



Mt. Washington  
Pediatric Hospital

Where Children Go to Heal and Grow

Est. 1922

An affiliate of University of Maryland Medical System and Johns Hopkins Medicine

## Centennial Spotlight:

# Longtime Nurse Violet Ebbesen



***Nursing is more than a profession:** for many, it's a calling. A great nurse is intelligent, observant, technically skilled, calm in the face of chaos, and kind no matter what is happening. Nursing engages both the mind and the heart—Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital's (MWPH) own Violet Ebbesen, RN, BSN, MEd is a true example of nursing excellence.*

Violet has been a nurse for 38 years, and she has spent 37 of those years at MWPH, which is more than one-third of the hospital's 100 year history. After graduating from Coppin State College (now university) in 1984, Violet completed a one-year medical-surgical nursing internship at Provident Hospital in Baltimore before accepting a position at MWPH.

Pediatric nursing was Violet's desired specialty from the beginning, but she didn't know about MWPH. "Back in those days, before the Internet, you looked for jobs in the newspaper or on signs. I was waiting at a stoplight, when a van from MWPH pulled up alongside my car. I had to speed up when the light changed,

so that I could write down the phone number," she remembered.

When she arrived for her interview, she didn't recognize the hospital at first. "I was driving up and down Rogers Avenue, looking for something that looked like a hospital. MWPH didn't—it was a mansion," she said. Yet, after talking with the senior nurse, and touring the wards, Violet knew that this was where she was supposed to be.

### Witnessing MWPH's care evolution

In the mid-1980s, MWPH bore little resemblance to today's facility. In the original building, which the staff called "the mansion," the first floor had a 20-bed open ward, with all of the babies. The



second-floor housed toddlers and younger children, as well as the continuing care unit, which provided long-term nursing home care for older children with severe brain injuries or disabilities. Staff offices were in the attic, and shift-change reports were completed in the kitchen.

Violet has cared for many patients over the years, but she'll never forget one patient who tugged at her heartstrings. He came to MWPH at six months old, and when Violet joined the hospital's staff, the boy was three years old "I'll never forget the first time I saw him, sitting up in the high chair when I walked in," she said. Violet cared for him for two full years, until he was discharged at age five. She remembers accompanying him to a specialty clinic visit at four years old, the first time he had been out of the hospital. "Everything was new to him, from snow to Santa Claus," she recalled. "He spent the whole time looking out the window."

The boy was the hospital's first patient on a ventilator, a sign of the increasing acuity of the patients at MWPH. Violet kept in touch with this former patient, who lived until his mid-thirties. He led a full life, graduating from high school and singing in his church choir, although he

continued to need ventilator support while he slept. "All nurses at MWPH have patients like that, who are so special to us," she said.

There were many interesting moments at "the mansion". Once, the hospital lost power, and nurses had to ventilate the patients by hand, standing in between two cribs and bagging two patients each while another nurse ran from bed to bed providing suction. In 1989, the staff moved all of the patients to the new Rogers Avenue facility, keeping all of the medically complex patients safe and completing the move in a single morning.

At the new facility, the large single ward was replaced by patient rooms with four beds or two beds. The hospital started taking in more complex patients, using more advanced technology, and working with multiple specialists. In the late 1990s, MWPH began accepting premature infants. "We started caring for the small infant population with incubators, and the program began to grow immediately," Violet said.

The new facility also enabled parents to become more involved in their children's care, giving the nurses an opportunity to train and educate parents before their child went home.

### Heading into the new millennium

The 2000s saw the addition of MWPH's outpatient center and a significant expansion of therapies available, including aquatic therapy. Inpatients at MWPH also began receiving school services on site. Nursing care continued to get more complex. "We progressed from providing basic care to providing more complex care," Violet said.

A particularly proud moment came when MWPH became jointly owned by the region's two powerhouse health systems: Johns Hopkins Medicine and the University of Maryland Medical System. To Violet, this change signaled a significant milestone. "It showed that these two organizations had confidence in what we had been doing, and they wanted to give us more resources to provide



Mt. Washington  
Pediatric Hospital

Where Children Go to Heal and Grow

Est. 1922

An affiliate of University of Maryland Medical System and Johns Hopkins Medicine

“ [Since the mid-80s] We progressed from providing basic care to providing more complex care. ”

even better care for our patients,” she said. “It was an amazing moment.”

Violet also participated in the hospital’s transition from paper charts to electronic medical records in the 1990s—and when it came time to build the new Expanse EMR system, Violet was tapped to be part of the team. The new system went live in 2020.

### Family feeling

No matter how much care has evolved at MWPH, the family feeling among the staff is a constant source of satisfaction for employees. “We’re more like a family than coworkers,” she said. “I’ve developed friendships that have lasted all these years at MWPH.”

For example, a few years ago, Violet had to fly to the Virgin Islands because her father was seriously ill. She used up all her accumulated time off, but MWPH continued to be there for her as she had been there for her patients year after year. She was able to take an extended leave so she could stay with her family longer than

expected. “That said a lot to me about the way they valued me as a longtime employee. It shows the administration’s dedication to the staff,” she said.

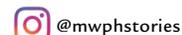
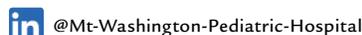
A few months after she returned, MWPH CEO Sheldon Stein was visiting the staff on the units to wish them all happy holidays. He came up to Violet and asked how her mother was doing, and how she was doing. “He knew that it was the first Christmas without my dad, and he knew what an impact that would have, not just on me, but on my mother. I’ll never forget how kind and sincerely caring that was,” she said.

Violet plans to retire in a few years, wrapping up her long and successful career. And when she does, she’ll know that she has left a mark in this world: her caring and expertise has changed the lives of hundreds of children and their families, giving them the best chance to live healthy and productive lives. Violet Ebbesen is a true super nurse, and we at MWPH are honored that she has chosen to share her gifts with our team and our patients for nearly four decades.

## Violet’s 5 Reasons Why MWPH is Special

- 1 The goal of an acute care facility is to keep a child alive. The goal of MWPH is to help the child to live. We’re caring for them so they can go home, and that goal is always front and center. Our focus is different here.
- 2 You cannot find a better, more dedicated staff anywhere. We all have the same goal: care for the kids and care for the families. The staff performs and goes above and beyond so that these kids can receive the care they deserve.
- 3 What other organization allows you—and encourages you—to act like a kid yourself? We play games, and we all have the opportunity to connect with a childlike sense of joy and wonder.
- 4 The hospital has a large number of longtime staff, with 20+ years of service. That speaks volumes about the organization’s management and employee engagement.
- 5 Over 100 years of caring, MWPH’s techniques, and technology may have changed. What hasn’t changed, however, is the continued professionalism, dedication, exceptional caring, love, and family feeling that the patients and families receive here at MWPH.

Visit [mwph.org](http://mwph.org) to learn more about Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital.



Mt. Washington  
Pediatric Hospital

Where Children Go to Heal and Grow

Est. 1922

An affiliate of University of Maryland Medical System and Johns Hopkins Medicine

“We’re more like a family than coworkers. I’ve developed friendships that have lasted all these years at MWPH.”