



Media Release

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CRDAMC celebrates National Nurses Week

By Gloria Montgomery, CRDAMC public affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas -- Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center celebrated the heartbeat of patient care last week during National Nurses Week when it honored its civilian and military nurses during ceremonies held May 12 at the Fort Hood hospital.

Capturing Advanced Practice Registered Nurse of the Year honors were Lt. Col. Kelley Togiola and Dr. Sheyenne Chan. CRDAMC's Registered Nurses of the Year honors went to Capt. Teresa Rios-Rodriguez and Sheilah Priori. Spc. Stephanie Royse and Kenyetta Reeves were named CRDAMC's Licensed Vocation Nurses of the Year with Joseph Ashford earning the honor of Certified Nursing Assistant of the Year.



CRDAMC's Military RN of the Year, Captain Rios-Rodriguez, said she was honored to be nominated by her peers and other staff members to earn the Military RN of the Year honors.

"It's our duty and responsibility to provide the best care possible to our patients," said Rios-Rodriguez, whose Army career began in the enlisted ranks. "That's why it's a wonderful honor to be recognized for that hard work. It's also motivating to know that our patients, as well as our subordinates, peers and leadership, appreciate the work we as nurses do each and every day."

Her 2005 deployment to Iraq was the impetus that led her to follow her heart into nursing.

"It was the comradery I felt when I deployed because you really are deploying as a family when you put yourself in harm's way," said Rios-Rodriguez, who has been in nursing for eight years. "It made me want to care for those I served alongside with, and being an Army nurse provides me with that level of fulfillment. I truly take pride in the opportunity to take care of our Soldiers."

Nationally, the nursing profession is the largest healthcare occupation in the United States. Within the CRDAMC footprint, there are more than 850 nursing professionals ranging from registered nurses and licensed practical nurses to nurse practitioners and licensed vocational nurses.

“Nurses are involved in 98 percent of this facility’s health care and in every facility across the country,” said Col. Jennifer Robison, CRDAMC's Chief Nurse Officer, adding that the level of care nurses provide make a difference in how patients recover. “It’s the nurses our patients remember most because of that caring relationship nurses build with their patients.”

And it’s that relationship, said Col. David R. Gibson, CRDAMC commander, that’s key to compassionate care.

“It’s not just about being a competent nurse capable of ensuring the delivery of care,” said Gibson, “but how they deliver that care is critical to providing an extraordinary patient experience. Our nurses are truly extraordinary, and we couldn’t do what we do without them.”

National Nurses Week is a seven-day celebration to raise awareness of the critical role nurses have in saving lives and improving health. It begins annually May 6 and ends May 12 on the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. This year’s theme was “Inspire, Innovate and Influence.”

Nursing week, according to Robison, is a real morale booster because it’s just a special time for nurses to ‘smile, laugh, share memories and be recognized’.

“A lot of times, nurses get caught up in the day-to-day and forget how they can impact the patients,” said Capt. Jessica, Fitzgerald, Mother-Baby Unit chief. “Nurses Week allows us to recognize the great things we do every single day and take a moment during the week to celebrate those people who are so special.”

For Lori Gardiner, a nurse practitioner in CRDAMC’s general surgery department, CRDAMC’s celebration of nurses was the first she has experienced in a military setting.

“And I’m loving it,” she said, embracing the festive activities offered to CRDAMC’s nurse corps during the week-long activities. “I’ve never seen a nurse’s week like this before at any institution where I’ve worked. This hospital is just going all out in embracing us and showing their appreciation for what we do.”

Besides the award ceremony, CRDAMC nurses celebrated the week with various activities, including a breakfast, yoga and Zumba demonstrations, an ice cream social, poster board roundup, a women’s health lecture, scavenger hunt and a step competition.

“Nurses Week is really a chance to celebrate what we do every day,” said Allysson James, a registered nurse in CRDAMC Mother-Baby Unit. “It also reminds us that what we do every day makes a difference in someone’s life and whether it’s through science or process improvement or through that one minute when you can make their day better.”

CAPTION: Capturing Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center’s nurses of the year honors for the military Advanced Practice Registered Nurse of the Year was Lt. Col. Kelley Togiola with Capt. Teresa Rios-Rodriguez earning military Registered Nurse of the Year honors. The two awardees along with other nurse of the year winners were recognized during an award’s ceremony, held May 11. The ceremony was held in conjunction with National Nurses Week, an annual celebration that begins May 6 and ends May 12 on the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. This year’s theme was “Inspire, Innovate and Influence.” From left, Col. Jennifer Robison, CRDAMC's chief of nursing, Togiola, Rios-Rodriguez, and Col. David R. Gibson, CRDAMC commander.

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