

Parish nurse receives honors for her vocation

PAT LANGFORD

Florida Catholic correspondent

WEST PALM BEACH — Unlike receiving a player-of-the-year award backed up by statistics and wins, the “Nurse of the Year” title goes to individuals based on compassion, love, selflessness and understanding.

Gae Faraone, a registered nurse for 30 years and a parish nurse at Holy Name of Jesus Parish for the past five, didn’t know what to say

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— **Mary Cleary, founder and president of IHWA**

health events and programs, and coordinates immunizations at Holy Name School. She makes calls on the homebound and residents of assisted living facilities, and works at the parish’s outreach center, located blocks south of Holy Name, that provides referrals, guidance and support for all who visit, no matter what faith or background. She also writes a weekly health feature for the church bulletin.

After leaving the parish, Faraone’s work is not done. She is a mother of three and works one day a week at Columbia Hospital in West Palm Beach in case management, where she received a 25-year service award this year.

“Our criteria for this honor is someone who has been very active in a faith community and shown Christ’s love through this ministry,” said Mary Cleary, founder and president of IHWA.

Cleary points out that she knows of more than 50 nurses in the area working out of churches of different faiths, community centers and facilities providing food and other services for the poor.

“This year, we had a hard time selecting someone because we had so many wonderful nominees. I think Gae is a beautiful model for any nurse going into this type of practice; she really is a beautiful model

when she received an unexpected phone call notifying her that she is this year’s Interfaith Health and Wellness Association (IHWA) “Nurse of the Year for 2007.”

“I was speechless,” Faraone said of the award given to members of IHWA, a nursing association dedicated to the support and education of registered nurses of all faiths who serve congregations and members of the community.

“It is a great honor. I didn’t know I was one of the nominees. I’m very, very blessed and excited.”

Faraone is one of nine parish nurses in the Diocese of Palm Beach. As part of her five-day ministry job, she organizes



FLORIDA CATHOLIC PHOTO BY LINDA REEVES

Gae Faraone, a registered nurse, checks Deacon Jack Hamilton’s blood pressure. She is the parish nurse at Holy Name of Jesus Parish in West Palm Beach and has won an award for her outstanding work and nursing ministry.

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The nursing award is given in an attempt to promote dedicated and special nurses similar to Faraone, based outside the medical environment.

“It’s very different from the nursing that goes on within a hospital (facility),” said Cleary, a registered nurse.

“There is no hands-on care. The nurse provides education for families or people who are new to our area. Many are immigrants, primarily just the underserved and the poor, who have no health care. They (nurses) approve referrals; they provide counseling and perform a lot of advocacy within their faith community. The nurse who usually goes into this type of practice is a nurse who has been in nursing for a number of years. They really want a practice where they can really feel like they are able to give holistic care and sometimes even pray with their patients.”

Candidates considered for the nurse award are generally nominated by a religious leader or coworkers. The nominations are reviewed by a seven-person board, which is headed by Cleary and, this year, included a pair of professors from Florida Atlantic University and a physician.

Father Gavin Badway, pastor at Holy Name, nominated Faraone.

“She’s an incredible woman,” he said. “Gae goes beyond just her role as a nurse. She watches out after all of us, making sure everybody is doing what they should be doing; not only as far as exercise, but eating right, too. She has affected so many people’s lives.” ■