

Centennial

1912 – 2012

Sentiments

“Always Remember the Children”

“Always remember the children.” These were the words, spoken by Visiting Nurse Association Health Group (VNAHG) Founder and President, Geraldine Thompson to her friend and later President, Ellen Adams. While many associate home and community care with the elderly and disabled, caring for children has remained a tenet of the organization, preserved as part of VNA’s mission for nearly a century. The children may be healthy, acutely ill, or handicapped; they may require nutritional support or immunizations. They are from many ethnic backgrounds and live in every town in our New Jersey service area. They all have a special place at VNA Health Group.

Monmouth County’s first prenatal clinic was started in 1932 by VNA Health Group, (then known as Monmouth County Organization for Social Service (MCOSS), in a small office in the Belford section of Middletown. Well-child conferences were added soon after. The program was expanded to Asbury Park, Red Bank, and Freehold with services offered at clinics set up in neighborhood storefronts, old factories, and converted homes. Volunteers played a key role, helping nurses weigh and measure infants, reading to children, taking calls and filing charts.

In 1988, a \$75,000 allocation was made to MCOSS’ maternal child health clinics as part of New Jersey’s 1989 fiscal budget. Support from the state was an important testament to the importance of the clinics. In 1990, the MCOSS Board of Trustees and management mounted a campaign, in combination with public health officers, civic leaders



and concerned citizens, successfully prohibiting legislative provisions slated to eliminate major funding for prenatal and well-child clinics in Monmouth County. MCOSS Foundation was awarded a \$25,000 grant from the state to pilot a program for babies who had prenatal exposure to cocaine and subsequently suffered from serious health problems.

The focus expanded in the mid 1990’s when nurse practitioners and midwives gained prescriptive privilege in New Jersey. Since that time, the neighborhood clinics have been transformed into VNA Community Health Centers, which are Federally Qualified Health Centers located in Asbury Park, Red Bank, Keyport and Keansburg, providing comprehensive primary care for people of all ages. In 2010 more than 9,800 patients obtained services. More than 480 of the patients were expectant mothers who received essential prenatal care and several hundred babies were delivered by VNA nurse midwives through a collaborative partnership with Monmouth Medical Center.

VNA Health Group is the largest Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Program administrative organization in New Jersey, providing food, nutritional counseling and health screenings to more than 36,000 mothers and babies each year.

Today, 40 percent of the nearly 95,000 individuals receiving VNAHG community-based care are under 18 years of age. Services for children include newborn care; pediatric primary and specialized care; immunizations; case management services for early intervention or special child health services; school-based health and youth programs; nursing services for children in day care centers; maternal child health mobile outreach; home visitation parenting and support programs; supplemental food programs; hospice care and bereavement support.

For nearly 100 years, VNA Health Group has continued to follow the lead of Geraldine Thompson in championing the mission of community-based care and caring for children. They are the future of New Jersey.