

Our Founder and Her Vision

Carrie Nelson Black, Humanitarian (1859-1936)

Carrie Nelson Black was a Victorian woman ahead of her time. In 1906, she was the Founder and President of the Columbus Society for the Prevention and Control of Tuberculosis; the predecessor organization to The Breathing Association. She served beyond the role of President to guide daily operations as the Chief Executive for 30 years, using her keen vision and marked executive ability, without drawing a paycheck. She was a volunteer in all that she did. As a visionary and civic leader, she had the ability to motivate others to share her passion to care for the “sick poor.”

Concerned about the state of health in Columbus, she traveled by carriage in 1898 to study nursing care in Chicago and Boston. She saw caring for those less fortunate as a civic responsibility. As a demonstration of her persistent enthusiasm, she returned from Boston with a nurse, Louise Salter, to begin care for the “sick poor.” Mrs. Black then founded, as its President, the Instructive District Nurses Association, the first Columbus Health Department Home Nursing Service. That association is now LifeCare Alliance.

In 1901, Mrs. Black became the Director of the Ohio Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis; now known as the Ohio Public Health Association.

Upon founding the Columbus Society for the Prevention and Control of Tuberculosis in 1906, she again traveled to Boston, New York, and Chicago (all at her own expense) to visit tuberculosis dispensary services in order to incorporate the best ideas for Columbus. In 1907, she was instrumental in having Franklin County build the first tuberculosis cottages and was chosen to turn the first ceremonial shovel of dirt. In 1913, her campaign was successful to build the Open Air School for children with tuberculosis at Hudson and Neil Avenues. In 1931, she solicited contributions to buy 20 acres of wooded land on Brice Road and there had the Nightingale Cottage built for children exposed to tuberculosis. On the 25th Anniversary of the founding



Mrs. Black
with son Sam.

of the Tuberculosis Society, Mrs. Black had the satisfaction of learning that the rates of death from tuberculosis in Columbus went from one in six to one in twenty.

In 1921, alarmed over the high cancer mortality in Columbus, she organized the Columbus Cancer Clinic, the first free cancer clinic in the United States, and served as its Director until her death.

A mother of three children; Sam Luccock, James Nelson, and Helen Margaret, Mrs. Black prevailed upon Governor Judson Harmon in 1911 to issue the first Mother's Day Proclamation ever made in Ohio. She was a Director of the Ohio Association for Mother's Day.

Married to Probate Judge Samuel L. Black, a Columbus Mayor, their home was a place to entertain groups of all races and creeds in order to exchange ideas which could give new hope and opportunity for those in need.

Her philosophy of life was an inspiration, as she poured unrelenting energy, compassion, and kindness into her missions. Never failing to assume responsibility, her tenacity resulted in the actions she wished to accomplish. As a pioneer

and health crusader, Mrs. Black spent her life in service to humanity, working for her causes until two weeks before her death at age 78.

Upon Mrs. Black's death in 1936, Columbus mourned. She was called a courageous leader to alleviate the suffering among the poor of the community. Mayor Gessaman said, "Her work will live forever." By her thoughts for others, regardless of race or creed, her concern for the sick and unfortunate, her love for little children, by her kind and wise leadership, Mrs. Black endeared herself to all who were privileged to know her.

Mrs. Black's memory continues to be a guiding light as her work lives and continues today. She lives in the hearts of those of us humbled to follow in her footsteps and in the services that she taught us how to give. Thank you, Carrie, and Happy Anniversary!

Photo to the right: Carrie's sister, Ella Alpharetta Nelson, died in 1874 at 20 years of age from tuberculosis. Her death is believed to have been a major factor in Carrie's crusade against tuberculosis.

