



ERNEST J. GRANT

RN, MSN

The Influencer

When Ernest Grant, who stands at 6 feet, 5 inches, dresses as “Sparky the Fire Dog,” preschoolers, kindergartners and first-graders pay attention. His lessons on fire safety and burn prevention are just one way he reaches out to the North Carolina community through his work as a burn nurse and nursing education clinician.

As a child, Ernest had aspirations of becoming a medical technologist. Because family funds were limited, his guidance counselor suggested he enroll in a one-year LPN course. After spending a few short years in the hospital environment, he knew he had found his calling. Working full time, he managed to put himself through nursing and graduate schools.

Today, even though he faces daily challenges in his work with patients suffering from severe burn injuries at the North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center, Ernest proclaims he has the best job in the world. And he’s been working at the center for 20 years.

“It’s challenging and rewarding to make a difference in someone’s life every day, even if it’s a transition from this life to the next,” said Ernest. “I read once that ‘nursing is the foundation of health care,’ and it truly is. We are there 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We’re the ones the family remembers. We’re making a difference.”

Ernest makes an impact in other ways, too. Following Sept. 11, 2001, he volunteered at a New York hospital to treat burn patients. He is involved in several church ministries and sings in an award-winning gospel choir. And recently, he became a mentor to an African American electrical engineer, who aspires to become a nurse.

For the future, Ernest, who loves books, education and politics, hopes to earn a law degree, and eventually develop health care policy. Now he is enjoying his most recent honors as *Nursing Spectrum* magazine’s 2002 Nurse of the Year and American Nurses Association’s Honorary Nurse Practitioner.

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