

UMKC Nursing Teacher Wins National Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award

Hard-working, passionate nursing teacher is recognized for helping to open new clinic.

When Jacki Witt isn't teaching nursing to students at the University of Missouri - Kansas City, she can usually be found volunteering at the Helen Gragg Adult Clinic. The clinic is a division of Operation Breakthrough, a childcare and early education center that serves children whose families live in poverty. It was Witt's perseverance that helped to create for parents the same healthcare opportunities that their children have through Operation Breakthrough. For this, she has received the prestigious Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award. Witt is one of only 11 honorees nationwide in 2006.



The award is granted annually by Cherokee Uniforms - a leading designer and manufacturer of healthcare apparel - to recognize nurses and other non-physician healthcare professionals who demonstrate exceptional service, sacrifice and innovation and have a positive impact on others' lives.

"Jacki Witt is dedicated to putting the needs of others before her own. The volunteering she does outside of her work is inspiring to all healthcare professionals, especially to those she is teaching in the classroom. Cherokee Uniforms is proud to honor her with this award," commented Wendell Mobley, who directs the national award for Cherokee.

Witt worked for years alongside Sister Berta Sailor, co-director of Operation Breakthrough, to achieve her goal of making healthcare services available for parents. Witt saw her countless volunteer hours pay off when the Helen Gragg Adult Clinic opened its doors to the public. The goal behind creating the clinic was to make healthcare more accessible to parents, many of whom are single mothers. They can now receive services conveniently and without the cost associated with a typical doctor's office visit. Witt hopes that the convenience of the clinic will encourage parents to make healthcare a priority in their regular routine.

Witt was nominated for the Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award by her colleague at the University of Missouri - Kansas City, Kit Smith. Says Smith, "The sacrifice and strength of commitment needed to see this project to fruition could only come from the heart, and was all the more inspiring with Jacki as its source."

Besides teaching full-time and volunteering at the Helen Gragg Adult Clinic, Witt also devotes her time and her abilities to working in the Clay County Health Center Women's Health Program; the Obstetrics and Gynecology Unit at Truman Medical Center, a safety net hospital in Kansas City; and the Kansas City Free Health Clinic.

"I receive so much more than I give to the women I serve," said Witt. "I look forward to going to work because I know I will learn something new about a medical problem, about a patient or about myself, every day.

As a Grand Prize Winner in the award's Advanced Practice Nurse category, Witt receives an all-expense-paid cruise for two to the Cayman Islands, a crystal award and a wardrobe of Cherokee healthcare apparel. She also will appear in the nationally distributed Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award 2007 calendar.

Since the Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award was established in 2003, more than 4,200 healthcare professionals have been nominated in the Registered Nurse, Advanced Practice Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse/Licensed Vocational Nurse, Student Nurse and Non-Physician Healthcare Professional categories. A panel of nursing professionals and Cherokee representatives evaluates nominations and grants the awards.

For every nomination, Cherokee Uniforms donated \$1 to Nurses House, a national fund that provides short-term financial assistance to registered nurses facing serious hardship. Since 2005, Cherokee has donated \$2,200. Proceeds from Cherokee Uniforms products support healthcare professionals through initiatives such as the Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award, an annual calendar and the A Nurse I Am Film and Scholarship Program. Cherokee Uniforms will be accepting nominations for the 2007 Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award beginning March 1, 2007 through May 31, 2007. For further information on the award, please visit www.CherokeeUniforms.com.

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