

The *Caring* CONNECTION

VNA Care Network & Hospice

Summer 2008

“ELECTRONIC NURSE” JOINS HOSPICE TEAM IN CARING FOR PATIENTS

Rosie cheerfully greets patient Joseph Carty promptly at 10 a.m. and starts the visit with a series of questions.

“How do you feel today compared to yesterday? ...Are you having any shortness of breath? ...How is your shortness of breath today compared to yesterday?” After logging Carty’s responses to several questions, she moves on to check his blood pressure, pulse, weight, and other vital health measurements.

Unlike the others on the hospice team from VNA Care Network & Hospice, Rosie isn’t actually a person. She’s an “electronic nurse” Carty and his friends dubbed Rosie. The technology is known as telehealth, and enables clinicians to see how patients are doing between in-person visits and improves patients’ quality of life.

The small telehealth unit, which connects to a blood pressure cuff and other devices, uses large text, graphics, and audio to walk patients through the process. Questions are answered by touching the applicable response on the screen. The informa-

tion is sent over a toll free telephone line where it is reviewed by a nurse.

VNA Care Network & Hospice introduced the new telehealth equipment to home health patients last year. It was so successful in helping patients manage chronic health conditions that the service was expanded to terminally ill patients in early 2008, thanks in part to grants from the Fallon/Ornda and Fairlawn Foundations.



Joseph Carty, a hospice patient, is visited at home by Carol Higgins, RN.

continued on page 5...

VNA CARE NETWORK & HOSPICE HONORS FAMILY CAREGIVERS

VNA Care Network & Hospice recently held its own version of the Oscars. The annual EMAs (Extra Mile Awards) honor family caregivers for their lead role caring for an ailing loved one. This year’s winners were Diane Brooks of Worcester, Rene Gendron of Leominster, Laurie Pedzewick of Westwood, and Larry Simmler of Shrewsbury.



Charlene D’Angelo (left) was on hand to see her sister, Diane Brooks, accept the Extra Mile Award.

DIANE BROOKS

Doris Martin was always there when her daughter, Diane Brooks, needed her. Six years ago, when Doris could no longer continue living on her own, Diane welcomed her into her home and has been there for her every moment since.

VNA Care Network & Hospice’s home health

care team first came to know Doris and Diane last year, when Doris needed health care at home after a hospital stay for

pneumonia. Doris has multiple health concerns, and Diane tends to all of her needs day and night. Diane juggles her caregiving responsibilities with running a home-based day care. She keeps her mother involved in daily life, and the children at the day care affectionately call Doris “Ma.”

As Diane accepted her award, she said, “I’d like to thank all the nurses who are just wonderful, wonderful. I can’t say enough good about them. ... This is an honor to receive this award.”

RENE GENDRON

Rene and Jean Gendron were married for 54 years when Jean was diagnosed with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease). The disease progressed quickly, and Jean’s needs became very complex.



Robin Spaulding, chair of the VNA Care Hospice board, and Rene Gendron

FAMILY CAREGIVERS RECOGNIZED FOR DEDICATION AND COMPASSION

...continued from page 1

VNA Care Network & Hospice's home health care staff helped Rene keep his promise to care for his wife in sickness and in health. Rene learned about Jean's increasingly complex needs, including managing a trach and ventilation cough assist system so Jean would not get a respiratory infection.

Home health care staff never heard Rene complain about his role as caregiver. Instead, they'd hear him singing his and Jean's song, "Because of You" by Tony Bennett. Rene's efforts allowed Jean to continue living at home where she died peacefully, surrounded by her family.

Rene thanked family and friends as he received his award. He told those gathered, "I am grateful for all the help that I received from the VNA ... that I was able to fulfill this accomplishment. It was a promise we made to each other, and I guarantee you if the shoe would have been on the other foot, Jean would have done the same for me."



Laurie Pedzewick

Laurie Pedzewick

Tom Pedzewick had always been extremely active and one to push the envelope in life. He raced motorcycles, ran his own business, and doted on his daughter, Risa. During his two-year ordeal with ALS, his wife, Laurie, focused on helping Tom live life as fully as his disease allowed.

The agency's hospice team, which offers specialized care for terminally ill patients, supported Laurie in her

role as a caregiver. She worked with staff to keep him comfortable, addressed his respiratory needs, prepared feeding tube mixtures, and supported him physically as he moved from one room to the next. She always tried to anticipate what he would want, to reduce stress on him.

One of the hospice team members said that "Laurie was an inspiration to all of us. I don't know where she found her strength to get through all of the demands upon her, but her strength and devotion to Tom never wavered."

Laurie thanked the hospice team as well as family and friends as she accepted the Extra Mile Award. She said, "For all of the caregivers who give their love and dedication to help people, you are angels on earth. This award is for you, too."

Larry Simmler

Beth Simmler had suffered from Alzheimer's for almost 10 years when she became a hospice patient with VNA Care Network & Hospice. Her husband, Larry, lovingly cared for her all of those years, feeding her, dressing her, bathing her, and keeping her safe.

VNA Care Network & Hospice staff would often find Larry and Beth sitting on their back porch with his beautiful garden outside. Beth would roam the porch, and say to Larry the last few words left in her vocabulary, "I love you."

One of Beth's hospice nurses told us that "Larry's care for Beth makes one stop and only wish that we should all have someone as loving and dedicated to our well-being."

His devoted care allowed Beth to remain at home until her passing.

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Doris Martin. Our thoughts are with her family.



Karen Green, president and CEO of VNA Care Network & Hospice, with Extra Mile Award winner Larry Simmler.

IV CLINICAL SERVICES MANAGER NAMED UNSUNG HEROINE

Elizabeth "Beth" Mena, RN, was recently named an Unsung Heroine by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women for her work as IV clinical services manager at VNA Care Network & Hospice.

"Our Unsung Heroines are women who don't make the news, but make the difference in their communities, businesses, or volunteer endeavors," said Linda Brantley, Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women executive director.

Mena was selected for making a difference as a nurse and edu-

cator. She oversees VNA Care Network & Hospice's infusion therapy services provided to patients in their own homes. Mena was one of 287 women from across the state selected for this year's Unsung Heroine awards.



Elizabeth "Beth" Mena, RN

ANNUAL SPRING CELEBRATION SUPPORTS CHILTON HOUSE

Hospice of Cambridge's annual Spring Celebration recently marked its ninth year raising funds for Chilton House and hospice care for the terminally ill in Cambridge.



Jodi Vigneron (left), VNA Care Network & Hospice development associate, and Jan Kinasewich, chair of the Spring Celebration, were among the attendees at the ninth annual event.

This year's event, chaired by Jan Kinasewich, was hosted by Patricia and Richard Chute at their Cambridge home. Pianist Leila Pradell performed for the crowd. Cambridge Trust Company generously sponsored the event.

Joseph V. Roller, II, president and CEO of the Cambridge Trust Company, was honored for many years of sup-

porting hospice care in Cambridge. The committee also remembered and honored two late volunteers, Wiz de Rham and Mary Schein.

The Hospice of Cambridge Development Committee is a long-standing group of volunteers dedicated to supporting VNA Care Network & Hospice's Chilton House and hospice care in Cambridge.

The Hospice of Cambridge Development Committee is chaired by Patricia A. Thornton, and members are Louise Bray, Patricia L. Chute, Valerie L. Donham, Natalie N. Goethals, Susan L. Good, Elizabeth Goodfellow, Janet M. Kinasewich, Mary W. McAdoo, Susan Eldredge Mead, Carol Monica, Pauline M. Olsen, LuAnn Polk, Ann Riker, Joanna C. Scott, Wendy Squires, and Ann S. Wyman.

For more information about Chilton House or the Hospice of Cambridge Development Committee, contact Jodi Vigneron at 617-547-2620, ext. 1363 or jvigneron@vnacarenetwork.org.

VNA CARE NETWORK WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER

VNA Care Network & Hospice recently welcomed David W. Hillis as a member of the VNA Care Network Foundation board of directors.

Hillis brings many years of experience in health care management to this role guiding the agency's nonprofit home health care, hospice, and wellness services. For more than 20 years, Hillis has served as president, principal, and chief executive officer of AdCare, Inc., which provides health care management services and acquisitions of facilities specializing in alcohol and drug care.

Hillis has received numerous honors for his work, including the Administrator of the Year Award from the American College of

Addiction Treatment Administrations, an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Endicott College, and a 30-Year Achievement Award from the Hospital Financial Management Association.



David W. Hillis

HOW TO REACH VNA CARE NETWORK & HOSPICE:

Service Information
800-728-1862

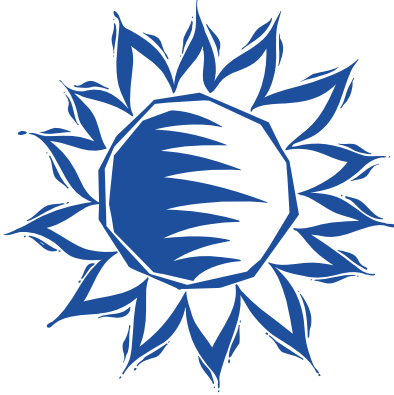
Mailing List and Donations
888-663-3688, ext. 1370

Web Site
www.vnacarenetwork.org

Bequests
888-663-3688, ext. 1360

Hospice Volunteer Opportunities
Central Massachusetts/North Shore:
888-663-3688, ext. 6887
Eastern Massachusetts:
888-663-3688, ext. 4271

SENIORS CAN SURVIVE THE SUMMER SAFELY WITH TIPS FOR AVOIDING HEAT STRESS



As the weather heats up, seniors should try to keep cool to avoid heat stress and potential complications like heat exhaustion, heat stroke, heart failure, and stroke.

“Heat and high humidity can put a strain on your body.

Seniors are especially vulnerable to prolonged exposure to high temperatures and humidity because of physical changes they’ve experienced,” said Marge LeDuc, RN, preventative health nurse with VNA Care Network & Hospice. “Knowing the warning signs of heat stress and taking precautions to avoid it can help keep you healthy during the summer.”

Maureen Sendrowski, RN, MPH, preventative health program manager with VNA Care Network & Hospice, added, “Temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit and/or high humidity are especially dangerous, but it doesn’t take a heat wave to cause problems.” She tells seniors and other adults that if they experience any of the mild signs of heat stress, including feeling hot and uncomfortable, loss of appetite and lack of energy, to try these tips for keeping cool:

- Exercise before 9 a.m. or after 6 p.m. when temperatures tend to be cooler.
- Stay in an air-conditioned place. If you do not have air-conditioning in your home, go to an air-conditioned public place, if possible, such as a library or senior center. If you are unsure if your town has a senior center or other air-conditioned place for seniors, call your town’s Council on Aging for further assistance.

If you are unable to go to an air-conditioned place on a hot and/or humid day, VNA Care Network & Hospice staff also recommend trying to:

- Stay in the shade and out of direct sunlight.
- Apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher 30 minutes before going outside. Sunburns affect your body’s ability to cool itself and cause a loss of fluids.
- Take a slightly cool bath or shower.
- Put cool, damp towels on your body.
- Use fans to keep air circulating.
- Avoid strenuous activities. If engaging in strenuous activities, pace yourself and rest frequently.
- Wear light-colored, lightweight, loose clothing made out of a material that allows sweat to evaporate such as cotton. Avoid synthetic materials like polyester.
- Protect your head and neck when outside by wearing a wide-brimmed hat or using an umbrella.
- Drink frequently to replace fluids lost by sweating. Avoid fluids containing alcohol, caffeine, or salt. If you have a problem with retaining water or a special medical condition, check with your doctor about the amount of fluids you should be drinking.
- Avoid hot foods and heavy meals, since it adds heat to your body. If you use a stove, try to cook during cooler times of the day.
- Limit your use of salt. Use salt tablets only with your doctor’s approval.
- Ask a friend or relative to check on you at least twice a day.
- Don’t ignore the warning signs of heat stress.

Contact a doctor or other health care provider if the mild signs of heat stress continue for a prolonged period of time after taking these actions. Contact a physician immediately if you are experiencing any of the following serious symptoms of heat stress: breathing problems, chest pain, muscle cramps, diarrhea, dizziness, dry skin (no sweating), great weakness, mental changes, confusion, nausea, rapid heartbeat, throbbing headache, extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees Fahrenheit when taken orally), and/or vomiting.

DID YOU KNOW?

VNA and hospice are generic words like hospital. Unless you ask for VNA Care Network or VNA Care Hospice by name, another agency may arrive at your home. For more information, call us at 800-728-1862.

ONLINE GIVING IS QUICK, SECURE AT WWW.VNACARENETWORK.ORG

Supporting your local Visiting Nurses has never been faster or easier with VNA Care Network & Hospice's online giving option.

"Making a gift online offers enormous advantages over mail — convenience and speed. No more looking for stamps, making a trip to the post office, and waiting to hear that your donation has been received," said Susan Young, fund development director for VNA Care Network & Hospice.

"People who donate using our secure web site immediately get a receipt of their gift. We receive the donation almost instantaneously and are able to quickly put it to use supporting our mission of caring," added Young.

HOW TO MAKE A GIFT ONLINE

Go to VNA Care Network & Hospice's web site at www.vnacarenetwork.org and click on "how you can help" at the top of the page. From there, click on "make a gift online."

Once on the secure page, donors indicate the amount of their donation and how they would like their gift used, including home health care, hospice, one of three hospice residences for the terminally ill (Chilton House, Cambridge; Rose Monahan

Hospice Home, Worcester; or Tippet Home, Needham), or where the need is greatest.

Memorial and tribute gifts can also be made using the online donations page. There is a place for the name of the honoree as well as the name and contact information for those who should be notified about the gift.

Donations may be made using Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover. The web site uses SSL encryption technology to protect donors' personal and credit card information.

INFORMATION

For more information or assistance making a donation, contact Susan Young at 888-663-3688, ext. 1370 or syoung@vnacarenetwork.org.



Make a donation at
www.vnacarenetwork.org.

TELEHEALTH IMPROVES PATIENTS' QUALITY OF LIFE ...continued from page 1

Carty, who has end-stage congestive heart failure, is among the first group of hospice patients using the equipment. "Anybody can operate it," said Carty, who likes having a daily record of his vital signs and knowing someone will call or visit him if there's a problem.

Rosie's proven to be a valuable member of the hospice team. At one point Carty's blood pressure increased dramatically. His nurse, Carol Higgins, was able to follow the changes closely because of the information gathered by the telehealth unit. She worked with Carty's physician to adjust his blood pressure medication and get it back under control.

Data has shown that home health patients using telehealth have higher levels of improvement in pain, less frequent occurrences of

shortness of breath, improved medication management, higher rates of remaining at home at the end of service, and lower acute care hospitalization rates.

To learn more about how telehealth can help you or a loved one, call VNA Care Network & Hospice's Referral Center at 800-728-1862.



Patients answer questions about their health by touching the telehealth unit's screen.

We'll deliver health tips and news straight to your e-mail box

Subscribe to our new, free e-newsletter for:

- News about local health resources for you and your family
 - Tips for staying healthy
 - Flu clinic dates
- ...and more

To sign up, go to VNA Care Network & Hospice's web site at
www.vnacarenetwork.org



PATRIOTS PRESENT MVP AWARD TO HOSPICE VOLUNTEER

One of the New England Patriots' Most Valuable Players has never played football.

She has instead volunteered for nearly two decades at VNA Care Network & Hospice supporting care for the terminally ill in Eastern and Central Massachusetts. Robin Spaulding serves as chair of the board of directors of VNA Care Hospice, guiding the agency's specialized care for those facing the end of life.

Hospice offers physical, emotional, spiritual, and practical support with an emphasis on pain and symptom management for patients. The hospice team also provides support to patients' families and loved ones. Care is provided in patients' homes, the agency's three residences (Chilton House, Cambridge; Rose Monahan Hospice Home, Worcester; and Tippett Home, Needham), nursing homes, and assisted living and other facilities.

Spaulding played an instrumental role in the construction of the Rose Monahan Hospice Home, a homelike place where terminally ill patients may live and receive hospice care. Her involvement included leading the volunteer division of the capital campaign in raising \$50,000 to build the residence's kitchen. This

kitchen is now the site of Robin's other volunteer work — cooking meals most Thursdays for patients and families.

Robert and Myra Kraft, owners of the Patriots, presented the Community MVP finalist award to Spaulding during a recent luncheon at Gillette Stadium. The New England Patriots Charitable Foundation also donated \$1,500 to VNA Care Network & Hospice in Spaulding's honor.

For more information about hospice, call VNA Care Network & Hospice at 800-728-1862 or visit www.vnacarenetwork.org.



Left to right: Robert and Myra Kraft, owners of the Patriots, presented the MVP finalist award to Robin Spaulding with Andre Tippett, Patriots' community affairs director, in attendance.

- "Electronic nurse" cares for terminally ill
- How to make a donation online
- Family caregivers honored

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Development Office
5 Federal Street
Danvers, MA 01923

At Home with Your Health
NETWORK & HOSPICE
*VNA*care

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
VNA Care Network