

Thursday, May 8, 2008

School of Nursing honors areas top nurses

Oakland University's **School of Nursing** (SON) hosted the 20th Annual Nightingale Awards for Nursing on Thursday, May 1. The program honored nine award recipients and nine runners up for their dedication to the field of nursing. Local 4-WDIV morning news anchor Rhonda Walker served as the evening's emcee.

The evening was hosted by the SON and the **Board of Visitors** with the help of presenting sponsor Henry Ford Health System; gold sponsors Oakwood Hospital and William Beaumont Hospitals; silver sponsor St. John Health; and bronze sponsors Kelly Services, Crittenton Hospital Medical Center, St. Joseph Mercy Oakland, Detroit Medical Center and Health Care Weekly Review.

The ceremony honors the contributions of nursing professionals while raising funds for student scholarships and other department needs.

The awards are given in honor of Florence Nightingale, the Briton who in the mid-1800s created the nursing profession. The Nightingale awards are given to nurses in the areas of administration, advanced nurse practice, research and education, long-term care and rehabilitation, nursing in the community, staff practice and the OU distinguished alumni in nursing.

"We are honoring 18 extraordinary women who have committed their time and energy to providing best practices, unselfishly gave of their money and time to help those in need, implementing life saving programs and continually developing new ways to improve their profession," said School of Nursing Dean Linda Thompson Adams.

Nightingale Award nominations are sent to health care agencies all over Michigan. All licensed registered nurses working in the state are eligible. The nominations and support letters are sent to a selection committee, which reviews candidates based on achievements, community service and professional organizations. Committee members independently score each of those criteria and the top scoring candidates comprise the winners and runners-up.

Selected from more than 150 nominations, the nine award winners each receive a check for \$1,000 and a solid bronze statue of Florence Nightingale. Runners-up receive a plaque and Nightingale pin.

The Nightingale Awards for Nursing coincide with National Nurses Week and Florence Nightingale's birthday, May 12, 1820. The awards promote nursing's essential health care role and the various ways nurses care for America's citizens.

2008 Nightingale Award Recipients

Nursing Administration Award

Denise Bertin-Epp
President and Chief Nursing Officer
Brighton Hospital
Nominated by Colleen Conklin

As the president and chief nursing officer of Brighton Hospital, Denise Bertin-Epp lives the hospital's motto "Help, Hope and Healing." In fact, she dispenses help, hope and healing as if they were pain relievers to patients and their families.

With more than 20 years experience treating those who suffer from chemical dependency or addiction, Bertin-Epp's list of accomplishments extends from hospital operations, to staff development to personal missions. Early in her career, she took a year-long sabbatical to work with individuals at Native American reservations in New Brunswick to provide prevention and treatment of chemical dependency. She encourages her staff to share in her passion and determination to help others conquer addiction. In addition to her strong commitment, her staff values her leadership. Bertin-Epp is not a leader out for her own personal gain, but to bolster and encourage further advancements for those who work with her and her cause. She shares success and credit with all those who assist in the project. She sees the potential of others, even if they do not see it in themselves, and encourages them to expand their roles in order to grow personally and professionally. Her philosophy asserts faith in her staff to make the right decisions. She provides them with the needed resources to ensure patient needs come first and will be supported throughout their recovery and if necessary, relapses. Through this philosophy, nurses and health care workers have begun effective new methods such as yoga, acupuncture, recreation therapy and anger management programs.

Bertin-Epp has taken the hospital from a "red" bottom line to one with a significant profit, and the agency continues to grow. Brighton Hospital has received the National Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (NAADAC) award and Customer Service Top Box Scores of 93 percent. Bertin-Epp has ensured that all salaried nurses were subsidized in obtaining their certification in addiction nursing, and has brought in two advanced nurse practitioners to the inpatient setting to improve psychiatric screening and aftercare services. She and the medical director have established a residency program where one or two physicians train their staffs in the treatment of chemical addictions. She has also been instrumental in opening both a men's and women's halfway house, creating professional recovery programs and legal assistance programs as well as instituting adolescent outpatient services. In an effort to ensure everyone in need of care can reap the benefits of Brighton Hospital, she created the Brighton National Addiction Foundation in order to obtain grants that will subsidize patient services for the uninsured.

Another of Bertin-Epp's successful programs is her reinitiated standard 30-day treatment program, offered through both insurance and private pay. This 30-day program experiences a relapse rate of approximately 7 to 8 percent, where regular insurance funded programs (which cover only 6-8 days), have a relapse rate of nearly 50 percent.

2008 RUNNER UP — Debra Ann Williams, RN, BSN, TNCC

Advanced Practice Nursing

Melanie Keiffer, RN, MSN, CFNP
Providence Hospital
Nominated by Karen Peper

Melanie Keiffer is a stroke clinical nurse specialist at Providence Hospital where she serves as a mentor, provider, educator, consultant, facilitator and change agent. She manages multiple projects to recruit and retain talented nurses and improve clinical outcomes for patients and their families. Recognizing the importance of a comprehensive education, Keiffer introduced a computerized patient and family education area in the visitors' lounge of the Providence Neuroscience Unit. Through a grant co-authored by Keiffer, the hospital began offering a computer with access to the St. John's Health System neuroscience Web site, providing continuous, current, evidence-based information. The site provides links to other related neuroscience information including disease processes, risk factors, signs and symptoms and support group information.

Keiffer brings the same innovative approach to teaching nurses, providing a wide variety of educational opportunities for nurses to improve patient care. She was instrumental in offering a number of educational opportunities designed to improve nurses' critical thinking, encourage professional development and advance the science of nursing. To do this, Keiffer developed neuro-grand rounds, assisted in the development of an online stroke self-learning module, developed "Retrain Your Brain" self-learning manuals and coordinated a neuroscience nursing course as part of

continuing education. She also developed numerous "Lunch & Learn" programs regarding nutrition and stroke patient safety, initiated, developed and administered a mentoring program, presented at "Neuro Theory Days," and created poster presentations on nursing memoirs entitled "Stroke: Enhancing Patient Safety through Community Education."

Community outreach is important to Keiffer. She regularly participates in numerous community health fairs and educational programs to share the risk factors and signs and symptoms of strokes. These programs are aimed at reaching community members who are at high risk for strokes. Keiffer also participates in a train-the-trainer approach focused on parish nurses. As a result, she has exponentially increased Providence's reach into the community. Area parish nurses are provided with training and materials to educate their communities on stroke risk factors and prevention, including videos, DVDs and handouts.

2008 RUNNER UP — Linda Schrettner Miller, WHNP, IBCLC

Nursing Education and Research

Nancy Gibbs, MED, BSN, CEN
Detroit Receiving Hospital
Nominated by Beverly Baul

As an emergency room nurse at Detroit Receiving Hospital for more than 20 years, Nancy Gibbs is highly motivated, dedicated and enthusiastic. She is gifted in her ability to teach complex skills and shows compassion to every patient and stranger she meets.

It is not unusual to see Gibbs staying late or returning during the night when the department is short staffed or an emergency arises. She educates other nurses daily and is highly respected in the emergency room. Gibbs develops, plans, implements and coordinates the emergency nurse orientation program for all nursing personnel in the emergency department. She develops policies and procedures for the emergency department nursing care staff and participates in research, incorporating the findings into practice.

Since Gibbs began teaching and hosting Trauma Nursing Core Curriculum courses at Detroit Receiving Hospital, the program has grown tremendously and is attended by people throughout Michigan. As a result, Gibbs was recruited by Wayne State University's Medical School to set up and conduct the first Trauma Nurse Core course in the Bahamas. In collaboration with the Detroit Medical Center Occupational Health Services on the General Motors Nursing Skills Project, she has trained occupational health nurses throughout the U.S.

In the emergency room, Gibbs has witnessed numerous resuscitation attempts and deaths, as well as end-of-life issues in her personal life. As a result, she is gifted at reaching out to others and talking with families and patients during these emotional and critical times.

In 1996, Gibbs was awarded a nursing certificate for her dedication in the profession, including the Munuswamy Dayanandan Humanitarian Award by Emergency Medicine and Wayne State University, and attained the designation of certified emergency nurse.

2008 RUNNER UP — Sue Kokko, MSN, RN-BC

Long-Term Care and Rehabilitation

Pamela Thomson, BSN, RN, CRNN
Garden City Hospital
Nominated by Kathleen Urban

As a case manager at Garden City Hospital's Rehabilitation Unit, Pam Thomson's philosophy is to do what is best for the patient - not what is convenient for the discipline. She goes above and beyond for each patient, whether it's obtaining medication for a patient who cannot afford costly heart and blood pressure prescriptions, or a stroke patient who needs a ramp built at their home. She works tirelessly until the needs of the patient are met.

Thomson is a model for the rehab philosophy and works closely with every member of the rehab team. Colleagues turn to Thomson with questions about rehab nursing, policies and procedures. Her commitment to the team approach make her a role model in the rehab community. She implemented a "Journal Club" on the Rehab Unit, encouraging staff to use the resource for discussion and to share information. To obtain resources for her patients, she works with the Michigan Association of Rehabilitation Nurses (SEM-ARN), Case Management Society of America, home care, nursing homes and other groups. Thomson's dedication to rehab does not end when her shift ends. She is always willing to help a stranger on the street who needs physical assistance or answer questions. She is also an advocate for the rights of the disabled. Thomson's father, a World War II veteran, lost his leg in the war. She believes this is why she became interested in the rehabilitation field.

During the past 15 years, Thomson has been involved in SEM-ARN and the Michigan Association of Rehabilitation Nurses, serving as president, secretary and director and she encourages fellow rehab nurses to join. She has helped plan state chapter conferences and was instrumental in securing national-level speakers. She was also an active participant at Nurses' Day at the state capitol, meeting with legislators and articulating concerns on important issues.

2008 RUNNER UP — Linda Yoder, RN, CRRN, CCM

Nursing in the Community

Susan Zacharski
Pontiac School District
Nominated by Aimee McKeever

Susan Zacharski, or Nurse Sue as she is affectionately known, is the department head of health services and school nurse in the Pontiac School District. She services the largest elementary school in the district, Whitmer Human Resources

Center (WHRC), with more than 700 students. She focuses on removing barriers to learning, promoting optimal learning with a safe environment and keeping students, staff and families healthy.

Vision and dental care are high priorities for Zacharski. She has brought the Mobile Dentist to the students for the last 10 years. She personally performs an oral health screening with each child in the building. Last year alone, the Mobile Dentist saw 235 students, filled 386 cavities, extracted 47 teeth and performed 37 pulpotomies. More impressively, 77 percent of students identified with cavities received dental care through programs offered by Zacharski.

In order to provide students the opportunity to improve their vision early, she performs vision screenings at the start of the school year rather than waiting for the county eye checks conducted at the end. For uninsured students in need of glasses, she works with Sight for Students, Communities United, the Lions Club and other resources to get them. The students at WHRC are not the only ones who benefit from Susan's knowledge and experience. Staff is trained regularly in health-related issues that affect children including asthma, seizures, anaphylaxis, diabetes, medication administration, emergency medication administration and blood borne pathogens. She also persuades staff to model healthy living by encouraging them to offer healthy snack alternatives and participate in the Health Challenge, which last year resulted in 18 staff members losing a combined 103.5 pounds. Family Fun Night, which focuses on healthy living for the entire family through games and healthy foods, began with 300 attendees and has since doubled in attendance.

Her advocacy for safe care of children and the practice of nursing in the school setting has put her on the stand before the House of Representatives and Senate Education Committee. She has also met with representatives individually to sponsor an amendment to include emergency care plans in schools, allowing students with allergies to carry an EpiPen.

2008 RUNNER UP—Ameldia R. Brown, M.Div, BSN, RN

Distinguished Alumni

Charlotte Mather, RN, BSN, MBA
Genesys Regional Medical Center
Nominated by Sue Schwartz

When Charlotte Mather began her job as administrative director of the Women and Children's Center at Genesys Regional Medical Center, her first daunting task was to address the employee and patient dissatisfaction ratings and negative safety attitude survey. With her leadership, the division scored more than 60 percent higher on the assessments two years later. When she began the project, she not only had to be objective with the analysis of the results and make recommendations, but as the newest member of the team, had to be confident about the recommendations made. Mather was not only up for the challenge, but took the right approach. She shared her plan with key stakeholders, including the management team, labor union representatives and staff, discussed her thoughts and welcomed suggestions. The plan became a vision shared by all parties and, therefore, more conducive to implementation.

She also is the leader for the Perinatal Safety Initiative, a multidisciplinary group created to establish protocol for the safe care of mothers and babies. Through the group's core tenets, including common language between nurse and physician, structured communication, Pitocin bundles, simulation training and instrumented deliveries, Genesys can boast zero neonatal mortalities and zero birth trauma for years ending 2006 and 2007.

With a focus on patient safety and protection, Mather led a team to create and implement a plan that would significantly reduce the number of pressure ulcers. In 2004, the prevalence rate was 5 percent. While lower than the national average of 6.6 percent, this was not acceptable to Mather. Despite being out of the realm of her experience, she stepped up to face the challenge and as a result of her efforts and the assistance of her team, Genesys was able to not only provide a safe health care environment by predicting pressure ulcer risk, preventing skin injury and providing early treatment for pressure ulcers, but attained a current prevalence of 0.5 percent. Mather's goal is zero. Mather's staff values her expertise and leadership practice. She engages her staff by using exhaustive communication methods including information sharing and data, as well as involving them in plans and decision making.

2008 RUNNER-UP — Sheryl Cummings, BSN, OCN, RN

Staff Practice Nursing

Melissa Mayes, RN, BSN, OCN
DMC Huron Valley Sinai Hospital Charach
Cancer Center
Nominated by Chrisie Deming

Melissa Mayes shines as a leading example for everything the profession of nursing stands for in the chaotic realm of health care today. She extends her highly educated mind, whole enthusiastic body and unwavering balanced spirit to the health and well-being of all. As a staff nurse at DMC Huron Valley-Sinai Hospital (HVSH) Charach Cancer Center, she is viewed by both physicians and staff as a nurse and a mentor. She serves on several hospital-wide committees and is a resource to many other nurses within the hospital. Mayes led the way to the redesign and development of the Charach Cancer Center Nurse Practice Council over the past five years. She is currently the chairperson for the cancer center's nurse practice group where she strives to bring the best practices to the center and the hospital.

Melissa is also one of the founding members of the Huron Valley- Sinai Hospital Professional Nurse Advisory Council (PNAC) and helped establish its missions and goals. She oversees the council and takes their decisions to the next level. Because of her success on these committees, she has been chosen as chairperson for the hospitalwide PNAC Group. Mayes recently assumed the role of coordinator for the HVSH Tumor Board Program. In this role, her communication and organizational skills assist patients, families, nurses, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, pharmacists and social workers in promoting positive outcomes.

Mayes has stepped up to the plate to embark on the Magnet Recognition Journey committee. Mayes is leading the initiative of organizing and gathering evidence that focuses on Magnetism Force 4: "Personal Policies and Programs." Mayes was selected because of her communication experience and dedication to the nursing profession and her patients. Mayes has been nominated for the Nurse of the Year 2007 award by her peers at the hospital. She also volunteers in the continued development of the Community Education for CCTC HVSH, the annual Canoe-to-Care fundraiser sponsored by the Charach Cancer Center to support her community and programs for their patients and is a member of the Oncology Nurses Society.

Mary Ellen Zajac, RN, BSN, RNC
Children's Hospital of Michigan, Detroit
Medical Center
Nominated by Cassandra Chassie

Mary Ellen Zajac is a staff nurse at Children's Hospital of Michigan, Detroit Medical Center. Zajac has been working in the Level III-C Neonatal Intensive Care Unit since she began her nursing career in 1983. Her commitment to this unit has enabled it to continuously upgrade technologies as necessary. She has promoted new practices that aid in reducing blood stream infections in the fragile, neonatal population. Zajac received her national certification in Neonatal Nursing (RNC) and consistently takes an active role in researching all recent literature and current evidence-based practices in order to implement necessary changes that have resulted in decreased infection rates. Children's Hospital of Michigan named Zajac the 2007 Nurse of the Year.

As a conscientious nurse, Zajac performs all of her duties with due diligence. This diligence has resulted in practice modification that has impacted infection rates including a "clean and dirty" area at each bedside in every room to ensure that diapers and other contaminated items will not come in contact with clean ones. Disinfecting wipes are also part of daily protocol and equipment is cleaned immediately. Zajac, as the chairperson for the Practice Committee, led a team in the development of an opioid weaning protocol for infants in the NICU. She then corroborated with a nurse practitioner from Hutzel Women's Hospital, Detroit Medical Center, to develop policies for DMC neonatal units. One of these policies included a Car Seat Tolerance Testing protocol which was recently implemented and has already become standard practice for select infants prior to discharge. She has also drafted a policy for safe sleep practices and hopes to finalize this policy in the coming months.

After researching current literature and best practices, Zajac has developed the NICU Bundle of Best Practices to reduce bloodstream infections. As a result, the NICU has seen a drop in umbilical catheter related bloodstream infections (BSI) to a rate of 3.96. Zajac set a goal of 3.5 for 2007 and exceeded this expectation with a rate of 3.2. Because of these improvements, 29 BSI's were prevented and the hospital saved hundreds of thousands of dollars.

2008 RUNNER-UP — Jodi Radtke, RNC, BSN
2008 RUNNER-UP — Brigid McCabe, RN

People's Choice Award

Jennifer Cassady, RN
Providence Hospital
Nominated by Amy Burley

Jennifer Cassady always goes the extra mile for not only her patients, but their families as well. Before leaving for the day, she makes sure family members are eating and resting while their loved one is being treated and cared for in the hospital.

Cassady even provides her personal cell phone number to her patient's family to call her if they need assistance or just need to talk. Checking up and taking care of the family members are just two of Cassady's wonderful qualities as a registered nurse. Taking care of one patient in particular, for three and a half months was emotional. When the patient passed away, Cassady was not at the hospital. When she heard the news, she

immediately went to the hospital to be with his wife. She is acknowledged by co-workers for her cheery attitude, deep love for her patients and their family members and her willingness to always be there. Whether it is taking care of a patient one time or for a few months, Cassidy always goes beyond the call of duty.

For more information about OU's nursing programs or the Nightingale Award, visit the [School of Nursing](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

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