A Note About Flu Shots
As always, keeping our patients safe is a top priority. That’s why all of our employees are getting flu shots this year. From field-staff clinicians, volunteers, contractors, to our hospice unit workers, administrative and office staff are all getting vaccinated before Flu Season starts. Flu Season is generally categorized as beginning in October or November, depending on the strain forecast. Our nurses will administer the vaccines right here in our offices.

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A Message from the President

Greetings,

Weather reports indicate that July and August were two of the hottest months on record. With the threat of global warming, more extreme weather is predicted in the future. Just think of the difficulties this hot weather poses for our clinical staff as they visit with patients in their homes.

With the burden of carrying a supply bag, a laptop computer and an I–phone, our clinical staff going door to door must navigate the heat filled neighborhoods. Their visits are complicated by the fact that many of our patients cannot afford to have air conditioning and their homes have become very uncomfortable and hot. The concrete of the city only intensifies the heat and insures a full day of relentless discomfort. The heat may complicate the patient’s medical condition and make symptoms even more intense. This creates even more demands on our clinicians.

City streets are often under repair during the summer. This work snarls traffic and makes travel between homes even more difficult and time consuming. The dual threat of heat and traffic erodes even the most patient personality. But, our dedicated and committed staff focuses only on treating patient needs. Their caring attitudes overcome the environmental challenges in an almost supernatural way. They are the true heroes of healthcare and the core of our home health, palliative and hospice programs.

It is not easy to make home visits. The physical demands of the work in perfect weather extract a lot of wear and tear. Weather conditions, such as extreme heat or cold, only increase the physical burden. In addition, a winter snow eliminates many parking spaces in the city, thereby forcing our clinicians to walk longer distances often in slippery conditions.

Historically, post office workers have been given fame and notoriety for meeting the challenges of working in spite of the weather. I feel that home health and hospice clinicians have somehow been ignored. Their perseverance against nature is just as formidable, yet no poem immortalizes their dedication. Their focus on delivering the best care to patients in their homes is an even nobler calling than delivering the mail. But, the recognition is somehow missing. Now is the time to correct this oversight! I salute our dedicated clinical staff. They truly make a big difference for their patients every day. They are the heart and soul of our agency and of healthcare. They do great work without regard to the weather.

Sincerely,

Walter W. Borginis III
Meet our patient Rudolfo Almodovar and his wife Aracelis Gonzales. Theirs is a beautiful love story. They were married years ago but each went their separate ways. When Rudolfo was diagnosed and came into our hospice care, he and Aracelis remarried. Their nurse, Amy Scollon, bought the groom his “tux-shirt” and bought the bride her veil to wear for the ceremony, which was performed in their home by VNA Chaplain Twana Malone. What a story of Compassionate Care, the VNA Difference!

Pictured above: Rudolfo Almodovar and his wife Aracelis Gonzales and family.

Pictured above (left to right): VNA Nurse, Amy Scollon, Rudolfo Almodovar and his wife Aracelis Gonzales and VNA Chaplain, Twana Malone.

For the past six years, our Social Workers and Chaplains have organized a Butterfly Release for the family and friends of patients who have passed under our hospice care. This year, they also reached out to members of our community who wished to share the celebration of life and love with us.

Everyone is invited to purchase a real-life butterfly (they come from a butterfly farm in Massachusetts) and gather together for the event, which took place on June 30 here at the Falls Center on Henry Ave. After a moving ceremony that included inspirational readings, names of the deceased were read aloud. Then everyone moved outside to stand under our beautiful sycamore tree awaiting the time to let the butterflies go.

While still at the farm in Massachusetts, the butterflies are gently chilled to get them ready for transport to their destination. When they arrived here, they had to come back up to ambient temperature. Each participant was given a very small envelope with a butterfly inside. After careful instructions from The Reverend Donna Geiger, everyone delicately opened their envelope and watched a beautiful butterfly emerge, flap its wings, and fly away on the summer breeze.

Reminded of the symbolism of a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, it was an emotional and beautiful sight to see hundreds of these lovely creatures spiral up and float away into a beautiful, bright blue sky.

When the “official” event concluded, we gathered for refreshments and conversations with each other.

Pictured above: VNA Nurse, Amy Scollon, Rudolfo Almodovar and his wife Aracelis Gonzales and VNA Chaplain, Twana Malone.

Craig Hindman, MSW, LSW, Director Clinical Services, Hospice of Philadelphia (pictured above) as he prepares to release the butterflies.

Janet Pierce, (pictured above) releases a butterfly in memory of her husband, Jay.

The envelope that a butterfly arrives in.
Dr. Dawn Seiders, Medical Director, Hospice of Philadelphia

Recently, our colleague Maureen Murphy, SVP of Development, had the opportunity to get to know our newest addition to our medical staff, Dr. Dawn Seiders. Here are excerpts from their conversation.

MM: So, where are you from?

DS: I’m from a very small town called McConnellsburg, a 3-hour drive west of Philadelphia. It’s rural, in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Population 1,054

MM: Where did you go to school?

DS: I attended Bloomsburg University for both a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Biology. Then, I went on to medical school at Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey, PA where I also did residency in internal medicine. From there, I moved to Philadelphia.

MM: What was your first job in the Philadelphia area?

DS: I worked at Cancer Treatment Centers of America for 7 years – first as an oncology hospitalist for 5 years, then as a Palliative Medicine consultant from 2014 to 2016.

MM: What rewards you about your job?

DS: Many people believe that Palliative Medicine physicians are “death doctors” but I see my job as being about helping people live as well as possible for whatever time they have. I consider it very important to help a patient and family throughout the course of a disease process and especially at end-of-life. I got into medicine because of my love of people and human interaction. In Palliative Medicine, we really get to spend the time that it takes to know patients as people – understanding their goals and values, getting to know their family – so that this can be taken into the context of their disease process and care options. Friends and family often ask how I can do this kind of work but I have to say that the rewards far outweigh the emotional toll; the patients have taught me so much about not taking things for granted, how to live with no regrets, and focus on being present in the moment.

MM: How did you hear about this position?

DS: Would you believe social media! The recruiter found me on Twitter.

MM: What do you like to do when you’re not working?

DS: I love spending time with my niece and nephew, who are 10 and 13 and live locally. I am pretty obsessed with my Scottish Fold cat, Boris, who is one year old. You can find him on Instagram, Boris_the_Cutest_Cat. Other than that, my favorite pastime is eating! I live in Center City and love trying out all the restaurants. My friends consult me often for restaurant recommendations. In the past year, I’ve been most excited about the opening of Wm. Mulherin’s Sons in Northern Liberties.

MM: What’s your approach to treating patients?

DS: It’s very simple - I treat patients as if they are my own family. Before an encounter, I like to take a breath to center myself and just imagine if this were my mother/sister/aunt, etc. – how would I want them to be treated? Then, I get in there and try to provide the same kind of respect, patience, and kindness that I would hope my loved ones would receive.

MM: Did you always want to be a doctor?

DS: I don’t remember ever not wanting to be a doctor – it goes back to when my best childhood friend was diagnosed with leukemia when I was 4 and she was 3. However, I did want to be an astronaut as well and even attended Space Camp as a teenager!

MM: What is your style like with patients?

DS: I see people at extremely difficult times in their lives, and spending time to listen is so important. My approach is to spend whatever time it takes to help people understand the disease process so that they can make the best decisions for themselves moving forward. Patients and families may not remember all the details of the medical care they receive, but they sure will remember how they felt about the way they were treated.
Hospice of Philadelphia Held Its 2nd Women’s Initiative Luncheon on July 8, 2016.

On July 8, the VNA Hospice of Philadelphia continued its Women’s Initiative series. This presentation and luncheon featured Keynote Speaker Nicole Kelly, Regional Vice President of Voya Financial. Nicole spoke on the topic of Women and Money: What Every Woman Should Know About Earning, Saving, Investing, Spending, and Donating It!

We are grateful to our corporate sponsor Baker Tilly for hosting our event. More than 2,700 professionals strong, Baker Tilly is a full-service accounting and advisory firm with specialized professionals.

The Women’s Initiative has been created to provide women an opportunity to learn, lunch, and network and to learn more about all of the activities taking place in the VNA of Greater Philadelphia and the Hospice of Philadelphia.

The next Women’s Initiative meeting will take place on Friday, September 30, 2016 between 11:45 am-1pm. It will be hosted by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The topic is Women’s Issues in Healthcare: What Every Woman Needs to Know about Wellness and Healthy Choices. Attendance is complimentary. Reservations are requested. Just call Maureen Murphy at 215-581-2006 or email her at mmurphy@vnaphilly.org.

For further information, please contact Karen Zielinski at 215-581-2080 or via email at kzielinski@vnaphilly.org.

Where are they Headed?

Almost half of our Volunteers are college students - both undergrad and graduate and most are headed into a healthcare career. These students have carried a busy study schedule and still found time to spend with our patients and in our office. We love that we are a part of their journey, and that we are sending smart, compassionate people who truly understand what Hospice is out into the world to help others. We are proud to share the next step for a few of our Volunteers and wish them well in their studies:

Poojitha Kakulavaram - Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine (Harlem)
Archi Chandrashekar - Midwestern University - AZ College of Osteopathic Medicine
Tim Corcoran - The Commonwealth Medical College (Scranton)
Xanthia Tucker - Pritzker School of Medicine (University of Chicago)

Watch for information regarding our December Women’s Initiative Luncheon soon.....
Highlights from the VNA Employee Campaign

Every year, we have an Employee Campaign to raise money for our Patient and Care Givers Assistance Fund. This year, we also included the renovation project for our Inpatient Hospice Unit as a recipient of our fundraising efforts.

The Patient and Care Givers Assistance Fund provides monies for our patients and their families for things that aren’t covered by insurance but are necessary. Examples of items that our employees have donated their own money to purchase include shower chairs, grab bars, groceries, clothing, lock boxes for medicine and other household items including fans and a refrigerator.

During one week in June, employees made their commitment to donate to the Agency. We tried to make it a little fun as we went about our serious business. Events during the Campaign included a Bake Sale, Hot Dog Day, Taco Day, Game Day (featuring Bingo and Family Feud) and a raffle to take a chance on donated prizes. The total raised was $14,153.88.

Our commitment to Compassionate Care, the VNA Difference, was evident by the amount of participation!

Recruitment efforts at the VNA

We think we have the best clinical staff in home health and hospice anywhere! Our Clinical Recruiter LeAnne Hall-Stowe (pictured right) finds opportunities everywhere she can to tell health-care professionals about us and explain why they might want to consider a career with us.
Testimonials from our Patients’ Families

To All Members of PH’s Care Team,

Thank you all very much for the compassionate care with which you surrounded P during her last months. She and we were always delighted by each person’s presence, skill and tenderness. Our hearts will remain grateful.

The H family

To The Hospice Team,

I would like to thank you for your tenderness and kindness to my husband CM. You are all angels in my eyes, again my children and I thank you all.

EM

I am so thankful for all the love and caring my husband receives till his last breath. I have lost the love of my life for 24 years and it seems so unreal but I couldn’t have done it by myself and for that I will always be grateful. Thank you ALL.

MM

Dearest VNA Hospice of Philadelphia,

Thank you for your love and kindness extended to us during our time of bereavement through the homegoing of our mother, VB. There is nothing like a caring medical support group who surround us with love and care during our times like these.

With grateful hearts,

The B family

VNA Hospice Staff,

I can’t thank you enough for all the care VNA staff gave to my grandmother during her transition. I am eternally grateful!

RK

Dear Ms. M.

Thank you for your recent letter and kind words. My daughter and I are doing pretty well—we will miss G very much but take comfort in the fact that he is no longer suffering. G was only at your facility for several hours...but we could feel the warmth and caring atmosphere of your facility. For that we are very thankful.

Sincerely,

LK

To all of our VNA family,

You’re a special breed, so much compassion. We are forever indebted. My dad’s last days were with dignity and peace.

K

Many of our family members are kind enough to write a note of thanks about the care their loved ones received from our clinicians. It’s heartwarming. We post them on a bulletin board in a staff break room so that all colleagues can see them.
We have long said that one of the things that really sets us apart from other home healthcare and hospice agencies is our Compassionate Care.

Here’s an example...One of our chaplains, the Rev. Laura Barry, visits Mr. Walter Stafford, a patient, and has gotten to know that he is a Phillies fan. Reverend Laura had an idea! She applied to the Lighthouse of Hope to see about getting a Philadelphia Phillies baseball game package for him. One that would include tickets for Mr. Stafford, his family, his nurse, and herself. Her request was approved! And on Sunday August 14, 2016 off they all went to the ball game! Once The Phillies heard they were coming, they were very generous, too, and added a few more free tickets and free parking and food!

According to Reverend Laura, "Mr. Stafford cried when he saw the Phillies Citizens Bank Park Stadium as he has not been to a live game since the Phillies played at Shibe Park (pre-1970). The Phillies mascot, the Phanatic, came to visit Mr. Stafford and as you can see in the picture, Mr. Stafford cried again with much happiness. The entire family was so very excited to have shared in this experience, as was Mr. Stafford’s VNA nurse, Linda Kamnik and I. At the 7th inning stretch, “God Bless America" played throughout the stadium and Mr. Stafford heartily sang along as tears welled in his eyes. And, the icing on the cake…the Phillies won!"

VNA staff member learning first hand the benefits of therapy after an injury

Our colleague Donna Schilling, Referral Center Manager, recently learned the benefits and challenges of physical therapy first hand! Three months ago, Donna broke her fibula in a fall at home and was sidelined after surgery. Just like many of our patients, Donna had to cope with a limited ability to do things for herself and had to discover modified ways of performing daily tasks, including when she needed a cast, then a boot, then a walker, and now a cane. Donna said she came away from the experience with a renewed appreciation of what our patients and caregivers go through after an injury. She also said the experience made her mindful of our patients who don’t have the same network of family and friends to provide the additional care and the social component that become so important to a person home alone with an injury. We’re delighted to tell you that Donna is back to work and making great strides toward a full recovery with the help of her physical therapists and others.

If you or a family member need physical, occupational, or speech therapy, our team of excellent and compassionate clinicians are here for you! For more information, please call 215-473-7600 or visit us on the web at www.vnaphilly.org.
Our CHAP Survey Highlights

In our Summer issue, you read that we were getting ready for our CHAP (Community Health Accreditation Partners) survey to take place. The surveyors go out to our patients’ home with our clinicians (nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech therapists) and observe the care and the interactions of our clinicians and our patients. Here are the results and some of the comments from the surveyors over the three-day inspection period that took place in June.

On the first day, five Home Health visits were made by the CHAP Site Visitor

- Home Health Site Visitor stated “All patient’s were very pleased with their care.”
- Theresa (Social Worker) “visit made, went very well.” Patient stated “I love the VNA and even my doctor loves the VNA.”
- Pam (Physical Therapist) the family stated “all services were very good.”
- Hilary (Occupational Therapist) the patient made a “thumbs up” sign in regards to the services he receives.
- Teresa (RN) “Patient very pleased with care.” Surveyor noted “excellent care and teaching.”
- Bill (PT) “Patient also very pleased with care.”

Five Home Hospice visits were also made with the CHAP Site Visitor. The Hospice Site Visitor stated “What a great team we have.”

- Kelly (RN) “did beautifully, wanted to make sure the surveyor saw her bag technique!!!”
- Ron (Chaplain) “supports the daughter and did a wonderful job. Patient sang a song to the surveyor.”
- Coraly (Social Worker) “interacted with the patient very well. Reviewed current events.”
- Yasmin (Certified Nursing Assistant) “reviewed the plan of care with the surveyor.”
- Linda (RN) “was wonderful with the patient.”

On the second day, all visits went well! The CHAP Surveyor visited five home-health patients.

- Delisha (RN) “the visit went well. Patient was very happy about service.”
- Jonas (RN) “the visit went well.”
- Adrienne (Speech Therapist) “good rapport with patient.”
- Julia (RN) “great job with wound care using good technique.”
- Tondalaya (Home Health Aide) “answered all questions asked by surveyor!!”
- Employee records completed and no issues found! Great job!
- Clinical Records were reviewed with more to review tomorrow.

Linda A. Trout, RN, PhD, CHPN, Director of Hospice and Palliative Care of Philadelphia let the staff know how the survey went in the Hospice Inpatient Unit (IPU). She told us there were “special comments to Safiyyah Floyd who does an outstanding job with the IPU kitchen. Marie, the Lead Surveyor, couldn’t say enough about what a great job she does and that she has never surveyed a kitchen that was that prepared and clean!!! Great Job Safiyyah!!!

Marie the lead surveyor also went to Team B’s team meeting. She stated the team was ‘delightful’. She felt there was great participation by everyone and good team spirit. Bereavement was reviewed and there was a lot of discussion about different families and cultures experiences with grief and bereavement.” She also told us that the Lead Surveyor said “The IPU is FABULOUS, it is just want you want to have in the IPU setting. Congratulations to the IPU team.”

President and CEO, Walt Borginis, said, “I am pleased to announce that the three CHAP surveyors have completed their four day survey. They conducted an exit conference and we are pleased to report that the VNA has passed the survey. As a result, we are reaccredited for another three years.”
Highlights from VNA Wellness Resource Day

During the week of July 26th, our HR Department set up a series of employee wellness programs for us. The events included 5 minute chair massages with a Massage Therapist; a nutrition presentation on reading food labels and packages presented by our friends from Brown’s Shop Rite on Fox Street and the one in Cheltenham; and a demonstration and exercise presentation from representatives from the Kroc Center.

VNA Staff gather around to listen to presentation about reading food labels.

VNA Nurse on WPVI-Action News

On Wednesday, August 17th, VNA nurse Jonas Lapinski, RN, Team 5, Home Health, was accompanied on two home visits by Action News reporter John Rawlins. In recognition that the hot weather is an immediate threat to the elderly and especially those with chronic health conditions, the purpose of the feature was to bring attention to appropriate precautions during our most recent heat wave.

As Jonas conducted his visits, he advised patients on the importance of remaining well-hydrated. “Are you drinking plenty of fluids”? is the question Jonas asks of his patients. Jonas noted that dehydration affects a person’s mental capacity and they can become more forgetful of drinking their fluids. One of Jonas’ patients had a cardiac condition with physician-ordered fluid restrictions. He taught the patient that there is a fine line between drinking enough fluids and not over doing it which can result in heart complications.

Another concern for the elderly and disabled is avoiding extreme high temperatures in their homes. Jonas stated that he still sees people who only use fans to cool down their homes. He added that many people who do have air conditioners try to keep the units off as much as possible to avoid high electric bills.

Jonas did an excellent job in advising his patients on heat-related precautions and did a wonderful job in representing the VNA. Given the VNA’s historical significance and outstanding reputation in the Philadelphia healthcare community, the media regards the VNA as a “go to” agency when it comes to being experts in care of the elderly and disabled.

Many thanks to Jonas, not only for the Action News feature, but for doing a great job as a VNA nurse.
TRUSTEE PROFILES/VNA NEWS

Mr. Stulginsky is a former Senior Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP’s Health Care Industry Group and Partner-in-Charge of their Mid-Atlantic Health Care Practice with over 43 years of health care experience in both the Philadelphia and Baltimore offices. He has been the lead manager for audits for the Health Care Systems at The University of Michigan, The John Hopkins University, the University of California and the University of Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Board and Finance Committee of the Stella Maris Operating Corporation, which operates Maryland’s largest nursing home, home health and hospice service and is a member of the corporate Life Board of the American Red Cross. Mr. Stulginsky also serves on the Board of Trustees of Main Line Health, is a past chair and a current member of the VNA Board and is also a current member of the VNS Board.

William L. Stulginsky

Walter W. Borginis III, President and CEO (pictured below) congratulates VNA Employee, Joan Howard, Administrative Clerk, Medical Records, (also pictured below) as she celebrates her retirement after over 50 years of service.

Joan Howard was hired in November 1965 as a Senior Patient Services Clerk. In July 1994, Joan became a Team/Unit Clerical Coordinator. She changed positions in 2003 and became a Patient Services Clerical Coordinator. The next year, Joan joined the Medical Records team. She was employed by our Agency for 50 years and seven months! Joan retired on June 30, 2016, but returned for a few weeks to help out her department.

And VNA Employee, Dan Oliver, Purchasing Specialist, Facilities (pictured right), retires after over 14 years of service with the VNA.

Daniel Oliver was hired as a Purchasing Specialist by the VNA of Greater Philadelphia in July 2001. He retired on May 6, 2016 after serving the VNA for 14 years and nine months. Dan still keeps in touch with his friends here at the Agency. He tells us he just got a new puppy!
Our home health-care and hospice nurses and therapists at the VNA of Greater Philadelphia have the privilege and responsibility of taking care of people in the patients’ home. This gives them the opportunity to learn much more about the patient than just their illness. They see photos, meet pets, learn about hobbies, and get to know family members. Often the medical issue is not the only challenge that some of our patients face. Some families are struggling. Even what should be a fun and exciting time like Back to School season can be a hardship.

Here’s what our compassionate and caring staff did to alleviate the burden of their patients with children or grandchildren who needed school supplies: they organized Operation Back Pack! Bins were placed in our lunchroom and our colleagues donated all the items that the kids needed. The supplies were sorted by age appropriateness and divvied up evenly for each child who was designated as needing a little help.

Our clinicians picked up the stuffed backpacks and delivered them to the families on their medical visit. Here is what two of our clinicians said about the drop offs:

"I wanted to share with everyone how happy our patient Mrs. Smith's daughter, "C", was to receive the back to school package. She said that she was running out of money to complete her daughter's back to school items and wasn't sure how she was going to come up with additional money.

Her daughter wasn't home but one can only imagine how surprised she will be!

I must say it was a tearful moment for this daughter and me. And "C" sends a special thanks to you as well as our organization.

I love us!"

Toni

Happy faces of two little boys receiving their new school supplies.
Contact Us

For more information on our services please call:

215-473-7600
215-473-0772

Or visit us on the web at www.vnaphilly.org.

To make a donation, please contact:

Maureen Murphy
Sr. VP for Development

215-581-2006
mmurphy@vnaphilly.org

or www.vnaphilly.org to make a donation online. Click Donate Now.

In the Community

As partners in the community, we take part in all kinds of neighborhood events. This one was celebrating the anniversary of a doggie day care. In addition to trying to support our community we were also checking the event out to see if we could find any owners who had Certified Therapy Dogs! We’re always looking for them to volunteer in our Inpatient Hospice Unit. They are much loved and most welcome visitors! If you know of one, let Terry Scott, CAVS, Manager of Volunteer Services know at tscott@vnaphilly.org.

VNA of Greater Philadelphia, your provider of choice.....

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