

*Meet the*  
OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS'

# 2015 Award Winners

*for Nurse of the Year*

by Kim Rotelli  
Communications Office



# Julie Brown

2015 NURSE OF THE YEAR  
& CENTRAL REGION NURSE OF THE YEAR

*Julie Brown, a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) at the Lexington Assessment and Reception Center (LARC), was inspired at a young age to help those in need.*



The Oklahoma Department of Corrections' (ODOC) 2015 Nurse of the Year, Julie Brown, was inspired at a young age to help people when her Grandma Norton had a stroke and was placed in a nursing home. Just a young girl at the time, Brown remembers it as a defining moment in her life. Years later, with encouragement from her mom, Brown applied to an LPN program. *"I was painfully shy growing up, and never would have entered the nursing profession without my mom's encouragement,"* she says.

Upon graduation from the LPN pro-

gram, Brown worked for various businesses, including a funeral home, prior to her move to LARC in 2000. When asked how she handles working in a prison, she says, *"I come in every day and complete the daily tasks that I know must be completed, but I always keep it in the back of my mind where I work and what might happen. It keeps me on my toes! My greatest stress at work is the potential for emergency situations, and not just patient-related, but staff safety as well. It is always in the back of my mind."*

Brown, responsible for more than just patient care, continues to work on time-

management issues by being flexible and willing to make changes. *"The thing that comes easiest to me as a nurse is taking care of my patients. Even though there is more to nursing than patient care (paperwork, deadlines, etc.) it feels good to know that I did something for someone that most people could not do,"* she says.

Structured and organized, Brown has improved the overall efficiency of LARC Medical Services. She is dedicated to patient care and compassionate about her work. Congratulations, Julie Brown, on your selection as ODOC's 2015 Nurse of the Year and the Central Region Nurse of the Year.



Julie's mom, Vickey Plavchak (above), encouraged her to apply to nursing school; Julie Brown knew she wanted to help people when her Grandma Norton (right) had a stroke and was placed in a nursing home.

## EDUCATION

LPN Program (1991-1992)  
Mid-America Vo-Tech  
Wayne, Oklahoma



ODOC's Nurse of the Year and Region Nurse of the Year are recognized at the April Board of Corrections Meeting.

# MORE ABOUT Julie Brown

**WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE FUNNY STORY ABOUT YOURSELF?**

*"I am the youngest sister in my family, so I am reminded of many funny and weird things that I have said. The one my parents and siblings repeat all the time happened when I was four. I said, 'Imagination is a hopping turtle,' which, in my defense, is accurate. Even though this happened nearly 40 years ago, it comes up often for a good laugh at my expense."*

**NAME ONE THING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW.**

*"I love to refinish/ redesign/repurpose furniture. I've spent many hours watching HGTV."*

**BEST COMPLIMENT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?**

*"Definitely being nominated and notified that I was selected for this position. It is a great honor!"*

**DID YOU HAVE A MODEL OR IDOL YOU ASPIRED TO BE AS A YOUTH?**

*"My dad was a great role model. Professionally and personally, he taught me to work hard, treat people with respect, to be kind, and honest. I strive to follow in his footsteps."*

**WHAT COMES EASIEST TO YOU AS A NURSE?**

*"The thing that comes easiest to me as a nurse is taking care of my patients. Even though there is more to nursing than patient care it feels good to know that I did something for someone that most people could not do."*



# Denise Hunter

2015 WESTERN REGION  
NURSE OF THE YEAR

*Denise Hunter, a Registered Nurse (RN)  
at the William S. Key Correctional Center (WSKCC),  
lives by the motto "Home is Home—Work is Work."*

The Western Region Nurse of the Year, Denise Hunter, decided to attend nursing school with encouragement from her dad. Busy raising a young family, Hunter gave numerous excuses for why she couldn't attend—but her dad persisted. *"After many reasons of why I couldn't—I finally gave in and went. I will always be thankful to my dad for that,"* she says.

In 2002, after 15 years as a nurse at the Harper County Community Hospital, Hunter was looking for a change. Attracted to the benefits offered and the closeness in location, she applied to WSKCC in Ft. Supply, Oklahoma.

As a registered nurse at a facility, Hunter describes her work as triage with everything from patient care to paperwork. *"The most rewarding thing about my job is knowing that I helped someone who needed it whether it is wound care or someone with cancer. The hardest thing is accepting the fact that some things I cannot fix. I try to stay positive, have compassion and do what I can,"* she says.

Described by her co-workers as very thorough, a great teacher, and a compassionate, caring nurse with excellent communication skills, Hunter is able to soothe difficult/hostile situations with her calming demeanor.

## EDUCATION/ TRAINING

Licensed Practical Nurse Program

High Plains Vo-Tech

Registered Nurse Degree

NWOSU & Regents

Wound Care

(40-hour workshop)

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

# MORE ABOUT Denise Hunter

## WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE FUNNY STORY ABOUT YOURSELF?

*"I was outside in my PJ's in the dark and locked myself out of the house. I went down the street to a friend's house and ended up crawling through a window to get back in. When people asked me about it—I thought my neighbor had been watching and told on me. So, I sent him a letter and told him I was going to start making popcorn and charging for the entertainment—only to later find out he was out of town at the time."*

## WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES?

*"I like fishing, camping and I just started trying to restore old furniture. I spend my weekends working in my yard and working on an old house I'm renovating."*

## WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE TOY (OR GAME) AS A CHILD, AND WHY?

*"Playing softball—becoming friends with teammates and depending on each other—it was fun to me."*

## BEST COMPLIMENT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

*"Had to come from my children telling me that because of my determination to accomplish something and not accepting 'I can't' as a reason for not trying, that they have accomplished what they have today."*

## DID YOU HAVE A MODEL OR IDOL YOU ASPIRED TO BE AS A YOUTH?

*"Would probably be my granny who was the kindest and most patient person I know."*



**Medical Services** has four infirmaries to provide special medical care for offenders and the agency has a service contract with the Lindsay Municipal Hospital for more acute care that cannot be provided on-site. Offenders are able to access specialty care through the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, as well as local hospitals and medical providers as the need arises.



# Mallory Woten

## 2015 SOUTHEAST REGION NURSE OF THE YEAR

*Mallory Woten, a Registered Nurse (RN)  
at the Jackie Brannon Correctional Center (JBCC),  
wants her staff to come to work and love their job.*



*Married with  
two children,  
a boy and a  
girl, Woten's  
husband, Caleb,  
was recently  
elected Mayor of  
their hometown  
of Hartshorne,  
Oklahoma.*

The Southeast Region Nurse of the Year, Mallory Woten, never imagined she would someday work in corrections—now, she can't imagine working anywhere else.

Managing the JBCC Clinic, Woten is responsible for a workload that can seem overwhelming at times. She credits her staff with making the clinic run as smoothly as it does. *"The one thing that really attracted me to JBCC was the teamwork within the facility. Since my very first day I have always been welcomed with open arms and that is dif-*

*ficult to find in a workplace,"* she says.

Asked what she finds most rewarding about her job, she says, *"Seeing the transition from the offender upon arrival to the time of discharge. The transition to prison is not always an easy one and with medical working so closely with the mental health staff we often see the offenders at their best points and their worst. Seeing them overcome all of the obstacles they have went through in their life and come out stronger than they have ever been, that is what makes my job worthwhile."* she says.

# MORE ABOUT W Mallory W Woten

## SO FAR WHAT'S BEEN YOUR MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT AS A NURSE?

*"Almost passing out in the labor room during my externship after seeing my first laboring patient have their baby."*

## NAME ONE THING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW?

*"I have a passion for dancing. I started dancing as a child and fell in love with it and I danced in college."*

## SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT PEOPLE MIGHT NOT READILY KNOW?

*"I am terrified of frogs."*

## BEST COMPLIMENT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

*"That I look like my mom."*

## WHAT MAKES YOU LAUGH?

*"My kids. Their personalities are so fun and inspiring. The things that come out of their mouth never cease to amaze me."*

## DID YOU HAVE A MODEL OR IDOL YOU ASPIRED TO BE AS A YOUTH?

*"My big sister. She may only be 20 months older than me but she was always the person I looked up to and wanted to be. I knew my Mom and Dad would always be proud of me and cheer me on but when she was proud and cheering me on nothing else seemed to matter."*

**Medical Services** employs physicians, optometrists, dentists, physician assistants, advanced nurse practitioners, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, certified medication aids, personal care assistants, dental assistants, dental hygienists, correctional health service administrators, and medical clerical staff.



**Medical Services** provides direct medical care to over 20,000 incarcerated offenders housed in prison, community work centers, halfway houses, and contract county jail beds and oversees the medical care of ODOC offenders housed in private prisons. Medical administration staff ensure the compliance with policy and offer support services to the field.



# Mary Kekahbah

2015 NORTHEAST REGION NURSE OF THE YEAR

*Mary Kekahbah, a Registered Nurse (RN) at the Dick Conner Correctional Center (DCCC), is an advocate for every patient.*

In 2011, Mary Kekahbah began her career as the chronic clinic nurse at DCCC in Hominy, Oklahoma. Four short years later we are proud to recognize Kekahbah as ODOC's Northeast Region Nurse of the Year.



Compelled to study nursing when a good friend died suddenly and tragically, Kekahbah credits many co-workers through the years who have helped her learn and grow as a nurse. *"Nursing can be stressfull. I leave 'work at work' and do the best I can. General hands-on nursing comes easiest to me as a registered nurse. I try to be well rested for each working day."*

***Kekahbah decided to study nursing when her good friend, Cynthia (left), was tragically killed.***

Responsible for ensuring offenders with chronic illnesses are treated by the medical team, Kekahbah is the epitome of a team player and never backs down from a job. *"I handle everything by catching up and staying caught up on offenders with chronic illnesses. I have a list of offenders and their chronic illnesses, which makes my job manageable. My job is most rewarding when I see offenders receive quality care and*

*how the healthcare team works together efficiently to provide care. Nursing can be stressful. I leave work-at-work and do the best I can,"* she says.



*Kekahbah's mom and dad.*

## WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE TOY (OR GAME) AS A CHILD?

*"A tire swing in our backyard."*

# MORE ABOUT **Mary Kekabbah**



*View from Kekabbah's childhood home (top left) and (left) dock and creek in her hometown of Savannah, Georgia.*



*Kekabbah admired her Cousin Linda (left and top).*

## WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE FUNNY STORY ABOUT YOURSELF?

*"In about the 3rd grade, I wrote on the steamy bathroom mirror that I loved an 8th grade boy. Well, I guess the message stayed on the mirror after the steam dried up. I was mercilessly teased by family for a long time!"*

## BEST COMPLIMENT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

*"That I'm a good Mom."*



*Kekabbah's two children at a young age.*

## NAME ONE THING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW.

*"I'm a popcorn addict."*

## WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES?

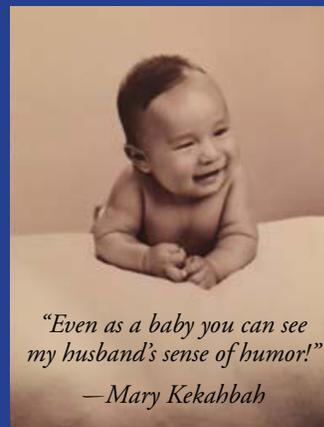
*"Bicycling, reading and gardening."*

## DID YOU HAVE A MODEL OR IDOL YOU ASPIRED TO BE AS A YOUTH?

*"I felt a lot of admiration for my older cousin, Linda. She worked for Eastern Airlines and got to travel all over the world. She also wore false eyelashes and fishnet stockings and played Beatle music loudly in her Ford Cougar."*

## SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT PEOPLE MIGHT NOT READILY KNOW.

*"I'm a beach bum at heart."*



*"Even as a baby you can see my husband's sense of humor!"  
—Mary Kekabbah*

## WHAT MAKES YOU LAUGH?

*"My husband and his sense of humor."*



Very involved in animal rescue, Kekabbah has rescued Bruce (top), a 3-legged cat (middle) and a hound dog named Hickory (bottom).