

August 28, 2015

ASU Mid-South Nursing Instructor Wins Outstanding Faculty Award

Martha Herron, lead faculty for Arkansas State University Mid-South's Nursing Assistant/Health Technology program, has been named an Arkansas Community Colleges Outstanding Faculty Member for 2015-16.



"I was shocked, excited, and overwhelmed with emotion because it was an incredibly challenging year for me," Herron said. "It's nice to be selected for this recognition by my peers. To receive an honor like this is the pinnacle of the year."

Herron, who earned an associate degree in nursing at Phillips County Community College, said the year's challenges included skyrocketing program enrollment and enhanced preparation for the SkillsUSA competition. Those efforts caught the attention of multiple coworkers.

"Martha has shown that going above and beyond for her students makes a significant difference," said Pete Selden, Associate Vice Chancellor for Workforce

Programs. "Not only has she led our Nursing Assistant and Medical Professions programs with great effort, but Martha has worked with students outside of class hours in order to prepare them for certification exams and the SkillsUSA competition."

"This unmatched dedication helped her earn third place in the Arkansas SkillsUSA Advisor of the Year Award voting. Martha has proven to be a great leader."

Janice Coleman, ASU Mid-South Coordinator of Career Services, said she witnessed Herron's "deep passion for helping students succeed" while assisting with the SkillsUSA effort.

"It was evident how committed she was in preparing students for competition," Coleman said. "Many of the students came after hours to practice with her. Because of her efforts, one of her students was able to bring home a gold medal during the competition."

“I admire how she holds her students accountable while pulling the best out of them. I saw firsthand how she is able to connect with them on a genuine level. With the number of students she has, I admire how she is able to handle multiple demands and stay on top of her administrative tasks.”

The Marion resident said her students deserve nothing less than maximum effort.

“I am extremely passionate about teaching at this level,” she said. “When I first walked into the classroom three years ago, I saw the need. My students needed an opportunity, and I felt like I could provide it for them. I realized I was right where I needed to be.”

In addition to working with students outside the classroom to prepare them for the SkillsUSA contest, she also provided transportation to the study sessions.

“It wasn’t just ‘sign you up and send you off,’” she pointed out. “There was a lot of preparation. I put in a lot of time because I knew that was a golden opportunity for the kids. To have it come full circle is incredible. In the end, all of that work was a great blessing.”

Veronika Pounds of Earle High School earned a gold medal in Nurse Assisting at the state competition, and she placed ninth in the national contest. Brittney Willis and Maddie Wilkerson of the Academies of West Memphis won silver and bronze medals on the state level.

Herron, who is working toward a master’s degree in geriatric care from the University of Arkansas for the Medical Sciences, said healthcare has always interested her.

“When I was young, I always wanted to go into the medical field,” she said. “I’ve worked in many departments as an RN – ER, ICU, dialysis, geriatric care, and wound care – but geriatrics is my passion.”

She said the high school program focused on nursing assistant care is a perfect fit for her.

“I’m passionate about teaching care and compassion,” Herron said. “It’s not solely about the skill of a nurse; it’s about giving of your heart to the patients. They appreciate that more than anything. I want to pass that on to my students.”

Herron came to ASU Mid-South after working at Broadway Healthcare in West Memphis for two years. She has also worked at Methodist University Hospital and the Baptist Memorial Health Care Hospital in Memphis.

At the college, Herron has helped the high school-focused program grow dramatically.

“When I started here three years ago, we had 42 students in the program. This fall, we started with 222. The kids are excited, and I’m excited because they are. It’s just been incredible what has happened in three years.”

When not teaching, studying, or working, Herron enjoys running, playing golf, following college sports, and supporting the Memphis Grizzlies.

“It’s all about sports in my house,” she said.

A standout basketball player at Tyronza and East Poinsett County high schools, Herron made the 1987 Arkansas High School Coaches All-Star team. She received multiple scholarship offers to play collegiately but elected to pursue other options.

Herron’s daughter is following in her mother’s footsteps. The teenager, a student at West Memphis Christian, runs cross country and track.

The ACC Outstanding Faculty Member award goes to instructors who exhibit a positive attitude, show commitment to student learning and success, demonstrate integrity and professionalism, employ innovative teaching methods, pursue professional development, serve the college, and support the community.

Herron joins a prestigious outstanding faculty winners list which includes Mark McClellan, Lori (Payne) Forrester, Mary Field, Jason Carmichael, Jason Carr, Logan Oliver, Dr. Trena Miles, Sanjay Chowdhury, Wilma Thomason, Dr. Topeka Small, Andrea Crutchfield, James Vardaman, Cynthia Armes, Tammy Hovland, Darrell Uselton, D. Steve Nichols, Barbara Simpson, Nancy Rieves, and Gale Allen.