



BOB DOBENS

Alice Macomber, the 2011 winner of the "Non-Physicians Excellence in Health Care" award, stands next to Bob Brunjes, president of Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers.

## **2012 Health Care Champions Awards recognize those who make a difference**

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STUART —I was six years old, and I had a cavity. Everything about the dentist's office made me sick — the smell of the gloves, the tiny rooms, bright lights — even the feel of the paste that was smeared on my teeth. I only wanted to skip to the end for my new toothbrush and floss set.

Unfortunately, I had to face the most horrifying experience of my six-year-old life — the drill and tooth numbing injection. I don't recall every detail of the visit, but I remember a group of dental assistants surrounding me as I did what normal six-year-old girls do when they have to get a shot in their gums.

The dentist had to call in about four dental assistants to help calm me down. Somewhere among all of the commotion I remember a hand holding mine, and a gentle voice that pierced through all other sounds of sedation.

I was able to calm down just enough for the dentist to do what he needed to do, and I left with a filling, my new toothbrush and an assurance that I would never get a cavity again.

As traumatic as I thought that visit was, when I think about The Health Care Champions Awards, I don't think about that difficult visit. I think about the hand that squeezed mine.

Whether you're six or 60, we've all been there — the dreaded doctor's appointment. Fear of cold appliances, bad news and a disheveled doctor plague us right up until the moment we sit on the exam table. Many of us have become immune to the regular check-ups and occasional scoldings from our family doctor.

But every once in a while, we come across that one person who makes our visit more bearable. The 2012 Health Care Champions Awards wants to honor those whose service comes from the heart, whether it's the front desk receptionist who'd be happy to help, the nurse whose care reminds you of your mother's, or the organization that supported a cause that was important to you.

The Health Care Champions awards honor those committed to helping and healing by creating a platform to recognize some of the Treasure Coast's "undercover" heroes.

Each year, nominations are submitted from the community and the finalists are chosen by a panel six distinguished judges, made up of Treasure Coast's healthcare leaders.

Among them is Alice Macomber, a nursing vet who dedicates her time to mentoring and educating today's youth through the Medical Assisting Program at Keiser University.

After losing her oldest son to AIDs complications in 1997, Macomber has led a life of service to everyone around her. Last year Macomber was honored at the Health Care Champions luncheon with the Non-Physicians Excellence in Health Care award and she continues to be an advocate for HIV/AIDS awareness.

"Life is all about loving, sharing and always giving your very best to do good," she said.

Macomber will be joined by five other healthcare leaders at the judge's luncheon on Aug. 22 to vote on this year's finalists.

On Sept. 27, citizens from around the Treasure Coast will honor the finalists at the Port St. Lucie Civic Center and eight will receive awards.

The award categories cover all aspects of the health care field, from physicians to non-physicians; organizations and individuals.

Nominations will close Aug. 14.