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2009



# UPDATE

THE NEWSLETTER FOR WATERBURY HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES & NETWORK AFFILIATES

## 2009 HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR RICHARD SMITH



### Hospital Social Worker Finds Real Meaning of Success in Uplifting Others

Throughout his life, **Richard Smith, LCSW**, has never measured his success in terms of money, prestige or power. For him, the greatest satisfaction has always come in making a difference for those struggling to overcome disease or despair.

Now 68, the soft-spoken Waterbury Hospital social worker lives in a modest apartment in Waterbury which, until recently, did not have a TV. On the weekends, he either spends time with his two children and granddaughter or with his clients, the HIV-diagnosed patients whose lives have been given new hope through Richard's dedication and compassion.

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**ABOVE:**

TOP: **Richard Smith**, Waterbury Hospital's 2009 Humanitarian of the Year, with his daughter, **Sarah Smith**. Richard is a social worker in the hospital's Infectious Disease Clinic.

MIDDLE: Richard admires a photograph taken by one of his clients, **Leroy Hilliard**, who credits Richard with giving his life new hope.



LEFT: Richard as a toddler with his father, the late **Dr. Karl Smith**, on the roof of Laconia Hospital in New Hampshire.

BELOW: Richard practicing his water-skiing jumps on a lake in New Hampshire in 1957. He helped take his high school team to the national high school water-skiing championships in San Diego that year.



## RICHARD SMITH

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His willingness to go above and beyond in giving his own time and energy to the people he serves, is why Richard was selected to be Waterbury Hospital's 2009 Humanitarian of the Year.

"Richard is exactly the kind of person this award was meant for," said **Steven Schneider, MD**, Chief Medical Officer of Waterbury Hospital. "The actions he takes to improve the lives of others consistently exceed the parameters of his job description. He gives of himself 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, yet he does it in a way that never calls attention to himself. That is the essence of humanitarianism." With his trademark modesty, Richard said he was "overwhelmed" when told he had been chosen to receive the award, which is given every year to those in the hospital community who have demonstrated a history of providing above-and-beyond service or philanthropy to Waterbury Hospital and the community at large.

### A Perfect Choice

Those who know Richard best said they could not imagine a more suitable choice for the award.

"I am thrilled to hear that Richard was chosen as the Humanitarian of the Year," said **Steven Aronin, MD**, Chief of the hospital's Infectious Disease (ID) Section, which oversees the Infectious Disease Clinic where Richard works. "He is a humble man who has quietly dedicated decades of his life to helping others. Most recently, the impact of his compassion and expertise has been felt at the Waterbury Hospital ID Clinic where he has helped clients with chronic illnesses and problems with substance abuse to find a new beginning in their lives."

His daughter, **Sarah Smith**, said Richard is someone who usually avoids the spotlight, but is richly deserving of it.

"I'm so proud of him, and I'm so elated that he is being recognized for his profound spirit of humanitarianism," she said.

Sarah Smith said her father's dedication and compassion for others was ingrained in him during his childhood in New Hampshire. The oldest of five children, Richard was eight when his father, a physician, died of a heart attack. His mother, a schoolteacher, raised the children on a meager budget, an experience that instilled in Richard sympathy for those who are less fortunate.

As he grew up, Richard, who was known to his friends and family as "Dick," became an exemplary student and popular figure in his schools. He was a member of the Key Club and president of his class in his senior year in high school and set many local records in water-skiing, including

taking his high school team to the 1957 national water-skiing finals in San Diego, where they finished sixth. He was also captain of his cross-country team and a member of the varsity ski team at the University of New Hampshire, where he earned a bachelors degree in social work. He then joined the U.S. Coast Guard, where he served four years and volunteered at a residential children's center in Seattle. Afterward, he spent a year in the VISTA program in Houston, working with those who were living in poverty, then went to earn his masters degree in social work at the University of Connecticut.

### A Calling to Help Those in Need

Even in his youth, Sarah said, her father had a decidedly humanitarian bent. In the Coast Guard, while many of his fellow cadets were pinning up photos of sexy starlets in their lockers, Richard instead kept a photo of a young girl from overseas who he had sponsored in a *Save The Children* fundraiser, Sarah said.

Later, while working as a social worker for kids with cancer at Yale-New Haven Hospital, Richard established a summer camp in Hebron called Camp Rising Sun so that many of the kids would be able to have a summer camp experience.

For Sarah Smith and her brother, Joshua, the most significant decision made by Richard and his former wife, Gwen, came when they sought to adopt two children from Korea in the 1970s.

Sarah said her parents made the decision because they wanted to bring love and happiness to babies who were already part of the world instead of creating biological children of their own. It's that kind of spirit that has touched many in Richard's life, she said.

"A couple of years ago I was attending an event with his clients and one of them came up to me and told me how much my father had meant to her life and we both just started crying," Sarah said. "That's the kind of impact he has on people."

One of Richard's clients, **Leroy Hilliard**, said Richard is more than a social worker to him and his fellow clients. He said Richard has become a life mentor.

"Let me tell you, this man changed my life," Hilliard said. "Before I met him, I was at the very bottom, as low as you can go. I never thought anyone could believe in me because I didn't believe in myself. But he saw something in me, and he lifted me up."

"I wish there were 200 million other Richards out there. If there were, the world would be a lot better place."

**"I never thought anyone could believe in me because I didn't believe in myself. But he saw something in me, and he lifted me up."**

- *Leroy Hilliard*  
Client of Richard Smith

**AT RIGHT:**

TOP: Richard receiving training as a young cadet in the U.S. Coast Guard.

BOTTOM: Richard poses with colleagues in front of the Waterbury Hospital tent at a recent Relay for Life cancer fundraiser in Cheshire.



**“Richard gives of himself 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, yet he does it in a way that never calls attention to himself. That is the essence of humanitarianism.”**

*-Steven Schneider, MD,  
Chief Medical Officer of Waterbury Hospital*

often takes the group to Boston or other locales to explore new subjects to photograph – all on his own time.


Richard’s contributions to Waterbury Hospital go beyond his work with his clients. Dr. Schneider said that, for years, Richard woke up in the pre-dawn hours in the dead of winter to register for a prominent place for Waterbury Hospital’s promotional tent at the annual *Relay for Life* fundraiser for the American Cancer Society in Cheshire. Every year at the event, he said, he and others associated with the hospital would notice that the hospital’s tent was centrally and prominently located, yet no one knew how that occurred. Dr. Schneider said he later found out from a third party that Richard had arranged the tent several months earlier and had quietly organized the hospital’s participation in the event, which raises thousands of dollars every year for cancer research.

“Richard never came to us to let us know about it or to get time off or overtime or even just acknowledgement. He just did it because he thought it was the right thing to do,” Dr. Schneider said.

**Jane Cooper, MD**, a rheumatologist affiliated with the hospital who first met Richard at one of the *Relay for Life* events, said she was not surprised to learn that Richard had been named Humanitarian of the Year.

“I think it’s very well deserved because he really is a positive person who wants to make a positive change in the lives of his patients,” she said.

Richard said he hopes to continue working closely with his clients while also spending a lot of time with his granddaughter, 3-year-old Mya Smith. He continues to go to the gym every morning and still enjoys snow skiing in the winter and bicycling on Martha’s Vineyard during the summer.

“I’m living a very happy life,” he said. “I couldn’t ask for more.” 

**RICHARD SMITH**

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**Exploring New Possibilities**

When Waterbury Hospital received grant funding five years ago to expand its services for people infected with HIV, Richard immediately saw an opportunity to help people cope with a disease that can be devastating not only to their health but to their sense of self-worth.

One of the ways Richard has helped his clients turn their lives around is through photography. Two years ago, he created a groundbreaking program that encouraged clients to move past the misery of their disease by taking pictures of the world around them. In the process, many of the clients in his photography group have been able to overcome drug addictions and other self-destructive habits and have begun to live independently. One of his clients has even started taking photography classes at Naugatuck Valley Community College. The group has shown its photographs at many exhibits and displays across the region, and Richard




**Smoking on Hospital Property Could Be Grounds for Discipline, Termination**

With two months to go before Waterbury Hospital becomes smoke-free and tobacco-free, employees are reminded that anyone spotted smoking or using tobacco once the new policy goes into effect on November 20 could face disciplinary action up to and including termination.

As with violations of other hospital policies, employees who are caught violating the smoke and tobacco-free policy will be referred for counseling after their first offense. A second offense would lead to a verbal reprimand and a third offense would lead to a written reprimand.

Those who are spotted violating the policy a fourth time would face an unpaid suspension while a fifth offense would lead to termination.

Offenders would only face disciplinary action if they were spotted violating the policy by a member of the hospital security staff or supervisory staff. Employees will not face disciplinary action if an alleged offense is reported by a non-supervisory employee or visitor.

Under the new policy, employees and visitors will not be allowed to smoke or use tobacco anywhere on hospital property as of November 20, 2009. The smoking/tobacco ban will also include all parking lot areas and satellite medical buildings. 



## Hospital wins Bronze Achievement Award



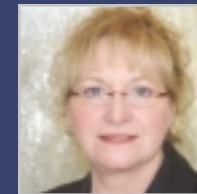
Waterbury Hospital has won a Bronze Achievement Award from the American Heart Association (AHA) for its high rate of success in treating heart failure patients. The award was given in a ceremony in the Bizzozero Conference Room, where an AHA representative praised the hospital for consistently complying with the highest levels of care for heart failure patients. The hospital joined the AHA program at the beginning of the year, and immediately was able to maintain the program's standards for 90 consecutive days – meriting the bronze award. The hospital would be eligible for a silver award if it maintains the standards for a year, and a gold award if the standards are maintained for two years. **Amanda McCulley**, Director of Quality Improvement Initiatives for the AHA, said Waterbury Hospital was able to meet the guidelines more quickly than many other hospitals that have taken part. She praised **Erin Roland, RN**, the hospital's Clinical Nurse Leader for the Telemetry Unit, for spearheading the hospital's success with the program. Pictured above at the award ceremony are, from left: Amanda McCulley; **Rachel Meehan, RN**, Nursing Director of Critical Care Services; **Jock D. Lawrason, MD**, Chairman of the Department of Medicine; Erin Roland, RN; **Kathy Benson, RN**, Assistant Director of ICU/CVU; and **Joey Cosgriff, MD**, Director of Critical Care. 🌐

## ON THE MOVE



**Brian Emerick**, the Executive Director of Access Rehab Centers, an affiliate of Waterbury Hospital, has been named Regional Coordinator

for the National Association of Rehabilitation Agencies (NARA). Emerick, who has been a member of the organization for five years, will now be responsible for coordinating the organization's activities throughout the Northeast region of the country. NARA represents more than 80 rehabilitation agencies across the country, including Access Rehab Centers.



**Marie Martin, RN, BSN, MSM**, has been hired as the Interim Nursing Director of the Emergency Department. Martin has a wealth of

experience stepping in to serve as interim nursing leader in Critical Care and Emergency Departments across the country, serving most recently at a hospital in Maine. She earned her nursing degree at Emmanuel College in Boston and now lives in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., with her husband and family.



**Michelle Miranda, RN**, has been hired as the new Assistant Director of the Telemetry Unit. Miranda joins Waterbury Hospital after serving for many years at Charlotte

Hungerford Hospital. She earned her nursing degree at Western Connecticut State University and now lives in New Milford with her husband. She has two grown children.



## Central Sterile Processing Employees Give a Boost to Troops

The Central Sterile Processing Department at Waterbury Hospital has made a positive impact on some of the U.S. troops stationed in Iraq. **Debby Gursky**, a technician in the department, arranged to have employees put together a care package for her son, Air Force Staff Sergeant **David Gursky, Jr.**, who was stationed in Iraq earlier this year. The care package, which consisted of items such as tea bags, snacks and toiletry articles, was warmly welcomed by David Gursky and the other men and women in his unit with whom he generously shared the items. As an acknowledgement for the gifts, Staff Sergeant Gursky was able to arrange to have an American flag flown on a combat mission in honor of the Central Sterile Processing Department at Waterbury Hospital. The flag was flown on a mission by the 46th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron on March 19 aboard an MQ-1B Predator, Tail 3144, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On March 29, the flag was again flown in recognition of the Central Sterile Processing Department, this time aboard a fighter aircraft, the F-16 Viper, on a combat mission by the 332nd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron. On May 3, the flag was once more flown over the Joint Base Balad, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom by the 727th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron. Afterwards, the flag and accompanying certificates were presented to the Central Sterile Processing Department. Shown in the photo above, from left to right, are: Back row, Central Sterile Processing employees **Jane Cammilletti**, **Donna Rimbochi**, **Marie Hotchkiss**, **Angela Santopietro**, **Tashanna Lawrence**, **Debby Gursky**, **Brigitte Schuerlein**, **Mary Stankus**, **Dena Carpentier**, **Patti Klein**. Front row, Staff Sergeant **David Gursky, Jr.**, **Joan Nolan** and Senior Airman **Sarah Leeper**. Those not pictured in the photo include Central Sterile Processing employees **Maria Bastos**, **Lina Mucciacciaro**, **Sue Sargunas**, **Keith Taylor** and **Evelyn Torres**. 🌐

## UPDATE

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