

# Centennial

1912 – 2012

# Sentiments



## A Century of Caring for our Community

*Nearly 100 years ago, six women, led by a social reformer and philanthropist named Geraldine L. Thompson, chartered an organization to meet the needs of the broader Middletown community. Today that organization, known over the years as MCOSS, the Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey, and Visiting Nurse Association Health Group, is the largest nonprofit community health provider of home care, hospice and community-based services in the state, caring for more than 120,000 individuals each year regardless of circumstance. VNA Health Group members include VNA of Central Jersey, Visiting Nurse and Hospice Services, Essex Valley VNA, Robert Wood Johnson Visiting Nurses, and Cape VNA.*

**It was the spring of 1912.** A frail 6-year-old boy, standing at the side of a dirt road in Lincroft, New Jersey, beckoned to two young girls passing by on their ponies. He implored them to follow him to his home, a ramshackle house in the woods. Once there, the girls saw that the entire family was very ill; they all had the violent cough symptomatic of tuberculosis (TB). The girls raced home to tell their mother, who immediately set out to minister to the entire family. The girls' mother was the socially and politically influential Geraldine L. Thompson, who from that seminal moment worked relentlessly to eradicate the ravages of TB and went on



to charter an in-home nursing service to care for her neighbors in need.

That child opened the door and was enveloped in the comforting embrace of VNA's compassion. Since that day millions of patients have continued to open their doors to the mission-based compassion of VNA Health Group.

The parents of a newborn child diagnosed with a terminal illness opened their door to the caring circle of the VNA hospice team. Predicted to have only days to live, the tiny baby girl defied the odds. As days turned into a week, the hospice nurse observed behaviors inconsistent with the child's admitting diagnosis. She mobilized the interprofessional health care team and the child is expected to live a full life.

A young adult male left paralyzed from a gunshot wound keeps his door ajar for the VNA nurse practitioner who, with her team, provides primary

care and intervention and ensures that weekly rehospitalization does not have to be a frame within which he lives his life. Through the nurses' ministrations, he is able to know the healing comfort of sleeping in his own bed, has the potential for rehabilitation, and sees the hope of modified yet meaningful goals.

A 91-year-old WWII pilot and grandfather of five eagerly awaits the VNA nurse who comes to his home three days a week, fortified by the belief that her entry through his door will allow him to spend his remaining days at home.

Since the moment nearly 100 years ago when one child opened the door, the compassion of VNA has continued to replicate on city streets and suburban cul de sacs, and in rural neighborhoods, homeless shelters and seaside hamlets throughout New Jersey.