

Nurse Inspires New Britain Teens to Lead Healthy Lives

Nightingale Award honoree Jean Palin couldn't be more enthusiastic about her successful career in nursing, a field she describes as "great" because of its fulfilling challenges, flexibility and variety.

As a nurse practitioner at the Community Health Center, Inc., she is assigned to CHC's New Britain High School-School Based Health Center, a dynamic school with over 3,000 students. Palin was selected for the Nightingale Award for her clinical excellence, spirit of innovation, and commitment to mentoring the next generation of health professionals to her work. Palin does this as a family nurse practitioner that is preparing generations of New Britain teen-agers to lead healthy lives, not just now, but long into their adult lives. Jean Palin is an example of the Community Health Center, Inc.'s commitment and vision of building a world-class primary care organization focused on clinical outcomes and healthy communities for special populations.

A graduate of St. Joseph College and the University of Virginia, nursing has become one of her life's most fulfilling and challenging achievements. When asked about the news of



the award Palin said, "This is very humbling, there are so many great nurses at CHC and Connecticut." Palin says her success is attributed to not only the forward-thinking of Community Health Center, Inc., but keeping up-to-date medically, not being judgmental, common sense and most importantly – being a good listener.

"The kids give back to me everyday. That's what is most rewarding about this job," she

acknowledges. What Palin offers to underserved teens is invaluable, as she helps teens make better health choices while maintaining the boundaries and dignity that teens need.

Palin is an essential link to primary healthcare for many students at the high school who often are experiencing many very adult-sized problems along with serious medical issues and concerns. She manages diabetes, but also works to reverse obesity and thus prevent new cases of diabetes. She treats tension headaches, but counsels students on healthy lifestyles and ways to manage stress. Palin considers great communication skills key to success in the field, and hones those skills everyday serving the diverse population at New Britain High School.

Palin can usually be found in her primary suite at the high school, but you may also find her in the classroom, in teacher conferences, mentoring nurse practitioner students, or collaborating with physicians and nurse practitioners in the community. In the summer she eagerly works at all of the other CHC's sites, enjoying the variety of nursing applications Palin so prizes. Yet, Palin can also always be found in a very special place.... the hearts of her patients.

About the Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing

May 6th marks the ten-year anniversary of the Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing Gala, an annual event honoring nurses for going above and beyond the call of duty in an array of clinical and educational environments. The goals of the program are to encourage retention, inspire future nurses, focus public attention and recognize the breadth and scope of nursing practice at the local level.

In 2001, the Visiting Nurse Association of South Central Connecticut in New Haven created the program to "celebrate and elevate" the nursing profession. The Nightingale vision was quickly embraced by the health care community as a unique opportunity to focus public attention on our local nurses during National Nurses' Week.

In 2003, the program grew to include concurrent Galas in the Hartford, Eastern Connecticut, and Fairfield County regions, as well as the original program in New Haven. The Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing program is open and inclusive of all health care settings—hospital, home health care, health centers, schools, health departments, long-term care, nursing schools, agencies, and