

## **Southwest Alabama Hospital Heroes Honored**

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MOBILE – Ten Mobile-area hospital employees were honored for their dedication to the health care industry at a luncheon hosted by the Southwest Alabama Regional Hospital Council 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."

Mobile-area honorees included: Natalie Johnson, RN, Staff Nurse, D.W. McMillan Memorial Hospital, Brewton; Drusilla Bryant, CNA, Certified Home Health Aide, Jackson Medical Center, Jackson; Debra Tanner, RNC-OB, Charge Nurse, and Sandy Wallace, RNC-CCE, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant, Mobile Infirmary Medical Center, Mobile; Angela Sutton Black, RN, Emergency Department Manager, Monroe County Hospital, Monroeville; Karen Dixon, Volunteer Coordinator, and Paula Moore, Insurance Coding Specialist, Providence Hospital, Mobile; Tammy Brown, RN, Assistant Nurse Manager, and Shirley E. Ezell, RNC, Assistant Nurse Manager, Springhill Medical Center, Mobile; and Josalyn Lofton, RN, MSN, ONC, Orthopedic Clinical Nurse Specialist, University of South Alabama Medical Center, Mobile.

**Natalie Johnson, RN, Staff Nurse, D.W. McMillan Memorial Hospital, Brewton**

In 1987, Natalie Johnson was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Although she has since undergone surgery and radiation, Ms. Johnson still suffers from side effects, but she never complains and always has a smile on her face in her role as a staff nurse in the outpatient department at D.W. McMillan Memorial Hospital in Brewton. Throughout her own health battles, Ms. Johnson took it upon herself to find unique ways to help patients find joy during their hardships. She arranged vacations for two families through the “Dream Foundation.” As a result of Ms. Johnson’s thoughtful act, two terminally ill mothers were given priceless, quality time with their children and families. Ms. Johnson also regularly makes transportation arrangements for patients and even offers to drive patients herself. “Natalie will not hesitate to go out on a limb for the patients,” explained Judy Parmer, outpatient nurse manager. Ms. Johnson has worked in the health care industry for 22 years and has been at D.W. McMillan Memorial Hospital since 1990.

**Drusilla Bryant, CNA, Certified Home Health Aide, Jackson Medical Center, Jackson**

Drusilla Bryant, certified home health aide at Jackson Medical Center in Jackson, is described by her patients, co-workers, friends and family as possessing a heart of compassion and utmost respect for those around her. Ms. Bryant came to work at Jackson Medical Center in 1998. With more than 16 years of experience as a certified home health aide, she has not wavered in her level of service to patients. For those who have difficulty cooking, she’s been known to schedule her visits around mealtime so she can help; she’s also helped with laundry, purchased personal items when needed and arrived at patients’ homes early in the morning so they could have time to make it to an early doctor’s appointment. Ms. Bryant also diligently works to provide staff members with any assistance they need and will never leave a task undone. “Drusilla is a hero to her patients and fellow employees because of the compassion and love she displays on a daily basis,” said Teresa Grimes, CEO of Jackson Medical Center.

**Debra Tanner, RNC-OB, Charge Nurse, Mobile Infirmary Medical Center, Mobile**

Debra Tanner has worked as a charge nurse in the labor and delivery department at Mobile Infirmary Medical Center (MIMC) in Mobile since 1976. During more than 30 years of service, Ms. Tanner has developed a special place in her heart for families who have endured the tragic loss of an infant. Whenever an infant passes away, Ms. Tanner will come in on her days off to

take photographs of the infant, prepare a casting for the parents to take with them and dress the baby for burial. Ms. Tanner even goes to the funeral and follows up with all families after burial. She has such a passion for comforting the bereaved that she developed a bereavement program that helps train individuals on how to perform castings and do infant photography, offering her classes to anyone who wishes to learn. Ms. Tanner was instrumental in the creation of the “Baby Rest” program, an annual memorial service for family members who have lost an infant. “Her reputation for turning a heartbreaking experience into a heartwarming memory has made a difference to so many families in this community,” said Shirley Colston, nurse manager.

**Sandy Wallace, RNC-CCE, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant, Mobile Infirmiry Medical Center, Mobile**

Sandy Wallace, lactation consultant at Mobile Infirmiry Medical Center (MIMC) in Mobile, has passionately devoted her entire nursing career to women’s health services. Ms. Wallace was instrumental in the planning and implementation of the MIMC Lactation Center and has helped maintain the Center since its inception. “She is a hero to many new mothers in her role as their lactation consultant, which is evident by many thank you cards, letters and comments on patient surveys,” explained Ina Hall, manager at MIMC. In one instance, one of her mothers who had been discharged contacted Ms. Wallace about her baby’s strange symptoms. Thanks to Ms. Wallace’s quick action, the baby, who was suffering from dehydration, was referred for immediate medical care and was saved. In the community, Ms. Wallace is valued as an educator on women’s issues and for her help with the “Baby Rest” ceremony, a memorial service provided by the Pine Crest Cemetery for the purposes of remembering children who died before, during or after birth.

**Angela Sutton Black, RN, Emergency Department Manager, Monroe County Hospital, Monroeville**

When asked to describe her love for working in the emergency department, Angela Sutton Black, emergency department manager at Monroe County Hospital in Monroeville, declared, “Even if I won the lottery, I would be back here on Monday morning in the emergency room.” Under her leadership, turnaround time in the emergency department has improved to two hours, well below the national average. She has encouraged her hospital’s involvement in the statewide trauma

system, secured a telemedicine grant and taught Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) classes to employees in order to improve patient care. In addition to her work in the emergency department, Ms. Black plays an active role on a number of hospital committees, including the code team, safety and health committee and pharmacy and therapeutics committee. “I have personally known Angie for four years and can confirm that she is a compassionate nurse, a loyal friend and a dedicated co-worker,” said Kim Sheffield, public relations coordinator. “Angie demonstrates a passion for the advancement of medicine and the care of others.”

### **Karen Dixon, Volunteer Coordinator, Providence Hospital, Mobile**

Even though Karen Dixon has not worked in the admitting department of Providence Hospital in Mobile for the past 15 years, department managers are still receiving letters complimenting the service she provided. “Many of the things for which she has been complimented were not related to her job, but simply acts of kindness from seeing someone in need,” said Jamey Greer, director of volunteer services. Ms. Dixon is said to lead by example. In her current role as volunteer coordinator at Providence she goes out of her way to make patients and their families comfortable. She also is attentive to the needs of her volunteers, attending weddings, funerals and other important events in their lives to show her gratitude for their service to the hospital. She is even credited with saving the life of a volunteer who didn’t show up for duty one morning after suffering a stroke. Ms. Dixon is active in local athletics and in the prevention of domestic violence. She is a regular volunteer with the United Way and Relay for Life campaigns and other community projects.

### **Paula Moore, Insurance Coding Specialist, Providence Hospital, Mobile**

Paula Moore began working at Providence Hospital in Mobile in 1987. After a brief change of employment, Ms. Moore returned to the hospital as an insurance coding specialist with dedication and an unparalleled level of service. “Her exceptionally compassionate and caring attitude touches many people, even though she is not a direct caregiver,” said Lucy Walsh, human resources director. Co-workers describe her as the first one to sign up for hospital work teams and the one who always participates in night and weekend volunteer projects. She has volunteered with the hospital’s mission project, serving as a mentor to fellow employees on the mission and values of the organization. This dedication was recognized when she was awarded

the hospital's highest honor, the Vincentian Award, an award given annually to an employee who best demonstrates the mission and values of the hospital at work and in the community. In addition to her employment-related activities, she volunteers in the community, serving as a member of a support group for victims of breast cancer and as an active member of her church.

**Tammy Brown, RN, Assistant Nurse Manager, Springhill Medical Center, Mobile**

Tammy Brown, RN, assistant nurse manager in the post partum unit at Springhill Medical Center in Mobile, has experienced several personal hardships during her life, including the death of her son. However, Ms. Brown has used her life lessons to empathize with patients and their families and help educate fellow employees. Colleagues claim she gives 110 percent while at work and even calls the floor every night before going to bed to be sure everything is all right. "She is not just a nurse who provides for patients during her shift, but she follows up with them when they leave her floor or get discharged," explained Sherri Stroud, special projects coordinator. "She checks on families of patients if they have questions, and she treats the family as an extension of the patient." Ms. Brown also shares her compassion with the people in her community by serving as secretary of the Saraland Youth Football Conference and board member of the Mobile Youth Football Conference. She's often seen paying for sports equipment for less fortunate children.

**Shirley E. Ezell, RNC, Assistant Nurse Manager, Springhill Medical Center, Mobile**

Throughout her 35 years in the health care industry Shirley E. Ezell, RNC, assistant nurse manager of pediatric services at Springhill Medical Center in Mobile, has not once wavered in her commitment to patients and staff. "Shirley is an advocate for our babies, their parents and their nurses," declared Dottie Hollingsworth, nursery charge nurse. "She has taken the role of a nurse in the hospital and community to a higher standard." Ms. Ezell uses her experience with infant loss to comfort others, currently serving as a board member of the Baby Rest Program (a service provided by the Pine Crest Cemetery for the purposes of remembering children who died before, during or after birth). She has been a strong proponent of increasing awareness of child abuse in the form of shaken baby syndrome, creating brochures, making presentations and helping develop Shaken Baby Syndrome legislation that mandates that all Alabama birth-parents

be educated on the syndrome. Ms. Ezell also serves on the Alabama Baby Coalition’s death case review board and the community action team.

**Josalyn Lofton, RN, MSN, ONC, Orthopedic Clinical Nurse Specialist, University of South Alabama Medical Center, Mobile**

Since joining the University of South Alabama Medical Center in Mobile, Josalyn Lofton, RN, MSN, ONC, a clinical nurse specialist in orthopedics, has not missed a single day of work in eight years. Her dedication to the health care industry is proven through her commitment to patients, her relationship with co-workers and her contagious optimism. At the USA Medical Center, Ms. Lofton is the liaison for orthopedic services and coordinator of all aspects of care for orthopedic patients. “Her positive attitude encourages others, and wherever she is, there is an air of contentment,” said Anne F. Carter, therapy services director. Ms. Lofton is past chairperson of the Medical-Surgical Quality Assurance Committee, a member of the National Association of Orthopedic Nurses (NAON), and co-founder and past secretary of the Azalea City Chapter of NAON. During her career as a nurse, Ms. Lofton has been recognized for her service to the health care industry through several awards, such as the Mobile Infirmary Award for Excellence, the Helen Davis Award and the Excellence In Practice Award.

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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.