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Our Bodies, Our Blog

An informative dose of women's health news and analysis.

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Every Mom is a Hero:Carolynn Ernst

BY [WENDY](#) | APRIL 30, 2009

From 2009 – 2011, Our Bodies Ourselves honored the work of women's health advocates worldwide by asking readers to nominate their favorite women's health hero. View all nominees by year: [2009](#), [2010](#), [2011](#)

Entrant: Rachael Longo

Nominee: Carolynn Ernst, Associate VP of Health Center Operations, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England



Every Mom is a hero.

The love of a mother, the work of a mother, is enough for that title. My mom is not only a hero for raising me and my two siblings, but also for her lifelong dedication to women everywhere.

Carolynn Ernst has been working as an adult and family nurse practitioner for over 30 years. She is currently the Associate VP of Health Center Operations of a 26 health center, three-state affiliate of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. She has been fighting for women's rights her whole life. She is a life-long learner; never accepting that she has enough knowledge to continue in her field, she has continued her education throughout her career, even earning a post-graduate Family Nurse Practitioner degree at the University of Vermont, while raising three kids and working full-time.

She has marched in Washington to ensure a woman's right to choose. She has been brave in the face of terrible threats from anti-abortionists who have called in bomb threats to her clinics or sent suspicious letters, possibly containing anthrax. And she has continued on, marching forward, never wavering in her belief and conviction that a woman should be in charge of her body, be able to feel proud of her body and her decisions and most of all, feel beautiful and confident, no matter what road they choose in life.

My mother gave me pride, self esteem and self worth, courage and determination. She gave me the freedom to dream big and never allows me to give up on myself or those that I love. She did all of this, while dedicating her life to women everywhere, educating and caring for them, teaching them how to care for themselves and prevent unwanted disease and pregnancy.

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29 Comments

 VAL SAYS:

April 30, 2009 at 1:40 pm

Touching tribute, and well-deserved!

SARAH SAYS:

May 1, 2009 at 7:53 am

Rachael, thank you for sharing your amazing mother with us all. I am honored daily to be able to call her a colleague and friend.

PATTY SAYS:

May 1, 2009 at 9:07 am

Rachael,

How awesome that you share your story of your mom. Your mom is an amazing woman who works very hard for womans rights and I am proud to say I work for an organization that fights for womans rights along with your mom. She is a brilliant woman. You are very lucky to have gotten to be her daughter.

CHRISTY LEMIRE SAYS:

May 6, 2009 at 5:54 pm

Certainly a hero! I am also lucky to have her as a mother and a friend. She continues to amaze me with her accomplishments and her ability to balance her career, family, and friends, all while staying grounded, compassionate, and fun! Love you Mom!

RACHAEL LONGO SAYS:

May 6, 2009 at 8:11 pm

VOTE VOTE VOTE FOR MY MOM!

JESSICA SAYS:

May 6, 2009 at 8:33 pm

A true hero—if only this world had more women like Carolynn, women everywhere would never have to question whether or not they will have rights over their own bodies in the future.

DICK SAYS:

May 6, 2009 at 9:45 pm

Carolynn is not only a woman's hero, but a husband's idol. I am so very fortunate to have her as my life's partner, my love and closest friend.

KATHY SAYS:

May 6, 2009 at 10:17 pm

We are proud to be part of Carolynn's extended family and we salute her contributions to woman's health and women's rights!

ALI SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 6:57 am

She is amazing and has my vote!!!

OBE SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 7:23 am

Carolynn has been my great friend for many years. She is so very deserving of this honor.

JENNY SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 7:46 am

I have so much respect for your mom and all the work she has done!

JILL SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 8:42 am

What a terrific mother and champion of women's rights! She's got my vote!

MARIA SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 8:46 am

How true! I'm so glad and proud to have Carolynn as a friend and sister-in-law. I know her thirst for knowledge is insatiable and will use this knowledge to help anyone in need!

KATE SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 9:00 am

She has my vote! Rach, your nomination made me all teary... beautiful
😊

TERRY SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 9:14 am

It's not easy to gain the admiration and respect of a brother but Carolynn has done that and a lot more. Her dedication to her profession and her family cannot be fully expressed or totally understood. When I think of her, the first thing that comes to mind is her smile and her laugh.

She makes everyone a better person for knowing her. She deserves the praise that I've read in these comments. They are all true and only begins to describe the person she has become.

ALLAIRE SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 9:14 am

A sweet tribute to a wonderful woman!

ANNE SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 9:15 am

Carolyn is a true friend – and co-worker. I am constantly amazed at what she accomplishes. Beautiful write up Rachel.

MIKE SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 10:55 am

While Carolyn is not my mother, she is my mother in law, and while that word often leads people to cringe or make jokes, I do neither when it comes to her.

She is truly a great person whom I'm honored to call my Mom (without any reference to the "in-law" part).

LAURI SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 11:00 am

Rachel, what a wonderful tribute. Carolyn is a very remarkable woman and a great role model for us all.

PAM SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 4:53 pm

I've only met Carolyn briefly, but she's a dear friend of a friend and my sister. What a lovely tribute.

AMY SAYS:

May 7, 2009 at 5:13 pm

Oh Carolynn – you are all this and more. I'm proud to call you my friend, I'm in awe of your schedule, I love that you help women every day, I don't envy the miles on your car, you've raised three amazing kids and you still find the time to check in on me. You deserve this in every way.

MAURA SAYS:

May 8, 2009 at 12:05 am

Cali is my hero!

MINDY SAYS:

May 8, 2009 at 8:54 am

What an honor it is to read these tributes and know that the woman I admire the most is also valued by so many. Carolynn has been my best support system and my best example of how to be the best I can be. I am blessed to have a sister that is also my friend.

DEBRA SAYS:

May 8, 2009 at 9:18 am

I would be honored to vote for Carolynn. I have worked with her for nearly 24 years. Her dedication to her job and family planning rights is only surpassed by her dedication to her family. She is a strong and caring woman. I am proud to call her my friend.

JANE SAYS:

May 8, 2009 at 10:07 am

Carolyn gets my vote! A great friend, always upbeat. A great mom, nursing colleague & mentor.

MAGGIE SAYS:

May 8, 2009 at 1:08 pm

I vote for Carolyn!! She has raised 3 great kids including 2 smart, confident, healthy and fun women. This is much deserved!

KARLI SAYS:

May 8, 2009 at 4:01 pm

Love you auntie Carolyn!!! My vote's in for you!!! You are an inspiration to us all!!! :o)

CAROLYNN SAYS:

May 8, 2009 at 5:53 pm

I want to say Thank you to all of you who shared such touching sentiments. I am overwhelmed by your support. It is an honor to have all of you in my life; to be your friend, Mom, sister, aunt, partner and colleague.

My sincerest Thanks to my family; and to Rachael for her articulate, thoughtful and amazing nomination. As are her siblings, she is a wonder!

I would love this comment to count towards a vote, as I have been having trouble clicking on the stars.

Thanks to Our Bodies Ourselves for the opportunity to recognize and appreciate all the nominees, they are all "winners"!

JEAN SAYS:

May 8, 2009 at 8:02 pm

You go girl!!! I have known Carolyn for almost 40 years! How is that possible, we are still so young at heart! She inspires me to be a better person. I am often included in family gatherings and am proud to call them my second family. Thank you Rachael for a moving tribute to my best friend, Carolyn.

Jean

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