

COMMUNITY FOCUS NEWS

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A Newsletter of Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk • Spring 2022

♥ HEART TO HEART

Dear Friend,

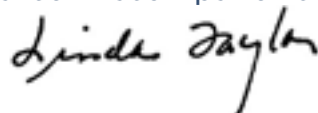


Linda Taylor, MA, BSN, RN
Chief Executive Officer

It has been a busy winter that included a thankfully short lived COVID surge, throughout which Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk (VNSHS) maintained our focus on caring for our patients and families in their own homes or at the Hospice House. With the most recent approval to administer second COVID booster shots to those over 50, VNSHS continues to schedule vaccine appointments through a link on our website in response to ongoing demand and in hopes of keeping infection rates at bay. In March VNSHS successfully renewed Medicare/Medicaid Certification following an on-site survey by CHAP (Community Health Accreditation Program) for both our hospice and home care programs and received accolades from reviewers who observed positive interactions between VNSHS clinicians and families that demonstrated clear interventions to improve the health and well-being of our patients. VNSHS is proud to boast a 4.5-star rating in published performance outcomes by Medicare for excellence in patient care that surpassed ratings of other similar certified agencies serving our community.

VNSHS now looks forward to spring and summer with plans to resume in person events as we emerge from a bit of a COVID hibernation that has daunted us all. 2022 marks a VNSHS milestone anniversary of 70 years in service to the community reflective of growth from a small community-based nursing organization to the broad-spectrum home care and hospice agency of today. Our community-based history is rich in opportunities accessed to improve the health of individuals and families, and we value our ability as a free-standing community-based organization to respond directly and timely to community health needs. To that end we look forward to enhancing our current services as we recruit Nurse Practitioners to fill an identified gap for needed medical oversight to the homebound. Meanwhile we continue to provide transportation to medical appointments for those who cannot get out and need the assistance of a VNSHS home health aide to do so.

VNSHS remains grateful to all who support our mission and welcome your continued input to help us serve you better.



The generosity of donors enables VNSHS to provide quality health care to patients regardless of their ability to pay. Please consider making a gift at visitingnurseservice.org/giving or in the enclosed envelope to help local families facing a health care crisis.

SPOTLIGHT ON VNSHS



Health Care Hero is an ongoing series spotlighting a Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk (VNSHS) employee. In this edition, we recognize the entire VNSHS Team whose dedication, determination and passion achieved a top quality of care rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

VNSHS was founded 70 years ago as the first home nursing service in Suffolk County and in 2004 opened Hospice House, New York State's first freestanding inpatient hospice facility. VNSHS has established itself as a trusted leader in compassionate home health and hospice care of the highest quality. This year, we are honored to be recognized with a 4.5-star quality care rating and 4.0 patient satisfaction survey rating from the CMS. These combined achievements place VNSHS as the top-rated certified home health agency in the region. This rating was achieved despite the unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID pandemic. "These fantastic CMS Star Ratings accurately reflect the high level of quality care that VNSHS provides the community every day" shares Patricia Matos-Puente, MD, President, VNSHS Board.

CMS developed this rating system to help consumers make health care decisions. The quality of care ratings are based on performance measures of patients including managing daily activities, treating symptoms, preventing harm, preventing unplanned hospital care and value of care.

You have a choice in health care providers. Choose Top Rated Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk.

Patients may not realize they have a choice in selecting a health care provider. The CMS star rating provides an easy way for patients to learn about providers in their area. Patients should alert their physician, health care provider, hospital or discharge planner that they chose Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk for their home health and hospice care needs. It is important that patients or caregivers ask for us by name.

Please see below how VNSHS ranks above the National and New York State average in the following categories:

IMPROVED WALKING/MOBILITY

93.9% VNSHS

82.5% National average

83.2% New York average

IMPROVED BREATHING

90.5% VNSHS

84.8% National average

87.6% New York average

HOME HEALTH CARE STARTED IN A TIMELY MANNER

99.9% VNSHS

95.6% National average

98% New York average

PATIENT REMAINS IN THE COMMUNITY AFTER HOME HEALTH CARE DISCHARGE (No NY average reported)

88% VNSHS

78.6% National average

PATIENT/CAREGIVER WOULD RECOMMEND VNSHS TO A FRIEND/FAMILY

83% VNSHS

78% National average

74% New York average

RUN FOR THE HEALTH OF IT 5K

22nd ANNUAL RUN FOR THE HEALTH OF IT IN MEMORY OF ANITA THOMAS



Anita and Bill Thomas

To meet Anita Thomas was to be inspired by her positivity, graciousness, strength and selfless commitment to helping those in need. Anita touched the lives of every person who had the pleasure of knowing her. At the 22nd Annual VNSHS Run for the Health of It Presented by The Charles and Helen Reichert Family Foundation, VNSHS will remember and honor the life and legacy of our dear friend, Anita Thomas, whose warm smile and kindness will be forever in our hearts.

Born in Germany in 1939, Anita V. Thomas was 4 years old when she received her last rights twice due to diphtheria and pneumonia while in a bomb shelter. She survived, and in 1949 immigrated to the United States, attended Northport Schools, obtained a teaching degree and Master's in Special Education.

In 1959, Anita married Bill Thomas and they settled in Northport where they raised three children, Kathy, Peter and Eric. Anita was a special education teacher and Bill was a middle school science and health teacher. While on a family vacation, a tragic car accident caused the loss of one son and a serious injury to the other son. While tragedy could have torn the family apart, it instead brought them closer as Anita and Bill dedicated themselves to helping others.

During the 1970s, Anita was an early leader of the Northport Running Club. Over the years, Anita ran hundreds of races including 26 marathons in New York City and Washington, DC and concluded her running career by qualifying for and completing the Boston Marathon in 1983. Bill who was also an avid runner, joined Anita at countless races and marathons.

Anita and Bill devoted their time to charitable activities. The Thomas' formed a trust in their son Eric's name to support Long Island charities helping children with disabilities. They also hosted families from Haiti whose children traveled to the United States for surgery. The death of Anita's mother in 2006 introduced her to the work of Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk. Anita gave back by supporting VNSHS fashion shows and soirees while also encouraging others to join her. She was recognized as Rotarian of the Year in 2016. With Bill by her side, Anita brought Soles 4 Souls, an international shoe drive, to the community and this annual event continues in their name to this day.

In May 2020, Anita and Bill passed away at Hospice House within one week of each other due to COVID-19. Anita and Bill Thomas will be remembered as loving parents, grandparents of six boys and active leaders of the Northport community and beyond.

A HOSPICE MOMENT

By Joann Grimm, Hospice Volunteer

"When I retired from my years of being a school administrator, I began to think of ways not only to be productive but to be of service, to give back. Little did I know that, on my new journey, I would receive far more than I could ever give.

"I was interviewed at the Hospice House, received training, and with a certain amount of nervousness, received my first assignments to assist at the House by answering the phone, welcoming families and spending time with each patient as their needs dictated. That nervousness quickly dissipated, thanks to the support and encouragement of the staff.

"While visiting one of the patient's families, I commented on how they had placed a beautiful scarf around their mother's neck. Her daughter told me that her mother always wore a scarf and that it was the family's way of continuing to honor her and comfort her. The silk scarf brought comfort to their mother and to them and framed their mother's thin, frail face with color and beauty. The patient died shortly after our exchange.

"I returned to the desk while the family made funeral arrangements. Before they left, the patient's daughter came to the desk and handed me a scarf. It was one that had belonged to her mother. She thanked me for spending time with them and for listening to their stories about their mother. The family wanted me to have something to keep as a token of their gratitude and as a special remembrance of their mother. Needless to say, I was overwhelmed by this beautiful gesture and so grateful to be honored in such a manner. That moment and the scarf are treasured by me.

"Being at the Hospice House has continued to bestow on me countless blessings. Whether ministering to a patient or to a family, I leave after each assignment a better person and a more grateful person for having been given the opportunity to be part of such a network."

Whether you commit to a couple hours a week or a couple hours a year, Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk provides rewarding opportunities for you to give your time to make a difference in the lives of patients and families facing a health care crisis. Some volunteers



have specialized expertise, but most are people who want to serve our community and help their friends and neighbors. Some volunteers work with patients, while others help at the office, events or in the community. Volunteer opportunities are available 365 days a year. To learn more about volunteer opportunities at VNSHS, please contact Bonnie Gruber at bgruber@vnshs.org or 631.930.9340.

COMPASSIONATE CARE SINCE 1952



Don Olson; Corinne Olson; Donna Cole, VNSHS Occupational Therapist; Leslie Saravay, VNSHS Physical Therapist

Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk is humbled by the kind words we receive from our patients and their caregivers. It is inspiring to hear their feedback and know we are improving quality of life and comfort. Donald Olson, husband and caregiver for his wife and VNSHS patient, Corinne shares their experience with VNSHS below.

Corinne Olson is in year three of receiving VNSHS palliative care, a specialized multidisciplinary care for serious illnesses. With a focus on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain, physical and mental stress of a serious illness, the goal of palliative care is to improve the quality of life for both patients and their family. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness. Patients may receive active curative treatment during palliative care.

With a 40-year career in which Don worked closely with physicians and the health care industry combined with his observations of Corinne's previous experience with rehabilitative therapy from another provider, Don felt he had a good perspective of what to expect

when Corinne came onto VNSHS services. While he had expected average care that would make Corinne comfortable, he was pleasantly surprised at the dedication and quality of services from Corinne's VNSHS care team, registered nurse Maryanne, occupational therapist Donna, physical therapist Leslie and medical social worker Erika. Don describes Corinne's care team as "Comforting but authoritative. Their visits are uplifting and productive. VNSHS' professional, talented staff has a deep knowledge of their responsibilities. This creates a spirit of confidence and a healing environment for the patient and family."

Corinne responded to VNSHS services immediately. Although confined to a bed, she experienced greater movement and less pain. Sharing stories and photos, VNSHS' visits brought the outside

world to Corinne. When her care team learned that Christmas was her favorite holiday, they suggested, and Don agreed they move her bed to the living room in front of the tree during their visits. Corinne's response was so positive that her future visits with VNSHS are now beside the tree which is displayed year-round in the living room.

From VNSHS' first visit, when Corinne's care team asked what is most important to both Corinne and Don, their visits have been collaborative. VNSHS provides guidance to Don on how to care for Corinne. If he has a question in between visits, her VNSHS team is a phone call away. Don shares that this unique relationship provides the patient and caregivers with a sense of trust and "ownership of their destiny".

Don feels that there is no comparison to the home care provided by VNSHS. The familiarity of home combined with the professional, compassionate care has made a world of difference for both Corinne and Don.

WE ARE HIRING

Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk takes great pride in the way we care for our patients and employees. VNSHS team members are supported, encouraged and recognized by colleagues and rewarded for their contributions. Employees regularly share their own paid time off balances with a colleague who is battling an illness or a personal crisis. VNSHS is also responsive to the needs of its employees. This year, the agency offered full-time employees the option of a four-day work week to improve work-life balance.

Shares Tedra Grant, VNSHS Clinical Manager "What I love about VNSHS home care is that I get to spend quality time with one patient at a time. Home care is a more controlled pace and schedule than other medical settings. I have the time to read my patient's clinical notes and understand who my patients are. I have the chance to sit down and listen without interruptions to the challenges facing the patient. This understanding and 1:1 relationship allows me to really have an impact on my patient's long-term health."

VNSHS offers a fulfilling career, competitive salaries and a rich benefit package consisting of, but not exclusive of:

- Employer subsidized medical (with opt out benefit)
- 403(b) Retirement plan (with employer match for staff employees)
- Generous paid time off policy
- Four-day full time work week option
- Dental coverage
- Vision coverage
- Tuition reimbursement
- Long term disability
- Flexible spending accounts
- AFLAC plan basic group life insurance & accidental death/dismemberment
- Monthly cell phone benefit
- Mileage reimbursement

**VISITING NURSE SERVICE
&
HOSPICE OF SUFFOLK**

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DENTISTS FOR A BETTER HUNTINGTON AWARDS GRANT TO VISITING NURSE SERVICE & HOSPICE OF SUFFOLK



Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Dentists for a Better Huntington (DFBH), a charity organization which assists people in need in the Huntington Township. Since 1996, dentist members, along with industry partners and other donors, work together to raise funds to support local charities that serve the community. VNSHS is grateful for our longstanding partnership with DFBH.

♥ THE COMMUNITY THRIFT SHOP

Style, Sustainability and Circular Fashion Inspire Collaboration between The Community Thrift Shop and LIU



What's old is new at Huntington's Community Thrift Shop as Long Island University students help to merchandise the store to accelerate sales. Students from Long Island University's Fashion Merchandising and Management Program are engaged in a creative venture that reflects LIU's tradition of service to the community as well as a current focus on sustainability in fashion.

Students enrolled in LIU's fashion program volunteer to design attractive thematic and seasonal displays to maximize sales in The Community Thrift Shop located at 345 Main Street in Huntington. They also provide guidance on signage and messaging to broaden the customer base and stimulate purchases. Net sales from the thrift shop directly benefit the Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk as it helps families in our community facing a health care crisis.

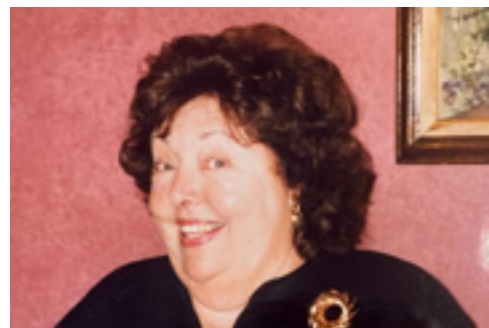


The Community Thrift Shop was founded in 1965 as a cooperative effort by local non-profit organizations who serve those in need. Linda Taylor, CEO of VNSHS, commented, "It's inspiring to have the fashion-forward input of the students who bring a fresh, Gen Z look to the merchandise in the shop. This helps to increase sales which extends Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk's ability to provide crucial services to patients and their families throughout our county."

"This collaboration exemplifies the experiential learning for which our university is renowned," said Long Island University President Kimberly R. Cline. "It also illustrates the creative ways that our students give back to the community while gaining experience that will drive success in their future careers."

Cherie Serota, director of LIU's Fashion Merchandising & Management program, explained, "Another highly advantageous aspect of this partnership is that it promotes circularity and sustainability in fashion, which is of pressing concern to our students and the industry worldwide. Thrifting reduces impact on the environment by upcycling and reusing clothing. At the same time, it enables a larger population to access luxury brands. It's a win-win."

Joan Erlagen was a dedicated Community Thrift Shop volunteer for thirty-one years, often helping at the shop five days per week. She loved her fellow volunteers who became like family to Joan. Her keen eye for fashion, knowledge of top brands and impeccable merchandising skills, ensured that all products on the sales floor and at the VNSHS fashion shows were top-notch. When Joan found a designer or antique item, she researched it and often had it appraised ensuring that it sold for top dollar in order to raise the most possible funding for VNSHS services. A mentor to all thrift shop volunteers, Joan's retail savvy will be seen and felt at The Community Thrift Shop today and always.



In Memory of Joan Erlagen

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EVENTS



VISITING NURSE SERVICE
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**22ND ANNUAL 5K
RUN FOR THE HEALTH OF IT
TO BENEFIT HOSPICE HOUSE
IN MEMORY OF ANITA THOMAS**

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\$25/ADULT \$10 AGE 12 AND UNDER

PRESENTED BY:

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Visiting Nurse Service & Hospice of Suffolk is a participating agency of
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