

## **Baystate Medical Center Nurses Alumni Celebrating 100 years**

On June 25, 1906, with the assistance of Jessie Catton, Superintendent of nurses, The Springfield Hospital Nurses Alumnae Association was established. In the early years the Association struggled for existence since most of the nurses worked private duty, providing 24 hour care in the patient's home, sleeping on a cot in the patient's room at night for \$21.00 a week. There was little time for outside interests, so meetings were poorly attended; however, Superintendent Jessie Catton, who was very influential in molding the character of her students, told them it was their duty as graduates to join the Alumnae Association and remain members. She also encouraged membership in the M.N.A. to improve the status of the nursing profession.

The original objectives of the Association were:  
to raise the standards of the School  
to keep in touch with the latest methods of the profession  
to offer help and comfort to graduates in times of illness and misfortune  
to foster a spirit of loyalty to the hospital

In 1914, members of the Alumnae Association sponsored many events for the purpose of establishing a Relief Fund to provide assistance to alumnae members who were in financial need. Their long term goal was to raise enough money to establish a Trust Fund which would be self supporting for as long as the Alumnae Association existed. Finally in 1931, after many years of raffles, concerts and other projects, \$5000 had been raised and the Trust Fund became a reality. This was quite an accomplishment for a small group of poorly paid women. Since there was no health insurance or medicare, the Trust Fund was the only source of assistance for many alumnae.

As more patients entered the hospitals, the training schools with their student nurses became an important factor to hospitals, providing a standard of care not previously known. It is little wonder that the training schools became a boon to hospitals. Up until the 1950s nursing care was provided by student nurses. The quality education and experience of the Springfield Hospital graduates was recognized by other hospitals and the community. When a member of the Board of Trustees or the Medical Staff needed a nurse to care for a family member, they would request a Springfield Hospital graduate.

Throughout the years, the Alumnae Association has donated funds to the community and as far away as Honolulu. A donation

was made towards a Memorial Building honoring Mabel Lelani Smith, a graduate of the Springfield Hospital School of Nursing, class of 1914, who died in 1936. Miss Smith was known as " the Florence Nightingale of Hawaii".

But the true love of the Alumnae Association was the School of Nursing, its students and The Springfield Hospital. Over the years all three were recipients of many generous gifts. For the Nurses Home: a grand piano, china, a silver candelabra. a grandfather clock and a service flag honoring the 111 graduates who served their country. Many of the School's historic memorabilia have been donated to the Pioneer Valley Historical Museum.

In the 1990s, computers, training mannequins and monetary donations were also given to the School. Scholarships of \$250 were given to students in their Junior and Senior years as well as \$500 at graduation for the purpose of obtaining a BSN. The Alumni Association continues to offer a \$500 Scholarship to alumni members for further education in nursing.

Other significant gifts were made to the hospital's many building funds, the East Wing, Wesson Maternity Hospital and the Library.

In 1971, Mr. William Malone had the honor to be the first male graduate of The Springfield Hospital School of Nursing and became a member of the Alumni Association.

In 1999 the announcement to close the School of Nursing was a time of sadness and disappointment for the Alumni Association and the School.

There were many nurses who sacrificed and paved the way for our 2906 graduates to excel in nursing and promote our proud heritage.

Nursing has played a significant role in the growth and progress of hospitals and because of their loyalty belong some of the credits of the hospital's success.

Our School motto: "To Learn, To Serve, To Live" has remained with us during our nursing careers.

Our Centennial Celebration is dedicated to the 2906 graduates, staff and faculty of Baystate Medical Center School of Nursing for their skill, knowledge, wisdom and guidance.

[Written by the Alumni Association President on the occasion of the closing of the school in 1999.]