

# Centennial

1912 – 2012

# Sentiments

## “Certified Home Health Aides offering dignity and compassion to those in need.”

*In the late 1960's, VNA Health Group, then known as Monmouth County Organization of Social Service (MCOSS), helped to finance the establishment of the county homemakers' service. Homemakers, often called substitute mothers, were selected to maintain a regular household schedule and care for the children when the mother, because of illness, hospitalization, or convalescence, was unable to do so. When it became apparent in 1978 that the personal care needs of patients and families were increasingly complex, the organization made the decision to start its own home health aide department. Always innovative, in 1983, VNA Health Group initiated a three-year demonstration project to evaluate the effectiveness of training welfare recipients to provide homemaker/home health aide services for the chronically ill elderly.*

Beginning with twenty-eight home health aides who graduated from VNA Health Group's first training class, today more than four hundred certified home health aides provide compassionate daily living assistance through personal care, private care and live-in services as valued members of the VNA Health Group multidisciplinary health care team. For the 85-year-old patient sent home from a local hospital, bedbound and with little promise of rehabilitation, the home health aide worked with the physical therapist and the nurse and within four months the patient was taking walks down the street. When a hospice patient died in the dawn hours, the home health aide promptly called the

family to express his condolences and to say that he was on his way. He believed that his final responsibility to the family was to provide personal care so that the family's final visit with the patient would be the best possible.

In 2008, as a result of an aide's powerful ability to transform his patients' lives, he received an unprecedented and prestigious honor as Clinician of the Year from the Visiting Nurse Association of America (VNAA), the national professional association for VNAs. This national award is given in recognition of outstanding achievement by a clinician in improving an organization's ability to add to patients' quality of life and increase community awareness of home care and VNA services. It was the first time the award was ever presented to a home health aide.

In 2010, sixteen VNA Health Group certified home health aides were selected to participate in a pilot program by the NJ Department of Human Services. The program allowed expanded duties of home health aides under the direction of a Registered Nurse. Based on patient needs, the participating aides were able to give medications, assist with diabetes testing and nutritional feedings. One of the aides who volunteered to participate in this program cared for a young patient, Katie, in need of daily nutrition and medication through a feeding tube. The young woman experienced daily seizure activity and required nebulizer treatments to lessen breathing difficulties. The ability of the aide to provide these treatments offered a brief but vital



respite for the devoted but overwhelmed family. At the end of the grant program, the VNA Health Group home health aide pilot group was approved by the State Board of Nursing to continue their expanded duties to seven patients, one of whom was Katie.

VNA Health Group provides care within a context of a large community family that is interconnected in many ways. A 62-year old woman once cared for others as a VNA Health Group home health aide. Today, that woman is homebound as the result of Multiple Sclerosis. She receives the gentle, compassionate care of her own live-in caregiver who welcomes the opportunity to enhance the life of one of her own.