

West Alabama Hospital Heroes Honored

Jan. 20, 2010

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TUSCALOOSA – Ten area hospital employees were honored for their dedication to the health care industry today at a luncheon in Tuscaloosa hosted by the West 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."

West Alabama honorees included: Angela Hurt, RN, Staff Nurse, Bryan W. Whitfield Memorial Hospital, Demopolis; Jeff Beans, RN, Intensive Care Nurse, Bernadine DellaPenna, LBSW, ACSW, Social Worker and Stephen Eure, B.S.Pharm., Critical Care Clinical Pharmacist, DCH Regional Medical Center, Tuscaloosa; Kathy Griffith, RN, MSN, Assistant Administrator of Patient Care Services, CNO, Fayette Medical Center, Fayette; Teresa Wilkes, RPT, Director of Rehab, Marion Regional Medical Center, Hamilton; Timothy Mayhew, Home Medical Equipment Delivery Tech, Pickens County Medical Center, Carrollton; Etta Felton, MSN, PMHCNS-BC, Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Lisa Holloway, BSN, MSN, Chief of Quality Management Services, and Yolanda Kennedy, Patient Services Assistant, Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, Tuscaloosa.

Angela Hurt, RN, Staff Nurse, Bryan W. Whitfield Memorial Hospital, Demopolis

Angela Hurt, RN, jokes that her mother made her go into nursing, but claims she stayed in the field because of the joy she's found in her job. Co-workers at Bryan W. Whitfield Memorial Hospital affirm her decision; when nurses or other staff at the hospital need help they often turn to Ms. Hurt. "Angela doesn't just care for her patients, she is also a cheerleader for the entire hospital's success," explained Danny Smith, human resources division director. "She understands the critical role a nurse plays in the hospital setting, yet respects the roles of other departments." While the hospital is currently undergoing an IT conversion to all electronic medical records, Ms. Hurt's supervisors have labeled her as the "go to" person because of her computer skills and willingness to work through any challenge. Ms. Hurt serves as a mentor for nursing students, gladly sharing her experiences, skills and knowledge of the nursing field in order to help shape the young nurses. In 2008, Ms. Hurt was recognized by the hospital as the Employee of the Year.

Jeff Beans, RN, Medical Intensive Care Nurse, DCH Regional Medical Center, Tuscaloosa

Jeff Beans, RN, has been a nurse in the medical intensive care unit at DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa for more than 23 years and has spent a total of 33 years in the health care field. Co-workers note his kindness and attentiveness to patients. A family member of a patient described Mr. Beans's care, "His knowledge and professionalism were surpassed only by his compassion in caring for my daddy. In my eyes, Mr. Beans is more than exceptional. He is extraordinary." In addition to his bedside care, Mr. Beans serves as a clinical instructor for nursing students with both the University of Alabama and Shelton State Community College. A winner of the DCH Excellence Award, Mr. Beans is also involved in the community as an active contributor to the scholarship program of the University of Alabama's Department of Theatre and Dance. He is a current member of the Alabama State Bar and the Alabama Blues Society, as well as a past-member of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses.

Bernadine DellaPenna, LBSW, ACSW, Social Worker, DCH Regional Medical Center, Tuscaloosa

Throughout 25 years of service to the health care industry, Bernadine DellaPenna, social worker with the DCH Cancer Center in Tuscaloosa, has developed an intense passion for caring for

cancer patients. While at the Cancer Center, she created and operated for several years the “I Can Cope” program, a series of support sessions implemented for current and former cancer patients. Ms. DellaPenna recruited session speakers, organized activities and arranged lunches for participants in the program. Her support for cancer patients does not stop with this program. Employees tell of her gifts to patients, such as colorful hats for those who have lost their hair as a result of treatments. “Ms. DellaPenna excels as a social worker and is an irreplaceable asset to the DCH Cancer Center,” explained a co-worker. Ms. DellaPenna has been recognized by the hospital with the DCH Excellence Award. In the Tuscaloosa community, she volunteers with Relay for Life and various DCH Foundation events that benefit both the patients of the Cancer Center and the residents of West Alabama.

Stephen Eure, B.S.Pharm., Critical Care Clinical Pharmacist, DCH Regional Medical Center, Tuscaloosa

Stephen Eure, B.S.Pharm., critical care clinical pharmacist at DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa, is described as an excellent pharmacist, a researcher, a doer, a project manager and a teacher. Throughout his 22 years of service to the health care industry, Mr. Eure has developed a library of knowledge on pharmacy, and he uses that intelligence in his daily work and to assist other staff and help guide pharmacy students. “Mr. Eure expects the best from himself, and he expects those he teaches or supervises to do the very best for each patient everyday,” declared co-workers. “Mr. Eure excels in all he does and is an exceptional resource for other pharmacists and pharmacy staff when making judgment calls.” In addition to his role in the pharmacy, Mr. Eure is an affiliate clinical instructor in the Department of Clinical Pharmacy Practice at Auburn University’s School of Pharmacy and Samford University’s School of Pharmacy. He is also a pharmacy practice residence preceptor and was a previous winner of the DCH Excellence Award.

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.

Teresa Wilkes, RPT, Director of Rehab, Marion Regional Medical Center, Hamilton

Teresa Wilkes, director of rehab at Marion Regional Medical Center in Hamilton, is described as an excellent role model, never asking staff to do anything she would not do. Her department consistently receives compliments from patients and their families for the professional and compassionate care received. When she’s not working with patients, Ms. Wilkes is often found helping others. She initiated a hospital campaign to provide supplies for soldiers. She hosted a meeting in her home for victims of domestic violence and later designated her department as an official collection area for donations to support these victims. Ms. Wilkes also began a program that celebrates birthdays with patients who are in the hospital on that special day and another program in which hospital staff adopt a nursing home patient during the holidays to provide gifts and make residents feel special. “Teresa is a hero to patients, co-workers, fellow leaders, strangers and myself,” explained Anne Lawler, human resources secretary. “She always serves others with compassion, accountability, respect, excellence and a smile.”

Timothy Mayhew, Home Medical Equipment Delivery Tech, Pickens County Medical Center, Carrollton

Timothy Mayhew, home medical equipment delivery tech, spends his days outside the walls of Pickens County Medical Center in the community delivering, assembling as needed and providing instructions on medical equipment. He’s said to be an excellent hospital representative who shows compassion and always wears a smile. “His support and loyalty to his job, patients and the hospital, go beyond measure,” said Sharon Hamlin, assistant administrator of operations. “Timothy continuously exceeds standards and exemplifies perfection in his job performance and

in his role as a leader.” The hospital recently received a letter from a patient explaining how much they appreciated Mr. Mayhew when he delivered a bed to their home. They went on to explain how Mr. Mayhew patiently answered all of their questions and then proceeded to fix a plumbing problem. Another individual told of how he chopped firewood for her on a cold wintry day. In his eight short years of service to the hospital, Mr. Mayhew has already been recognized for his efforts with the 2007 Employee of Excellence Award.

Etta Felton, MSN, PMHCNS-BC, Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, Tuscaloosa

Etta Felton, MSN, PMHCNS-BC, suicide prevention coordinator at Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center in Tuscaloosa, has dedicated her 35-year career in the health care field to helping veterans of various wars with mental health issues. While at the VA, Ms. Felton developed an education session for the hospital’s employees in order to help increase awareness of suicide and provide prevention tools. As the coordinator, Ms. Felton carefully tracks all suicide attempts and patients at risk to ensure they are appropriately treated and monitored. “She demonstrates exemplary nursing practice and is considered to be an expert in her field by her colleagues,” explained Rebecca Meyer, associate chief nurse in mental health. Ms. Felton tirelessly works to implement new policies and revise current policies in order to make sure the hospital is constantly providing the best and most efficient care for patients. Her expertise is shared statewide through her work with the Alabama Suicide Prevention Coalition, and she has received numerous awards, including the Outstanding Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Award and the Outstanding Nursing Practice Award from the Alabama State Nurses Association.

Lisa Holloway, MSN, Quality Standards Nurse, Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, Tuscaloosa

Lisa Holloway, MSN, serves as the quality standards nurse at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center in Tuscaloosa and has been working in health care for more than 30 years. Under her leadership as co-chairperson of the Health System’s Board, the Medical Center has improved its performance on all critical screening measures and become a clinical leader in the VA system. “Ms. Holloway is dedicated, caring, compassionate, knowledgeable and well-recognized for her expertise that has made a major impact on clinical outcomes to veterans served at the Tuscaloosa

VA Medical Center,” said Tracy White, chief of quality management services. “She is a clinical leader who utilizes a system’s approach to improve and maintain high clinical standards and is recognized through the Medical Center as an advocate and leader for quality health care and disease prevention.” In addition to her work at the Medical Center, Ms. Holloway is a regular volunteer with the Salvation Army’s soup kitchen and serves as a chapter coordinator for veterans with the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Yolanda Kennedy, Patient Services Assistant, Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, Tuscaloosa

Following a 20-year career in the U.S. Army, Yolanda Kennedy began working at the VA Medical Center in Tuscaloosa. As a patient services assistant, she provides administrative support for various departments, including helping coordinate information needed from veterans entering the community residential program. She is recognized for her organization, problem-solving skills and her willingness to help wherever needed. “Ms. Kennedy’s contributions and productivity far exceed the expectations of an employee of her grade,” explained Patricia Hill, secretary to the chief of mental health service line. “Ms. Kennedy has saved the day for us administratively and programmatically time and time again, which is a credit to her commitment, a huge benefit to the veterans and a reflection of great credit upon our Medical Center.” One example of her commitment was when the hospital’s police were no longer able to perform background checks for the community residential program; realizing that the fees charged by most companies would not be affordable for residents and their sponsors, Ms. Kennedy called numerous companies until she found one willing to provide free background checks.

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.