

### **Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee (Caring, Community)**

Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee exemplified the Caring and Community aspects of the Seven Cs. She built a community of Navy nurses dedicated to the care of Sailors in peace and war.

Higbee joined the newly-created Navy Nurse Corps in 1908 as one of the first women nurses, known as the “Sacred Twenty.” These nurses did not receive a rank, were paid less than other Navy medical personnel, and were not provided with quarters or a mess. After naval training and two years as chief nurse at Naval Hospital Norfolk, Higbee was appointed the second superintendent of the Navy Nurse Corps in 1911. Higbee immediately set out “to improve working conditions . . . obtain proper living quarters,” and secure “equitable pay.” Nurses received 40 cents to men’s 75 cents. Eventually, she achieved a pay increase from \$50 to \$60 per month. Higbee also “formalized Navy nursing uniforms bearing the golden oak leaf and acorn superimposed over an anchor.” She lobbied for “legislative efforts to improve the professional education of nurses.”

Higbee expanded nursing care. She successfully spearheaded efforts to provide healthcare services to members of Sailors’ families. She placed Navy nurses aboard ships for the first time to care for soldiers of the American Expeditionary Force, and supported efforts to treat World War One veterans with “chronic medical and neuropsychiatric illnesses” in naval hospitals and assigned nurses to care for them.

She improved training for the Navy’s nurses and for its hospital corpsmen. Specifically, she sought to teach corpsmen nursing methods and to “develop in the hearts and minds of these ‘pupil nurses’ the principles of conscientious care of the sick.” For her nurses, Higbee created Vassar Training Camp, a school devoted to preparing the Navy’s nurses for 20th-century warfare with its “shrapnel and high velocity projectiles,” its “trench foot,” its “mustard, phosgene, and chlorine gases,” and its “post-traumatic stress disorder, then known as shell shock.” This training helped to professionalize the Navy’s growing medical ranks.

For her efforts leading the Navy Nurse Corps during the First World War and the subsequent Influenza Pandemic of 1918, Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee was awarded the Navy Cross, the first living woman to receive this award.

*Caring is defined as the “displaying kindness and concern for others.” Leaders who care take action toward serving needs of their people. In what ways did Higbee care for her nurses? In what ways did she care for Sailors?*

*Community is defined as “a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.” Leaders should endeavor to establish community strength when creating teamwork. In what ways did Higbee build community among her nurses?*