

Capital Area Community Nursing Network Nursing Excellence Award 2012 Honoree

Michelle Milam, RN, BSN

Michelle Milam has been a practicing registered nurse for nearly 30 years, serving over 21 years in the Greater Lansing community. She has been a positive influence and role model for many health care professionals throughout her nursing career. From her earlier work with the Michigan State University Family Practice Residency Program in an adjunct faculty position involved in resident education and evaluation, to her more recent administrative roles with Ingham County Health Department (ICHHD), she has impacted the lives of countless individuals in our community from the patients and families she serves to her colleagues and former residents. Her compassion and commitment to serving the uninsured and underserved population led her to working for ICHHD in the Adult Health Center and eventually for Health Plan Management Services (HPMS), which manages the Ingham Health Plan (IHP) along with 14 other County Health Plans across the state of Michigan. As Medical Services Coordinator, Nurse Milam is responsible for the oversight of the IHP Emergency Department Case Management Program. It was from her work with this program that she identified the rising problem of prescription narcotic misuse, abuse, and overdoses in the community and recognized the need to reach out to key players in the community to help tackle this important issue.

Michelle Milam has used her extensive professional nursing experience to bring together many different agencies to identify issues affecting the Greater Lansing community. Nurse Milam has applied her clinical and administrative expertise to coordinate a community-wide effort aimed at addressing the challenges to providing safe and quality care to the people in the Capital Area. Her contributions to nursing have been felt most strongly in the work she has done with the underserved population; those that are low-income and uninsured. Her efforts exemplify the importance of nursing as an essential link between the patient's and the provider's needs.

As an employee of the ICHHD and coordinator of the IHP Emergency Department Case Management Program, Nurse Milam was instrumental in the development of the "Community Plan of Care," a collaborative initiative between IHP, ICHHD, McLaren and Sparrow Emergency Department leadership and nursing staff and several local primary care providers to address the growing problem of prescription narcotic overdose and abuse/misuse of prescription medications in the community. Although this initiative was formed only seven months ago, it has already accomplished many of its goals, including expanded access for IHP members to get non-narcotic treatment options, including some medications and a physical therapy benefit that were not previously covered by the Health Plan. Another achievement is the collaboration between the ICHHD Adult Dental Clinic and the McLaren and Sparrow Hospital emergency departments to develop a referral system to help IHP members seen in the ED for dental problems obtain the follow-up dental care they need. The Community Plan of Care group is currently working to develop standard guidelines for the treatment of chronic pain and dental pain to be utilized in both emergency departments. Her strong work ethic, positive attitude, and tireless commitment to serve the uninsured and underserved, has made her an excellent role model for nurses and other health care professionals in the Greater Lansing community.