



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Award recipients recognized for nursing excellence at provincial nursing conference**

**St. John's, NL – June 9, 2011** – The Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL) presented its Awards for Excellence in Nursing to outstanding registered nurses (RNs) this morning as part of its 57<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference at the Holiday Inn in St. John's.

The provincial awards recognize nursing excellence in the areas of Research, Education, Practice, and Administration. The Elizabeth Summers Novice Nurse Award, named in honour of ARNNL's first President, was also presented to a RN who graduated from a Bachelor of Nursing program and began practicing within the past two years.

#### **Award winners:**

- Paula Didham, Nurse Educator, Bachelor of Nursing (Collaborative) Program, Western Regional School of Nursing  
**Award for Excellence in Nursing - Research**
- Denise English, Nurse Educator, Centre for Nursing Studies, Eastern Health  
**Award for Excellence in Nursing - Education**
- Ellen Peddle, Community Health Nurse, Victorian Order of Nurses  
**Award for Excellence in Nursing - Practice**
- Sharon Smith, Program Director, Cancer Care, Eastern Health  
**Award for Excellence in Nursing - Administration**
- Ashley Preston, Acute Surgical Unit, Western Regional Hospital, Western Health  
**Elizabeth Summers Novice Nurse Award**

At ARNNL's banquet this evening, Honorary Membership will be presented to Jeanette Walsh, ARNNL's Past President and longstanding contributor to nursing education.

"ARNNL congratulates this year's recipients, and is inspired by their dedication and commitment," said Beverly White, ARNNL President. "This exemplary group is a shining example of nursing service that goes above and beyond, and represents the significant contribution that RNs continue to make in the many facets of the nursing profession throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Their efforts set a standard for nursing excellence for the health of the population."

Since the awards program was established in 1992, 44 RNs have been honoured with the prestigious recognition. Four RNs have received the Elizabeth Summers Novice Nurse Award since that category was

created in 2007. Honorary Membership, which has been conferred to 48 nurses since 1954, is bestowed upon individuals who have helped advance the nursing profession and/or the Association.

Refer to the attached biographies of this year's award winners and honorary membership recipient.

ARNNL's AGM and Conference, "*Nursing: Knowledge in Action*," kicked off this morning and will provide RNs from around the province with an opportunity to share knowledge, generate ideas, and revitalize their passion for nursing. Over 23 education sessions feature experts in the areas of nursing practice, management, and administration, and delegates will hear from Canada's nursing leaders. The two-day event wraps up tomorrow.

#### **ABOUT ARNNL**

ARNNL is the regulatory body and professional organization representing all 6,700 registered nurses and nurse practitioners in the province. In pursuit of its vision, 'Excellence in Nursing,' ARNNL exists so there will be public protection, quality health care, and healthy public policy.

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## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Paula Didham, Nurse Educator, Western Regional School of Nursing Award for Excellence in Nursing – Research**

Paula Didham's contributions as a researcher help to advance nursing knowledge and support the development of the nursing profession. Her research has been utilized to support a wide range of initiatives, including the Western Newfoundland's Women's Wellness Program, the Student Wellness Program at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University, the Integrated Nursing Access Program for Inuit students (along with College of the North Atlantic's Happy Valley-Goose Bay campus), and an enrichment program for junior high school students in her region.

Paula has been instrumental in getting dedicated research time for nursing faculty at Western Regional School of Nursing and worked with a team to secure a Grenfell Campus research grant - the first time this award was granted to a faculty member at the School of Nursing. Paula has disseminated her research results at provincial, national, and international forums, and mentored novice and student researchers.

In 2008, Paula participated in an International Nurse Research Internship under the direction of Dr. Nancy Edwards, Scientific Director with the Canadian Institute for Health Research. Through this initiative, Paula became involved in two international research projects; one to strengthen leadership in nursing research in six countries, and another to raise awareness of indigenous strengths to enhance equality in health care and educational institutions.

### **Denise English, Nurse Educator, Centre for Nursing Studies Award for Excellence in Nursing – Education**

A committed and passionate educator, Denise English likes to shake things up. She strives to create learning environments that foster open discussion, stimulate reflection, and impact practice. She has been complimented for innovative student placements (particularly within the Eating Disorders Interprofessional Team); through introducing 'tough' topics in the classroom, like global health and equity and violence in the workplace; and through self-reflection exercises that challenge students to articulate their own vision for nursing practice.

Denise extends her creativity for improving the educational program as a member of several committees that foster and recognize scholarship, develop and apply standards, and advance evidence-based and collaborative practice in Memorial University and within Eastern Health. She was among the first educators at the Centre to use D2L technology (Desire to Learn), an improved method of delivering course content and maintaining contact with students.

Denise is an ambassador for the nursing profession and a true role model for her colleagues and students. Her students have participated in a wide range of projects that have taken them beyond the classroom and into public nursing forums. According to Denise, "when students are enthusiastic about knowledge exchange, they carry their enthusiasm with them into the workplace and throughout their careers."

**Ellen Peddle, Community Health Nurse, Victorian Order of Nurses  
Award for Excellence in Nursing – Practice**

Ellen Peddle’s compassion and unconditional respect for her clients is evident through her understanding of their holistic needs. She makes a point of knowing what services are available, whether it is housing, access to food or medication, or peer support. She has helped many moms fill out applications for everything from a summer camp to a government subsidy.

Through Ellen’s innovative approach, she has proven that limited resources are not a barrier. Practicing in the community, often with clients with challenging needs and social constraints, Ellen takes pride in developing individualized care plans. Whether this means unorthodox time or meeting places, her targeted one-on-one approach has helped many families receive exemplary care.

Ellen is always one of the first to volunteer within her organization to sit on committees or to help out with charitable events. She also shares her free time with local charities, and took part in a missionary trip to Zimbabwe, bringing with her a suitcase full of health care supplies and items for the local children.

A well-respected preceptor to nursing students and mentor to novice nurses, all who work alongside Ellen say she is a true leader, and commend her commitment to new learning and pride in the profession.

**Sharon Smith, Program Director (Cancer Care), Eastern Health  
Award for Excellence in Nursing – Administration**

Sharon Smith can see the big picture, design the pathway to achievement and motivate others to work together to create change. She is an integral member of numerous initiatives that have an impact in local and national arenas. Her influence can be seen on the ground, in the standards used to guide the administration of chemotherapy and, in philosophy, as evident in Eastern Health’s patient safety agenda. Her work has supported improvements in client flow through the introduction of protocols, care maps, and structured discharge planning. She is said to know how to turn utilization data into solutions.

Her colleagues commend her commitment to practice, noting that she was one of the inaugural nursing consultants that masterminded the professional practice model that is still thriving in Eastern Health some 15 years later. She is recognized as a leader and a role model who is compassionate and approachable, motivating others to pursue professional development, support evidence-based practice, and to embrace change.

Sharon’s impact spans outside her employment. She has been involved with the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL) in a variety of capacities, but most notable as President of the Association from 2001 to 2004, a position she wholeheartedly served for an extra year on short notice. Significant highlights of her presidency included ARNNL’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, and Newfoundland and Labrador serving as host province of the Canadian Nurses Association’s Biennial Conference. During her tenure, the profession made significant advances in the nurse practitioner and the advanced practice nurse roles. Sharon also capitalized on opportunities to present ARNNL’s positions at national consultation events, including the Romanow Commission and the Senate Standing Committee on the Health of Canadians. Sharon is a true “difference maker.”

**Ashley Preston, Staff Nurse, Acute Surgical Unit, Western Regional Hospital  
Elizabeth Summers Novice Nurse Award**

Having started her career on a very busy surgical unit in an acute care hospital, Ashley Preston is said to have stood out on day one. Although a novice, the enthusiasm, consciousness, and professionalism she demonstrates, as well as excellent assessment skills and belief in client advocacy sets her apart from the rest.

Described by her peers as “a breath of fresh air with a cheerful disposition and an infectious positive attitude,” Ashley has also been commended for a great work ethic, an ability to work collaboratively as a team player, and a willingness to take on challenges and accept feedback.

Staff and families alike have taken note of her leadership skills and resourcefulness – Ashley is known to get things done. She is already a sought-after mentor and preceptor to new nurses.

Ashley truly shines as a member of the health care team. A senior nurse on her unit said, “There are times when I feel 'wow' this person is a really good young nurse and I wouldn't mind her caring for myself or any of my loved ones. I often reflect and remind myself that this nurse only just graduated and she is awesome!”

**Jeanette Walsh, RN, BN, MScN (retired)  
Honorary Membership**

Throughout her career, Jeanette Walsh has had a meaningful impact on the nursing profession and the quality of nursing education in Newfoundland and Labrador. Within two years of graduating from the General Hospital School of Nursing in 1965, Jeanette assumed a head nurse position in Coronary Care in St. John's and eventually coordinated a post-basic education course in the specialty. A lifelong learner, Jeanette completed a number of certificate programs and received a Bachelor of Nursing from Memorial University in 1979 and a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Toronto in 1986.

Jeanette has been instrumental in nursing education development at both the General Hospital and Memorial University Schools of Nursing. From 1972 to 1996, she was a formative educator at the General Hospital School of Nursing – having moved from a faculty position in the 1970's to the Director's role, a position she held from 1986 to 1996. Her visionary leadership as a faculty member was evident as she helped evolve the Diploma nursing curriculum, and as Director, she led many innovative changes to the nursing education program's content and delivery.

An ardent supporter and volunteer for ARNNL, Jeanette began her 11-year tenure on ARNNL Council as a council member in 1981, and served in the roles of Vice-President, President and Past President. As President, Jeanette helped establish the appointments of public representatives to Council, supported the right change within health care restructuring in the province, advocated for registered nurses' roles within the restructuring to maximize their contribution to the health care system, and advocated the implementation of evidenced-based practice. She also worked with ARNNL, the five Directors of the Schools of Nursing and many others to consolidate the Diploma Schools of Nursing and to develop support for changing nursing education from Diploma to the Bachelor of Nursing (Collaborative) program. She was integral in moving nursing education to the university setting – starting with ARNNL's

Task Force on Entry to Practice (1986), to achieving the profession's goal of a provincial Bachelor of Nursing program for entry to nursing practice (1996).

In 2004, Jeanette was the Coordinator of ARNNL's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations, and was responsible for the establishment of a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Education Scholarship. A passionate historian, she initiated the retrospective review of the first 50 years of the Association and created a time capsule to be opened at ARNNL's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. She also volunteers with the Lillian Stevenson Archives and Museum, and is a member of the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing (CAHN).

An accomplished author, Jeanette has co-written three historical books: *From the Voices of Nurses: An Oral History of Newfoundland Nurses Who Graduated Prior to 1950* (2004), *A Life of Caring: 16 Newfoundland Nurses Tell Their Stories* (2008), and *Overseas Recruitment: Experiences of Nurses Immigrating to Newfoundland and Labrador* (to be published in fall 2011). Through her research, presentations, and publications on the history of nursing in Newfoundland and Labrador, she has raised the profile of the rich legacy of the profession and the leadership role nurses played in serving the health needs of the public of this province.

Jeanette is a proud registered nurse and exemplary nurse leader whose distinguished service has contributed immensely to ARNNL and her profession.