

**By SABRINA GARRETT**

*The Wilson Post*

FRANKLIN -- It is only appropriate, that in a state nicknamed "The Volunteer State," Tennessee's governor would host a Volunteer Stars Awards, remarked emcee and longtime NewsChannel 5 Anchor Jennifer Kraus at the ceremony held Monday night.

Although a previous engagement detained Gov. Bill Haslam from attending the fifth annual event at the Franklin Marriott, he prepared a video welcome for honorees and guests. "Some 1.2 million Tennessee volunteers fulfill needs that would otherwise go unmet," he said. "On behalf of all Tennesseans, I want to thank you. Tennessee is a better state because of what you do."

Since its beginning, the initiative has sought to recognize one outstanding adult and one youth volunteer from each of the state's 95 counties. Wilson County has had a presence at the event for the past two years, under the direction of Coordinator Ken Sweeney.

Sweeney, who was appointed by Wilson County Mayor Randall Hutto, led the committee that, after much review, selected Sherry's Run as Wilson County's adult honoree and Jessica Fults as the youth honoree.

Sherry's Run, an organization that benefits those affected by cancer, was represented at the awards ceremony by Executive Board members Tiffy Clemons, Tonyia Watson, Administrative Assistant Corrie Cluck, Tamara Lampsa and family members of the late Sherry Whitaker, her sister, Susan Hargis and father, Carney Patterson.

Although the Volunteer Stars Awards typically honors an individual, Watson said that the committee selected the Sherry's Run organization because "so many of the people who were nominated had listed Sherry's Run as their volunteer organization." Sherry's Run is a 5K Run/Walk event held each September in Lebanon.

Both Watson and Clemons believe that the overwhelming support for Sherry's Run is due to the fact that funds stay in Wilson County to help patients locally. "A lot of folks don't know that we assist patients with grocery shopping or buying prescriptions or paying their rent," Watson said. Lampsa said she hopes receiving a Volunteer Stars Award will increase awareness for their cause and hopefully get their name out to attract more sponsors in the future. "We are always seeking sponsors," she said.

"We are just really honored and want them to know how much we appreciate this," Clemons continued. In 2012, Sherry's Run raised an estimated \$300,000 – adding to their total of \$1 million since the organization began in 2004, when Sherry passed away following a year-long battle with colon cancer.

Youth honoree Fults was unable to attend the event but was recognized for her volunteer spirit that began at a very early age. For her 8th birthday, Fults hosted a fundraising event for the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt in honor of a young boy suffering from brain cancer. Instead of gifts for her, Fults requested that guests donate money to help the boy – resulting in a \$400 donation to the hospital.

Fults, now a senior at Wilson Central High School, has continued to give back to the community by volunteering to work at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation "Walk to Cure Diabetes," and the "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" walk.

Awards were presented by Miss Tennessee 2012 Chandler Lawson.

"The last thing that volunteers want is recognition – but I think it is important to hear thanks," said keynote speaker, Wendy Spencer, chief executive officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service. "Serving is so important – and it is important to hear why they are serving."

**PICTURED -- Wilson County Governor's Volunteer Stars Award adult recipient Sherry's Run was recognized at a ceremony held at the Franklin Marriott on Monday night. On hand to receive the award were members of the organization's Executive Board, from left, Susan Hargis, Tonyia Watson, Tiffy Clemons, Tamara Lampsa, Carney Patterson, father of the late Sherry Whitaker in whose honor Sherry's Run was founded; and Corrie Cluck.**

## **Volunteer Star Awards honors locals**

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