

RUBY AWARD NOMINEE: FLORENCE JAMESON, M.D.

SUBMITTED BY SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF GREATER LAS VEGAS

Once in a rare while, someone accomplishes the nearly impossible. Dr. Florence Jameson is that someone. Dr. Jameson has been practicing medicine in obstetrics and gynecology for thirty years since her graduation in the top 25% from UCLA in 1981. Obviously, her professional focus has been on women and their families. Her social focus has also been on the mental, physical, and economic status of women. In recent years, Dr. Jameson has been acutely aware of the tragic outcomes of poverty and lack of health insurance. While maintaining her own very busy medical practice and Women's Wellness Center, she has worked tirelessly in the Las Vegas community to found Volunteers in Medicine of Southern Nevada; to develop partnerships within the medical, business, and political circles; and to open the first Volunteers in Medicine of Southern Nevada Clinic.

When Florence Jameson was a little girl, one of five children being raised by her single mother, there was enough money to buy food and pay the rent; but when the children became sick enough to need a doctor, there was no money for health care. However, there was a kind and generous family doctor who took care of them without expecting payment. Because of this, Florence made a youthful promise to God that someday she would find a way to give back. That youthful promise became an adult commitment which is being manifested in a health clinic which is not only free, but also welcoming and friendly. So far there is only one VMSN clinic in Las Vegas, but to Florence Jameson this is just the first of many.

The money was raised to buy the building and renovate it. The money for the first six months of operation is in the bank. A recent fundraiser brought more support. It will cost about \$350,000 to operate the clinic for a year. That is about six million dollars less than a typical clinic costs to operate. How did she do it? This clinic is staffed daily by a couple of volunteer doctors, volunteer nursing staff, a volunteer pharmacist, and medical students. Daily operations are handled by a paid staff of five or six. Several local hospitals have offered to provide free diagnostics and X-rays.

Interestingly, the neighborhood where the clinic is established was very reluctant to have a free clinic nearby, fearing that there would be large crowds, increased traffic, and an influx of homeless individuals. As a result, the County Commission established some extremely stringent conditions for operating the clinic. A maximum of 20 patients per day was set, and qualifications for using the clinic require the patients to prove their residency, their income, and to abide by other restriction. Undaunted, Dr. Jameson looks forward to establishing a second in the downtown area with fewer regulations and more patients.

In the meantime, with the help of Sunrise Hospital, the clinic is credentialing each of its volunteer doctors and nurses. Fundraising is an ongoing process. Partnerships with pharmaceutical companies and medical supply houses are keeping costs contained for both the clinic and the patients. For all of this and more, Dr. Jameson was honored this past year with the Patients' Choice Award and named the 2010 Vegas' Best Innovator.

In a recent newsletter, Dr. Jameson wrote, "I have a dream that one day, and that day is now, we will all rise up and extend a helping hand to our neighbors in need....I have a dream that our children will be immunized, that those with hypertension will have much needed medications,...that diabetics will not go into a needless coma, that our asthmatics will have the breath of life....I have a dream that just because someone in Nevada is without a job or without friends, without health insurance, without welfare that they will have a medical home at VMSN to minister to their medical, dental, and mental health care needs."

This is a woman who has accomplished the nearly impossible and continues to do even more every day. Florence Jameson is indeed a Ruby in the crown of Nevada women, and Soroptimist International of Greater Las Vegas is honored to nominate her for the Ruby award.