CSUF professor honored with DAISY Faculty Award

Posted By Jessica Escorsia On September 15, 2011 @ 2:00 am In Campus News,Featured Stories,News | No Comments

Jessica Escorsia | No Comments

Published: September 15, 2011
Categorized in Campus News,Featured Stories,News

As a child, nurse costumes were her top choice during Halloween. Many long nights were spent engaged in her collection of Cherry Ames books, a series based on a mystery-solving nurse.

Now, after 34 years in the nursing field and almost 11 years as an assistant professor for the School of Nursing at Cal State Fullerton, Elaine Rutkowski was awarded the DAISY Faculty award in a luncheon ceremony at the CSUF Irvine Campus Aug. 19.

"I would never do anything else but teach. Getting this award really just validated that the school appreciates us and what we do," said Rutkowski.

The DAISY (diseases attacking the immune system) Award for extraordinary nurses was created after Patrick Barnes, 33, died from the autoimmune disease ITP (idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura) in 1999. The Barnes family was overwhelmed by the excellent nursing care their son received while he was in the hospital. After a decade of presenting the DAISY award to nurses in the hospital setting, the family decided to recognize faculty members in the education system who inspire and teach practices of excellent service and care to nursing students.

Lolita Hortono, office manager for the School of Nursing and one of the committee members who selected Rutkowski, said the CSUF School of Nursing became part of the DAISY foundation’s recognition program because they wanted to honor teachers who have done an exceptional job in their field.

"She’s a wonderful teacher. One thing that I can emphasize is that she leads by example and students see that," said Hortono.

During the 2010 commencement ceremony for the School of Nursing, Rutkowski was announced the winner of the DAISY Faculty Award.

Hortono and the committee believe the award should be given to a person who has made a difference.

"Based on input from students, almost all of the nominations indicated that their life changed in a positive way because of her," Hortono said.

Rutkowski humbly credited the faculty and students at the CSUF School of Nursing to her own success and inspirational teaching methods.

"I feel that I just represent the group of faculty that we have right now and that I was just the lucky one to be picked," Rutkowski said.

Kathleen Griffith, a full-time lecturer at CSUF’s School of Nursing, was a former student of Rutkowski. She agrees that Rutowski and her teaching methods are inspirational.

"What she teaches, she believes in and she sets a positive example for her students. She sets a great nursing example," said Griffith.

Besides being a full-time faculty member at CSUF, Rutkowski is a mother of two, parish nurse for her church, a volunteer nurse at her son’s high school, a public health nurse for the safety committee for the city of Laguna Niguel and a board member for We ROCK, a nonprofit after-school intervention program for Orange County students. With so many things on her plate, Rutkowski understands many of her students and believes they are the inspiration for the educator that she is today.

"I think students, especially nursing students, work, they have families, they have social lives and they’re students. And as a faculty member, every time you look at a student (who) you know there is all kinds of things going on in their life, it’s an inspiration to come in and teach,” she said.
Along with her recognition, Rutkowski was presented a pin and a hand-carved stone sculpture from Zimbabwe called "A Healers Touch."

"The award is something that will be with me for the rest of my career. It was such a tribute to be recognized in a department that is passionate about what everybody does," Rutkowski said.

The School of Nursing plans to continue to present the DAISY Faculty Award once every year.