

Montco Health Advocacy Company Can't Find Entrepreneurial Nurses to Take its Money

By John George

A nurse-owned patient advocacy services company in Montgomery County has a vexing problem.

Flourtown-based Guardian Nurses has money it wants to award to nurses trying to launch their own health care businesses, but it is having trouble finding any takers.

The 21-year-old company said it has not received any qualified applications during the past two years for its Entrepreneurial Award, part of The Nightingale Awards of Pennsylvania.

Betty Long, the founder and CEO of Guardian Nurses, said they are offering up the \$5,000 prize once again this year.

Long, current president of the board of trustees for The Nightingale Awards, said she provided \$40,000 three years ago to fund an annual award for entrepreneurial nurses.

Her motivation for doing so was the cash award she won more than two decades ago in a business competition from a Mount Airy business development organization when she was starting Guardian Nurses to help people navigate the complexities of the health care delivery system.

"I won \$500 and remember thinking, 'This is great,'" Long said.

To be eligible for the [\\$5,000 Guardian Nurses Entrepreneurial Award](#), applicants must be the founder of an existing business that is no more than two years old or be in the midst of starting their own business. Eligible businesses include, but are not limited to, those developing and selling a home health product or medical device, or offering independent nursing services such as patient care, nursing education, home health or consulting services.

"It takes drive and determination to start your own business," Long said. "We want to encourage and support our fellow nurses in their entrepreneurial endeavors."

No applications were made for the award in 2022 — something Long attributed to the country in general and



Guardian Nurses founder and CEO Betty Long

health care workers in particular dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Last year, the Nightingale Awards received just one application for the Guardian Nurses Entrepreneurial Award. That applicant, Long said, was not eligible because her company had been in business for 10 years.

Long hopes that changes this year. She talks up the award whenever she is invited to speak to a group at a conference or any other gathering. Her hope is the \$5,000 will give a nurse an "encouraging boost" in the early days of their health care venture, while also encouraging other nurses to consider starting their own businesses in the future.

Long launched Guardian Nurses in 2003 as a one-nurse patient advocacy organization. Today, her company employs 58 people and provides high-touch, in-person nurse advocacy services. Guardian Nurses' Mobile Care Coordinator program was recognized for its innovation last year with an American Academy of Nursing "Edge Runners" award.

