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**For Immediate Release**

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**JAQUITH NURSING HOME RESIDENT CELEBRATES A CENTURY**

WHITFIELD —Six generations of family members gathered at Jaquith Nursing Home (JNH) on Sunday, Jan. 16 to celebrate a milestone that not many people are able to reach.

That milestone was the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Edward Dickens Gray, who reached the century mark on Jan. 17. Friends and family came from all over to celebrate the occasion, with some coming from nearby towns like Prentiss, Mt. Olive, Mendenhall and Magee while others came from as far away as Maryland. The party was marked by two different choirs, a little bit of preaching and a lot of memories of the centenarian, a Jefferson Davis County native who now lives at JNH.

“For me, it’s been a special journey in this life to think of such a man that God has blessed us with, that we can share 100 years of his life on this earth with him here,” said his grandson, Kevin McGee. “And we can say ‘I love you,’ with him here today.”

His friends and family showed their love by standing to their feet and singing “Happy Birthday” as he made his entrance, followed by a round of applause from the 100-plus crowd.

Mississippi State Hospital Chaplain Jimmy Davis spoke from Psalm 90, reading, “Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures.”

“So I pause now and say God must have given you strength, sir,” he said.

Gray was also honored by two different choirs, one of which was composed of staff from Jaquith Nursing Home’s Madison Inn. He was also presented with a proclamation from the mayor of Mt. Olive, recognizing him not simply for his age, but for his history of service and community involvement in the area. He had friends and family there from not just Mt. Olive, but nearly half the room stood when those from Prentiss, Mt. Olive, Mendenhall and Magee were asked to rise.

Of course, family members had their turn at the podium, standing beside the guest of honor to share their memories of “Uncle E.D.” and to tell how Gray had inspired them throughout their lives.

His great-great-niece Denise Jackson, who has had several firsts in her career as a police officer, was recently featured in a newspaper article that talked about her tradition of making history. Looking at the headline, she said, all she could think of was her Uncle E.D.

She summed up everyone's feelings with her closing comments.

"We take a lot of things for granted. We take a lot of little things for granted, but the most important thing is the love of family," she said.

"Uncle E.D., I love you. This is your day, and there are many more to come."

*Founded in 1976, Jaquith Nursing Home is a 479-bed long-term care facility dedicated to serving individuals who are in need of nursing care in a safe and comfortable therapeutic environment. The nursing home is located on the 350-acre campus of Mississippi State Hospital at Whitfield. JNH is accredited by The Joint Commission.*

-30-

#### **PHOTOS ATTACHED:**

**1 – Attendees at Edward Gray's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party reach out to shake his hand and stand to applaud him during his entrance into the room. The Jefferson Davis County native turned 100 on Monday, Jan. 17. Friends and family traveled from across the country for his party at Jaquith Nursing Home.**

**2 – A group of staff members from Jaquith Nursing Home formed a choir to sing some classic gospel songs they knew E.D. Gray would enjoy hearing. Their performance brought tears to the audience.**

**3 – Just one of the several cakes that were prepared for the celebration. There was also a fully-stocked buffet line and fresh fruits available for the approximately 100 guests.**