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News

Phoenixville's Kontra Wins Cherokee Award

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By Dennis J. Wright
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PHOENIXVILLE — Jesse Kontra of The Clinic was honored with the Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award during The Clinic's Eighth Anniversary Dinner at the Kimberton Inn Thursday evening.

Executive Director Kryz Sipple and medical director Dr. Lorna Stuart presented Kontra with the award, as he was given a standing ovation in his honor.

"Jesse puts his whole heart into his volunteer work at The Clinic," Sipple said. "We're incredibly lucky to have him. He's one of the most caring and compassionate people I know, and this award is well-deserved."

As a certified procurement transplant coordinator and emergency medical technician, Kontra has dedicated his life to providing compassionate care to others.

His compassion extends to helping the less fortunate by volunteering several days a week at The Clinic, a nonprofit serving the uninsured.

For his selfless service to his community, Kontra is one of just four recipients nationwide being honored with the Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award.

"I had no clue I was getting this award," Kontra said. "There was a lot of back and forth about it. There was some talk around The Clinic. I was totally taken by surprise."

Along those congratulating Kontra Thursday evening was his mother, Elma Kontra, and two sisters, Georgia Kontra and Amanda Wright.

"It was a nice surprise to see my family here," he said. "This is the first major award I've won. I like to care for patients that other people won't. It is what I do."

Ironically enough, Kontra was actually put into action as a dinner attendee fell ill, and he rushed over to attend to the fallen man.

"Lorna said I think someone passed out," he said. "I went over to take care of him, but I was also told I couldn't go anywhere."

Kontra said he found out that he was nominated for the award by Debbie Shupp, director of development at The Clinic.

"Jesse has an extremely demanding full-time job, yet finds the time to volunteer with us," Shupp said. "In 2009 alone, Jesse

volunteered more than 400 hours, and with his help our physicians were able to treat and impact the lives of many of our vulnerable patients.”

In fact, with Kontra's help, The Clinic provided medical services to more than 11,000 patients last year. Many of these patients are extremely ill, often with chronic conditions, yet they have not been to a doctor in some time due to financial reasons.

“Jesse Kontra's dedication to providing care to those who need healthcare, but have issues accessing it, demonstrates a tremendous personal commitment to making life better for his fellow man,” said Wendell Mobley, who directs Cherokee Uniforms' charitable and scholarship programs. “He is living proof of the life-changing difference that one compassionate and willing healthcare practitioner can make.”

The Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award is granted by Cherokee Uniforms as a way of recognizing the caring work of nurses and other non-physician healthcare professionals, who provide exceptional service, sacrifice and innovation, while positively impacting others' lives.

This is the eighth year the leading designer and manufacturer of healthcare apparel has honored inspirational caregivers.

As the Grand Prize Winner, Kontra receives an all-expense-paid Caribbean cruise for two; a wardrobe featuring the best of Cherokee Uniforms and Cherokee Footwear worth more than \$1,000; a \$500 donation in his name to the DAISY (Diseases Attacking the Immune System) Foundation; a Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award trophy; a 14K gold-plated commemorative pin; and a year's subscription to Scrubs, the nation's first lifestyle magazine for nurses.

“Looks like I'm going to need a big boat with everyone wanting to go with me on the cruise,” he said laughingly.

Kontra said that he is driven by the sense that he is making a difference in patients' lives.

“Every day people come into our clinic, we patch them up and send them on their way,” he said. “These days can be exhausting, but that exhaustion is always overridden by the sense that we are making a difference in the lives of people who need our help the most.”

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