

# COMMUNITY FOCUS NEWS

## In this issue

Health Care Hero	2
Golf Classic	3
Giving	4
Compassionate Care	5
Physical Therapy	6
Community Thrift Shop	7
Events	8

A Newsletter of Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk • Fall 2021

## HEART TO HEART



**Linda Taylor, MA, BSN, RN**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

The generosity of donors enables VNSHS to provide quality healthcare to patients regardless of their ability to pay. Please consider making a gift at [visitingnurseservice.org/giving](http://visitingnurseservice.org/giving) or in the enclosed envelope to help local families facing a healthcare crisis.

Dear Friend,

I could say “we’re back” as we improve vaccination levels and see COVID-19 infection rates decline throughout our community, but I can gratefully report that we actually never really left! Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk (VNSHS) maintained our home care and hospice services through a difficult spring and summer, albeit modified with the addition of virtual visits, while the Hospice House remained open 24 hours/day 365 days/year without missing a beat. I credit our dedicated staff who juggled their personal family demands with those at work to meet health care challenges in our community that went beyond the pandemic itself. Thank you to all who continued to support us whether accommodating modified home visit schedules or participating in our on-line or virtual fundraising events. July 1<sup>st</sup> was a significant date for us as office-based employees returned to work on-site after a long absence through which operations were done remotely. July 1<sup>st</sup> also marked the grand re-opening of The Community Thrift Shop in a beautiful new Huntington space at 345 Main Street, demonstrating our ability to assume additional initiatives that demanded staff and financial commitments at an already stressful time. Neither could have been accomplished without our dedicated clinical and support staff to care for patients along with an expanded corps of wonderful volunteers to staff the new reopened Thrift Shop.

We look forward now to the holidays ahead with hope and gratitude and with special thanks to you for your consistent and longstanding support. 2022 will mark yet another milestone as VNSHS recognizes 70 years since first incorporated in 1952. We look forward to celebrating the unique role we continue to play as an independent community-based organization among the maze of health care providers. We appreciate you and welcome your input from which we can best respond to what is important to you in meeting your health care needs - whether rehabilitative or at the end-of-life - with competence and compassionate caring in every encounter.

*Linda Taylor*

## HEALTH CARE HERO SPOTLIGHT ON Silvia Rivera-Belardo, MSN, RN



**Health Care Hero is an ongoing series featuring an interview with a VNSHS employee.**

Silvia Rivera-Belardo, MSN, RN, joined Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk as clinical manager in 2015, bringing a diverse background in community and field nursing from New York City's top hospitals and health care systems. Assisted by tuition reimbursement and a clinical preceptor provided by VNSHS, Ms. Rivera-Belardo completed her master's degree with a thesis on the use of telehealth to prevent hospitalizations which has shaped the current VNSHS telehealth program. Today, as director of clinical operations for the certified home health agency (CHHA) division of VNSHS, Ms. Rivera-Belardo is responsible for the overall performance of CHHA and helps to advance its strategy and mission. She has assembled and leads a team of clinical managers, quality assurance and performance improvement educators, administrative staff, field clinicians and home health aides.

Ms. Rivera-Belardo was attracted to VNSHS' long history of service to the community, broad range of services and leadership in health care which aligned well with her own vision and commitment to high quality, compassionate care and effective public health services. She observed how patients usually identify VNSHS by the red heart on the clinicians' uniforms. Over the years, she learned that the heart is an excellent representation of VNSHS' compassionate interaction with patients, caregivers, each other and the community. Ms. Rivera-Belardo shares "The VNSHS team is committed, skilled and compassionate. It is common to see field staff going above the call of duty for a patient in need". She recalls when a physical therapist learned her patient's new apartment was not yet furnished, the therapist and her colleagues donated and delivered furniture and essentials, enabling the patient to comfortably recover

from surgery. A nurse surprised a homebound patient with a pizza after the patient mentioned a particular restaurant had the best pizza pies on Long Island. When an aide sensed a patient's anxiousness over losing independence when he began to require assistance showering, the aide calmed his concerns by singing – and inviting him to sing with her – as she helped him in the shower. VNSHS employees often donate their banked vacation time to a colleague in need of time to tend to personal or family emergencies. These are just a few of the daily examples of VNSHS' caring and compassion.

Ms. Rivera-Belardo cites technological innovations as the most dramatic change during her more than 30 years in health care. Technology has changed the way we work and has led to improved patient outcomes and increased efficiency. "Technology allows us to gain a better perspective of our patient's needs, respond quickly to their needs and objectively assess our work. It also encourages patients to participate in their plan of care and/or make modifications to improve their health. Technology enables us to work more closely with patients on what truly matters most to them" Ms. Rivera-Belardo said. During the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth, virtual meetings and remote work became crucial allowing staff, patients, caregivers and other health care providers to safely communicate while maintaining daily operations without interruption.

Asked what she enjoys most about home health care, Ms. Rivera-Belardo said without hesitation, "One of the most rewarding aspects of home health care is that clinicians are able to form a deeper bond and understanding of our patient's lifestyle, support system and any changes in health, all of which lead to improved outcomes."

# 17TH ANNUAL VNSHS GOLF CLASSIC HONORING DAN ROSSITER RAISES \$90,000 FOR HOSPICE HOUSE

More than 150 guests gathered to honor Dan Rossiter at the Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk 17th Annual Golf Classic on August 2nd at Indian Hills Country Club in Northport. Golfers enjoyed 18 holes on scenic greens overlooking the Long Island Sound.

After a modified event in 2020, VNSHS was delighted to bring guests together for a dinner reception and lively awards ceremony. Ron Duswalt, founder of the VNSHS Golf Classic, reported the event has raised more than \$1 million since its inception in 2005. Linda Taylor, VNSHS CEO, said that each year, the organization recognizes a respected local leader who has given back to VNSHS and the community. Honoree Dan Rossiter is president of Rossiter Financial Group, which was founded by his grandfather Robert Rossiter in 1947. Today, the firm manages more than \$350 million in assets. Dan Rossiter is a member of VNSHS Foundation Board, as was his father, Tim Rossiter.

On behalf of the VNSHS board and staff, Ms. Taylor presented Dan Rossiter with this year's VNSHS Outstanding Community Service Award. Suffolk County Sheriff Errol D. Toulon Jr. also presented Mr. Rossiter with a Proclamation on behalf of the Suffolk County Police Department.

In a touching tribute, Mr. Rossiter shared his family's personal experiences with Hospice House:

"The first person I'd like to remember is my mom, Jane Rossiter. My mom was diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer 15 years ago. After meeting with her doctors, it became apparent that my mom only had weeks to live. It was at this point where my family reached out to VNSHS to learn more about how they could assist with my mom's final days.

"My mom was a very private person and more of a homebody than a traveler. My mom's one request was to pass with dignity in her own home in Commack. When we asked VNSHS if they could care for my mom in our family home, they advised us that this was part of their services provided, and there would be no issue with this type of care. Needless to say, the nurses at VNSHS were beyond outstanding with my mom's care. Death of a loved one is never easy, but VNSHS certainly shared in easing the pain for my whole family.

"The second person I'd like to remember is my good friend and neighbor Jeff Galluzzo. Jeff was one of the first neighbors I met when I moved to Commack. Jeff was loved by everyone who came in contact with him.

"Jeff's care was a bit different than my mom's care due to the fact that Jeff spent the last two weeks of his life at the actual Hospice House located in East Northport. Last week, I asked Jeff's wife, my good friend Jodi Galluzzo, what she remembered most about her experience at the Hospice House. Two stories came to mind for her. The first memory Jodi had was how the Hospice House was so welcoming not only to her immediate family but to all of the friends who came through those doors the last two weeks of Jeff's life. Folks would bring food, and VNSHS opened their kitchen and their living room like it was Jodi's own home. Whether it was opening their kitchen or sharing their stereo so Jeff and Jodi could slow dance, VNSHS was so supportive in every way.

"In the final days, as it became apparent that Jeff was going to pass, the nurse that was taking care of him had a feeling that he may pass



**Ron Duswalt, VNSHS board member and Golf Classic co-chair, Dan Rossiter, honoree and Linda Taylor, VNSHS CEO**

that evening. As her shift came to an end, she made a decision to sleep in her car that night in the event that Jeff passed. Unfortunately, Jeff did pass that evening, but did not have to pass without his nurse as she was notified and was there for Jodi and the rest of her family within minutes. Just truly incredible.

"The third person I'd like to remember tonight is our Aunt Charlotte. Coincidentally, our Aunt Charlotte was in Hospice House at the same time as our good buddy Jeff. The care she received from the Hospice House was a great relief to our Uncle Tom, who was her caretaker for years. Aunt Charlotte was battling Alzheimer's disease, and the care she received to make those last weeks of her life calm were second to none.

"My whole family is so grateful to all the nurses and staff that made our loved ones' last few days so peaceful."

**VNSHS would like to thank Dan Rossiter, the Golf Classic Committee, sponsors, golfers, volunteers and Indian Hills staff for a memorable and successful 17th Annual VNSHS Golf Classic.**

## MEMORIALIZE AND HONOR A LOVED ONE

In the late 1990s, Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk recognized a gap in service on Long Island. There was no dedicated facility for patients who required end-of-life care and were unable to stay in their own homes. As the millennium drew to a close, Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers juggled career and family while becoming caregivers to their parents and grandparents. Quality of life was sacrificed as families found it difficult to balance family needs with caring for loved ones in their final days. VNSHS rose to this challenge, and in November 2004, it established New York State's first freestanding inpatient hospice.

Although many Americans prefer to spend their final days at home, most will spend their last days in facilities very unlike home and without a full complement of services designed to alleviate pain and suffering. With eight private patient rooms, a family room, kitchen, sunroom, meditation room and garden patio, our Hospice House in East Northport is specifically designed to meet the needs of terminally ill patients and their families in a warm, homelike setting that neither appears nor functions like a hospital or nursing home. Since it was founded, more than 5,000 patients have been lovingly cared for at Hospice House. With no set visiting hours, loved ones can stay 24 hours a day. Today, Hospice House serves as a model for the development of other hospice services.

Unfortunately, Hospice House runs at an annual deficit of approximately \$500,000. While this sum is significant, the comfort and service provided to the community by Hospice House are immeasurable. VNSHS is committed to providing the highest quality care regardless of insurance coverage or ability to pay. We also provide services that are not mandated because we know they enhance the comfort of our patients, their caregivers and loved ones.

## HOSPICE HOUSE NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

Hospice House .....	\$1,000,000
Family Room .....	\$500,000
Memorial Garden .....	\$250,000
Greeter's Desk .....	\$100,000
Staff Entrance .....	\$50,000
Medical Office .....	\$25,000
Conference Room .....	\$15,000
Hospice Bed (8) .....	\$15,000
Home Health Aide Department Office .....	\$10,000
Hospice Department Office .....	\$10,000
Social Work Department Office .....	\$10,000
Volunteer Department Office .....	\$10,000
Staff Kitchen .....	\$10,000
Memorial Garden Flower Bed .....	\$7,500

One hundred percent tax-deductible donations and Memorial Garden bricks or pavers may be confirmed online at [visitingnurseservice.org/giving](http://visitingnurseservice.org/giving) or in the enclosed envelope. For questions or to purchase a naming opportunity above, please contact Susan Bruder at 631.930.9310 or [sbruder@vnshs.org](mailto:sbruder@vnshs.org). Naming opportunities will feature a plaque engraved with your personalized message. Pledges of \$25,000 or more may be fulfilled over a three-year period.

**The generosity of our donors is vital to our ability to help families facing a health care crisis. Every gift, regardless of amount, is greatly appreciated and helps offset our annual operating deficit. Please consider a personal or corporate gift in memory of or in honor of a loved one or special caregiver or to show your support of a critical community resource.**





# COMPASSIONATE CARE SINCE 1952



## WE CALL THEM THE DREAM TEAM

**Connie Fonseca with Erika Silverstein, VNSHS medical social worker**

## MEMORIAL GARDEN CEREMONY



Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk held its annual Hospice House Memorial Garden Dedication Ceremony on September 10th. The Memorial Garden at Hospice House at 101 Laurel Road in East Northport provides a lasting way to honor a loved one with an engraved brick or paver while supporting the mission of VNSHS.

“We were pleased to coordinate a less restrictive event than last year yet still meeting safety precautions for our families, staff and volunteers,” said Hospice House Support Services Coordinator Bonnie Gruber. Hospice House is a warm, homelike eight-bed inpatient unit designed to meet the needs of terminally ill patients and their families as they face the end of life. The Memorial Garden is a place of comfort and respite for Hospice House’s patients, their loved ones, as well as staff and volunteers.

“All of us who work with our hospice patients and families have a special part in their journey, and this event is a garden of their life stories that we all have a chapter in,” said Mary Denning, lead medical social worker.

Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk is humbled by the kind notes we receive from the caregivers of our patients. We would like to share with you a note received from the family of Connie Fonseca about her VNSHS hospice nurse Rose Anna, medical social worker Erika and acupuncturist Ed.

“We see them on a weekly basis, and while caring for our mother’s needs, there also is a sense of friendliness, calm, support and interest in her and her well-being that goes above and beyond. She responds and looks forward to their visits. She opens up to them about her concerns, and has had long, philosophical conversations with Erika. (To our surprise, we found out things about my mother we did not know!)”

“Ed was in the other day and asked what to concentrate on. Our mom was having trouble writing Christmas cards. Needles were placed on her right hand, pen and paper were brought over for her to practice on. That evening, she wrote 14 cards – a memory for those who have missed connecting with her this year.

“Rose Anna is a model of empathy, sense of humor and professionalism. From her very first visit, we have felt listened to, respected and encouraged.

“During this very tough year for all of us, the presence of this support team has made such a difference in our lives. Through all of our mom’s ups and downs, we have been truly supported and even uplifted.

“We wish everyone in our situation could have a Rose Anna, Erika and Ed in their lives. We are deeply grateful.”



# PHYSICAL THERAPY



## BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL THERAPY AT HOME

**(Left) Clinical manager Jacek Wiczynski and members of the VNSHS Rehabilitative Therapy Team**

Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk provides physical therapy in the home for a variety of medical conditions, including orthopedic care, recovery from traumatic injury and exacerbation of chronic diseases. The goal is to improve a patient's ability to care for himself or herself, increase strength and mobility, and teach exercise plans.

Clinical manager Jacek Wiczynski shares below the benefits of physical therapy at home and what patients should expect:

- The initial visit involves developing an individualized care plan with a set goal and action items.
- We work with the patient and the caregiver. The caregiver learns how to support the patient and what to look for should a chronic condition worsen.
- Spacing of visits is a key consideration, with adequate time in between for the patient to practice. Visits are more frequent in the beginning to allow for training of the patient and the caregiver.
- Physical therapy in the home is comfortable and less taxing, especially if a patient's mobility is severely compromised or if he or she is homebound.
- Physical therapists assess the home to determine how to prevent falls. We may suggest reconfiguring the layout of a room for clearer walkways or the placement of a piece of sturdy furniture to serve as a support should a patient need to rest.
- If a walker, hospital bed or commode is required, VNSHS will order this equipment, which would be covered by insurance, Medicare, Medicaid or private payment.
- For bedbound or patients with extremely limited mobility, VNSHS physical therapists assess patients for pressure ulcers due to lack of movement or certain diseases.
- Should supplemental services such as skilled nursing, occupational therapy or speech therapy be required, the VNSHS care team meets weekly to discuss each patient and utilizes electronic charts to share information.
- Rehabilitative therapy, including outpatient physical, occupational and speech, is reimbursed under both the Part A and Part B Medicare benefit.

## TOWNWIDE FUND AWARDS GRANT TO VISITING NURSE SERVICE & HOSPICE OF SUFFOLK



Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk was awarded a \$5,000.00 grant from the Townwide Fund of Huntington at the Annual Harvest Night Celebration. As one of the first member organizations, VNSHS is proud of and grateful for our longstanding partnership with the Townwide Fund which dates back to 1961 when the Fund was established by a group of Huntington residents who came together to help their neighbors in need.

**(Left) Janice Whelan, TWF board and grants chair, Alice Marie Rorke, TWF executive director, Susan Bruder, VNSHS development director, David Altman, TWF board president**



# THE COMMUNITY THRIFT SHOP



SORT. PRICE.  
SELL. REPEAT.  
ALL IN A DAY'S  
WORK AT THE  
COMMUNITY  
THRIFT SHOP!

The Community Thrift Shop, founded in 1965 as a cooperative effort by local non-profit organizations that serve those in need, held its long-awaited Grand Reopening at its new location at 345 Main Street in Huntington on July 1st. This followed the closing of the shop's former location on New York Avenue in spring 2020 during COVID-19 shutdowns.

All items sold at The Community Thrift Shop are donated, with proceeds benefitting families facing health care crises. Staffed by more than 60 volunteers, the shop has a steady flow of shoppers and donors. When sales exceeded expectations, the shop's hours increased from four to six days/week and product categories were expanded.

The Community Thrift Shop has seen an increase

in the popularity of second-hand shopping over the years, especially amongst teens. According to a recent study commissioned by online clothing retailer ThredUp, the resale market is expected to double in the next five years which is 11X faster than traditional retailers. The Community Thrift Shop is excited

to be back to serve the community as consumers are increasingly searching for bargains, hidden treasures and guilt-free shopping.

Janet Ambrosio, the shop's manager, expressed "Our heartfelt gratitude to our generous donors who fill the store with beautiful merchandise, our loyal shoppers who make the store a lively success and our dedicated volunteers who tirelessly give their time and heart to make the shop such a special place."



## COMMUNITY THRIFT SHOP AT A GLANCE

**New Address:** 345 Main Street Huntington, NY 11743

**Phone:** 631.610.2600

**Website:** lithriftshop.org

**Average Price of Merchandise:** \$6.57

**Special Promotions:** Flash sales almost every week including 50% off select items or fill a bag for \$10. Everyone's favorite \$2 rack is back.

**Trends:** Circular fashion - or concept of recycling, upcycling, renewed and repurposed fashion - have contributed to the popularity of thrifting. Shoppers are looking for great buys to wear or repurpose. A unique print shirt may be used to make a tote bag or pillow.

**Donations:** The shop accepts gently used and new women's and juniors clothing, shoes, handbags, jewelry, accessories, maternity, men's outerwear, small home goods and home décor at 345 Main in Huntington from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday to Saturday, and at VNSHS offices at 505 Main Street in Northport from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays.  
**Looking Ahead:** The shop will have an e-commerce presence with high-end designer goods and collectibles sold online.

**Follow us** on Facebook and Instagram at **#LITHRIFTSHOP**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Linda M. Taylor, MA, BSN, RN

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# EVENTS



**VISITING NURSE SERVICE  
&  
HOSPICE OF SUFFOLK**

## **FLU & COVID-19 MODERNA VACCINES AVAILABLE (including boosters)**

**ADMINISTERED BY AN RN AT  
VNSHS 505 MAIN STREET NORTHPORT, NY**

**BY APPOINTMENT ONLY AT  
VISITINGNURSESERVICE.ORG  
OR CALL 631.261.7200**

No fee for COVID-19 vaccine. For flu vaccine, traditional Medicare will be accepted as payment. For private insurance, HMO or Advantage Plan Patients there will be a \$40 regular dose & \$70 high dose fee with a receipt provided for reimbursement.

The Townwide Fund of Huntington and the United Way of Long Island.  
Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk is a participating agency of



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