



Visiting Nurse Matters

SUMMER 2009 VISITING NURSE AND HOSPICE SERVICES VOLUME 1 NO. 1

'We've Been Blessed'



Love and loyalty

Paralyzed as the result of a stroke, Joan knows that William, her husband of 50 years, will always be by her side.

After three children, five grandchildren, and 50 years of marriage, Joan and William feel they have been blessed. So in 1994 when William received a call that something had happened to Joan and discovered she had been taken to the emergency room, he raced anxiously to her side.

At the hospital William learned that Joan had suffered a stroke caused by a ruptured brain aneurysm, a bulging weak area in the wall of an artery that supplies blood to the brain, while driving their son Maurice to school. Fortunately, Maurice took the wheel and steered them safely to the side of the road. But the stroke left Joan paralyzed on her right side and seriously affected her speech.

After surgery and nursing home care, Joan, who was then only 52, wanted to come home. William was determined to make that possible. For the next 14 years, with the assistance of a neighbor and intermittent home health aides, William did his best to care for his wife. He worked all day as a grounds man for the Cherry Hill Board of Education (he has been there 21 years and maintains 19 schools) and took care of Joan at night and on the weekends. He cooked, cleaned and did the laundry.

In 2008, Joan was referred to VNHS for assistance by a certified home health aide. That's when the home health aide supervisor, Steve Shoffner, RN, came into the family's life. Steve had stopped by to make a routine supervisory visit. He took one look at Joan and knew that something was wrong.

"Her face was pasty, her lips chapped, and her speech was slurred. I checked her blood sugar and it was way out of control," said Steve. "I recommended that William take Joan to the doctor immediately." Joan's symptoms were the result of diabetes that was not being managed. The doctor had given William a glucometer and an instruction book but he did not understand how it worked. "I didn't know what to do," said William. "My daughter and I both read the book but we didn't understand it. If it wasn't for Steve, I don't know what would have happened."

Once Steve received approval to provide skilled nursing care for Joan, he started teaching William how to manage Joan's diabetes. He taught William how to use the glucometer correctly and how to read the results. They discussed the importance of diet and what William could do to counteract poor readings. "Bill dearly loves Joan," Steve says. "He learned quickly and was willing to do anything necessary to keep her at home. He deserves all the credit."

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VNHS nurse Steve Shoffner monitors Joan's health regularly.

We've Been Blessed

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Today, Joan is doing fine and is aware of the importance of managing her disease. "She may have trouble speaking, but she lets me know every day that she wants to be checked," says William. "I feel better too. I take daily accu-checks and know how to make adjustments if I need to.

"Joan wants to be home and that's where I want her to be. I'll do whatever it takes to care for her," William adds. "She means everything to me and we feel we are blessed." Giving her husband a big hug, Joan lets William know she agrees. "That's right," Joan smiles. "God is good."

VNHS Announces New Director of Clinical Operations

Visiting Nurse and Hospice Services welcomes Ann Painter, RN, BSN, MSN, as Director of Clinical Operations.

Ms. Painter is responsible for the oversight of all clinical care for VNHS, as well as regulatory and budgetary requirements.

Prior to joining VNHS, Ms. Painter was Assistant Director of Operations at Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey. She began her career with VNACJ as a staff nurse in January 1990 and over the years held several managerial positions, including Manager of Referral Services, Clinical Manager, and Manager of Staff Development. Ms. Painter accepted the position with VNHS at the time of its affiliation with VNACJ.

"I am very excited about being at VNHS," Ms. Painter says. "I have the opportunity to play an integral role in building our team and growing the agency. We have already started to look at ways to enhance our services to the community and ensure the highest level of care."

One of her top priorities is to increase public awareness of community health nursing. As part of a collaborative with the medical faculty of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) at Stratford, Ann invites physicians to join VNHS staff in the field to see firsthand the unique role of a community health nurse. Physicians learn how nurses perform patient assessments, identify healthcare issues, and connect patients with critical resources to live healthy, independent lives at home.



VNHS RN Receives Advanced Certification in Wound Care

VNHS staff nurse Dawn Caldarulo, RN, BSN, has a new nursing credential after her name, CWON: certified by the Wound, Ostomy, Contenance Nursing Board. Ms. Caldarulo is a recent graduate of the Wicks Educational Program for Wound Care Nursing, one of only six-accredited WOCN programs offered in the United States.

The intensive regime requires one month of classroom study plus 160 hours of clinical wound care, ostomy care and continence care provided in an outpatient wound care setting, a hospital setting, and a home care setting. Ms. Caldarulo will serve as a consultant to VNHS staff and patients, helping VNHS to provide a higher level of complex care for more difficult wounds. She will also be able to train nurses on the latest wound care techniques. Identifying the best solution for ostomy care can be very challenging, and Ms. Caldarulo will be able to recommend the preferred solution. In addition, she plans to enhance the staff's knowledge in continence care, to meet the growing need for that service.

"The program was impressive," Dawn Caldarulo says. "It was much more involved than I ever imagined. I worked with some of the best wound care specialists in the industry."

She adds, "I feel that this is a great opportunity for VNHS and me. I will be able to educate our staff on innovations in wound and ostomy care and make life-altering changes to help patients return to a normal lifestyle."

"This is a tremendous benefit for our patients and our agency," says Wayne Whelan, executive director of VNHS. "Dawn's ability to work with staff in these areas will speed healing, improve outcomes, & ultimately help reduce costs"

For information on VNHS clinical programs, including wound, ostomy, continence, palliative and respite care, please call 800-792-8603.



Hospice Care Helps Patient Continue Her Good Life

Mention dancing and Anna's eyes sparkle. "My husband and I went dancing every Saturday night," Anna says. "My brothers were in a string band. I loved music and a party. I had a good life."

As she dwells on her memories, Anna is with her daughter, Betty Ann, and Joan McNerney, MSW, a social worker for Visiting Nurse and Hospice Services. Joan visits Anna once a week as part of the VNHS Hospice Program. Currently Joan is spending time with Anna doing what she calls a "life review," in which Anna retells important parts of her life.

Anna receives nursing, home health aide care, social work services and pastoral counseling through the hospice program.



Anna with social worker Joan McNerney (center) and daughter Betty Ann (right).



Anna with Joan McNerney, VNHS social worker. Hospice social workers provide emotional support and advocacy for patients and their families.

Services offered through the VNHS Hospice Program include

- nursing care
- palliative care and symptom management
- medical social work
- certified home health aide care
- physical and speech therapy
- spiritual counseling

Hospice care is available around the clock, including weekends, in order to support the patient and family during this emotional time. In addition, VNHS offers bereavement counseling for families, friends, and children who have lost a loved one.

For more information on VNHS Hospice Services, call 800-792-8603.

The program utilizes an interdisciplinary team approach to provide comfort care for patients who have been diagnosed with a life-limiting illness. "In hospice, we develop our plan of care based on the wishes of the patient and family," says Joan. "We are guided by their direction and by their pace."

At 84, Anna is perfectly happy to set the pace, and "you still never know what she's going to say or do," says Betty Ann. "Mom has always been a very social person," she says. "I have vivid memories of my parents getting all dressed up to go dancing and of mom putting perfume on."

Anna has diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a progressive disease that makes it hard to breathe. Betty Ann was concerned about her mother living alone and a little over two years ago, they decided to move in together. But two days before the move, Anna fell in her kitchen. When Betty Ann was unable to reach her by phone the entire day, she called a neighbor, who found Anna on the floor. While Anna does not remember what caused her fall, doctors' believe it may have been related to a drop in her blood sugar level. Anna spent a month in a nursing facility. When Anna was discharged, Betty Ann became concerned about leaving her alone while she worked. She contacted the Office on Aging for assistance. A VNHS nurse was sent to assess Anna's needs and recommended nursing and certified home health aide assistance, along with physical therapy.

Anna was placed on hospice in November 2008. "Mom especially loves her visits from Joan and Father John [Shimchick], who provides pastoral counseling. It's such a relief to have VNHS care. The nurses do a great job," says Betty Ann. "Everyone has been wonderful and I feel so much better knowing mom is comfortable and happy at home. They have made this transition so much easier for all of us."



Visiting Nurse and
Hospice Services

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***Make a difference –
be a volunteer for VNHS***

*For more information on volunteer opportunities and training programs,
call Bonnie Mangle at 800-792-8603, ext. 2210.*

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Nursing
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Emergency Personal Response System
Telehealth Program

Community-based Programs

Community Health Education
Bereavement Counseling
Senior Wellness
Respite Care
Speakers Bureau
Volunteer Program

VNHS Matters is a publication of Visiting Nurse and Hospice Services, a voluntary organization serving Burlington, Gloucester and Camden counties.

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