



Contact: Teresa Gross, PR/Communications Director, 865-374-0433, tgross2@covhlth.com

Covenant Health CNO Among 10 in U.S. to be Named a 2021 Fellow by American Organization for Nursing Leadership

FAONL Honoree is UTC School of Nursing Alumna

(Knoxville, Tennessee) -- Debra (Debbi) Honey, RN, senior vice president and chief nursing officer at Covenant Health and a graduate of the UTC School of Nursing, has been named a Fellow in the American Organization for Nursing Leadership. The FAONL designation recognizes a nurse leader's sustained contributions to the specialty of nursing leadership, commitment to service and influence in shaping health care.

Honey is among 10 honorees who will be recognized at AONL's annual conference in July. The 2021 inductees represent healthcare organizations and colleges of nursing around the United States.

"The FAONL designation reflects excellence at the highest level of nursing leadership practice," said AONL CEO Robyn Begley, DNP, RN. "I look forward to honoring these accomplished nurse leaders and thanking them for their contributions to AONL and health care."

"I am honored to receive this designation," Honey said. "Throughout my career I have had diverse experiences in nursing leadership, with many opportunities to learn and to make a difference. The Fellow designation represents the culmination of those experiences and reflects the contributions I hope I have made along the way."

"We are very proud of Debbi Honey, not only for being selected for this designation, but for her impressive accomplishments over the course of her career," said Jim VanderSteege, president and CEO of Covenant Health. "She has made a significant positive impact as our chief nursing officer, providing leadership and guidance at our hospitals and clinics throughout the East Tennessee region. Debbi's expertise has been particularly valuable during the past year as Covenant Health faced the challenges of caring for COVID-19 patients and coordinating the distribution of COVID vaccines for our 10,000+ employees and our communities."

Honey joined Covenant Health as the system's chief nursing officer in 2017. She previously was the founder and president of Honey Consulting, Inc., a Chattanooga-based firm that helped healthcare organizations -- both small hospitals and large systems -- with business turnarounds and improvements in areas such as clinical operations, quality, patient safety, and leadership and staff development.

As a consultant, Honey served as chief nursing executive at CHRISTUS St. Vincent Regional Medical Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she implemented a nursing leadership program, improved patient engagement scores, and oversaw decreases in voluntary nursing turnover and patient harm rates. She was senior vice president and chief nursing officer at Providence Hospital in Washington, D.C. Prior to

consulting she served for more than 12 years as vice president of clinical leadership development and clinical operations for Catholic Health Initiatives in Denver, Colorado, where she was responsible for system wide projects for 70+ hospitals in 22 states.

“I became a nurse because it’s my vocation and my calling,” Honey said. “I started in the ED and critical care, and then became interested in nursing administration. I worked in many different areas including nursing education and nurse recruitment, and in quality and regulatory leadership.

“I think the best way to become a nursing leader is to stay curious and to ask for opportunities. In turn, you have the opportunity to nurture other potential nursing leaders. I have had – and still have – a delightful career.”

Honey said she could not achieved her career goals without the support of her husband, Joe, and her son and daughter. The family lives in Chattanooga, which served as home base for her travels to work with other healthcare organizations around the country. Honey says she joined Covenant Health as CNO because of the health system’s reputation, opportunities and its location, which has allowed her to both live and work in East Tennessee.

Honey received a bachelor of science in nursing degree from UT Chattanooga and a master’s degree in health administration from the University of Minnesota. She holds certifications in Executive Nursing Practice (CENP) and as a Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ), and she is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives. Honey is a member of the American Organization of Nurse Executives and was selected for the 2008 cohort of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Executive Nurse Fellowship program, an advanced leadership program for nurses in senior executive roles.

For a full list of the 2021 FAONL inductees, go to <https://www.aonl.org/press-releases/aonl-announces-2021-class-of-fellows>.

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About Covenant Health

Covenant Health is a community-owned health system providing comprehensive services in Tennessee. The health system includes 10 hospitals; outpatient services and clinics; specialized behavioral, oncology, and rehabilitation services; home care, physician practices and community programs. With more than 10,000 employees, affiliated physicians and volunteers, Covenant Health is the Knoxville area’s largest employer and has been named six times by Forbes as a Best Employer. Learn more at [CovenantHealth.com](https://www.covenanthealth.com).