

Happy Anniversary!

Happy anniversary, everyone! Cut yourself a piece of cake (if you can find one), brew a steaming cup of coffee, and sit back and reflect for a few minutes on the memories and blessings of days and years gone by. That's right: Today is the 28th birthday of Life Care Centers of America.

Actually, the milestone is the second significant date in the company's history to fall within a three-day span of time. The other is January 4, which was the 34th anniversary of the first nursing center developed by Forrest Preston. That, of course, is Life Care Center of Cleveland, originally known as Garden Terrace Convalescent Center. As proof that old habits are hard to break, I still hear the Garden Terrace name used around town by people who were at the grand opening on January 4, 1970.

Garden Terrace, in the beginning, and Life Care later were created to serve people with long-term care needs, and that has remained its driving force throughout the years. Forrest concedes that, at the outset, he felt if he could develop four nursing centers, then that would be a wonderful career. Well, he overshot the mark a little bit. By 1976, he had developed a total of six centers -- five in Tennessee and one in Florida. That's when he realized he could not personally operate all six, and so Life Care Centers of America was born on January 6, 1976, to be the management company of those six properties, and any others that might be built or acquired.

The organization he leads today operates 263 skilled nursing, assisted living and retirement centers in 28 states -- all the way from the Eastern Seaboard to Hawaii.

Aside from the cake and coffee comment (a little smart-alecky, to be sure), what is an appropriate way of observing today's anniversary? Well, one recommendation would be to review the Mission and Values statement with associates again -- whether it be at a standup staff meeting, or an in-service training session, or in small groups at coffee break. The truths of that statement define the culture and operational philosophy of Life Care. It continues to be the standard by which our performance, and any proposed initiative, should be measured.

And for me personally, those 28 years have afforded me the opportunity to get to know some of the greatest people in the world, residents and associates alike, and my life is all the richer for it.

--Beecher Hunter