

## **Nightingale Events Honor Top Nurses and Offer Scholarships to Aspiring Ones**

Jim Cronin remembers his nurse mother getting home near midnight on Christmas Eve, then staying up until 4 a.m. making pies for the family celebration. Veronica Cronin, now 90, raised 10 children while working double shifts as a hospital, convalescent home and private duty nurse. But Jim Cronin, who is president of Dime Bank in Norwich, never remembers his mother complaining. Her great loves were and remain “her family, her faith and nursing.”

That’s why Cronin was eager to establish the Veronica Cronin Scholarship Fund to help nursing students at Three Rivers Community College. His family has generously established this scholarship to honor their mother’s dedication to nursing and to help alleviate the chronic shortage of nurses. This award was created to recognize students who have demonstrated ability and commitment to leadership among their peers. The scholarship is linked to the Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing, annual galas around the state that honor outstanding members of the profession.

When the Veronica Cronin Scholarship was first awarded at the eastern region banquet two years ago, the fund’s namesake also received a surprise Nightingale Award. “It was an evening you could not possibly script,” said Jim Cronin, describing his mother’s delight. Veronica Cronin’s career in nursing began in 1938, when she graduated from St. Francis Hospital’s school of nursing. With three classmates, she headed for Miami Beach to help survivors of a record hurricane that had devastated the east coast. The three women bonded over long hours and low pay before returning to Connecticut. They remain friends to this day. She continued to work until 1981, when her husband’s ill health meant that her nursing skills were most needed at home. When her son learned of the Nightingale Awards, he immediately thought they would provide an ideal occasion to develop a scholarship program. Many families endow scholarships in a loved one’s name after they die, but he wanted to start the fund in his mother’s lifetime so that she could know that new nurses were being helped in her name. Dianne Drobiak, Alexandria Moye, and William Phinney have all been recipients of the Cronin Scholarships during the past 2 years.

The Nightingale Awards are scheduled for May 4 this year and will honor 300 top Connecticut nurses. The aim of the program, now in its sixth year, has always been to celebrate nurses, not to raise funds for any of the sponsoring agencies. When the events began to turn a profit, organizers made a conscious decision to use money generated by the galas to support scholarships. All four regions of the state will be awarding nursing scholarships in conjunction with the Nightingale Awards this year.

For information about Nightingale nursing scholarships or the May 4 galas, call 860-444-1111 x304 in Eastern Connecticut; 203-276-3000 in Fairfield County; 877-722-7324 in Hartford; 203-777-5521 x1710 in New Haven.

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