



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2017

Contact: Elizabeth Hamilton
Manager, Communications
(203) 294-7216
hamilton@chime.org

**CHA to Recognize The William W. Backus Hospital's Shanon Pereira, RN,
as a Healthcare Hero**

WALLINGFORD – At its 99th Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 14, 2017, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) will recognize Shanon Pereira, RN, The William W. Backus Hospital, as a 2017 Healthcare Hero. She was nominated for this award by Steve Coates.

As a child, Ms. Pereira remembers seeing TV footage of the poverty in Haiti and vowing that one day she would do something about it. Now a nurse in The William W. Backus Hospital's E3 Progressive Care Unit, Ms. Pereira and her husband spend their vacations on the impoverished island nation working in a mobile health clinic and bringing vital care to people who would normally go without.

"In Haiti, if you don't have money you don't get healthcare," Ms. Pereira says. "It's that simple."

Ms. Pereira and her husband began making annual medical missions to Haiti with the Groton Bible Chapel shortly after she became a nurse seven years ago. One week each year they team up with local Haitian doctors to provide mobile health services in remote parts of the country, giving health assessments and treating a wide range of conditions, ranging from the common cold to malaria. Ms. Pereira also makes education a key component of her time in Haiti, teaching patients about hand hygiene, reproductive health, and food safety.

The mobile medical team is also able to dispense medication thanks to contributions from companies back home. Ms. Pereira says something as simple as Tylenol—to which many residents have never had access—can make a world of difference.

"One man had a tumor [in his abdomen] that was so painful he couldn't even button his pants. He was in tears from the pain. We were able to take his pain away temporarily. That means so much," she says. The Pereiras have also helped raise funds to build a permanent clinic adjacent to their sister church in Haiti to provide follow-up and continuing care for those who need it after a visit to one of the mobile clinics.

Ms. Pereira says this type of work is why she became a nurse in the first place.

"Caring for and helping people when they are at their worst is at the heart of what [nurses] do. I want

to help people who can never, ever, pay me back. That's the rewarding part of this," she says. CHA's Healthcare Heroes award was developed in 2002 to celebrate the invaluable contributions of healthcare workers, both to their field and to the community at large. Now in its 16th year, the presentation of the Healthcare Heroes awards has become a highlight of CHA's Annual Meeting.

###

The Connecticut Hospital Association has been dedicated to serving Connecticut's hospitals since 1919. Through state and federal advocacy, CHA represents the interests of Connecticut's hospitals on key healthcare issues in the areas of quality and patient safety, access and coverage, workforce, public health, and hospital reimbursement.

