



## Carmen Johnson Nurse of the Year

**T**he first thing you experience when you come in contact with Carmen Johnson is humility. And it is the same feeling she carries of her 'Nurse of the Year' title. "I feel humbled," she said when asked about her achievement. I think my personality makes me humble, and I see it as a blessing from God," she said.

Small in stature she is huge in commitment to her duties as a nurse.

The Nurses Association of Jamaica (NAJ) awarded Miss Johnson the title of Nurse of the Year out of a group of other nurses from across the island. She was the candidate who represented St. Ann. "Regional groups chose nominees to enter the competition. They questioned us in 10 areas which included Nursing, Ethics and Law, General Knowledge (International and National) and Community Knowledge," she said. "I went partially prepared and thought the questions would be harder, but it was o.k. After the competition,

*She said that those 14 years have been fulfilling, but things have become more challenging now. "The salary may not be good, but you experience joy. At first it was easy; now, the difficulty is due to the socioeconomic status of the country. There are few facilities, and we try to care, but we can't care as much as we want to because of those low facilities. And now, people know more of what they should be getting for health care, so they expect more, but they can't get it," she said.*

they picked the top three candidates, which I became a part of, and three of us had to prepare speeches for the Awards Ceremony," she explained. She said her win overwhelmed her. "When they announced the second and first runners-up, I could figure that I was the winner. I felt teary eyed and happy. Also, the reception of the St. Ann community was awesome and they're very proud of me. I'm proud of myself too," she said.

Miss Johnson hails from Clarendon and is the eighth of 10 children, and said she has lived life to the fullest. "I lived life as a child growing up, meaning, I wasn't bogged down with problems. We had to go to church and my parents saw education as very important. Growing up with so many people helped with my interaction with people around me," she said. She attended Miss Neita's Basic School in Aenon Town and Aenon Town All Age. She then went to Knox College and Knox Community College. She said her move to St. Ann was due to her Director sending her to St. Ann after doing her internship at the Kingston Public Hospital.

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Nurse of the Year:  
Carmen Johnson, Nurse of the Year for 2004, proudly poses with her sash and trophy.




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**Sister Carmen Johnson**  
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# Nurse of the Year

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"Nursing was never a choice for me, but in the community where I grew up, I use to hang



**Nurse Carmen Johnson**

around older people and bathe and take care of them. Even men in the community use to say I was going to be a nurse. Whenever I passed them, they used to say "Nurse, Nurse", and I would say, "What do you m e a n 'nurse'? They would then say, 'Yes, you are going to be a nurse,'" she said. While she was at Knox, she wanted to do Sociology at The University of the West Indies. However, it seemed that she was destined to be a nurse. The premonitions of the men in h e r community

were right, as she has been a Registered Nurse and a Registered Midwife for 14 years.

This is when a nurse will wear many hats; psychologist, teacher, social worker, pastor, among others. "When the patients are in our care, it is our responsibility to see to not only their physical needs, but also their mental and emotional needs," she said. There are times when patients are taken into the hospital and left there without anyone ever trying to come back for them. "At this point, their self esteem starts to deteriorate and we have to be there for them. We have to become the psychiatrist or a pastor. I tell them that they belong to someone, and when they die, someone will cry for them," she said. She also explains that helping someone who is sick feel better about themselves mentally, will help the physical healing immensely.

"Nursing is not a clean job. If you don't love nursing, and are just in it for the money, you won't get into it. When somebody looks like they've always been on the streets, you have to take care of them. You can't be afraid to get your hands dirty. Getting up close with the patient is a must," she said.

But with all those challenges, as a devoted mother, she finds time for her children who are of the utmost importance to her. "I am very much involved in the NAJ and when I have to go to meetings, I take them along with me. I always help them with homework and I find time to play with them, even if it's 11 o'clock at night," she said. Her children are very proud of her. In fact, her son says that the trophy she got for Nurse of the Year is his, because "he carried it."

Nurse Johnson's encouragement to anyone who wants to go into nursing is this, Nursing is a rounded profession. If there is anything else you want to do in life, nursing can prepare you for it. Next thing, you have to love it. It doesn't pay a lot of money, but you have to give of yourself. You have to be ready to do hard work," she said.