

Central Alabama Hospital Heroes Honored

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MONTGOMERY –Ten area hospital employees were honored for their dedication to the health care industry today at a luncheon in Montgomery hosted by the Central Council of the Alabama Hospital Association (AlaHA).

The luncheon is 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."

Central Alabama honorees included: Willie Wright, Ortho Tech and Clinical Associate, Baptist Medical Center South, Montgomery; Aray Nelms, Supervisor of Transportation, Chuck Sellers, Radiographic Equipment Technician, and Debra Walters, Human Resources Analyst, East Alabama Medical Center, Opelika; Judy Knoblock, RN, CNOR, Interim Director of Surgery and Patient Care Manager, and Brenda Starr, RN, Application Analyst, Jackson Hospital, Montgomery; Stanley French, MT, AMT, Medical Technologist, and Kristal Stanfield, RT(R), CT Specialty Tech and Clinical Instructor for Radiology Students, Prattville Baptist Hospital, Prattville; Janet Austin, RN, Clinical Information Specialist, Russell Medical Center, Alexander City; Vivian "Andretta" Turner, RN, Pediatric Nurse, Vaughan Regional Medical Center, Selma.

Willie Wright, Ortho Tech and Clinical Associate, Baptist Medical Center South, Montgomery

At Baptist Medical Center South in Montgomery, hospital personnel regularly read letters and hear comments from patients about their experiences with Willie Wright, ortho tech and clinical associate. Although Mr. Wright is never known to brag on himself, compliments received from past patients reveal a glimpse of the passion Mr. Wright has for health care and his patients. “Our patients have called back or written that without Willie they would not have had as an enjoyable experience at the hospital,” explained Polly Boone, nurse manager. “I have patients that have not been to the hospital in years that still remember Willie’s smiling face and friendly attitude.” As the ortho tech, Mr. Wright spends his time caring for patients by carefully and lovingly dressing and changing bandages, taking patients for walks and casting patients’ broken bones. Mr. Wright also looks out for his co-workers, once saving the life of another technician using the Heimlich Maneuver. The 16-year-employee of Baptist Medical Center came to the hospital after serving in the U.S. Army.

Aray Nelms, Supervisor of Transportation, East Alabama Medical Center, Opelika

Aray Nelms began her career as a patient transporter, later becoming East Alabama Medical Center’s first female security guard, and today serves as supervisor of transportation at the hospital. It is said she does not simply arrive at work to do her job ... she uses her connections at the hospital to expand her assistance to the elderly. With a special heart for the senior citizens of Opelika, Ms. Nelms heads the hospital’s holiday canned food drive for seniors by recruiting hospital personnel and community residents to get involved to ensure that all senior citizens in the Opelika community can have a warm meal at Christmas time. “Ms. Nelms has compassion for the senior citizens,” said Jackie Pinkard, director of the Area Agency on Aging. “Every year she tells me ‘We are going to do more than we did last year,’ and each year she comes through. Food donations have increased threefold, and monetary donations have as well.” Ms. Nelms is always willing to help with hospital projects and serves as an inspiration to others.

Chuck Sellers, Radiographic Equipment Technician, East Alabama Medical Center, Opelika

Chuck Sellers, radiographic equipment technician at East Alabama Medical Center in Opelika, earned his biomedical training while serving in the United States Air Force. After 13 years of service, Mr. Sellers joined the health care industry and has spent the last 17 years of his life in the

Clinical Engineering Department at the Medical Center. Employees claim he is not only known for his work, but also for his big heart. Following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, Mr. Sellers led teams from East Alabama Medical Center on five, one-week trips to Louisiana and Mississippi to help with home restoration, what some have called “extreme home makeovers.” In the community he has helped clean and renovate a parsonage for a local church, built ramps for people in wheelchairs and participated regularly in Rebuilding Together. In describing his work, John Atkinson, public relations manager at EAMC, said “With his attention to detail, patients entering our hospital can feel at ease knowing that his work will provide a safe hospital setting for them to be treated.”

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 manager, 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.

Judy Knoblock, RN, CNOR, Interim Director of Surgery and Patient Care Manager, Jackson Hospital, Montgomery

Judy Knoblock, RN, CNOR, is a 41-year veteran of the health care industry, with more than half of the time spent at Jackson Hospital in Montgomery. Currently, the interim director of surgery and patient care manager, Ms. Knoblock has gained the respect of co-workers and patients alike. With the addition of a new surgery center and the interface between it and the existing operating room, the past year has been a challenge for Ms. Knoblock. However, colleagues say her determination and years of experience more than prepared her to accept the challenge and be successful. “She has

pulled the OR team together during a time of transition and sometimes chaos, showing how much she cares for the staff, while making changes that would move the team in the right direction for the betterment of the department and organization,” explained members of the OR Leadership Team at Jackson Hospital. Ms. Knoblock has served as an officer in the Alabama Operating Room Nurses Association and has tutored many staff members returning to nursing school.

Brenda Starr, RN, Application Analyst, Jackson Hospital, Montgomery

Originally from Canada, Brenda Starr, application analyst at Jackson Hospital in Montgomery, graduated from high school at 16 years of age. Shortly after graduation, she began a career in nursing while she completed her BSN and MSN. In her current role as application analyst, Ms. Starr is helping the hospital bridge the gap between the clinical and non-clinical, building programs that improve patient care processes and make patient care safer. She has been essential in developing clinical system applications for all areas of nursing, respiratory care, physical therapy and many other departments; these applications have helped prevent hospital-acquired infections, promoted more efficiency in the emergency department and assisted physicians with ordering medications by computer. “It’s impossible to identify one heroic experience for a critical care nurse who has saved many lives,” said Kris Carpenter, information services director. “Although Brenda is no longer involved in bedside care, she continues to improve patient care through her work. She is special in that she truly cares about our patients, our physicians, our nurses, our community and all Jackson Hospital employees.”

Stanley French, MT, AMT, Medical Technologist, Prattville Baptist Hospital, Prattville

At Prattville Baptist Hospital, Stanley French, MT, AMT, medical technologist, is a quiet leader and an unsung hero. He has a bachelor’s degree in chemistry and microbiology, a master’s in human resources and has taught at the college level. Mr. French is said to consistently go beyond the call of duty without a single complaint or request for recognition. “While Stanley is low-key, he’s the first person to volunteer his time or his expertise to help the department, his co-workers, the hospital or the community,” said Naomi Turner, lab manager. “What we would think was a sacrifice of our time, he does without complaint.” In fact, he’s known to volunteer for the 5 a.m. phlebotomist shift to try and increase patient and physician satisfaction with his excellent skill in drawing blood. Aside from work, Mr. French volunteers at all hospital events, health fairs, and community events,

such as Prattville CityFest. He was also one of the first people to volunteer to help his neighbors and friends when a tornado hit the Prattville area.

Kristal Stanfield, ARRT, RT(R), CT Specialty Tech and Clinical Instructor for Radiology Students, Prattville Baptist Hospital, Prattville

When she was 10 years old, Kristal Stanfield, ARRT, RT(R), now the CT specialty tech and clinical instructor for radiology students at Prattville Baptist Hospital, was inspired by the health care workers who cared for her cancer-stricken mother. For more than three years, she helped her mother with treatments and watched those who cared for her, deciding she would dedicate her life to caring for the sick just as the doctors and nurses cared for her mother. Although, she has only been in the health care industry for nine years, Ms. Stanfield has already managed to gain immense respect from her co-workers. “Kristal comes to work each day wearing a big beautiful smile and filled with enthusiasm,” explained Nell Nelson, radiology manager. “Her demeanor and spirit are a positive influence on the department.” As a mentor to radiology students at Trenholm Tech, Ms. Stanfield has developed a meaningful clinical site for students and in doing so has gained the respect of the student population and Trenholm Tech’s instructional staff.

Janet Austin, RN, Clinical Information Specialist, Russell Medical Center, Alexander City

Janet Austin, clinical information specialist, began her nursing career at Russell Medical Center in Alexander City and has worked in various hospital departments, as well as with home health and hospice. When she accepted the position of clinical information specialist, Ms. Austin realized she needed to fill the void left by the lack of bedside care. So, she began working with the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life, work that became very personal in 2007 when her sister was diagnosed with breast cancer. Ms. Austin developed an intense passion for increasing awareness of breast cancer and raising money to find a cure. In fact, she and her sister raised more than \$9,000 for the three-day, 60-mile Susan G. Koman Walk in Atlanta. After paying the required entry fee, Ms. Austin had money left over, money she plans to use for local women in need of mammograms, transportation or wigs and other cosmetics. “I challenge everyone to find a cause, support that cause, reach out and challenge yourself to experience something bigger than yourself,” said Ms. Austin.

Vivian “Andretta” Turner, RN, Pediatric Nurse Manager, Vaughan Regional Medical Center, Selma

Andretta Turner, pediatric nurse manager at Vaughan Regional Medical Center in Selma, has worked in the nursing field for more than 19 years. A few years ago she was diagnosed with stomach cancer, a fight she still wages. However, despite her health issues, employees say Ms. Turner arrives at the hospital every day with a smile on her face and a positive outlook. They add she never lets her patients and co-workers know of the pain she is enduring and serves as an inspiration to everyone around her. “Andretta’s unique attitude is one that genuinely inspires and motivates,” explained Dionne Williams, human resources director. “She is a source of encouragement to all.” Although, Ms. Turner spends most of her time working and going to cancer treatments, she still finds time to help out at the hospital and in the community. Co-workers know that Ms. Turner will always be one of the first employees to volunteer her personal time for hospital events, such as health fairs and health screenings.

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.