

## **2014 Secretary's Excellence in Nursing Award Recipients**

### **Registered Nurse in an Expanded Role: Diana Munson, BSN, RN**

Diana "Diane" Munson currently serves as the Lead RN in the Communication Center and has served the Veterans at VAIHCS for 29 years. Prior to transferring to the Communication Center, Ms. Munson worked in patient care units on 58-2, 58-4, 102-1/2, and 102-7/8 when she started here in 1984 as a Student Nurse Tech. Diane returned to college in January 2011 and graduated from Indiana Wesleyan University with a BSN in December 2012.

When asked about the best part of her job, Diane replied, "The absolute best part of my job is the Veterans I serve. I have the opportunity to talk with Veterans on the phone and assist them to get appropriate appointments. I am also privileged to work with a great group of people as a part of Danville VA Ambulatory Care Team."

Diane was inspired to pursue a career in Nursing by her mother. When asked, Diane replied, "The biggest inspiration in my life is my Mom, Susie Glaze RN. My Mom has worked for the same doctor since 1966. She is 77 years old and still works four half days a week. People call her a community icon and the best shot giver ever. She is indeed a classic, a trusted well-loved nurse to our community and the absolute best mother in the whole wide world. She is my hero.

### **Registered Nurse in a Clinical Role: Karon Smithers, RN**

Karon Smithers is VA Illiana's Palliative Care RN. She works closely with Veterans who reside on the Palliative Care unit and with the patients & families that utilize the Palliative Care outpatient clinic. She began her career here 3 years ago as a staff nurse on the Palliative Care Unit after working 8 years in Pediatrics & Telemetry.

Karon obtained her LPN certificate from Danville Area Community College in 2003 and went on to obtain an Associate degree in their RN program in 2004. She became certified in Hospice and Palliative Care Nursing in August of 2013 and is currently enrolled in a BSN completion program through Grand Canyon University.

When asked about the best part of her job, Karon replied, "Working with a great Palliative Care team and educating Veterans, staff, and families about end of life issues. I enjoy being able to give back to the Veterans that have sacrificed so much for our great country."

Karon was inspired to pursue a career in nursing by her mother, stating, "My mother is a nurse and I always looked up to her. She is a kind, caring person and I always wanted to be just like her.

### **Licensed Practical Nurse: Frances Hernandez, LPN**

Frances "Fran" Hernandez serves in the role of TeleHealth Clinical Technician in Danville and provides coverage at the Mattoon and Decatur outpatient clinics when needed. Fran has been employed by VA Illiana Health Care System for 19 years and is

a 1994 graduate of Danville Area Community College. She has worked in TeleHealth, the Cardio-pulmonary unit, and the Geriatric Psych unit over the years. Prior to attending nursing school, Fran worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant, an Emergency Medical Technician, and as a Firefighter.

When asked what she likes best about her job, Fran replied, “TeleHealth continues to flourish and we are adding new clinics all the time. I feel like I’m continually learning new things working closely with the specialty clinics. I really enjoy working with our TeleHealth group and feel each person brings a key element to our team.”

Fran was inspired to pursue a career in nursing by her mother as well. She states, “She wanted me to pick a career that I could advance in and that would offer job security. She encouraged me to get a job at the VA and assisted me in applying. She told me that they would take good care of me just like they did when I was a kid. My dad died when I was 8 years old (he was in WWII) and the VA benefits helped to support me when I was growing up. She was right; the VA is my home away from home and I consider everyone here family.”

Fran is not only the winner of this prestigious award at VA Illiana. We are proud to announce that she was also named as the VISN 11 Network recipient of the award at the LPN level.

#### **Nursing Assistant: Janetta Brown, NA**

Janetta Brown currently serves our Veterans on the neighborhood of 101-1/2, the Geriatric psych unit. She shares that her role involves direct patient care, coordinating activities with recreation therapy, maintaining a clean and safe working environment, and ensuring that residents have clean clothes and other essentials to make their life and stay here more enjoyable. Janetta also transports and escort residents to and from appointments. She has worked at VA Illiana Health Care System for 20 years. She first obtained her CNA certification through the VOTEC program at Danville High School.

When asked what Janetta likes best about her job, she stated, “One of the things I like most about my job is working in an area that has so much cultural diversity. I also enjoy the chance to work with such a good group of coworkers. Ice cream socials are one of my favorite activities. I also enjoy it when the residents look for me at 10:00am to remind me that it is their snack time. It makes me feel needed and appreciated.”

Ms. Brown shares that she was initially inspired to pursue a job in patient care when she had the opportunity to take care of her Grandmother. She was also inspired by her VOTEC instructors, Sally Winsett and Jane Brown. As a result of her experiences she chose to pursue a career in health care.

Janetta is VA Illiana Health Care System’s Excellence in Nursing Award winner at the Nursing Assistant level. We are proud to announce that she was also named the VISN 11 Network recipient of the award for the Nursing Assistant level.