



MEDIA RELEASE

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Health Care Workers of the Year Awarded by the Kansas Hospital Association

(Sept. 14, 2018) The Kansas Hospital Association recognizes hospital employees who have made a significant contribution to the betterment of their hospital through the Health Care Worker of the Year Award. Hospitals across the state nominated individuals because they routinely go above and beyond the call of duty.

Pete Chooncharoen, The University of Kansas Health System St. Francis Campus, Topeka, and Aaron Hurst, Newton Medical Center, Newton, were awarded the 2018 Health Care Worker of the Year Awards at the KHA Awards Luncheon on Thursday, Sept. 6, during the KHA Annual Convention in Overland Park. They each received a cash award of \$500.

Twelve additional hospital employees were nominated and recognized: Teresa Ellis, Hutchinson Regional Medical Center, Hutchinson; Chrissy Fink, Geary Community Hospital, Junction City; June Karlin Rooks, County Health Center, Plainville; Andrew Kvasnica, Via Christi Hospital, Manhattan; Mardie Long, Wilson Medical Center, Neodesha; Tami Madden, Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center, Chanute; Isidro Morales, Scott County Hospital, Scott City; Dawn Osterhaus, Nemaha Valley Community Hospital, Seneca; Orio Rodriguez, Coffey County Hospital, Burlington; Sharla Rose, Via Christi Hospital St Teresa, Wichita; Connie Wagers, Stormont Vail Health, Topeka; and Curtis Woods, Phillips County Health Systems, Phillipsburg. All of these candidates demonstrate excellence in health care and routinely go above and beyond the call of duty. To be nominated from all the employees across the state is an honor.

Pete Chooncharoen, inpatient transporter, The University of Kansas Health System St. Francis Campus, Topeka, has worked in health care for 28 years. He lifts the spirits of every person in which he comes into contact, including patients of all ages and walks of life, staff from the front lines, to physicians, and even the CEO. He purposefully seeks out people who look lost or uncomfortable and makes every effort to help them find their way or just keep them company. He always closes his conversations with a, "thank you for working here," "thank you for coming here for your care" or "we are so lucky to have you." His words and actions are contagious and set an excellent example for others. The hospital's culture of patient-centered care radiates from him. Patients often request him by name because he makes them feel

special. One of Pete's favorite quotes is John F. Kennedy's, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." Pete lives by these words and says every day he looks for what he can do for patients and his co-workers, and what he can do for St. Francis.

Aaron Hurst, supervisor of quality services, Newton Medical Center, Newton, has worked in health care for 33 years. Patient safety is a core responsibility that drives his achievements. He persistently evaluates processes to further safety enhancements, protecting some of the most vulnerable patients from risks associated with life-sustaining blood products. A true scientist at heart, Hurst presses beyond the call of duty in visionary ways – applying analytic techniques, offering innovative recommendations consistent with lean process improvements, maintaining the highest quality standards for test results, and reducing turnaround times to enhance patient outcomes. He constantly researches literature and attends education events seeking new processes, procedures and updated technologies. His "can do" attitude challenges peers and followers to dream of new horizons. He teaches clinical students, mentors developing professional staff members, and collaborates with the laboratory leadership team effecting change within and beyond the department. He is respected for his creativity, skill and excellence.

The Kansas Hospital Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization existing to be the leading advocate and resource for members. KHA membership includes 223 member facilities, of which 124 are full-service, community hospitals. Founded in 1910, KHA's vision is: "Optimal Health for Kansans."

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