

Kathy England Thompson Hunt, MS, CNMT, FSNMMI-TS, 1954–2020

Kathy England Thompson Hunt passed away on Friday, July 3, 2020, at her home in Cordova, TN. Her career in nuclear medicine spanned 42 years of dedication to every aspect of the field. There are very few people who, during a lifetime, make a substantial impact on a specialty in medicine, but Kathy Hunt was one of them. Kathy's gentle presence and smile warmed everyone she met, but behind that smile was a classy, formidable, and intelligent woman.

Kathy earned her bachelor's degree in Biology from Lambuth University. She then received a certificate in nuclear medicine technology from Vanderbilt University in 1976 and a master's degree in leadership and policy studies from the University of Memphis in 1998.

Kathy had the invaluable experience of spending her entire nuclear medicine career at a single institution. Starting as a staff technologist for 2 years in the Baptist Memorial Hospital (BMH) nuclear medicine section, she then spent 2 years as the supervisor of the BMH nuclear pharmacy. This was followed by 13 years as the supervisor of the BMH nuclear medicine in vitro and radiobioassay lab, while also serving as a member of the faculty of the BMH School of Nuclear Medicine Technology.

In 1999, Kathy started an 8-year term as program director of the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certificate Program, with part of this time spent serving on the founding committee for the Baptist Memorial College of Health Sciences, developing policies and procedures that turned the certificate program into a baccalaureate institution. From 1998 until she retired in 2017, Kathy served as program chair and assistant professor of nuclear medicine technology in the Division of Allied Health. During this time, she also served for 2 years as the interim dean of the Division of Allied Health. Unselfishly volunteering her time, she received numerous appointments and served on numerous committees during her 42 years with Baptist. The Baptist College of Health Sciences honored her on her retirement by creating a nuclear medicine technology student scholarship in her name.

Kathy approached her contributions to nuclear medicine organizations with the same zeal as she devoted to Baptist. Her first leadership role was in 1990, as chair of student affairs for the Nuclear Medicine Technologists of Tennessee. She went on to serve as president of the West Tennessee Or-



ganization of Nuclear Medicine Technologists and on the executive board of the Nuclear Medicine Technologists of Tennessee.

Kathy joined the Society of Nuclear Medicine Technologist Section (SNMMI-TS), as well as its Southeastern Chapter, in 1981. In the chapter, she started as chair of academic affairs in 1993. After serving on several committees, Hunt became president of the chapter in 2006 while continuing to serve on the academic affairs committee.

Kathy was most active on the national level. For the SNMMI-TS, Kathy served on many committees but concentrated on those involved with advocacy and education. In 2008 she entered the SNMMI-TS executive leadership when she was elected secretary, and in 2010–2011 she served as president.

In 2011 the Southeastern Chapter of the SNMMI-TS presented Kathy with its distinguished service award. In 2012 she was awarded fellow status in the SNMMI-TS, and in 2015 she received the Robert Bower Award for Outstanding Dedication, by the Nuclear Medicine Technologists of Tennessee.

In recognition of her distinguished service to her chapter and to the specialty of nuclear medicine at the local, regional, and national levels, the Southeastern Chapter presented her with the Marshall Brucer Award in October 2019. This is the highest honor that the chapter can bestow on a member.

During her tenure as SNMMI-TS president, Kathy expanded educational offerings and was key to initiating the baccalaureate transition models for associate and certificate programs. During this time, the state technologist-advocacy-group team was also created, which has become a pillar in SNMMI-TS advocacy efforts. To recognize her accomplishments, in 2020 the SNMMI-TS executive board changed the name of the SNMMI-TS Outstanding Educator Award to the SNMMI-TS Kathy E. Thompson Hunt Outstanding Educator Award.

Kathy left an imprint on many hearts and minds and was a mentor to many people. On news of her passing, tributes from her nuclear medicine family came pouring in. For example, Annmarie Alessi (past TS president), said, "I am heartbroken and saddened to hear this news about my dear friend and mentor Kathy Thompson Hunt. During our year as president and president-elect, Kathy's graceful southern charm was the yin to my rough-around-the-edges New York yang. I will miss her deeply but will always keep our memories and the fun we had close to my heart. I smiled every time she said, 'Well bless her heart,' especially after she told me the true meaning of the



phrase! Nuclear medicine has lost an icon today, and heaven has gained a formidable angel.” Tony Sicignano (active NMT at chapter and national level), commented, “This is so sad.

Kathy was such a special person and a gracious lady.” David Gilmore (past TS president), offered, “Like others, I too am deeply heartbroken. Kathy was a one-of-a-kind. She was such a great friend and one of the very first educators that welcomed me into my new role of teaching. I learned so much from Kathy, who was the model educator. I am so thankful that I got to spend so many days and hours working and laughing with her—from conference calls to the annual meetings. She truly left an imprint in my heart and mind that will never be forgotten. Yes, we have lost a great technologist, but she leaves a tremendous legacy for us all. Hopefully we can all be reminded of the importance of being kind to one another and always having a smile to brighten someone’s day—that is what Kathy did for us all.” Finally, Ben Greenspan (past SNMMI president), said, “She was an amazing woman, and I am pleased that she was able to receive the Marshall Brucer Award in person at our 2019 annual Southeastern Chapter meeting.”

James Wirrell, BS, MS, CNMT, FSNMMI-TS, 1939–2020

James Wirrell, SNMMI-TS president from 1985 to 1986, passed away on September 18, 2020.

Jim served in the Marine Corps for the first 10 years of his working life. After his discharge, Jim trained in radiologic and nuclear medicine technology and then continued his education, acquiring his baccalaureate and master’s degrees.

Jim was a long-time member of the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging. He served in active leadership roles in the New England Chapter of the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Technologist Section, including serving as that chapter’s president in



1978–1979. When Jim accepted the position of educational director of the nuclear medicine school at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis (later associated with Ball State University), he transferred that professional passion to the Central Chapter, where he once again served in multiple leadership positions, including serving as president of that chapter in 1982–1983.

As the educational director of the nuclear medicine program at Methodist Hospital, Jim was dedicated to the success of his students. He was known to invite students with academic problems to his home to provide them with academic support whenever necessary and served as a mentor to many technologists who were beginning their careers in the

