

Statewide Hospital Heroes Honored

Feb. 5, 2010

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BIRMINGHAM – Ten hospital employees from across the state were honored as “Hospital Heroes” at a recent luncheon in Birmingham hosted by the Alabama Hospital Association (AlaHA). The association’s seventh annual statewide “Hospital Heroes” contest is an effort to honor the dedication of hospital employees and to highlight health careers.

“When I hear of the heroic acts of these winners, I am honored to be a part of the hospital field,” said J. Michael Horsley, president of the Alabama Hospital Association. “These men and women use every available resource in order to help those in need. They truly deserve to be recognized as the best in health care.”

Those named as the Alabama Hospital Association’s 2010 Hospital Heroes include: Tina Jones, Laboratory Assistant and Phlebotomist, Cullman Regional Medical Center, Cullman; Debra Walters, Human Resources Analyst, East Alabama Medical Center, Opelika; Emily Broussard, RN, Staff Nurse, and Lila S. Gray, CDM, BA, Director of Food Services, Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital, Florence; Kathy Griffith, RN, MSN, Assistant Administrator of Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer, Fayette Medical Center, Fayette; Burnell Seals, RN, BSN, MHA, Nursing Supervisor, Flowers Hospital, Dothan; Tom Muller, After-Care and Wellness Program Coordinator, Northeast Alabama Regional Medical Center, Anniston; Liz English, RT(R), Radiology Supervisor, Southeast Alabama Medical Center, Dothan; Shirley E. Ezell, RNC, Assistant Nurse Manager, Springhill Medical Center, Mobile; and Ginger Prescott, RN, Case Manager, Walker Baptist Medical Center, Jasper.

Tina Jones, Laboratory Assistant and Phlebotomist, Cullman Regional Medical Center, Cullman

Although Tina Jones has only been in the health care industry for three years, her generosity, dedication to patients and leadership have already left an impression at Cullman Regional Medical Center in Cullman. A laboratory assistant and phlebotomist, Ms. Jones works tirelessly to ensure that every person walking in the doors of the hospital feels welcome. Co-workers say her unconditional love for those around her became apparent in September of 2009 when she donated one of her kidneys to a co-worker and friend battling a kidney disease. “Her kidney donation is a true testament as to the kind of person Tina is – always willing to help someone else,” explained Maria Stanford, marketing director. “Her daily walk is a journey filled with values such as: leading by example ... providing service with compassion and valuing each patient, visitor, employee and physician at Cullman Regional Medical Center and in our community.” Since beginning her career at the hospital in 2006, Ms. Jones has been awarded Employee of the Year and the Star Performer of the Month.

Debra Walters, Human Resources Analyst, East Alabama Medical Center, Opelika

Debra Walters, human resources analyst, has been an advocate for the employees of East Alabama Medical Center in Opelika for more than six years. After spending a few years in another department of the hospital and obtaining a degree in human resources, Ms. Walters moved to the human resources department. In this role, she has become known by employees as a problem solver, willing listener and devoted friend and colleague. “Debra always has EAMC employees’ best interests at heart and serves effectively and compassionately as a true employee advocate,” said Lisa Ruffin and Ann Shore, human resources manager and benefits manger, respectively. Due to her skill and compassion, Ms. Walters plays an integral role in several hospital initiatives, such as leave management, benefit plan changes, the flu line and the employee opinion survey. When a particular employee was diagnosed with breast cancer and given a bleak chance of survival, Ms. Walters not only ensured the lady was approved for long-term disability coverage, but she also helped reunite her with her estranged mother shortly before she died.

Emily Broussard, RN, Staff Nurse, Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital, Florence

Emily Broussard, RN, actually began working in health care during her final year of nursing school. Now, 25 years later, she is a staff nurse in the nursery at Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital in Florence, helping mothers bond with their new babies. When asked about her experience with Ms. Broussard, one patient explained, “Emily was like a mom to us. Without her I would have never breast fed. She made me feel comfortable... [and] I will never forget her kindness.” Even new fathers are known to compliment Ms. Broussard, claiming that she makes them feel equally a part of the new arrival. Staff members praise her competence and note the respect she endears from co-workers and physicians. They talk of her efforts to follow up with families after discharge, such as the parents of an infant born with a terminal condition that ended his life at 17 days old. In addition to her visits with the family, Ms. Broussard would frequently call the mother, offering words of advice and encouragement. For her efforts, she received the hospital’s first Nurse of the Year Award.

Lila S. Gray, CDM, BA, Director of Food Services, Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital, Florence

Lila S. Gray, CDM, BA, has worked in the health care industry for 27 years. As director of food services, Ms. Gray is the supervisor of all food services operations throughout the hospital. In her role as director, Ms. Gray displays a demeanor of professionalism and passion. “Lila Gray loves people and uses every available moment seeking ways to make life better for those around her,” explained Ms. Gray’s co-workers. “She is one of the most respected and appreciated employees of the Coffee Health Group and loves to share her knowledge and expertise with any director or manager regarding patient and/or employee satisfaction.” Ms. Gray was instrumental in reducing special diets in order to provide a larger variety of food choices for the residents; therefore, improving patient satisfaction ratings. She also reduced employee turnover by nearly 70 percent when she took on the role as director. Outside of the hospital, Ms. Gray volunteers her time mentoring high school students and working with women at the Freedom House, a

Florence-area organization that assists young women overcoming drug and alcohol addictions, to help locate job opportunities.

Kathy Griffith, RN, MSN, Assistant Administrator of Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer, Fayette Medical Center, Fayette

While working the halls of Fayette Medical Center in Fayette, Kathy Griffith, assistant administrator of patient care services and CNO, is both a leader and a friend to those who work with her and for her. She is described by her co-workers as a “teacher, advisor, mentor, instructor, employee and patient advocate, intercessor and most of all a friend.” They say that despite her authoritative role at the hospital, Ms. Griffith has a keen ability to speak to employees from a place of sincere empathy and immense wisdom. As a 32-year veteran of the health care field, Ms. Griffith has received several honors, such as the Most Outstanding RN Student Award from the University of Alabama, Fayette County Hospital Employee of Excellence Award and the Fayette County Hospital Nurse of the Year Award. She is also active in the community, serving as an ordained associate pastor in a local church. Ms. Griffith also teaches Sunday School and works with her class to feed 250 people each quarter.

Burnell Seals, RN, BSN, MHA, Nursing Supervisor, Flowers Hospital, Dothan

Burnell Seals claims her nursing career began at the age of six when she cared for her sister who innocently swallowed half a bottle of her father’s pills. Now in her thirty-sixth year as a nurse, she serves as a nursing supervisor at Flowers Hospital in Dothan. Ms. Seals is described as viewing each day as an opportunity to have an impact on someone’s life. As a breast cancer survivor, she is very active with the American Cancer Society helping other women affected by the disease. She strives for excellence, completing her master’s degree in health administration while going through chemotherapy, losing two parents and working full time. Ms. Seals received the Outstanding Nursing Practice Award from the Alabama State Nursing Association and has received numerous employee awards at Flowers Hospital. “Burnell is a consummate professional with an innate ability to hold those around her to a high standard,” said Dan Cumbie, chief

nursing officer at Flowers Hospital. “Burnell has earned the respect of physicians and employees who know she expects the best care for our patients.”

Tom Muller, After-Care and Wellness Program Coordinator, Northeast Alabama Regional Medical Center, Anniston

After working with aquatic teams at the Anniston YMCA for 12 years, Tom Muller took the after-care and wellness program coordinator position at Northeast Alabama Regional Medical Center in Anniston. Since joining the staff, Mr. Muller has been described as a constant source of professionalism, efficiency and wit. He is known for his ability to ease tense situations and has a reputation for being a hard worker. Co-workers say even when he is off the clock, Mr. Muller is still working. For example, while dining out, he performed the Heimlich maneuver on an individual who was choking; he’s assisted two people injured in separate automobile accidents and performed CPR on a heart attack victim. “Tom goes above and beyond what is expected of him,” said a co-worker. When Mr. Muller’s name is mentioned at the hospital, staff members know him by his tag line: “Everything is going to be alright!” He speaks regularly in the community on healthy lifestyles and has been on several mission trips to Honduras.

Liz English, RT(R), Radiology Supervisor, Southeast Alabama Medical Center, Dothan

Elizabeth “Liz” English, a radiology supervisor, has worked for Southeast Alabama Medical Center for almost 40 years. During her many years at the Medical Center, Ms. English is said to be the same eager worker and motivating presence she was on her first day at the job. She is known to staff members as someone who will go to any lengths to comfort a patient, co-worker, friend or family member. For example, Ms. English befriended David, a Hurricane Katrina-evacuee that acquired a job at the Medical Center. When she heard that he had been diagnosed with cancer, she did everything in her power to assist him, knowing he had no family in the area. Her care came in the form of cooking his meals, taking him to doctors’ appointments and ensuring that he was never alone in his battle with the disease. Ms. English has done similar acts of kindness to

others. One of her co-workers explained, “It’s the little things that don’t register with most people that Liz takes to heart.”

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.

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

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 co-workers 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.