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A Christiana Care Health System doctor who has volunteered 10 times to lead medical mission trips to Haiti was honored Thursday with a national Jefferson Champions Award. Dr. Patricia Curtin was one of two winners of the award bestowed by the Wilmington-based Jefferson Awards Foundation.

“What started out as a ‘doing something outside of my comfort zone’ when I turned 50 has turned into one of my best and most important and rewarding volunteer experiences,” Curtin told a foundation audience on Wednesday.

Curtin has helped out often in Haiti as part of a University of Notre Dame Haiti Program that aims by 2020 to eradicate a painful, disfiguring parasitic infection called lymphatic filariasis. She said the missions are supported by supplies and medications donated by “generous donors, friends, family members and my employer, Christiana Care.

“And what we bring to the people of Haiti are those things and the care and our skills, but really what we bring to them is hope – hope for a better day and hope for a better future. We leave that with them, and we take that home with us.

“I come back from Haiti each time a better physician and person, because of what the Haitian people teach me,” she said earlier this year when she received the Harrington Award for Distinguished Service and Leadership from the Christiana Care trustees. “I feel very blessed to be able to serve them.”

Curtin’s entire career has been at Christiana Care, following her 1988 graduation from Jefferson Medical College. In 2000, she was promoted to chief of geriatric medicine, and in 2001, Christiana Care established the We Improve Senior Health Program, an interdisciplinary and award-winning approach to senior health services.

Curtin holds multiple leadership positions at Christiana Care. She is also medical director of Stonegates Retirement Community in Greenville and a clinical assistant professor of medicine at Jefferson Medical College. She frequently lectures about geriatric medicine.