Five Mission Health Registered Nurses (RNs) were selected to receive the 2014 Great 100 Award. This prestigious once-in-a-lifetime award is given annually to 100 nurses across North Carolina. Blinded nominations are scored based on the descriptions submitted about each nurse’s professionalism, integrity and honesty, commitment, caring and dynamic impact, and one sentence summary stating what makes this person an outstanding nurse.

The recipients for the 2014 award will be honored at the twenty-sixth annual black-tie Gala at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, North Carolina, on October 18, 2014.

Carlin Smith, MSN, RN, PCCN Nurse Educator Mission Hospital, Asheville, NC

Cynthia Wilson, BSN, RN Medical-Surgical and CCU/ICU (Critical Care) Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, Spruce Pine, NC

Debra Caton, BSN, RN, ONC Orthopedics, Mission Hospital

Elizabeth Corbin, MSN, RNC Geriatric Quality & Safety Coordinator Mission Hospital

Melanie Norman, MBA, BSN, RN Director, Quality and Safety Mission Health

Following are excerpts from the winning nominations reprinted with permission of the nominators.
Nomination by **Connie Wright, BSN, RN**  
Manager, 9 North Progressive Care

Carlin is the educator for more than 130 nurses, nursing assistants, and telemetry techs in our hospital. She collaborates with hospital nursing employees and managers in assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating orientation, continuing orientation and education programs at the individual and organizational level. Carlin assists staff and organizational leaders in providing for patient, family and community education, as needed. She also teaches ECG classes for the hospital and opens the class to reach out to staff from other hospitals that do not provide ECG training. Carlin provides education experience that facilitates competent nursing practice and quality patient care delivery, while facilitating new nurse enculturation and providing support for staff in unit based orientation efforts.

She exemplifies integrity no matter where she is. I have seen her many times jump off the elevator as it stops on another floor to allow staff to take a patient where they need to go, instead of making them wait for another elevator. Integrity to Carlin also means she must be an advocate, as opposed to being a bystander. She always stands up to do the right thing for whomever she is serving. Carlin leads by example. In a push for nurses to become certified, she led the way by becoming PCCN-certified for a progressive care unit she covers. Nursing is a life-long learning commitment to Carlin. She began as a nursing assistant and over the years attained higher nursing education, from LPN to ADN then BSN and now MSN.

Carlin is committed daily to serve patients, families, staff and colleagues. She has a strong work ethic and takes her responsibilities very seriously. She always goes the extra mile to provide high-quality care. Carlin encourages staff daily and is very “hands-on” in helping staff with anything they need, including patient care. In addition, she works closely with new graduates giving them a safe, non-judgmental environment to begin their journey in nursing.

**In one sentence, what makes this person an outstanding nurse?**

Carlin considers nursing a calling--she embodies the compassion, empathy, and selflessness the calling asks for; with Carlin the change begins with her and she makes a difference in lives every day.
Cynthia Wilson, BSN, RN  
Medical-Surgical and CCU/ICU (Critical Care)  
Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, Spruce Pine, NC

Nomination by Rob Grenell, RN  
Medical-Surgical and CCU/ICU (Critical Care)

Cynthia has built her nursing career around a personal philosophy of continuous self-improvement that is directed at achieving true excellence in her nursing practice for the benefit of her patients. Her philosophy is unspoken, she is too self-effacing to hold forth; but it is clearly evident from her devotion and performance over the years. She has directed all of her energy toward achieving the highest level of excellence in patient/family care at the bedside by mentoring countless nursing students and staff, and by serving as the “go-to” resource for other nurses and staff, for our unit manager, and for medical providers.

My first inkling of the special qualities of this nurse came one night when I was just two weeks out of nursing school (over twenty years ago). I had paged the Cynthia, who was the house supervisor, for assistance with my patient in respiratory distress. She promptly responded to my page with an attitude that was completely open, supportive and professional. She took in the situation and elicited my report of the situation. She treated me with respect for my judgment in calling for help. She encouraged me to use critical thinking; we discussed the situation as two professionals, and she graciously made allowance for my inexperience, while encouraging me and giving support.

Cynthia is far too modest to claim any special title of distinction. Through her years of experience in a variety of clinical settings (Charge RN for ICU/CCU/Medical-Surgical units; Director of Operating Room/PeriAnesthesia Unit; Infection Control Coordinator; Patient Care Coordinator; Emergency Department Charge RN; Night Shift Supervisor; Night Shift Administrator; and Clinical Nursing and Lab Instructor), she has gained the quality that radiates quiet self-confidence and provides the positive support we all need at those times of extreme stress. And, in a beautiful way, she has the gift of being able to connect unselfconsciously with her patients and their family in expressing her deep compassion and support.

In one sentence, what makes this person an outstanding nurse?

I clearly recall the advice of my nursing instructor years ago who told us, that when we start work, to find a nurse to be our role model; and for me and so many others, Cynthia has served as that outstanding example of leadership and selfless devotion, of complete technical proficiency, of a total and compassionate commitment to her patients and their families, and to the support and growth of the next generation of professional nurses.
Nomination by Kathy Smith, RN, ONC  
Manager, Orthopedics

Debra is a role model for other nurses. She precepts new nurses hired on the unit, leading them in developing skills needed to succeed on the unit. She mentors student nurses, assuring they get an experience that will assist them as their skills advance. She is certified in her specialty and uses this information to further her nursing practice. She has presented two national level posters related to fall prevention and geriatric care. She has presented hospital posters on quality improvement and hip fracture management. Her presentation of information about arthritis and osteoarthritis at a local senior home provided education on prevention of the diseases with hands-on demonstrations of exercises, diet plans and handouts for the residents to keep. She also presented career day information regarding the nursing profession at a local elementary school.

Debra frequently provides support, as a geriatric resource nurse, to staff working with geriatric patients. She is considered an expert in the field of fall prevention and provides support to staff. She was instrumental in the improved processes for pain management protocol in the geriatric population. She is an active participating member of our shared decision/shared governance team. Debra has been a Super-user for new computer programs, assisting nurses as they learn these new documentation skills. She developed a fall prevention patient contract for the unit, which quickly spread to other departments in the hospital, as a tool to solicit the patient’s participation in their safety. She assisted the unit in developing a nurse-driven protocol for providing and ensuring consumption of oral supplements for patient who had hip fractures.

This nurse uses her expertise that she has gained from her years of service to make sure that her patients are getting the best care. She not only sees the issue at hand, such as pain management, but she sees the underlying issue, such as anxiety and overstimulation. With one patient who was having a terrible time with pain after an ankle fracture, she took the family aside and suggested that the overstimulation of too many people in the room may have been a deterrent to her pain management. After decreasing the number of visitors by providing family education and giving medications for pain and anxiety, Debra enabled her patient to find pain relief.

**In one sentence, what makes this person an outstanding nurse?**

Debra is a caregiver that has a desire to prevent suffering and promote wellness, realizing nursing is a higher spiritual calling and not merely a profession; she feels it is her destiny to share her knowledge, caring and love with others.
Elizabeth is an outstanding advocate for nursing and most recently for geriatric nursing in the classroom, the acute care and transitional care settings. She lectured in the pre-licensure class as well as the advanced BSN program at a local university. She shares expertise through lectures on topics such as delirium prevention and caring for patients with dementia for the Geriatric Resource Nurse and Geriatric Trained Provider programs in this hospital and serves as a role model and mentor. She engages students, bedside nurses, as well as hospital and nursing leadership through a professional approach to patient-centered care. This RN has served as adjunct faculty for didactics and clinical instruction in several undergraduate nursing programs. She currently serves as a guest lecturer on delirium recognition and prevention at a four year college.

Elizabeth’s daughter, who is also a nurse, made these comments, “Mom has been in nursing for my entire life. What makes her caregiver so outstanding is the variety of positions she has held, the degree of excellence she has pursued in each role, and her love of educating peers and students. She has served every age group, from being a certified nurse midwife to the current position, serving the geriatric population. Although the age groups have varied over the years, her love and excitement for what she is doing at that time is truly genuine. She enjoys people above all, and enjoys serving, assisting, and educating people. I have followed in her footsteps and have become a nurse myself. I understand today at a deeper level, the joy and satisfaction of serving patients. Throughout the years, I have heard many of my Mom’s tales of nursing from ‘way back when,’ including her time as a military nurse.

This nurse’s commitment and passion for new nursing challenges has played out in the acute care setting as well as personal life. She recently traveled across the country to be present for friends, as the husband was dying of brain cancer. In the wife’s words, “Elizabeth was attentive to his physical and medical needs, of which there were many. She put excellent nursing skills to work and always protected his dignity and helped him remain as independent as possible. More importantly, she spent many hours attending to his emotional, spiritual and intellectual needs with respect, love and humor. Elizabeth enriched the end of his life.”

In one sentence, what makes this person an outstanding nurse?

Elizabeth believes in and behaves in a way that demonstrates not only advanced knowledge and skill, but also respect for human dignity, the right to self-determination, and valued relationships with patients, families, colleagues and others.
Melanie has been an RN for 15 years. Beginning her career as a CNA, this BSN prepared nurse opted to obtain a MBA when pursuing a graduate degree in order to better bridge the nursing world with the business world. As an intensive care (ICU) RN early in her career, she thrived on managing the sickest patients. Additionally, she served as an ICU charge nurse; analyst for core measures and mortality; accreditation specialist; director of ICU, telemetry, dialysis, and cardiac cath lab; manager of performance improvement; and manager of patient safety.

Melanie seeks to bridge the chiasm at times created by cultural or language barriers in order to optimize the patient’s experience. For example, while not fluent in Spanish, this RN does have a foundational knowledge. As a result, whenever a Spanish-speaking patient was on the unit, this RN was always eager to care for that patient. The patients and their families were appreciative of this effort to communicate in their native language. On one occasion, the brother of one patient who was from Mexico saw Melanie at the mall a month after discharged. As he hugged his sister’s ICU nurse, he conveyed to Melanie’s mother his family’s appreciation that she attempted to speak to them in Spanish. He indicated appreciation for this display of respect for their culture.

When driving home with a friend, Melanie was first on the scene of a head-on collision that involved an elderly man and woman. Both were bleeding profusely. EMS was contacted, injuries were quickly assessed, pressure was applied as indicated, and Melanie and her friend calmly kept the injured immobile. Again, her calming voice helped the couple as they waited for emergency crew. As sometimes happens in the face of emergent situations, the elderly woman’s main concern was for her dog, which was at home alone. Melanie made phone calls to family members to meet this voiced need and remained by their side until the couple was transported to the hospital.

One hallmark of Melanie is her demonstration of persistence and follow-up; she is the glue on multiple teams ensuring that tasks are completed. It is a real pleasure to work with an autonomous team member, who beyond completing tasks on-time, always looks for the unmentioned opportunities to ensure patients, families, and colleagues have the tools to be successful as well. She assesses the needs of each group before crafting the most appropriate tool to ensure the success of others. In the past several months, she has worked tirelessly to change the way our hospital manages safety events.

**In one sentence, what makes this person an outstanding nurse?**

Melanie loves and cares about people; everything this nurse does comes from the core of her heart – from the truest form of caring for an individual, including mentoring, healing, and developing.