

Birmingham-Area Hospital Heroes Honored

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BIRMINGHAM – Ten Birmingham-area hospital employees were honored for their dedication to the health care industry at a luncheon hosted by the Birmingham Regional Council of the Alabama Hospital Association (AlaHA) this week.

The luncheon was one of seven regional awards presentations being held in January as part of the association's seventh-annual statewide "Hospital Heroes" contest, an effort to recognize the great accomplishments and compassion of hospital employees and to highlight health careers. The contest will culminate with a banquet in February where up to 10 of the regional winners will be honored as statewide heroes.

"If you've ever been in a hospital, chances are you've had a special caregiver who went above and beyond the call of duty to make sure your stay was not only productive, but comfortable," said J. Michael Horsley, president of the Alabama Hospital Association. "It is these types of individuals we honor each year as Alabama's Hospital Heroes, people who consider their work more than a job, who consider it a calling."

Birmingham-area honorees included: Shawn Cosper, RN, BSN, MSN, CCRN, Clinical Nurse IV, Brookwood Medical Center; Charlene Kim Lee, RN, BSN, CPN, Staff Nurse II, Children's Hospital of Alabama; Sister Janet Keim, RN, CRNP, Nurse Practitioner, St. Vincent's Health System; Virginia Pearl Fells, Surgical Scrub Tech, St. Vincent's Blount; Bob Anderson, Master of Divinity, Ph.D., Director of Pastoral Care and Karen Faircloth, RN, MSN, CEN, CRNP, FAEN, Director of Emergency Dept, Trinity Medical Center; India Alford, RN, BSN, ED Nurse Manager, Jamie Wade, MS, SLP-CCC, Speech & Hearing Clinical Coordinator, and Wendy Walters, LCSW, OSW-C, Family Support Coordinator, UAB Hospital; and Ginger Prescott, RN, Case Manager, Walker Baptist Medical Center.

Shawn Cospers, RN, BSN, MSN, CCRN, Clinical Nurse IV, Brookwood Medical Center

Shawn Cospers's praises are sung by staff and patients alike. She works in the cardiovascular thoracic surgery unit at Brookwood Medical Center and also serves as a preceptor for new employees and senior nursing students. "Shawn is an excellent clinician, always trying to use evidence-based strategies to improve the outcomes of patients," said Kris Cherry, administrative director of critical care services. "Shawn assisted in a study to research the benefits of open and flexible visitation. Her work in educating and communicating staff, was instrumental in policy which allows families more flexible visitation, a move that has reduced complaints and increased patient satisfaction." Ms. Cospers is said to be compassionate and driven to improve her education and to encourage her colleagues to do the same. Her caring attitude also extends to the community where she volunteers at the Anniston Soup Bowl and prepares meals and activities for senior citizens. In addition, Ms. Cospers established a food pantry at her church. "After 23 years of nursing, Shawn is perceived as one of the best open-heart nurses ever," added Ms. Cherry.

Charlene Kim Lee, RN, BSN, CPN, Staff Nurse II, Children's Hospital of Alabama

Since joining Children's Hospital in 2002, Charlene Kim Lee, a staff nurse, has been noted for her level of commitment to children and their families and praised for her integrity and respect for fellow employees. She is recognized by her peers as having a unique ability to develop and adapt new ideas in a rapidly changing profession. She was recently recognized at a national conference for her role in developing a successful, disease-specific program at Children's that helps identify the specific needs of children with cystic fibrosis as they move through the various stages of physical and psychological development. Aside from her clinical care of patients, Ms. Lee also serves as a training specialist for new nurses; she recently left such an impression on some of her interns that they elected to remain at Children's and asked to work alongside her and her staff. When asked about Ms. Lee, Rocky Caldwell, director of the adolescent and young adult medical/surgical unit, stated, "Simply put, Charlene makes our organization and community a better place to be in."

Sister Janet Keim, CRNP, Nurse Practitioner, St. Vincent's Health System

Sister Janet Keim, CRNP, has been in the health care industry for 30 years. Currently, she serves as a nurse practitioner with the uninsured and indigent clinic at St. Vincent's Birmingham and the clinic at St. Vincent's St. Clair which she helped start. Despite her many years of health care

service, Sister Janet has not tired in her efforts to share her kindness and compassion with patients. “Sister Janet is an excellent nurse practitioner,” said Sonja Banks, director of community service and outreach. “She constantly looks for new ways to meet the needs of patients... [and] spends a lot of time educating clinic patients about their medical condition and encouraging them to make life changes to improve their health.” She is known for going beyond what is expected in caring for her patients. One story is told of Sister Janet purchasing Weight Watchers memberships for several patients suffering from obesity, diabetes and severe hypertension. Another employee mentioned how she helped a patient pay a copayment to obtain much-needed blood pressure medicine.

Virginia Pearl Fells, Surgical Scrub Technologist, St. Vincent’s Blount

Virginia Pearl Fells, a surgical scrub technologist, has worked at St. Vincent’s Blount for 28 years. She is said to far exceed the requirements of her job by not only serving as a scrub tech, but also as an educator, mentor, mediator and friend to her coworkers and others in the community. “Whenever staff members ask a question that no one knows, everyone always answers by saying ‘ask Pearl,’” said Gabrielle Cox, RN, BSN, CNOR, director of surgical services. “I have yet to present her with a challenge that she has not met head on and been able to offer up a solution.” Ms. Fells is described as an extremely committed employee as evidenced by the fact that she continued working during a time when her husband and youngest son were going through major illnesses simultaneously. In addition to her dedication to St. Vincent’s, she is an active member of Pine Grove Methodist Church, helping care for the church and the cemetery landscaping.

Chaplain Bob Anderson, Master of Divinity, Ph.D., Director of Pastoral Care, Trinity Medical Center

Chaplain Bob Anderson, Ph.D., director of pastoral care at Trinity Medical Center, has dedicated more than 20 years of his life to the spiritual well-being of the physically ill and mentally and physically handicapped. Colleagues claim he brings a sense of calm, dignity and compassion to all situations. Chaplain Anderson is credited with revamping the hospital’s pastoral care program to be totally focused on ministry, ensuring full-time chaplain coverage for patients. “Even those who may not be seeking a chaplain often find his willingness to listen without judgment... to be a true blessing,” said Sean Dardeau, chief operating officer. Chaplain Anderson’s service continues outside the hospital walls. For example, after he met a patient

paralyzed after an accident, he helped find the young man independent housing. He has also assisted patients with disabilities by involving local churches, including the establishment of a respite ministry for families of disabled patients. Chaplain Anderson is known to keep in touch with patients long after they return home from the hospital and offers his assistance to anyone in need.

Karen Faircloth, RN, MSN, CEN, CRNP, FAEN, Director of Emergency Dept, Trinity Medical Center

“Karen is the type of person who doesn’t see her day in minutes and hours,” said Andy Romine, chief nursing officer at Trinity Medical Center. “She is a nurse at all times and is frequently called upon by neighbors and employees in need of emergency care.” Currently, Ms. Faircloth, a 33-year employee of the Medical Center, serves as director of the emergency department. She is said to be committed to making improvements in patient care as evidenced by the tremendous progress made in reducing emergency department wait time. Thanks to her leadership, patients are now seen within 15 minutes and are typically discharged within two hours. Her dedication to patient care led to her selection as the Community Cares Champion for the hospital, a position that ensures staff members remain focused on the needs of patients and their families. Ms. Faircloth has also been a leader in the field of emergency care, serving on a local task force addressing stroke and as president of the Alabama State Council Emergency Nurses Association.

India Alford, RN, BSN, ED Nurse Manager, UAB Hospital

India Alford began her career in emergency medicine as a technician in 1995 and today is a nurse manager for the emergency department at UAB Hospital. Her colleagues say Ms. Alford has a high degree of competency and professionalism tempered with an incredible sense of compassion and care for patients and their families. She is described as a problem solver who leads by example, encouraging her employees to look beyond the obvious illness or injury and provide optimal care for patients thus enabling them to return to their normal functioning. Coworkers share stories of how Ms. Alford organized a funeral in the emergency department for a patient’s wife as the patient was too sick to go to the funeral elsewhere. She also went above and beyond the call of duty in caring for a patient who had been in an automobile accident with her child. The child was transported to nearby facility, and Ms. Alford coordinated the transport of the patient to see her child and even accompanied her on the trip to provide emotional support.

Jamie Wade, MS, SLP-CCC, Speech & Hearing Clinical Coordinator, UAB Hospital

Jamie Wade is the speech and hearing coordinator at UAB Hospital and a person who's been known to inspire patients to overcome obstacles and achieve functional progress well beyond expectations. Ms. Wade is said to be a superb clinician who is credited with the development of an evidence-based treatment intervention for Parkinson's patients who are suffering from a loss of voice function. The program has received national acclaim and is now available statewide. In addition to the program for Parkinson's patients, Ms. Wade began a speech conference to provide continuing education, which has grown to one of the southeast's premier educational offerings, providing valuable continuing education to speech professionals. "Master's level speech therapists flock to University Hospital to complete their 9-month clinical fellowships because of Ms. Wade's reputation," said Cathy Newhouse, administrative director of rehab. "Her optimism is endless and is infectious to all those she meets. If there were ever a poster person for the core values, it would certainly be Jamie Wade."

Wendy Walters, LCSW, OSW-C, Family Support Coordinator, UAB Hospital

Wendy Walters, a 25-year health care veteran, accepted the position as family support coordinator at UAB knowing it was a new position funded initially by a two-year grant designed to provide counseling and support to families experiencing the loss of a loved one at UAB. Thanks to her commitment and compassion, the position is ongoing and has been the driving force in ensuring excellent end-of-life care for patients. Her passion for her profession is evidenced by her long list of community and professional achievements. Ms. Walters spearheaded the development of the hospital's bereavement support program, a service that provides ongoing support to families of patients who have died at UAB. She created a professional forum for local oncology social workers and helped found Camp NewSong, a camp for grieving children where she has volunteered as a camp counselor for 12 years. "Wendy not only has a multitude of creative ideas to improve the care we deliver, but she also has the tenacity and dedication to make these ideas a reality that continues to shift the culture of our organization," said Deb McGrew, associate vice president.

Ginger Prescott, RN, Case Manager, Walker Baptist Medical Center

A nurse of more than 30 years, Ginger Prescott came to Walker Baptist Medical Center one day with a red face and blistered hands ... she had tried to rescue her neighbor from his burning

house. Although the neighbor didn't make it, she had rescued him many times before by shopping for him, filling his prescriptions and providing other care he could not do for himself as he had a debilitating illness. Her coworkers recognize Ms. Prescott as an everyday hero providing this same level of compassion to her patients and her fellow employees, working long, selfless hours. She is described as an extremely generous person, one who provides groceries to those who have lost their jobs in the community, volunteers at the Humane Society, participates in Toys for Tots and makes gingerbread houses for children whose parents cannot afford Christmas. "As a single mother of three, Ginger may have worked long hours and had limited resources, but she was always generous with what she had, whether it was money, time, kindness or teaching" said Robbie Hindman, director of operations.

The Alabama Hospital Association, based in Montgomery, is a statewide trade organization that represents more than 100 hospitals and numerous other health care providers in their efforts to provide quality health care.

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