



# Sisters' legacy of care nurtured at St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital

In 1927, Archbishop H.J. O'Leary was troubled by the lack of healthcare services for an aging population—the first pioneers who had come to Edmonton and established homes.

He took action, and wrote to the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul in Kingston, Ontario, asking for help founding Edmonton's first "Old People's Home."

The Sisters of Providence journeyed to Edmonton, following their virtues of humility, simplicity, and charity, and opened the House of Providence on September 24, 1929, in a four-storey apartment called the Whyte Block. This is located on what is now called Whyte Avenue.

The Sisters worked hard to furnish the 120-room building, even making sure the residents would have flowers and trees to enjoy nearby.

The first day they opened, ten residents moved into their new home.

The Sisters relied on their previous experience in health care, social work and pastoral and educational ministries to care for chronically ill people of all ages, meeting the needs of the Edmonton community's most vulnerable.

It was soon evident there was a need for greater services—the House of Providence became St. Joseph's Hospital for the Chronically Ill, where patients aged two to 96 were treated.

Throughout the years, Edmonton's growing population meant the Sisters needed more room to care for those in need. In 1948 a new hospital was built, which was expanded in 1965. In 1993, St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital moved to a location in south Edmonton, where today staff carry forward the Sister's legacy of compassionate care.

Carolyn Rein, Recreation Therapist, St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital, credits a part of her role she loves, pet therapy, to Sister George, who is no longer at the hospital.

Sister George had a lifelong dream of starting a pet therapy program, and when she retired and began to volunteer at the hospital, she was able to fulfill her vision. Working with trainers and the Northern Alberta Pet Therapy Foundation, she was able to train Joey, a golden retriever, to be a comfort and source of happiness to the residents. Carolyn is happy to carry on this work with her dog Tiki.

"When I'm visiting with Tiki, residents open up to me. Pet therapy lets people feel safe, and gives them something safe to talk about," says Carolyn, who explains that each staff member has benefitted from the Sister's legacy of care.

From being helpful, positive, disciplined or making time for people, Carolyn explains that each staff member embodies a characteristic of the Sisters. She says recognizing and respecting these gifts in one another allows the team to work together to provide the same level of compassionate care the Sisters have in the past.

"We work together to make each day the best day possible for residents," says Carolyn. "This has everything to do with the legacy the Sisters have left behind."

*"We work together to make each day the best day possible for residents. This has everything to do with the legacy the Sisters have left behind."*

*– Carolyn Rein*



Sisters of Providence of  
St. Vincent de Paul