

## **A LABOR OF LOVE –JOAN WHITE, RN, GOES THE EXTRA MILE FOR PATIENTS**

ROME (April 2004) -- You may have heard the expression that *babies jump start peoples' hearts*. In the case of Rome Memorial Hospital Maternity Nurse Joan White, RN, that is undoubtedly true.

Not only has Joan been a labor and delivery nurse for over 33 years, but for all of the major holidays – including Easter, Valentine's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Halloween – she sews baby quilts with the holiday's motif to give to moms for their newborns. It is definitely a labor of love.

From Good Friday to Easter Sunday, White handed out five quilts to moms and their newborns at the hospital. The pastel-colored quilts were made of fabric adorned with bunny rabbits, Easter eggs and other spring motifs.

"I enjoy sewing," she said. "Sewing in the evenings keeps me busy and I find the cutest material and I just want to share it," she added. "I can only make so many blankets for my grandchildren," she said with a bright smile on her face.

"I want Rome Memorial Hospital to be unique and I don't think any other hospital sews blankets for the newborn babies on holidays like we do," said White.

This is vintage Joan White -- to go a step beyond what's asked of her and to find joy in the process. Her colleagues have taken notice. In 2003, Joan was named Clinical Employee of the Year, an award that is the result of peer voting. There are approximately 1,000 employees at the hospital.

White estimates that she has helped bring at least 2,500 babies into the world since she joined Rome Memorial Hospital in June 1970. There isn't a day that goes by where she doesn't have someone stop her, thank her or acknowledge her when she walks through the mall, goes to the bank or goes to the store.

White says she receives much joy from giving the quilts to moms and their newborns. "They have such a look of surprise and gratefulness that they received the blanket," she said. "They're amused that their baby happened to deliver on a particular holiday."

Maternity Department Nurse Manager Cathy Destito, RN, said "Joan is a very competent labor and delivery nurse. She anticipates patients' needs before they know they have them. She has been a loyal employee for 30 years – she loves her job and it shows. With Joan, the patient always comes first!"

During the last decade, Rome Memorial Hospital's Maternity Department delivered approximately 600 babies a year and in 2003, they delivered 655 babies. The department is run by 32 full-time, part-time and per diem employees.

Joan's motto is "life is too short to be unhappy." Her daily goal, she said, is to make at least "one person I come into contact with laugh." In the Maternity Department, there is a sign that graces the wall that says "Blessed are those who can laugh at themselves, for they shall never cease to be amused." Of course, Joan is the one who put up the sign.

But even though Joan displays lightheartedness and happiness, she has weathered some storms in life. She lost her spouse at a young age to cancer, has lost both parents, and as a young mother of four, worked full-time to sustain her family. "God only gives you as much as you can handle," she said. "In spite of everything, I feel very fortunate in my life."

It's that attitude that gives Joan White a spirit of giving at holidays and every day.