

# AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme Awards

## 10th National Conference

*Healthy Solutions for Children and Young People*

*28/29 April 2005*



As National President of AWCH from 1987-2003, **Irene Hancock** was involved at the very beginning of the Scheme. The idea for the Scheme is based on the belief that the trauma of hospitalisation in a child may be lessened considerably by the presence of an adult with whom the child has a loving relationship. Because a parent sometimes cannot accompany a hospitalised child for varying reasons such as distance, family and job obligations or parental illness, AWCH initiated the visiting ward grandparent scheme. The very first hospital to run the Scheme was the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, which was then at Camperdown in Sydney. AWCH has for a long time wanted to recognise the wonderful work of the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Volunteers. You might ask why would we want to recognise individuals who give their time so generously and freely and with such commitment but who tell us that they get reward enough when they have helped a child and family through their hospitalisation? Awards such as the ones we will be giving out today not only recognise the fantastic volunteer work of individuals but also make a statement about what is important in providing excellent health care for children, young people and their families. Recognition of this wonderful work may also encourage others to be involved as a volunteer in the Scheme

**Michael Kakakios**, Manager, Family Health, Primary Health and Equity Unit at NSW Health who presented the awards commented on the dedication of the ward grandparent volunteers to the philosophy of the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme, as well as the work of the health staff in hospitals who support the Scheme: in particular those staff who coordinate the scheme in each hospital and ensure that the volunteers are well supported with training and the provision of network meetings on a regular basis. This type of support is crucial to the success of the Scheme and Michael congratulated all those staff involved in supporting it.



There were a number of long service awards which were sponsored by Northern Sydney Carer Support Service and they were presented by Barbara Lewis, Coordinator of the Service.

### CONGRATULATIONS!

*Long Service Awards for 5 & 10 Years*



*Recognition of Outstanding Commitment  
to the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme Award*

**Margaret Piper**  
The Children's Hospital at Westmead



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The **Inauguration of the Ruth Jensen Award** is a very special award to commemorate a very special person, Ruth Jensen who was crucial to the Scheme right from the beginning. Ruth was one of the first "Ward Grannies". The importance of the Scheme is best described by Ruth in an interview she gave about the Scheme. "For many parents, family commitments, geography, finances or work mean they can't be with their child every waking minute. We look after the children when their parents can't be with them, as if we were their granny, it lets them know that they have a special visitor, that there is someone there for them and you are not going to give them needles or treatment." During the early days of the scheme one ward charge sister wrote "I would like to express my personal appreciation of the care and tenderness shown to K by Mrs Ruth Jensen. Before Ruth established a regular pattern of visiting and care K, would cry for extended periods of time. The nursing staff were aware of K's needs, but our time was so limited that one-on-one care was impossible. K's contentment grew as he absorbed Ruth's enjoyment of him. The distress of the staff also decreased, and when K died we knew that in his last few weeks of life he had had the "extra" care and love that should be the birthright of every child".



Ruth was not only an exceptional ward gran but she expanded the scheme by visiting hospitals throughout NSW, giving talks to Service Clubs and organisations. Whenever a hospital required more grandparents, advertisements were placed in the local press of a particular hospital. Ruth would interview every applicant by phone, informing him or her of the commitment required ie. Visit 3-5 days a week, 3-5 hours per day and that they needed both physical and emotional strength. She travelled to all the facilities by public transport. When the Children's Hospital moved from Camperdown to Westmead Ruth would catch a bus from her home to Chatswood, train to Central, change for a train to Westmead and walk in her "joggers" to the Hospital and repeat the performance at the end of 5-6 hours, stating it gave her plenty of time to read. Ruth died in 2001 and Dr John Yu, AWCH Patron, when speaking of Ruth's passing, said Ruth would have wanted to die with her boots on. He was so right.

### Inauguration of the Ruth Jensen Award

Accepted by  
Ruth's niece Barbara Smith



**The Ruth Jensen Award.** The ward grandparent receiving this award was described in her nomination as maintaining a child centred focus, sets her granny role as a priority and with compassion and humility, and despite all the challenges sometimes involved in being a ward granny, has never given up on establishing a relationship with a child which has led to a very positive outcome including increased self-esteem. This has also led to positive benefits for the hospital team as they have found an easier working relationship with the children and young people who have been cared for by this ward granny.

## Thank you

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AWCH Hospital  
Ward Grandparent Scheme  
Awards

**Inaugural Ruth Jensen Award**  
for outstanding ward  
grandparent volunteering

Joan James  
John Hunter Hospital,  
Newcastle. NSW



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