

**Jewish Hospital Chaplain Karen Behm selected as finalist for
OHA 2008 Albert E. Dyckes Health Care Worker of the Year Award!**



Karen Behm, chaplain at The Jewish Hospital, was selected as a finalist for the 2008 Albert E. Dyckes Health Care Worker of the Year Award by the Ohio Hospital Association at the OHA Recognition Dinner on June 9. Four finalists and one recipient were selected from 75 nominations throughout the state of Ohio.

The Albert E. Dyckes Health Care Worker of the Year Award is named for a retired OHA associate who was highly regarded throughout Ohio's health care community. The award recognizes outstanding caregivers who are great leaders, reflect the values and ideals of Ohio's health care facilities, routinely go above and beyond the call of duty, give back to the community and have overcome odds to succeed.

Behm has been a chaplain at Jewish Hospital for two years and has been instrumental in developing and implementing several new spiritual care programs. Outside of work, she is an active member and volunteer minister at her church. Read on for Karen's full nomination.

Nomination Summary

Though small in stature and young in years, Karen Behm, chaplain at The Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati, is a pillar of strength to our hospital community. Karen is responsible for spiritual care needs of our most critically ill patients. Despite the difficult situations that she faces while dealing with those who are sick and/or dying, Karen maintains an upbeat and cheerful disposition that is encouraging and motivating. She continuously evaluates practices and has been instrumental in launching several new programs to improve spiritual care at Jewish. At the heart of Karen's service and ministry is a zest for life that she uses to help those who are hurting to reach out and hang on, inside Jewish Hospital and also in the surrounding community.

Great Leader

Though small in stature and young in years, Karen Behm, chaplain at The Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati, is a pillar of strength to our hospital community. To watch her provide spiritual care and counseling is simply inspirational. Karen has the ability to instantly connect with people with respect and sensitivity. She puts all that she has into helping patients, families and associates through every spectrum of the human experience and emotion that they encounter at the hospital.

Karen is responsible for the spiritual care needs of our most critically ill patients, including intensive care and bone marrow transplant patients. She provides in-services to resident physicians and also leads a program series for associates on how to manage their own grief, grief of patients and families, and also compassion fatigue.

Karen has provided direction to the Spiritual Care Team, the Holistic Team and the Diversity Advisory Council by working collaboratively with these groups to provide educational programs and practices that promote sensitive care to meet the diverse spiritual care needs of patients.

Karen serves as a mentor to chaplain interns and lay volunteers. She is readily available to meet their needs and is conscientious about her role as mentor.

Goes Beyond the Call of Duty

Karen can always be counted on. She puts others first and her generosity knows no boundaries. She is willing to help anyone in need. Despite the difficult situations that she faces while dealing with those who are sick and/or dying, Karen maintains an upbeat and cheerful disposition that is encouraging and motivating.

Karen is continuously evaluating practices and creating new ways to improve on the spiritual care provided at Jewish Hospital. She has been instrumental in launching the Red Rose Program and the “comfort cart” for dying patients. The Red Rose Program provides a red rose placard to be placed on the door of a dying patient so that interruptions to the family and patient are kept to a minimum during this time. It also allows the chaplains, if the family desires, to provide more intensive counseling and spiritual support to the family. The “comfort cart” provides patients who are dying with a home-like environment that is soothing and encourages peace and reflection. The comfort cart, which resembles a nightstand, includes a small table lamp, a CD player with a selection of soothing tapes, sacred scripture, soft tissues, snacks, teas, coffee, calming lotion and a homemade quilt.

Reflects the Values and Ideals of Ohio’s Health Care Facilities

Karen was recently recognized as a Health Care Hero by the Business Courier of Cincinnati. Her nominations and finalist award in the “Provider” category demonstrate the impact that she has as a health care worker on her coworkers, patients, family and community. The mission of the Spiritual Care program at The Jewish Hospital is to create “a spiritually healthy community through sensitive attention to the dignity, culture, beliefs, practices and spiritual needs of all patients, their caregivers and staff.” Karen helps to fulfill this mission day in and day out, making Jewish Hospital a top choice for receiving care for the whole person – medically, emotionally and spiritually.

The Spiritual Care Program at Jewish Hospital is unique to this area in that it offers a Jewish rabbi, a Catholic priest, and Karen, a Protestant chaplain. This contributes to the diversity of the program and the breadth of experience that patients have access to to support their spiritual needs. Karen also helps to facilitate in-services for Jewish, Catholic and Protestant volunteers who come together to meet the needs of the community through volunteerism.

Gives Back to the Community

Karen has a deep inner core of energy, joy and faith that gives her life intense meaning. At the heart of Karen's service and ministry is a zest for life that she uses to help those

who are hurting to reach out and hang on. Her commitment to Greater Cincinnati's needy extends far beyond the walls of The Jewish Hospital. Karen is an active member and volunteer minister at her church where she is involved with the Interfaith Hospitality Network that works with the homeless. She also takes part in a group at her church that is paired with the East Trinity United Methodist Church Kids Club in Over the Rhine, in downtown Cincinnati. The group participates in activities with the kids such as playing basketball, sharing snacks, reading stories, and just enjoying time together.

Has Overcome Odds to Succeed

Though you may not know unless she tells you, Karen wears hearing aids. In the first grade, she performed poorly in her phonics class. This led to the discovery that she was born with a 30 percent hearing loss in both ears. She had to have nine surgeries to help manage issues that arose with her hearing and eventually, got hearing aids to support her ability to hear. Despite this disability in a profession comprised of conversation and counseling, Karen's flawless ability to communicate is inspiring. While in seminary, Karen started an organization called, "Advocates for Persons with Disabilities" in order to promote how churches and religious organizations can be more open and accommodating to person's with disabilities.

Being a chaplain in a hospital, as opposed to working in a church or school, is an innovative idea for some areas, as is being a woman in ministry. Not everyone is open to female ministers, as it is a different path that not all religions have explored or accepted. Karen, while mature in wisdom, looks young in years. This can also combat her "image" as minister or religious teacher, and hinder her pastoral identity, despite her efforts.

Other Information

Karen grew up in a family working in a funeral home. During her time spent in the funeral home, she recognized the need for families to have support for bereavement, end of life and chronic illness. In high school, she worked as a nurse's aid at a nursing facility. Her experience there also formed much of her passion and energy for meeting the deep spiritual needs of patients and families. So many of the patients there longed for connection to God and others. While in college, Karen was the chaplain of her soccer team, of which she was also a player on.

We all benefit from Karen's empathy and compassion in our daily encounters with her. She has a delightful sense of humor and is humble. Even though she works with people who are hurting deeply, she helps us to keep life in perspective with her humor and true enjoyment of life. She helps us to connect – to ourselves, each other, to our spiritual needs. Karen's dedication is awe-inspiring and her work is second-to-none. Greater Cincinnati is very, very fortunate to have her in our health care ranks.

Congratulations Karen. We're proud of you!