

The ability to inspire, motivate, be compassionate; the capacity to be well-loved and respected among students — these are qualities not often taught in medical school, but these are some of the qualities that distinguish alums.



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA AWARD: DR. ZITA SURPRENANT

These also are some of the traits attributed to Dr. Zita Surprenant, the 2004 recipient of the SIU School of Medicine Distinguished Alumna Award.

Dr. Surprenant, class of '81, is an Emergency Medicine and Occupational Medicine physician and assistant clinical professor in the Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City. She also has a master's degree in public health, with a concentration in occupational and environmental health and a research emphasis on workplace and family violence.

Going above and beyond the typical parameters of medical care, Dr. Surprenant is acclaimed as a national leader in domestic violence. It was during her early years in the emergency department when she first began questioning the role of health care to address family violence. "I saw so many battered adults and children who were victims of child abuse and sexual assault," she says. "It was a revolving door of physical and psychological injuries."

Teaching, program development and community service are among Dr. Surprenant's successes. She is especially noted for her ability to develop hospital-based screening programs. Her research interests include developing curricula and training for violence prevention for health-care providers and first responders.

"It's rewarding because doctors and nurses are grateful for the training and guidance," she says.

She is noted for her work with several organizations in Kansas City, Mo., proposing plans to foundations and writing and receiving grants for hospital-based domestic vio-

lence advocacy programs. She also is program advisor to numerous shelters. One nominator called her "the voice of the program to funders." Dr. Surprenant is a representative to the AMA's National Council on Abuse and Violence and the Education Committee on Abuse and Violence. She also develops screening and management protocols and health care-based advocacy for victims of domestic violence. She has authored or co-authored numerous publications and scientific presentations.

"Dr. Surprenant teaches that the role of the physician goes well beyond the clinical environment, to the community," wrote nominator M. Denise Dowd, M.D., M.P.H., of Children's Mercy Hospitals & Clinics in Kansas City, Mo.

Ellen Taliaferro, M.D., FACEP, of the Family Violence Center, San Diego, California wrote: "Even more impressive than Dr. Surprenant's list of outstanding achievements is her quiet team building and passionate leadership in the field of violence prevention in health care. Her good cheer and tireless enthusiasm serve as an example for all who work to prevent the devastating healthcare effects of family violence."

For the new graduates, Dr. Surprenant has these words: "No matter what area interests you, you have a vital role to play. If you see something in the system that needs to be addressed, not only can you give good, compassionate care, but you can advocate for change." ■

*For more information, contact Dr. Surprenant at Zsurpren@kumc.edu.
To nominate alumni for this award, contact John Record at 217-545-5770 or jrecord@siumed.edu.*