

COMMUNITY FOCUS

NEWSLETTER OF VISITING NURSE SERVICE & HOSPICE OF SUFFOLK, INC.

WINTER 2016



VISITING NURSE SERVICE &
HOSPICE OF SUFFOLK, INC.



Peace in the Garden

By Barbara Colatosti

This past September, VNSHS hosted the annual Memorial Garden Open House, organized by Hospice Bereavement Coordinator Lorrette Ayers with the assistance at the event from our dedicated staff and Hospice Volunteers. This is an opportune time to reflect on the integral role that the Memorial Garden plays in providing supportive services to families in our community.

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KEEPING COMMUNICATION OPEN

by Stefanie Gembala

In an agency balancing the need for growth while providing quality patient care, the IT department constantly asks itself how we can improve communication and efficiency. As employees are added and departments grow, keeping the lines of communication open between people poses a challenge. How do we foster collaboration between employees in different departments and sometimes, different buildings?

The VNSHS intranet, designed by the IT department's newest member Alvin Ledwidge, addresses these questions. What is an intranet? It is often described as an internal website – something only your staff can see and use. It is somewhat like the internet except for the fact that it is only accessible to those within the company.

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HEART to HEART
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11th Annual Golf Classic

By Barbara Colatosti

Participants of VNSHS' 11th Annual Golf Classic enjoyed another banner day this past August 3, 2015 at Indian Hills Country Club in Northport. The weather couldn't have been better for playing golf, and all had a great time. The day's events began with breakfast and a shotgun start at noon. Lunch and snacks were provided on the course, followed by a cocktail reception and dinner.

This year's event honorees were the not-for-profit organization, Dentists for a Better Huntington. The group currently comprises civic-minded dentists, who have joined together to say "thank you" to the Huntington community. Since 1997, they have been devoting their energies to helping others, with the goal of "giving something back."

Dr. Raymond A. Mascolo is President of the group, and Dr. Ina Gellerman, Treasurer. Both are successful in their own practices and are equally dedicated to Dentists for a Better Huntington, as well as supporting other charitable associations.



Pictured L to R: Barbara Sorelle, VNSHS Event Planner, Linda Taylor, VNSHS CEO, Huntington Town Councilman Eugene Cooke, Dr. Ray Mascolo, Dentists for a Better Huntington and NYS Assemblyman Andrew Raia

Huntington Hospital, Huntington Township High School Scholarship Program, and The Place — a non-profit drug prevention center.

Dentists for a Better Huntington has worked unceasingly since its inception by branching out and supporting worthy charitable groups in need. In turn, VNSHS was privileged to honor these extraordinarily charitable folks at this year's annual golf classic. Everyone enjoyed the day on the green, which continued into the evening with food, festivities, and fun in celebration of charitable giving. ❤️

VNSHS was one of the Dentists' grant recipients this year, as well as Temple Beth El Project H.O.P.E., Salvation Army to support veterans, and Meals on Wheels.

Previous beneficiaries have included a multitude of other deserving programs and facilities in the area, including



HEART to HEART

From our hearts to yours,
Linda Taylor, RN, BSN, MA
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Friends,

Providing home care and hospice services, whether through visits made by multiple caring professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers in the home or on site at our Hospice House, takes a complete team effort that incorporates a variety of specialties and skills. The varied gamut is reflected in this issue highlighting the very personal nature of home health aide care as compared to state of the art technology required in support of our caregiving. Technology has become integral to our successful operation at every level, and while our latest software application described in an article within provides for internal communication within the organization, we have been using computers to document electronic records for close to 30 years. All staff document patient care given using specially designed software that enables us to share care plans among clinicians while protecting patient confidentiality. All clinicians, including Home Health Aides also described in this issue, use laptop or tablet computers for documentation, and cell phones for texting timely encrypted messages that expedite communication for more effective care planning, by way of example. Technology enables us to transmit data from the “field” while in patients’ homes, to the central server in our office so that clinicians may share information needed to coordinate patient care timely, and supervisory staff can provide critical quality oversight remotely. Computers direct our telephone system that connects the main office with the Hospice House to send data and voice communications, and internet access provides informational resources to our staff, all in the interest of improving the quality of care to our patients. The technology of computers also provides for us to comply with Medicare regulations that require data submission about patient outcomes that ultimately get published on Medicare’s website.

Behind all operations however, no matter how technical, are the people – caring people who are motivated to do their jobs, whatever their jobs, to improve the quality of life for our patients. We are grateful as an agency to have a dedicated team of skilled and compassionate people working together toward this end. We are proud to have been recognized for the 10th year in a row among the top 25% of over 10,000 Medicare home health agencies in the entire country. And we are most proud of our consistently high patient satisfaction ratings that confirm you would recommend our services to friends and family, or come back yourselves when you need us – and you do! After all, this is what we are here to do, utilizing the best technology has to offer in support of bringing the human side of caring to you to make your lives better. May the human side of caring shine through in all that we do always! ❤️



Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk is pleased to announce that Daejin Jeong was selected as the 2015 recipient of the Helen Strobl Memorial Scholarship Award. Daejin is the seventh Northport High School graduate to receive this award. He is attending Farmingdale State College, his goal is to become a Nurse Anesthetist.

Pictured with Daejin are his mom, VNSHS CEO Linda Taylor (far right) and John J. Lynch, President of the VNSHS Board of Trustees.

John Thomas ~ Veritable Volunteer By Barbara Colatosti

A critical component in the VNSHS Hospice team is the corp of volunteers who train and then give their time to the workings of the organization in so many ways. One of those amazing people is John Thomas, who quantifies the meaning of volunteer in being about as genuine as you can get.

John worked at North Shore Health System as a Respiratory Therapist on the night shift for 37 years. Dedicated and committed, John encountered countless medical emergencies and patient therapies over time. When he retired, he eventually sought to do volunteer work and interviewed at VNSHS. He initially worked at the Hospice House from 7 to 10 pm, but through his prior experience and a desire to do more, he recognized that his services could be better utilized during the overnight at the House. He currently volunteers often all night long, sitting by a patient's bedside keeping them company.

Spending time with patients and families is something John never had the opportunity to cultivate extensively at the hospital because his work required all of his time. What he pleasantly realized through volunteering is how much he enjoys devoting his time to the patients' well being through his company and caring.

"In addition, working with the staff at VNSHS is a pleasure," John says, "they are wonderful and appreciative, and when I stay overnight, they pop in all night long and can't offer me enough support."

Through spending much time with patients, John found that he provides a calming, peaceful presence to them during a difficult time. "Late at night, patients can often experience greater anxiety and pain, and so it feels really good to be there for them during that crucial time," John explains. "It is so very important to be present for someone in whatever capacity they need, to comfort them or just hold their hand." Sometimes patients' talk, and John allows them the freedom to do that. "I take a ride with them in their imagination." John does whatever he can to make their journey more tolerable and to ensure they are as comfortable as possible. He has discovered a happy medium between the patient and himself. "It is a calming experience for both of us, and it makes a huge difference to know that a patient is looked after and cared for through the entire process, and to make sure everything is okay."

"It is an amazing experience volunteering for VNSHS," John expresses, "and I thoroughly enjoy working with everyone from the administrators to the nursing staff, as well as the patients," he says, "who touch my life." In turn, he brings his time and talent in a magnanimous way and is an exceptional addition to the healthcare team at VNSHS. ❤️



Peace in the Garden Continued from page 1

When the Hospice House opened in 2004, there was no more than a leveled patio coupled with a vision for the beautiful garden that blooms there today. From the genesis of any creation until completion, it takes time, care, and a collective effort of many in order for it to flourish, and that is exactly how this garden has grown. Whether you step out of the French doors leading from the Hospice House or enter through the latticed arbor from the front parking lot, verdant shrubs and flowering plants, in a rainbow of color specifically timed to bloom one after another throughout the season, capture your senses. The central focal point of the garden is the fountain where water trickles down and adds to the serenity, but with places to sit and relax in these peaceful surroundings, the highlight of the garden is the memorial bricks that are strategically placed throughout. On each brick is a carefully engraved sentiment that has been especially chosen by the family of a loved one, including the patient's name along with

lines of heartfelt words and even symbols, for family and friends to see. The bricks are offered in 3 styles, and the related donations received benefit the house in many ways.

Lorrette Ayers is instrumental in directing the entire project and works closely with family members to help them choose and create their personalized memorial bricks. At such times families often share stories about their loved ones, and as a result Lorrette feels as though she gets to know a part of the patient through learning about their lives. She describes the process to be “an awesome privilege for me and a very powerful moment when a brick or paver is unveiled for a family to ultimately see as it is placed perfectly amidst the garden walls”. The Memorial Garden provides a peaceful haven for families to continue to visit and enjoy, and VNSHS encourages folks to visit not only at the open house, but also throughout the years in loving memory or honor of their loved one. ❤️



Keeping Communication Open Continued from page 1

by Stefanie Gembala

Intranets have become the standard in managing company data such as policies, procedures and corporate documents, giving employees a central platform from which they can share information.

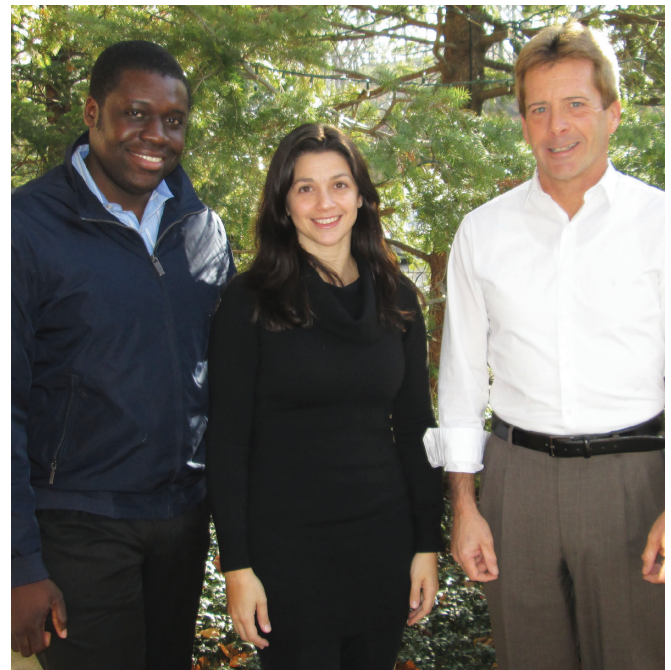
As employees enter the VNSHS intranet they are welcomed by our home page which posts upcoming events, important announcements and provides links to helpful information. The home page ties the agency together. Whether a nurse, a therapist or an office administrator, there is something there for everyone to benefit from.

From the home page employees can branch out to various departments. Human Resources use the intranet to easily distribute information and collect data from the staff, giving them time to stay on top of more important matters such ever-changing employment and labor laws. Our Education department provides links to relevant news articles and online training courses. The more education we provide online, the less we need to pull the staff into the office and away from their patients.

The most exciting area of our intranet has been the Clinical department, where the intranet originated and to which we have devoted the most time. In fact, our need for a better intake and scheduling process lead Alvin to developing our intranet in the first place. The intranet's "referral log", as we refer to it, replaces all spreadsheets and email communication. Information on each new patient is stored in one single database. As changes are made to a new patient referral or additional services requested, the intranet automatically generates email alerts and sends them to the appropriate persons. By automating communication, services are placed sooner, allowing us to provide better and more efficient patient care.

Our most innovative development might be our mapping system. Our maps give schedulers and managers an overview of patients assigned to our clinicians. The map allows us to see at a glance if we are using the staff in the most efficient way. For example, we have clinicians who primarily see patients in the Huntington area. Huntington is very large and a new patient could be closer to Melville than to Huntington village. Viewing the patient on our map may prompt us to assign the visit to a clinician on the South shore, allowing us to expedite that patient visit.

The VNSHS intranet has been an important asset to our agency. It simplifies communication within the company and puts us in a better position for growth as productivity increases. It allows our staff to be better internal communicators, connecting employees between departments and locations. When more than half of your agency works in the field rather than down the hall communication is essential. The intranet allows us to focus on what has always been our number one priority: providing quality patient care. ❤️



VNSHS' Information Technology team (L to R) Alvin Ledwidge, Stefanie Gembala and Scott Schafer

HOME HEALTH AIDES ~ THE UNSUNG HEROES

By Barbara Colatosti

Providing assistance with personal care and everyday activities such as bathing, dressing and grooming, preparing light meals, and maintaining a patient's stable environment are some of the diverse responsibilities of a Home Health Aide.

What makes a HHA vital to the well being of our patient's are many aspects of their job that are unspoken and unseen. In addition to personal grooming, the responsibility of earning a patient's trust and exemplifying caring compassion while carrying out their duties are what make a home health aide's role such an imperative one.

Genna Andolfo, a HHA at VNSHS was originally trained as a nurse in England, and began working in the U.S. as a home health aide because she truly loves the job, and finds it similar to her work as a nurse in England. Her most important task when entering a new patient's home is to get to know the patient and their family, and to earn their trust. Genna quickly takes in the patient's surroundings, draws them



Genna Andolfo

out in conversation in order to assess how she may best suit their needs. She elaborated that some patients initially may not know why an aide is there or they may be frightened. Genna works diligently to comfort them by listening, learning more about them and their life,

and ultimately gaining their trust. "When this is accomplished," she says, "caring for them becomes a comfort and an honor and I know I have done my job."

Tom Krahel spoke of his work as a HHA as a genuine calling. Tom's first career was as a banker for a large financial institution, and then he went on to become a major account representative in business. In 2001, he began caring for his father-in-law, and did that for 7 years. He has also volunteered at the Veterans Administration Hospital for the last 15 years



Tom Krahel

interacting with patients. His love of caring for others grew from these very personal experiences. In 2013, he interviewed at VNSHS and began work as a part-time HHA, which eventually turned into a full-time career. Tom's dedication to the work he does is apparent in the enthusiasm he shows when speaking about it. An avid Yankee fan, Tom describes his love of being an HHA as similar to that of his passion for the game. He feels that doing this work is like being a pitcher for a Yankee all-star game and is indeed a privilege. "Working at VNSHS is such rewarding work and I am fortunate enough to work with amazing professionals doing it," Tom shared.

People who are ill or disabled feel more comfortable at home and healthcare provided in familiar surroundings has been shown to improve the mental and physical well being of the patient. It has been proven to be a major factor in the healing process, and many times the HHA often provides that comfort. Maryann Blasko, Home Health Aide Manager, explains the role of the HHA best. "Home Health Aide's are wonderful people who are great caregivers and do exemplary work. The HHA's at VNSHS are truly the heart and soul of the company." ❤️



**VISITING NURSE SERVICE &
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Linda Taylor, RN, BSN, MA
Chief Executive Officer

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Winter Soiree

Saturday, March 12, 2016 - Northport Yacht Club, Northport, NY – 7:00pm – 11:00 pm
Event sells out quickly, please call 631-261-7200 for reservations.

A Taste of Long Island, Premier Wine Tasting Event

Thursday, April 14, 2016 – The Larkfield, East Northport, NY - 6:30pm-10:00 pm

Run for the Health of It - 5K Race

Saturday, May 7, 2016 – 505 Main Street, Northport, NY - 8:30 am. Kids Fun Run - 9:00 am

12th Annual Charity Golf Classic

Monday, August 1, 2016 - Indian Hills Country Club – 12:00 pm Shotgun Start

CONTACT BARBARA SORELLE 631-930-9310
Visit us online at visitingnurseservice.org

