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Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing Galas: May 4, 2006

NEW HAVEN—Six years ago one home health care agency set out to make a difference in the nursing shortage right here in Connecticut by emphasizing pride in the profession of nursing. May 4, 2006 will mark the 6-year anniversary of the Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing program in Connecticut, an annual event honoring nurses for going above and beyond the call of duty in an array of clinical, and educational environments. The Visiting Nurse Association of South Central Connecticut created the Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing in 2001, a Gala program to "celebrate and elevate" the nursing profession.
The goals of the program are to encourage retention, inspire future nurses, focus public attention and recognize the breadth and scope of nursing practice at the local level.

Over 300 very special nurses will be honored this year at four exciting events in New Haven, New London, Greenwich, and Hartford. The Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing will be presented to registered nurses and licensed practical nurses in all fields of practice. Criteria for selection, established by a panel of professionals, require that an honoree has: made a significant impact on patient care; gone "beyond the call;" demonstrated excellence; shown commitment to the community; and/or had an outstanding life-long achievement.

The National League for Nursing released a preliminary report in December showing an increase in applications, admissions, and enrollments in nursing programs at all levels. While this might seem reassuring, Dr. Ruth Corcoran, Chief Executive Officer of the NLN, cautions that these statistics don't tell the whole story: "The number of qualified nurses available to teach future generations of RNs continues to decline. This year, in a significant increase of 18 percent, schools of nursing were forced to reject more than 147,000 qualified applications. Record numbers of potential nurses await places in America's RN programs." "Right here in Connecticut, 1,100 qualified nursing applicants were denied admission to schools in 2004 because of the nursing faculty shortage," stated Joanne Walsh, CEO President of the VNA of South Central CT. She further said, "Connecticut is projected to realize a shortage of over 22,000 nurses within the next 15 years unless our schools can increase the number of nursing graduates to meet the demand within this time period."

All the major health care organizations and practitioners across the state enthusiastically support this exciting program. Over 100 health care organizations, including hospitals, medical practices, long term care facilities, home health care agencies, nursing schools, and community health centers are expected to attend and nominate nurses for the special honor. Official Sponsors include: Lawrence & Memorial Hospital, The William W.Backus Hospital, Bridgeport Hospital, Danbury Health System, Greenwich Hospital. Norwalk Hospital, St. Vincent's Medical Center, Stamford Hospital, Eastern Connecticut Health Network, Hartford Hospital, MidState Medical Center, New Britain General Hospital, St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Hospital of Saint Raphael, Masonicare, Inc., Yale-New Haven Hospital, and University of Connecticut Health Center.

Statewide media sponsors include: Advance for Nursing, Connecticut Parent Magazine, Connecticut Hospital Association, Connecticut Nurses' Association, Hartford Courant, and the New Haven Register.

Connecticut Regional Hosts are: VNA Health Care, Inc. – Hartford; VNA of South Central Connecticut, Inc. – New Haven; VNA of Southeastern Connecticut – New London; & Visiting Nurse & Hospice Care of Southwestern, CT-Stamford. ###

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