

The Gentle Giant

They call him the “gentle giant,” and for more than his physical size. Michael Beard, a certified nursing assistant at Life Care Center of Scottsdale, has a heart of immense proportions in terms of his regard for others.

Don Giardina, Life Care’s president, and Cathy Murray, chief operating officer, led a delegation that honored Beard as the Whatever It Takes award winner for the Southwest Division in a ceremony in that facility on Wednesday morning. It was an energy-charged meeting room, and when Giardina called Beard’s name as the award recipient, the response was a cheering, standing ovation.

His recognition is symbolic, since today is Career National Nursing Assistants Day, kicking off a weeklong celebration honoring these men and women who are so critically important to Life Care Centers of America, and the entire health care profession.

Beard has been an associate of Life Care Center of Scottsdale since February 1994. He is always on time and has missed only four days of work in the past five years. He volunteers for extra shifts, and is the official trainer for all new nursing assistants on his shift. He is described by Barbara Brown, executive director, as the “voice of the people” when it comes to the associates there – a role model for all to emulate. “Across the years, he has received several letters of commendation from families and residents. His kind, empathetic ways are noticed by all that he cares for each day,” Brown said.

Operation Christmas Child is Beard’s personal passion. He is a huge supporter of the program, donating dollars and countless hours loading and packing cartons of boxes at the building’s collection center. This year, Beard won acclaim at the Rewarding Excellence banquet as the CNA of the Year for the Saguaro Region. When he was presented the \$500 cash award, without hesitation he turned and handed the dollars back to the executive director with the request that the funds be donated to Operation Christmas Child. Every holiday season, he takes on the role of Santa Claus for the patients, making certain everyone is treated to a personal visit from the jolly old elf.

Life Care is blessed with thousands of certified nursing assistants like Beard, who believe God has called them to a special ministry, and they surrender their talents in good stewardship to serving our residents. Their work is at the very heart of our mission, and the focal point of all that Life Care does, for they deliver the hands-on care day in and day out.

In all the ways that our centers will honor our CNAs – today and throughout their special week that ends on June 22 – we encourage our other associates who interact with them: Hug a CNA and tell him or her how much he or she is appreciated.

--Beecher Hunter