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NRH honored for public health initiatives

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Norman Regional Health System will be honored by the Oklahoma Public Health Association at an awards ceremony and reception this evening at the annual Oklahoma Public Health Association conference in Tulsa.

NRHS is receiving two of the five awards given annually by the Oklahoma Public Health Association.

The first award, Exceptional Merit Award in Public Health, is awarded to those who have made a demonstrable impact in public health. This year's recipient is Paula Price, RN, BSN, MPH.

Price has served since 1998 as director of the Healthy Community Initiative. She and her staff conduct communitywide health assessments and from that data create and enhance community health education, promotion and screening programs including Healthy Community, Fit Family, Healthy Youth and Certified Healthy Business. The programs are dedicated to addressing hypertension, obesity/overweight, tobacco use and lack of physical activity.

Price was awarded the Kramer School of Nursing Silver Salute in 2006 for Community Nursing and her commitment to public health. She also serves as vice chair of the Oklahoma Turning Point Statewide Council.

In Norman, Price serves on the board of directors for Health for Friends, is a member of Sooner Rotary and oversees the Health System's United Way campaign. She serves at the Christmas Store, rings bells for Salvation Army and serves on the Altar Guild at St. Michael's Episcopal Church.

The second award being given to the NRHS is the Special Business Award for Excellence in Public Health for the Inpatient Tobacco Cessation Program.

The In-patient Tobacco Cessation program was launched under the direction of Dr. Thomas Kuhls in 2004 to encourage patients who used tobacco to quit.

Today, the program is directed by Dr. James Silman, who worked with tobacco cessation programs at the Cleveland and McClain County Health Departments, as well as the American Heart and Lung Associations. Amber Browning, RN, manager of health promotion and education at NRHS manages the day-to-day operations and data collection of the program.

Health promotion specialists at the hospital have visited and offered intervention to more than 8,000 tobacco users. Materials and support are given to the patient and their family. Patients are also given a coupon to attend, for free, a seven-week freedom from smoking class based on the American Lung Association course.

Phone calls and ongoing support are given after the patient is discharged from the hospital once a week up to one month, then monthly up to three months, if the patient is willing. The patients being visited are typically patients diagnosed with pneumonia, heart attack or heart failure who use tobacco.

The Health System's Tobacco Cessation program has also received the 2005 National Health Information Award and the 2006 National Health Information Award for Tobacco Free Campus.

For more information on the community educational opportunities and programs offered at Norman Regional Health System, visit www.normanregional.com