #72012).



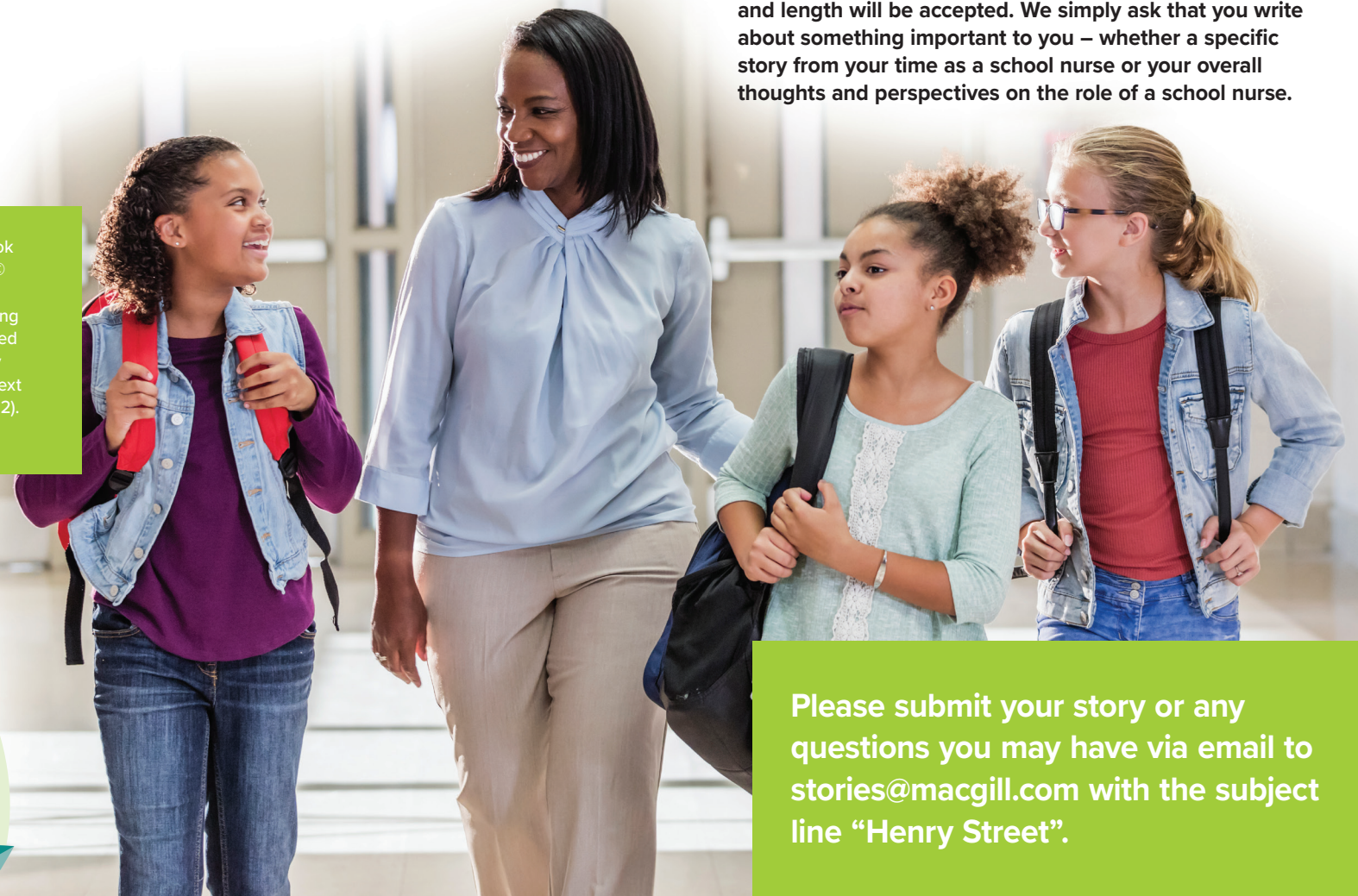
Submit Your School Nurse Story to A Long Way from Henry Street

If you’re a longtime school nurse and MacGill customer, you may remember our book, “A Long Way from Henry Street”. For years, we collected stories written by school nurses just like you about their experiences of keeping children healthy and happy.

Today, school nurses nationwide continue to bring the same value to their jobs as the first public school nurse, Lina Rogers Struthers, did in 1902. However, much has changed. “A Long Way from Henry Street” is a book that brings to light the changing role of school nurses and the new challenges that face them today.

It has been almost a decade since MacGill published the last volume of “A Long Way from Henry Street”. Even in the last few years, and especially so in 2020, school nursing has continued to change. That’s why we’ve decided to revive this project! Our hope is to provide a place for school nurses to share their experiences with their community. We’ll be publishing your stories in our upcoming flyers and on our blog.

We would love to hear from you. Stories of any type, topic and length will be accepted. We simply ask that you write about something important to you – whether a specific story from your time as a school nurse or your overall thoughts and perspectives on the role of a school nurse.



Please submit your story or any questions you may have via email to stories@macgill.com with the subject line “Henry Street”.

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