

Lois A. Fairley Community Service Award Winner

2013 marks the sixth year of the annual Lois A. Fairley Community Service Award, named after one of Windsor-Essex' most beloved nurses. Fairley was a graduate of Grace Hospital's nursing program in 1955, and she spent her career serving patients at Grace Hospital as nurse, and eventually, head nurse. Fairley also served the nursing profession as a member of the provincial board of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, and president of the Ontario Nurses Association.

This year's recipient is Shauna Carter. Profiled in last year's National Nursing Week special feature, Carter is a graduate of the University of Windsor's Nurse Practitioner program who obtained her undergraduate degree in 2002, and her NP designation in 2009. For the first two years of Carter's career, she served as an RN in the medical surgical unit, then moved on to the intensive care unit, where she remained for five years.

While working full time, Carter returned to school to obtain her nurse practitioner certification, and found employment as an NP at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital's nurse practitioner-led outreach program. Carter works to try to catch episodic illnesses, manage chronic disease before the need for ER visits and hospitalization, and collaborates with numerous physician partners, all of whom are attached to the long term care facilities Carter serves.

Carter says that the role of nurse practitioner is quickly growing in importance, especially in communities experiencing shortages in primary care; she is passionate about contributing to Windsor-Essex and is eager to inspire new nurses interested in her field.

Carter is humbled by the recognition of her work, and expresses sincere gratitude to the selection committee. "When they called, I was so surprised," says Carter. "But more than anything, I was honoured. I know this is a quite a dignified award... when you look at some of the (nurses) who have won in the past, how could you not be honoured? I can't even believe I'm in the same league! And Lois Fairley herself exemplified everything a nurse should be.

"To be considered worthy of this award... I'm just taken aback. I'm so thankful."

The following is the nomination letter submitted for Shauna Carter.

Behind every nurse there stands a family member or partner who has a front-row seat to the dedication of the nursing profession, and I want to submit my nomination of Shauna Carter because I have been fortunate to get a glimpse into her world and I feel the voice of those who care for nurses as husbands, as wives, as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters needs to be heard from time to time.

Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital has been an important part of Shauna's life long before she graduated with her BScN from the University of Windsor (2002). As a young girl, she volunteered at Hotel-Dieu on the pediatric ward and a little later worked part time in the kitchen washing dishes and working her way up to carrying food trays to patients in their rooms. Upon graduating with her nursing degree, she found a niche on a medical surgical unit and then the Intensive Care Unit.

Not long after we met, Shauna completed her Nurse Practitioner training in what is a hallmark of Shauna's commitment to nursing and her patients: constantly working to improve her skills in order to become a better nurse. I cannot count the number of times Shauna has put in a long week at work, only to pack up her bags and drive to a medical conference in Toronto to spend her weekend listening to talks on everything from diabetes to dementia.

After becoming a Nurse Practitioner, Shauna was entrusted with launching a brand new program at Hotel-Dieu, to work inside nursing homes in order to reduce emergency room admissions. The program has grown from two nursing homes to eight. And now—like Lois Fairley—Shauna has made the leap from student to teacher, heading up a team of four nurse practitioners in this growing and successful program. She's now at that stage where she presents talks at conferences on tuberculosis and shingles, runs in-service clinics for nursing home staff, and precepts nurse practitioner students.

Very few people understand the enormous energy that program required to get going, to win the trust of countless doctors, nurses and staff at all of these nursing homes, but I do know that Shauna still regularly doesn't return home until 10pm.

In addition to her demands at Hotel-Dieu, Shauna has served the Victorian Order of Nurses for many years, picking up weekend shifts because—in her own words—she wants to keep her community care

skills sharp. Shauna even picks up the odd weekend shift at the clinic on Pelee Island in order to relieve the full-time nursing staff and has managed—in a short time—to weave herself into the fabric of the island community. Shauna also serves as a board member of the Essex County Nurse Practitioner led clinic.

One night, after a thirteen-hour shift, I saw Shauna dragging her tired body and her 20-pound medical bag up the steps of our porch. It was close to midnight. The life of a nurse's partner is not always roses, and I was furious because our plans and dinner on the stove were foiled yet again. I asked her, what the heck in the world kept her so long. She responded, "There was an elderly gentleman who was having trouble breathing. I couldn't leave him like that. I had to help him."

Lois Fairley would be proud of this young nurse hitting her stride and the boundless spirit of her service.

- Irek Kusmierczyk

Past winners of the Lois Fairley Award.

2012 - Ursula DeBono

2011 - Carole Gill

2010 - Terry Johnston

2009 Georgina Kelly

2008 - Linda Moroun