Jude Jonassaint is the 2008 recipient of the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award from Duke University. This award seeks to perpetuate the excellence of character and humanitarian service of Algernon Sydney Sullivan by recognizing and honoring such qualities in others.

It would be difficult, indeed, to find an individual who better exemplifies the characteristics sought after in this award - of heart, mind and conduct as evidence of love and helpfulness to others. Jude Jonassaint grew up in a large Haitian family. His deep religious faith complicated his life initially by forcing him to choose between ministry and medicine. At first, he planned to become a missionary in the Congo. But after graduating from missionary school, he was asked by a friend to take over the temporary care of a quadriplegic. Jude was terrified to accept this enormous responsibility. However, through prayer, Jude was able to care for this individual. Several other experiences also conspired to change his life's work. He lost a brother to HIV. He entered a nursing program and went on to work as a nurse in surgery, trauma, psychiatry, and child and adolescent psychiatry. Ten years later, still working as a nurse, Jude was planning to take preparatory courses for medical school, when his father suddenly died. His father's death was followed by the death of his mother and his second brother's development of with HIV. His father's dream of Jude becoming a doctor also died as Jude gave up his plans and nursed his brother until his death.

Jude then reached the decision to change his ultimate goal. He decided that he wanted to conduct clinical research, which offered the best hope of making leaps forward in medical treatment and serving more patients than he as an individual could otherwise serve. He decided that his mission in life was to heal and to bring hope through medical research. Jude moved his family from Canada to Durham, NC, a place where he felt would provide him with many research opportunities.

Jude became a research nurse by doggedly pursuing every opportunity. After having interviewed for a research nurse position with the Duke sickle cell center, he independently took every course and on-line training program in clinical research he could find. He called weekly to see the status of his application and to update his application regarding the progress he had made in learning various skills. His energy and genuine interest led to his acceptance as a researcher at the Duke Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center.

Once he arrived at the sickle cell center, Jude's vision expanded to include a five-year plan: the creation of a program and facility to provide immediate, comprehensive, systematic care to sickle cell patients. He developed computer programs to help track patients, and he has been instrumental in making Duke a national leader in the enrollment of sickle cell patients in clinical trials. He taught himself sophisticated programs, wrote abstracts, took over budgeting, took over recruitment for clinical studies, and worked into the night gathering and analyzing data. His thoughtfulness about the process of clinical research led him to be a leader among research coordinators of the comprehensive sickle cell center program nationwide. His intelligence, energy and drive are simply unmatchable.

Nevertheless, it is the fact that Jude is always looking for the next project, challenge, and opportunity to help that prompted his nomination for this award. Not only does he expend extraordinary effort to help his patients at the center, but also generously helps the community. Jude often opens his doors to homeless people. Prior to moving to Durham, he helped found a Co-op housing program that could support 120 families. Since then, he and his family have housed and fed more than sixty homeless families.

Jude also believes in mentoring. One of the many people he mentored was a sickle cell patient who was working as a laboratory assistant. Jude helped this young man obtain a grant from Novartis for a project to collect data from 400 high school and college students at NIAA tournaments for a RASC (Raising Awareness for Sickle Cell) project. It was Jude's belief that one day this young man would win recognition for his genetic research that propelled him into the PhD program in genetics at Duke. Together, Jude and his protégé strive to reach their goal: to find a cure for all sickle cell patients.

To reach his goals, Jude Jonassaint has always risked everything he has - his security, his health, and his precious time with family. He has done all of this because of his love for mankind. Thus, he truly personifies the qualities embodied by the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award.