

## *A Passion to Serve*

Her name is Maria Baird. She is a nurse. And although that doesn't say everything about her, it says a lot. It describes her compassion and her commitment to making lives better. That's what we think of when we hear the word, nurse, mentioned.



Baird also happens to be the director of nursing at Life Care Center of Melbourne, Florida. That says a lot about her, too. It relates that she has a mountain of responsibilities to shoulder daily. But it also concludes that she is a leader – a motivator, a cheerleader, a strategist and a servant.

And all of those conclusions help define Maria Baird, a nurse, a human being with a passion for serving others, and one with a heart full of love. For that's what you must have if you choose to be a nurse.

Baird represents all that is good and noble about the nursing profession, and she symbolizes the extraordinary commitment of the thousands of licensed practical and registered nurses in Life Care Centers of

America. We are proud of the clinical expertise they bring and the compassion they exhibit everyday in an extraordinary demonstration of professional excellence. Baird, you recall, was named the winner of the Mary Denton Award at the annual meeting of directors of nursing on April 30. That is the highest honor bestowed by the company on a nurse.

This is National Nurses Week, a celebration that began May 6 and continues through Saturday, May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. Its theme is *Nursing: A Profession and a Passion*.

So why was Baird chosen for this unique prize – the Mary Denton Award? And what does she do that brings her such recognition?

She is the preeminent advocate for her residents. She is personally committed to quality care, spending time one-on-one with residents who have painful or terminal illnesses. She demonstrates patience, fairness, consistency and calmness that endear her to all her staff. She personally set up a supply room on each unit to ensure that nursing associates have the proper supplies readily

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available. She assists with admissions, ensuring each new resident is safe within the facility's care and comfortably settled in.

All of these descriptions are wonderful testimonials to the dedication of this nurse. But there are a couple of situations that describe the heart of this woman, and what sets her apart in an honorable profession:

1. When Baird returned from her Life Care Journey orientation program in Cleveland, Tennessee, at 11:30 p.m., she drove straight to Life Care Center of Melbourne to pick up a night shift for a nurse who had called in sick at the last minute, and then worked straight through the next day with an upbeat, energetic demeanor.
2. She drove a resident's wife to the facility to visit with her husband, who was dying of brain cancer, throughout his terminal illness, and made follow-up calls after the funeral to ensure that the wife was taken care of.

Thank you, Maria Baird, for representing all that is right and good about nursing. And thank you, all Life Care nurses, for doing as Baird does in the grandest pursuit of all – the love and care of God's children, the frail and infirm elderly.

--Beecher Hunter