Every year, Pastoral Care recognizes – and celebrates – its staff, volunteers and students who contribute to the more than 30,000 yearly pastoral contacts. Like the ER, it provides coverage around the clock throughout the hospital and its chaplains respond to all of the approximately 2,500 trauma calls.

But every year, the department also honors people who reflect the best of what is offered to patients and to each other. These are the winners of the Spirit of Caring Awards. Receiving this year’s awards are Madeline Dawson and the staff who serve as HUP’s Ambassador team.

**Helping with a Kind Word and a Kind Gesture**

They help people find their way around the hospital. They coordinate transport to outpatient departments. They answer tons of questions. But members of HUP’s Ambassador team frequently go far beyond these everyday responsibilities.

These unsung heroes often help patients and families deal with difficult issues. They listen. They comfort. And, when needed, they provide hugs. “They minister to the spirit of people with a kind word and a kind gesture,” said Denise Statham, administrative chaplain of Pastoral Care.

“They meet people as they are in good and bad times and they always are so welcoming,” said Jim Browning, coordinator of Clinical Pastoral Education. “I thank them for their loyalty and their sense of compassion.”

**An Ongoing Desire to Help Others**

Madeline Dawson has been a part of the pastoral care community at HUP — and throughout the Health System — for more than 20 years. Her desire to help patients started when her pastor asked her to visit some of their congregants who were inpatients at HUP … and it blossomed into a passion, often resulting in caring relationships and return visits from patients and their families.

In the early 1990s, when she worked in OB/GYN, Dawson received her initial training as a volunteer for the hospital’s hospice program. "Providing pastoral care to oncology patients and their families gave me an understanding of what ministry is about. They were my greatest teachers."
Shortly thereafter she and her sister, Johnnie, became part of the hospital's first volunteer pastoral visitors training program. In 1992, she entered HUP's part-time — and subsequently full-time — clinical pastoral education (CPE) program to learn about interfaith ministry, completing more than seven ‘units’ of clinical pastoral education. Each is the equivalent of 400 hours in providing direct patient care and learning the art of integrating interpersonal and professional skills.

Dawson soon became the staff chaplain for a variety of programs. As staff chaplain in the School of Nursing’s LIFE (Living Independently For Elders) program, she learned “what was truly important and meaningful in a life. I learned to view my life from a totally different perspective.”

During this time, she completed a masters in Human Services at Lincoln University, graduating with honors. “I was driven by my sincere desire to be there for those who are suffering and in pain.”

Although Dawson retired from HUP in 2009, she continues to serve as an adjunct chaplain, instructor and co-facilitator for the annual Gospelrama event. She’s also hoping to start a community-based intervention program for women and their children who have been directly impacted by domestic violence.

Reminding Al Black, COO of the hospital, of the gospel song, “This Little Light of Mine,” he said, “I thank Madeline for letting her light shine on all our patients and visitors who come to HUP.”