

**Bayhealth Medical Center**  
**Kent General Hospital DAISY AWARD 2009**

**Nicola Knaupe, BSN, RN** – This is a story of a nurse named Nicola and a family in crisis.

It was the early hours of March 2nd, 2009 during a snow storm when the Emergency Department received an ambulance transporting an elderly couple who were involved in a house fire. Married for nearly 55 years and the husband battling cancer, the couple had lost everything, including their home. Nicola Knaupe, RN was assigned to provide their care and was truly touched and inspired by the fact that their spirits remained positive in light of their dim situation. Nicola felt her heart breaks as the husband told her how physically good he had felt when trying to get his wife out of the burning house. While wiping the black soot from their pill bottles she overheard him say to his wife, “we have been married for 55 years and have never been homeless until tonight”.

It was at that moment that Nicola decided she wanted to begin a collection for them. Within 10 minutes the staff of the Emergency Department had donated \$100 dollars. The next moment an envelope arrived from the ICU containing \$60 dollars and a message “with love”, a nurse on one of the medical surgical units handed over the entire contents of her purse, and multiple other in-patient units gave donations willingly. Upon Nicola’s return to the Emergency Department, there was an additional \$200 dollars waiting, bringing the total to over \$500 dollars donated.

Shortly after her return to the Emergency Department, Nicola was informed that the husband would require intubation and transfer to Crozer Burn Center due to lung damage as a result of smoke inhalation. Nicola went to the husband’s bedside and gave him the money saying “just a little something from the staff at Bayhealth to get you through the next few days”. The tears in the eyes of the couple said it all.

As Nicola was preparing the patient for intubation, he asked her to please make sure his wife got to a family member safely. She promised him she would. With the snow storm in full force, obtaining transportation became a problem. Nicola contacted the Delaware State Police, explained the situation, and was told they would be happy to assist. She then found clean, dry clothing to dress the wife and provided some small toiletries to take with her. The State Police later arrived in an SUV and, giving her a big hub, Nicola sent her to a family home some miles away.

Nicola returned to the husband’s bedside and spoke his name. He turned his head, opened his eyes, and looked at her. She saw the question in his eyes and said, “Your wife has left safely to go to your family”. He nodded his head and with a tear running down his cheek, closed his eyes.

Nicola’s position as an RN in the Emergency Department is very challenging and demanding, and at times physically and emotionally draining. To provide advanced life support measures to a victim in need while never forgetting the ‘human’ and emotional needs of individuals in crisis makes her an exemplary model of a true nursing professional at all levels. We are extremely fortunate to have her as part of our Emergency Department team.