

Judi Wilson, RN, winner of the 2013 Preceptor Recognition Award

The Preceptor Recognition Award recognizes a preceptor who has demonstrated outstanding performance in her/his role as a preceptor for a nursing student. This award publicly acknowledges the essential contributions that a nurse in a preceptor and/or mentor role makes to a professional nursing education.

Judi Wilson was chosen as the winner of this prestigious province-wide award for upholding the College of Nurses of Ontario's standards of professional practice; for embodying knowledge-based practice; for advocating for the profession of nursing; and for valuing the role of preceptoring nursing students by providing direction, support, and constructive criticism while adhering to the scope of practice for a nursing student, the policies of the organization, and the policies of the educational institution.

This is the second time Wilson has been honoured with this award. She also won in 2008.

After her high school graduation, a fateful adventure in the Arctic was what made Judi Wilson realize her calling to be a nursing professional.

"It was 1970, and I went to (a settlement called) Baker Lake (in the Northwest Territories). A nurse took care of the entire settlement," explains Wilson. "Witnessing that was really fascinating. That's when I decided I wanted to become a nurse."

Wilson returned south and trained at the St. Joseph Hospital in London, and received her diploma in public health at the University of Windsor. By 1976, Wilson was a registered nurse, and began work at the Windsor Essex County Health Unit, where she worked for the next nine years.

The young nurse fell in love with community health, which focuses on prevention of illness and disease. "Because of my time up north, I saw things that the nurses did to promote health and prevent disease," says Wilson. "It was interesting to see an entire community committed to cleaning up and ensuring the health of everybody."

After nearly a decade at the health unit, Wilson moved on to take a position as the nurse at Maryvale Family and Adolescent Services. In 1991, the mother of three became the health promotion nurse at the University of Windsor's Student Health Services. In this capacity, she is responsible for spreading awareness about contraception, sexually transmitted illnesses, flu vaccinations, mental health issues and eating disorders.

"(This department) has a clinic and is responsible for primary care and health promotion," says Wilson. "It's very important – it's not a job for one person. What we do affects campus health and the community as a whole. Everyone involved tries to support as many projects going on as we can."

Wilson is particularly proud of the university's alcohol program, aptly named Don't Be That Girl, Don't Be That guy. "It's geared toward the responsibilities and parameters of responsible drinking."

She's also hard at work on a major anti-tobacco campaign called Leave the Pack Behind, a multi-faceted project first unveiled by Brock University. "It's about making students aware of not smoking once they get to campus," explains Wilson.

“All of these things we do are designed to raise awareness for the campus age group. Something happens around this stage, especially in young men, who feel like they’re invincible. We recognize that we listen to our peers before anyone else, so a major part of what we do is peer education. We’re thankful for our student nurses for providing that service.”

In the midst of caring for the campus community, Wilson never loses sight of what she considers her most important role: mentor to young nurses. Her sensitivity and commitment is not lost on her students. While she was nominated by a colleague in 2008, her 2013 nomination came from her students Katrina Baldwin, Rana Allawnhr, Meagan Sandhawalia, Jasdeep Shokar, Doreen Afriyie and Pagna Khuth.

“(The committee) sent me the letters that the students wrote in support of me,” remembers Wilson, who has precepted 150 students over the length of her career. “I was so humbled. The things they remembered that I told them... I was astounded.

“It just reminds me of how important what a nurse says is, whether it’s to a patient or a colleague. There’s a message I want to get out. It’s to always remember, as a nurse, the impact we make on patients when we talk to them.”