



DE SOUZA NURSE - Wingham nurse Kathy Blake, far right, is congratulated on achieving the de Souza Nurse designation by Wingham and District Hospital CEO Karl Ellis, far left, and Dr. Mary Jane Esplen, centre, executive director of the de Souza Institute.

Pauline Kerr photo

Kathy Blake honoured with de Souza Nurse designation

By Pauline Kerr
ADVANCE TIMES EDITOR

If you are battling cancer, or have a loved one who is, Registered Nurse Kathy Blake is the kind of nurse you want. Caring, dedicated and an expert in her field, Blake is one of only 20 nurses in the province, and the only one in Huron County, to have earned the de Souza Nurse designation.

She was honoured Friday during a reception in the Terrace Room at Wingham and District Hospital. In attendance were friends and family, her co-workers at the hospital, and Dr. Mary Jane Esplen, executive director of the de Souza Institute in Toronto.

The de Souza Nurse designation is the highest designation in cancer care nursing excellence. Fashioned after Great Britain's Macmillan Nurse Specialists, de Souza nurses must complete extensive course work as well as a clinical fellowship.

Blake has been working on becoming a de Souza Nurse since 2010. Many of the courses were taken on-line.

Esplen said the de Souza Institute has made a concerted effort to ensure cancer patients in rural Ontario have access to the same specialized care as those in Toronto; Blake is a good example. "Patients deserve the highest quality of care and it shouldn't matter if you live in an urban, suburban, rural or remote area." Esplen continued, "Kathy is leading by example and making sure she has increased specialization in her knowledge and skills so that she is better able to serve her patients in... Huron County.

Esplen noted she is well aware of the range of expertise demonstrated by those caring for cancer patients. The de Souza designation is aimed at creating an acknowledged standard of care in Ontario.

Blake, who has specialized in palliative care, is a nurse in the oncology department at the Wingham hospital and is a visiting nurse in the community. She is a member of the Huron Hospice Palliative Care committee.

Said Blake, "It's nice to bring excellence (in nursing care) to rural Ontario, so people get the same level of care as in Toronto."

Blake commented, "I have always wanted to be a nurse, and I have always wanted to be the best nurse that I can be for my patients and their families..."

She continued, "The de Souza Institute has given me an opportunity to further enhance my skills and confidence. I am grateful to be able to provide the best quality care by applying the advanced knowledge and expertise developed through de Souza Institute."

Karl Ellis, hospital CEO, congratulated Blake on her achievement "This speaks of the importance of...cancer treatment here in Wingham. On behalf of the community and the patients we serve, thank you for not just earning the de Souza Nurse designation, but for the care you provide every day." Established in 2008, de Souza Institute, in partnership with University Health Network, Cancer Care Ontario and funded by Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, provides ongoing educational support, professional development and career counseling to nurses caring for cancer patients and families.

The de Souza Institute is providing cancer care excellence by delivering innovative continuing education and mentorship programs, helping nurses to achieve national specialty certification, funding graduate scholarships to develop tomorrow's leaders, and supporting in self-care and career development. The de Souza Nurse Designation is the highest designation that a nurse can achieve. It is ideal for Registered Nurses who are certified in oncology, hospice palliative care, or pediatric oncology.