

**A'Hern Smith** retired in 2012 after a 52-year career spanning hospice care, public health nursing and education. She holds a Doctorate in Nursing Science degree from Boston University, a Master of Science in Nursing degree from Russell Sage College in Troy, New York and her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin.

A'Hern Smith moved to New Mexico in 1989 to start a freestanding hospice, but quickly realized there was a gap between the culturally diverse population of the state and the nurses who cared for them. She became a founding member of NMDOH CLAS (Cultural and Linguistic Access to Services), which works to reduce health inequalities and promotes cultural understanding, and in 2007 submitted an award-winning white paper on Disparities in Public Health Nursing. Presently, she is on the NM Diversity Committee that was established by NMNA and a grant from Con Alma.

During her 15-year tenure as a Director of Nursing Service, A'Hern Smith served as acting chief nurse for four years as well as director of nursing service, directing six public health offices in three counties. In that role she led the Families First project, increased the availability of immunizations for children and conducted research to help increase salaries for public health nurses to make them competitive with those in surrounding states. She was designated as the bill analyst for all bills submitted to the legislature annual that related to nursing and health and authored a bill to allow public health nurses to return to work after 3 months from retirement instead of waiting 3 years. She wrote curriculum for Quality Leadership Program and wrote the first nurse managers manual.

While being Director of Nursing she was told she was the first public health nurse leader to serve on Nurse Practice Committee and later she served on the NM Nursing Education Committee. She was a driving force in establishing a committee to make NM one of the first states that became part of the compact states in the US.

A'Hern Smith also taught nursing in the bachelor's and master's degree programs for the University of Phoenix, and for Grand Canyon University, where she encouraged many of her colleagues to pursue advanced degrees. A number of students have commented that the courses she taught, including Ethics 101 and Jean Watson's Caring Theory, made a profound difference in their professional careers.

In addition, A'Hern Smith was one of the founders of the New Mexico Center for Nursing Excellence and served as the first president of the board of directors of the organization. She was recently elected as the first non-Native American to the Board of Directors of the New Mexico Native American Indian Nurses Association. She has gathered over \$250,000 in fundraising and grants for nursing in the past 13 years. She is currently the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee for the CEC LPN School of Nursing.

Her awards are numerous and include the March of Dimes Community Health Nurse in 2003, New Mexico Center for Nursing Excellence Distinguished Nurse of the Year in 2010; U.S. Public Health Service U.S. Assistant Surgeon General Chief Nurse Award in University of Phoenix Nursing Faculty of the Year Award in 2001.

In her retirement she serves on the following boards as VP of Education for the Albuquerque Santa Fe Opera Guild, Albuquerque International Association, VP Summit Park Neighborhood Association, NMNA Foundation and UNM OSHER curriculum committee, Board of Nursing Nurse Practice Advisory Committee, NMEC Diversity Committee and a Docent at the National Hispanic Culture Center.

“Fran A'Hern Smith is the consummate professional, who is both a legend and an inspiration to many nurses in the state of New Mexico. She has a strong commitment to nursing, and we are so fortunate to have her as our mentor, role model and advocate,” according to Kim McKinley and Deborah Walker, who nominated her for the honor.