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Sugar and spice

Nurses find sweet recognition

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Staff / Tyler Goforth

Cyndi Pignolet, registered nurse at the cardiac rehab facility at Rockdale Medical Center, listens to Bonnie Barnes as she presents Ms. Pignolet with the Daisy Award for her dedication to her job.



Nurses bearing cream cheese-frosted pastries sweetened the life of one of their own who earned an award for looking after her patients' fitness.

Last week Cynthia Pignolet of the hospital's cardiac fitness outpatient practice won the second monthly Rockdale Medical Center award sponsored by the national Diseases Attacking the Immune System, or DAISY, Foundation.

The foundation's founders Mark and Bonnie Barnes said the appetizing aroma of cinnamon buns, their son J. Patrick's favorite food, is an appropriate tribute to the healing ability of doctor's assistants.

"Whenever you have a Cinnabon or smell one, stop and think how terrific you are," Barnes said to 20 nurses who along with 15 of her patients congratulated Ms. Pignolet on Nov. 12. "You are the front line. You are the advocate. You are the one the patient remembers when they go home."

Their son remembered his nurses when he was fighting a little-known and ultimately fatal autoimmune disease in 1999 in their native California, Ms. Barnes said.

"We said what can we do to keep his spirit alive?" Ms. Barnes said. "We know nurses are truly unsung heroes. We have to find a way to go around the country and say, 'Thank you' to as many nurses as possible."

A chance meeting with RMS Chief Nursing Officer Stuart Downs at an April 2008 convention added Rockdale to the 295 hospitals where the couple and their extended family have bestowed monthly DAISY Awards since February 2001.

"Cynthia shows much concern about your health," Downs read from a patient evaluation submitted by retired firefighter Frank Mann, who walks a mile before his regular appointment. "She is always willing to answer questions, always very friendly."

Similar praise won DeLesia Smith of the clinical decision unit the hospital's inaugural DAISY Award Oct. 30.

"I was too tearful to say anything," Ms. Smith said about her reaction to being called "an angel on Earth," among other accolades, and gifts of daisies, a sculpture hand-carved in Africa, an official certificate and a pin for her ID badge.

Ms. Pignolet also shed a tear as she thanked her benefactors.

"This is the greatest job on earth," Ms. Pignolet said. "We see 100 people a day and they bless our lives every day. Sometimes I see them more than my own family. They are part of our family."