History

Martha & Mary has adapted and grown a lot through the years. Thanks to the commitment of our leadership and staff, and through the support of our families and friends, we continue to evolve, improve and expand our services to meet the changing needs of our community.

This is our story…

In 1891, Reverend Ingebrit Tollefson and other leaders of the First Lutheran Church (Fordefjord Congregation, at that time, a member of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church) saw the need for an orphanage. Inspired in part by their church’s association with the West Coast Lutheran School and Charity Association, the church, community members and Rev. Tollefson built a home to care for 20 children in Poulsbo. This orphanage established the official beginnings of Martha & Mary.

The children’s home expanded during the first part of this century. Additions were made to the original building until it housed approximately 60 children with employees of the facility often receiving room and board in lieu of salary. The organization was a well-known charity within the Lutheran Church, and there were Martha & Mary Societies throughout the United States, especially in the Pacific Northwest and Midwest.

The original wooden building remained for almost 50 years. In time, it became apparent that the building was in need of repair and did not meet modern standards. A new brick building was constructed and dedicated on May 30, 1941, the golden anniversary of the organization. The brick structure remains as the center section of our existing building today.

As the times changed, so did the organization. The orphanage became a home for troubled boys around 1950. This venture did not last long as in 1955, it was decided that the most pressing need in the community was for a long-term care facility to better serve seniors.

Over the next 48 years there would be a number of continued improvements and renovations to our facilities here in Poulsbo.

In 1980, after 71 years of operation, the Ebenezer (the “old folks home” on the hill) was closed. After a complete renovation, it was re-opened in 1985 as Martha & Mary Retirement Apartments. Today we refer to it as the Martha & Mary Ebenezer Apartments. This building presently offers 24 independent senior living units.

In 1983, Martha & Mary returned to caring for children when employees were offered child care in a little red house on the grounds of the Health and Rehab Center. Six children attended the first day, and enrollment soon grew to its capacity of 15 children. Seeing the need for competent child care, the organization expanded its campus to offer a variety of children’s services to the community. Today Martha & Mary KIDS serves more than 1000 children at ten sites throughout Kitsap county – including the Early Learning Center that opened in the Fall of 2003 at the Joanna Carlson Campus in Silverdale. Martha & Mary KIDS now offers early learning and school age care programs as well as intergenerational programs with residents of the Health and Rehab Center and other area senior care facilities.

Following a major remodel in 1999, the Health and Rehab Center became a modern 190-bed healthcare facility. It now serves as the cornerstone of the organization with its view over Liberty Bay and easy walking-distance to historic downtown Poulsbo.

In the fall of 2009, Martha & Mary added a new line of business with the acquisition of Angel Advocates in the field of non-medical home care. This venture increased dramatically in 2010 as Abiding Homecare was also acquired and joined the Martha & Mary family. These acquisitions became Martha & Mary AT HOME, serving clients from Pierce County to Jefferson County. Our services within AT HOME now include home care, home health, and geriatric care management.

A new chapter of the organization’s history was undertaken in 2012 as Martha & Mary began managing other campuses that were not owned by our organization. An assisted living campus in Bremerton, Bay Vista Commons, was the first of this kind as we expand our mission into managing other campuses that share our values at Martha & Mary.

We continually strive to create a meaningful “community” in which the children, residents, staff, and volunteers grow in understanding and appreciation of the gifts that both young and old bring into our lives.