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Bayada Nurses Honors Mays Landing Resident as Registered Nurse “Hero of the Year”

July 2, 2009 – Linwood, NJ, Bayada Nurses, a leader in home health care, has named Mays Landing resident Marjorie Smith-Gale, RN as its Registered Nurse “Hero of the Year.” As part of the company’s *Heroes on the Home Front* program, Smith-Gale was recognized for her dedication to excellence and commitment to caring for children with profound physical and developmental disabilities. The award was presented during Bayada Nurses’ annual Awards Weekend, held in Washington, D.C. last month.

Bayada Nurses presents the “Hero of the Year” awards to recognize its nurses, aides, and therapists who unselfishly exceed the organization’s expectations for excellence. To qualify, a nominee must embody the fundamental values of compassion, excellence, and reliability, which comprise *The Bayada Way* and define the organization’s mission. Heroes are chosen from among Bayada’s 12,000 employees who work in 140 offices in 18 states and the United Kingdom.

In addition to being honored by Bayada Nurses, Smith-Gale was also chosen from among dozens of entries as a finalist in NJ BIZ magazine’s HealthCare Heroes Nurse of the Year program

When Smith-Gale learned she had been chosen from among so many of her colleagues as the Hero of the Year, she had a hard time accepting this extraordinary recognition for her dedication to her patients. As a home care nurse for 14 years, she truly feels that sharing her compassion and skill with physically and developmentally challenged children exemplifies her commitment to her chosen profession. In short, she says she is simply just doing her job.

“However,” says Maryann Prudhomme, director of Bayada Nurses office in Linwood, “the children and families who benefit from Marjorie’s care feel that this remarkable woman does so much more. When Marjorie comes into their homes, she becomes more than a nurse, she becomes part of the family.”

According to Prudhomme, Smith-Gale is trained and certified in providing technologically advanced care to children who require a tracheostomy and ventilator to breathe. She cares for these children in the home and the school setting, doing everything possible to ensure that her young patients enjoy each day to the best of their limited abilities.

Indeed, Bonnie Sebastian, the mother of a child with Down Syndrome who requires a tracheostomy and ventilator, could not agree more. "Although my son is 18, he has the developmental abilities of a six-year old," she said. "Changing his tracheostomy, which requires the insertion of a tube through a small hole in the neck, became a major challenge. Chris became frightened and combative. He would fight, thrash and nearly pass out, jeopardizing his life and nearly endangering his caregivers."

Sebastian feared that Smith-Gale would not be able to handle the intense demands that came with caring for her son. However, she persevered, showing Chris how to change a tracheostomy using a child-size training doll. "Marjorie never gave up on Chris," exclaimed Sebastian. "She helped him become an active, helpful participant in many aspects of his life. She even took him to his senior prom!"

According to Prudhomme, the pediatric home care program of Bayada Nurses provides a broad range of services for special needs children from newborn through adolescence. Bayada Nurses office in Linwood also provides home care for adults with chronic illness or injury. This includes skilled nursing, as well as home health aides who help with grooming, meal preparation and light housekeeping.

"Without home care, many of our special needs children would be forced to enter facility-based care, a prospect that can be heart breaking for their parents," said Prudhomme. "Because of our nurses and home health aides, children like Chris get to stay at home, where, despite their significant disabilities, they can thrive."

Smith-Gale knows, first hand, the challenges of dealing with illness or injury. As a young waitress, unsure of her future, a car accident led her on the path to a nursing career. The dedication of the professionals who nursed her back to health inspired her to enroll in nursing school.

During her tenure with Bayada Nurses, Smith-Gale has provided both adult and pediatric home care. However, it is the youngest of patients who truly touch her heart. Her presence in the home provides peace of mind and well-deserved respite for parents, and makes a positive difference in the lives of every physically and developmentally challenged child who receives her care.

For more information about home care services, call Bayada Nurses at 609-926-4600.

Founded in 1975 by J. Mark Baiada, Bayada Nurses is an independently-owned home health agency that employs more than 12,000 nurses, home health aides, therapists and social workers in more than 140 offices and 18 states, as well as the UK. Bayada Nurses provides skilled, rehabilitative, therapeutic, personal care, and support services to people of all ages in the comfort of their own homes. For more information, visit www.bayada.com.

