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CHT shares special stories in celebration of International Nurses Day

International Nurses Day, celebrated around the world each year on 12th May (Florence Nightingale's birthday), raises awareness and recognition of the enormous contribution that nurses make to our communities.

For many families the end of a loved one's life is an especially meaningful time when encounters with nurses leave indelible memories. We are very proud of the dedication, care and compassion of all our staff, in particular our nurses, in providing comfort and support to all our residents and their families.

Nursing in residential aged care can be both uniquely challenging and rewarding, with countless tales to be told. To celebrate International Nurses Day we are sharing the stories of just a handful of our many nurses – each with their own experiences and perspectives.

Megan Thorne, Unit Manager, CHT Acacia Park Home & Hospital

Taking on a Bachelor of Nursing degree at the age of 37 with her youngest child being 18 months old was a juggling act for Megan, but after her first couple of shifts as a caregiver it signalled a turning point in her life, and she is enjoying a rewarding career in nursing.



Starting out as a caregiver at Acacia Park 17 years ago, Megan has worked her way up as a Clinical Leader, Clinical Co-ordinator and now Unit Manager. She has also turned her hand to jobs as a kitchen hand, cook, cleaner and in the laundry – almost every role available.

Megan is also a volunteer Medical First Responder with Fire and Emergency New Zealand, a position that she is also very passionate about as it allows her to use her skills as a nurse and help those in need, finding it as rewarding as working with the elderly.

Megan attributes her love of nursing to having the empathy and drive to really give it her all plus having inspiring role models who encouraged her to follow her passion.

Asena Wainiqolo, Senior Nurse, CHT St Johns Hospital

Growing up in Fiji, Asena was introduced to nursing at a very young age as she tagged along with her older sisters, both nurses, on hospital visits and even delivering babies in the outer islands.



After initial roles in theater and psychiatric nursing, Asena took a job at CHT St Johns Hospital and has been a steadfast member of staff for the past 17 years.

As a resource nurse for last days of life, Asena feels a strong sense of privilege to be part of the end of their journey and truly believes that little things make a big difference for the residents she cares for.

Jeanette Coyle, Enrolled Nurse, CHT St Margarets Hospital

Literally part of the furniture, Jeanette began working at St Margarets 29 years ago after popping in to see if there were any jobs available and starting just two weeks later.

Jeanette has worked in aged care for her entire career since training at age 16, firstly in Tauranga and then in Auckland including working night shifts in a rest home while raising her children.

Her favourite aspects of working in nursing include the opportunity to care for residents and their families and making life-long friends through nursing. Coming to work in a supportive, beautiful environment also makes it rewarding for Jeanette.

With a daughter now also in nursing, Jeanette says it takes a special person to work in aged care – you need to be a caring, compassionate and patient.



Jenny Vollmer, Unit Manager, CHT St Johns Hospital

As CHT's longest serving Unit Manager – 11 years and counting – Jenny reminisces about her early years as a young nurse in her native South Africa (a profession suggested to her by her mother, also a nurse) and her passion for working in aged care.



Starting off in general and surgical nursing, Jenny moved into frail care and specialised in geriatric care including nine years working in the UK.

An opportunity to emigrate to New Zealand with her family to take up a CHT Unit Manager role gave Jenny a wonderful opportunity for a new challenge and now she even cheers for the All Blacks!

Social connection, learning about a person's history and culture and getting to know the whole family are aspects of nursing that are very special to Jenny.

Thank you to our nurses for the wonderful care you provide to our residents. On International Nurses Day we celebrate the past achievements of nurses and recognise those dedicating their lives to the profession today.

Max Robins
Chief Executive