A Message from the Interim President

Hello VNA family,

Late last month, Our Board of Trustees asked me to become the Agency’s new Interim President and CEO. I am proud to lead such an outstanding team of clinicians and non-clinicians. Each member of our VNA Philadelphia team plays a vital role in providing excellent and compassionate care to the people in our community.

VNA Philadelphia has a bright future, with a number of exciting new endeavors in the works. We’re focused on providing value to our constituents (patients, families, referral sources, and colleagues). Our number one goal is to always be the provider of choice for home health, palliative care and hospice. We do this with our timely initiation of care, our dedication to patient satisfaction, reducing hospital readmissions, and our determination to have the most modern technology in the healthcare industry.

To that end, we’re implementing:

- **Telehealth Technology**
  Health Recovery Solutions (HRS) is an advanced, remote-monitoring system for our patients and their families. Offering a way for patients to stay safer and healthier right from their own home and keep in touch with their clinicians and their families.

- **Specialty Program Development**
  Specialty programs have been developed for our patients with Cardiac/COPD, Diabetes, Wound Care, Mental Health and Palliative Care needs. These dedicated teams are focused on providing individualized plans of care for issues related to specific diagnoses.

- **Computer System Upgrades**
  We are currently looking at several new EMR options to support our operational development initiatives.

- **Recruitment and Retention Initiatives**
  We have developed a Nurse Residency program and hired a second full-time Staff Educator.

We, as an Agency, are aware of the challenges facing the healthcare industry. We’re prepared to meet them every day. It’s not easy work, but it’s vitally important.

It’s what we do
It’s why we exist
It’s who we are

VNA Philadelphia

Elwood Hungarter, RN, BSN, MS
Interim President and CEO
On Saturday, June 16, VNA Philadelphia hosted our annual Community Celebration of Life and Eighth Annual Butterfly Release. With approximately 150 people in attendance, our Hospice Team (led by Social Worker Craig Hindman, Chaplain Donna Geiger, and Bereavement Coordinator Zac Adams) conducted a beautiful memorial service for the families of loved ones who had passed in our hospice care. Our emcee for the event was Thera Martin, host of the show Daybreak on WURD 900 AM radio. The Threshold Choir beautifully performed works of music that they had chosen specifically for this occasion. Their voices (with no musical instruments accompanying them) were so lovely that they brought some people to tears.

Threshold Choir’s goal is to bring ease and comfort to those at the thresholds of living and dying. A calm and focused presence at the bedside, with gentle voices, simple songs, and sincere kindness, can be soothing and reassuring to clients, family, and caregivers alike. See www.thresholdchoir.org for more information about the choir and the work they do. The singers in Philadelphia are volunteers in our Hospice Program and sing to the patients and families in our Inpatient Hospice Unit.

After the formal service, everyone processed outside on a glorious June afternoon and each person received a butterfly in a small, triangular-shaped envelope. After receiving instructions on how to carefully and gently open the envelope, more than 300 butterflies were released simultaneously into the bright blue sky. In a breathtaking swirl, the butterflies flew up and away carrying our memories of our loved ones.

When the release concluded, all of our participants took part in the Community Celebration of Life that followed immediately. Hot dogs, cotton candy, pop corn, and water ice were served. Under a shady tent were a number of event participants, including a DJ, a yoga studio, a rock-climbing gym, certified therapy dogs, a US Army recruiter, a music school, a playground, a face painter, a caricaturist, and our partners for the event The Center for Grieving Children and The Cancer Support of Philadelphia.

Make plans to join us next year on Saturday, June 8 from 11 am to 1 pm!
Edgar, the Certified Therapy Dog made a new friend.

VNA Philadelphia Board of Trustees Chair, Liz Bligan with Interim President and CEO, Woody Hungarter.

Manny is one of our Certified Therapy Dogs

Look at the happy baby!

Our Hospice Volunteer, Kim, with Woody.

A box of Painted Ladies.

Bereavement Coordinator, Zac Adams, at the podium during the ceremony.

The Threshold Choir.

Everyone receives instructions on how to carefully open the envelope that contains their butterfly.

All kinds of activities to take part in.

Cotton candy, as well as hot dogs, popcorn, pretzels and water ice was free!

Our receptionist Lori sports a paper butterfly.
**Interprofessional Spiritual Care Education Curriculum (ISPEC)**

We are very excited and proud to announce that our own **Dr. Dawn Seiders and Chaplain Laura Barry** have been selected into the Interprofessional Spiritual Care Education Curriculum (ISPEC).

This curriculum focuses on the critical role spirituality and spiritual care plays in the care of patients, particularly those with chronic and complex illness.

**Congratulations!**

Only 60 participants were selected from the United States and around the globe to be part of this first ever train the trainer program.

**What is this all about:**

Recent clinical guidelines recognize the ethical obligation of all healthcare providers to alleviate pain and suffering, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual.

Health care providers acknowledge the growing momentum calling for patients' spirituality to be addressed, but often note lack of training as an important barrier to this. To bridge this gap, The George Washington Institute for spirituality and health (GWish), in partnership with City of Hope, and the Fetzer Institute developed an Interprofessional Spiritual care training program entitled "**Interprofessional Spiritual Care Education Curriculum (ISPEC)**". ISPEC is the first curriculum to be developed at the global level and offers a theoretically and research-grounded curriculum for teaching interprofessional spiritual care.

Clinicians will achieve greater skill development to educate, empower, and guide other healthcare professionals at their institute and within their communities in the integration of spirituality in healthcare.

More information is at: [https://smhs.gwu.edu/gwish/interprofessional-spiritual-care-education-curriculum-ispec](https://smhs.gwu.edu/gwish/interprofessional-spiritual-care-education-curriculum-ispec)

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**A Fond Farewell**

A retirement celebration was recently held for two of our most cherished colleagues. Anne Imhof, RN, and Larry Webster, PT enjoyed a party and well wishes from co-workers to celebrate the conclusion of their health-care careers at VNA Philadelphia.

Larry has been providing our patients with Physical Therapy since 1994 and Anne has been taking care of patients in our Hospice program since 2006.

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**Thank you, Volunteers!**

We are extraordinarily grateful for our volunteers and we recently honored them at a dinner to show our appreciation. Volunteers help with all kinds of activities with our patients. Some volunteers read, or talk to, or just sit with patients. Some play music or bake cookies. Some volunteers help with office jobs, like stuffing envelopes. Are you considering becoming a volunteer? Get in touch with Terry Scott at tscott@vnaphilly.org. Terry is our Volunteer Manager.
Congratulation (Again)

A hearty congratulations to our very own Medical Director Stan Savinese, DO! For the third straight year in a row, Dr. Savinese has been selected as a Top Doc by Philadelphia magazine. The unassuming and very modest doctor says he is just doing his job, but the honor confirms what we already knew about our colleague...he’s awesome!

Dr. Mary Kraemer (on the cover) is also a part of our Temple Health Palliative Care Team.

Testimonials to Our Care from Family Members

Dear VNA Nurses, Doctors, Social Workers, and Staff
Thank you so much for taking care of “Y” during her last few days. Thank you for making her comfortable. And thank you for your professionalism in taking care of her and dealing with the emotional friends and family. CK

Dear Staff,
Thank you for the support and comfort you all provided as well as the extra acts of kindness. Our sister “R” often spoke of the pleasant and personal care given to her that made her most difficult illness bearable. The Family of “R”

VNA Nurses,
We can’t thank you enough for all of the love and care you gave to our Mother at her final time. We could not have asked for more loving women than you. D and D

Dear VNA Staff,
Just wanted to thank you for your valuable service given to my Aunt K. Colleen, RN, was always attentive and professional, yet kind and friendly. She goes out of her way to make sure her patient is comfortable. Special thanks to Terri who gave us the kindest service, always considerate. (Social Worker) Liz and (Aide) Yazmin.

Florence Garrett

Florence Garrett was on hospice care from November 3rd to November 9th 2011 in our inpatient unit. Her daughter, Deborah Garrett, works with the Germantown Deaf Ministries Fellowship in Philadelphia. Today, April 27th she made a visit to see us to deliver a heartfelt “Thank You!” for the care Hospice provided to her mother and her entire family. She delivered a beautifully decorated, and delicious, cake in appreciation of the kindness, care and support that was given. As Ms. Garrett told me: “When someone in my congregation says they need hospice, I say VNA!!” as she lifted her hand in the air towards the sky.

In the spirit of giving back to the community, specifically to the VNA and the inpatient unit, Mrs. Garrett is volunteering her skills and support as a sign language interpreter for those who are deaf and hard of hearing and in need on our unit. She is offering sign language interpretation, friendly visitation, song and prayer to this often underserved community.
Our team members make the VNA Philadelphia Difference! We have a dedicated staff committed to providing excellent and compassionate care to our patients and their families. We all have a serious role to play in our Agency, but once in a while, we like to have a little fun together outside of work. One recent evening, a number of us took an art class. We all painted a masterpiece of a pineapple! We like working together!
**Introducing the VNA HELM Program**

VNA Philadelphia is launching another new program that will empower patients to be independent and in control of their health. The HELM Program is **Health and Education LifeStyle Monitoring** designed to help patients with chronic diseases such as Heart Failure, Diabetes, COPD and many others to steer their health in the right direction. VNA clinicians are able to bring the HELM program to patients by utilizing the technology from Health Recover Solutions (HRS) to enhance the care we deliver today.

HRS’ disease – specific kits are customized to include videos, educational tips, medication reminders and biometric tracking designed to help our patients engage in ways to manage their symptoms and improve their health. The platform is focused on daily interactions with the patients to transform behaviors, reduce hospital readmissions and improve clinical outcomes.

Clinicians, patients and caregivers have peace of mind when they enroll their patients in the HELM Program. The days of feeling lost at sea are gone. Patients also have additional support of the home monitoring in between clinician’s home visits. Clinicians feel connected to their patients and are able to provide seamless communication with their patients through video chat, wound imaging, and text messaging. Clinicians are able to identify and address patient concerns in real time. Family members and caregivers are able to be involved in their family member’s care and well–being remotely. The horizon is bright, stay tuned for more details.

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**Rock for Free Care**

Our Senior Vice President for Information Technology, Brian Sharkoski, led a fundraising effort with a night of music. His band, Lower Level, his Dad’s band, Vintage Stew, and his friend’s band, Frank & the Holdups played all evening to an enthusiastic crowd of colleagues who bought tickets for the concert.

All proceeds benefitted the Agency’s Fund for Free Care. VNA Philadelphia’s mission is “to provide comprehensive home health, palliative, and end-of-life care of the highest quality to all people, regardless of their ability to pay.” This means we take care of people who can’t pay us because they have no insurance. Our Fund for Free Care money went to more than $300,000 of uncompensated care last year. Interested in making a donation to this fund? Reach out to Maureen Murphy at mmurphy@vnaphilly.org. She’s our SVP for Development and Communication.

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**Photos by James Blocker Photography**
Facing the Challenges of a National Opioid Shortage

What do last Autumn’s hurricanes have to do with the opioid shortage facing hospices and hospitals. As it turns out, a lot. There are only a certain number of manufacturing facilities and two of them (one in Puerto Rico and one in Florida) were shuttered after experiencing too much damage in the storms last fall.

The Drug Enforcement Administration has tight regulations, in part to reduce the other opioid crisis...too many illicit drugs on the street...that don’t allow the remaining manufacturing facilities to simply make more.

Our Senior Vice President for Hospice, Linda McIver, RN, BSN, NP, knows this is a serious problem for our patients. She and a team of others traveled to meet with the staff of Senator Corey Booker (D-NJ) to explain the dire situation and try to get law makers to legislate an answer to the difficulty.

Until then, our clinicians continue to work creatively and diligently (using other drugs and drug forms) to keep our patients comfortable and out of pain.

Caring Award 2018

On May 17, we honored Jeffrey and Sandy Brown of Brown’s Super Stores (ShopRite and Fresh Grocer) at our bi-annual Caring Award dinner. Jeff and Sandy were selected for the outstanding and unselfish work they do in our communities. Much like VNA Philadelphia, they go into underserved communities and fill the needs of our neighbors. Congratulations!

One of our Chaplains, the Rev. Ann Schlossnagel, plays the reverie harp for a patient.

The harp was purchased with funds from the Shirley Pinola Memorial Fund, which was established by our Trustee, Richard Pinola.
VNA Philadelphia Participates in Broad Street Run

On Sunday May 6th, one of our hospice social workers, Melissa Hecht, participated in the Broad Street Run. Melissa has been providing care and support to her patient, Earl Smallwood Sr. and his family since coming onto hospice in March of this year. When Mr. Smallwood, Sr and Jr. heard Melissa was running the Broad Street Run, they came out to support and encourage her in kind. Melissa had a strong finish after recently having a baby girl, Pia Jane, less than 6 months ago! Melissa in turn gave Mr. Smallwood, Sr her Broad Street Run shirt as a “thank you” for coming out, showing love and being one of her “biggest fans.”

Recognition of Our Color Guard Members

VNA Philadelphia provides one of the most comprehensive programs designed especially for military veterans in the health-care industry.

In addition, our Veterans Liaison, Bob Haley, often works closely with the Coatesville High School Junior ROTC (United States Air Force) during the many ceremonies he organizes for area veterans who are, or may become, our patients.

Recently, Bob officially acknowledged two of the cadets for their service to VNA Philadelphia.

Have you served in the Armed Forces or has your loved one? Do you need assistance with anything related to military service or health care? We’re here to help you. Contact Bob Haley at rhaley@vnaphilly.org or call him at 610-570-9808.

Take our Kids to Work Day

In April, we celebrated National Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day! Kids we put to work that day included Karletta’s daughter, Trish’s daughter, Wanda’s daughter, Lavonna’s daughter, Liza’s daughter, Rita’s daughter, Arthina’s son, Kirsten’s little sister, and Zabre’s daughter.

It was a wonderful opportunity for these young people to see just how hard their Moms work every day!
On June 5th, 2018, Laura L. Barry, our Hospice Chaplain, organized a follow-up event to our Science and Spirituality of Death program called Crucial Conversations: the Language of Death and Dying.

You may remember the Science and Spirituality of Death on March 13th brought faith leaders from in and around the Philadelphia area together in an engaging collaborative conversation about the importance of faith and faith leaders in the dying process.

The Science and Spirituality of Death program which was offered free to faith based leaders was the beginning of what was hoped to be an ongoing series of conversations and meetings in collaborating with the faith communities in which we serve.

The community interest in continuing end of life discussions has lead us to develop the quarterly series called “Crucial Conversations.” Working with faith leaders, we will explore new topics of interest related to end of life care impacting our communities.

Crucial Conversations: the Language of Death and Dying opened a discussion about speaking from the heart versus the head when caring for members of faith communities, clichés to avoid, what to say and importantly, being comfortable in the sometimes uncomfortable emotions related to end of life.

Laura L. Barry presented and was supported by our Chaplain Supervisor Donna Geiger, Chaplain Ronald Kinsey and Bereavement Coordinator, Zac Adams. Attendance included 9 faith based leaders representing the Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist faith traditions. Also in attendance was the Program Facilitator for Communication and Leader Development for the Philadelphia Baptist Association which consists of 124 local Baptist congregations.

With the great success of the Science and Spirituality of Death program, where do we go from here?

The VNA has been asked to spearhead an end of life workshop for the Philadelphia Baptist Association’s upcoming clergy meeting in the fall. We will also continue to organize and facilitate faith based quarterly meetings as Crucial Conversations are a needed and valuable resource in helping residents in our community receive quality care, needed support and dignity at the end of life.

Our next meeting is September 25, 2018. Thank you and stay tuned for our future updates, successes and stories.

Crucial Conversations: the Language of Death and Dying was written by Laura L Barry and developed with input and support from Chaplain Supervisor Donna Geiger, Bereavement Coordinator Zac Adams and Director of Clinical Services, Craig Hindman.
The VNA Philadelphia Difference!

Another example of the VNA Philadelphia Difference is our Patient and Caregivers Assistance Fund. It is a fund that was created to benefit our patients and their caregivers by using the money in it to buy items that patients need but can’t afford and aren’t covered by insurance.

When a nurse, or an aide, or a chaplain, or a social worker, or community health worker sees a need in a patient’s home they can request money from the fund to buy the necessary items. Some of the more common items include shower chairs and grab bars for safer bathing, transfer benches to help prevent falls, hand-held, long shower heads to facilitate independent bathing, sock aides and dressing sticks to facilitate more independent living. But all kinds of things can be provided. Other things the fund has been used for include a space heater, an apartment-sized refrigerator, a mattress for a patient who had been sleeping on the floor, elastic shoe laces, a utility bill, a chair for a patient who been sitting only on a milk crate, a scale for a patient with congestive heart failure so she can weigh herself daily, ostomy bags, an exterminator for a patient whose home had bed bugs, reading glasses, clothing, and many other things. We don’t think any other agency is doing this.

And the most remarkable part about the fund? The donations to it come from our own employees. Our colleagues donate their own money so that our patients and families can have the things they need to keep them safe and comfortable.

One of our patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) was having difficulty breathing during the first brutal heat wave of the summer of 2018. His Community Health Worker requested an air conditioner from the Patient and Care Givers Assistance Fund. When his family learned that he would be receiving a brand new A/C still in its box, they couldn’t believe it. They were so grateful to team VNA Philadelphia!

An International Partnership

A short time ago, we received an inquiry from three Registered Nurses from Seoul National University Bundang Hospital in South Korea. They were interested in how they might start up a home-health program similar to ours.

Our SVP for Home Health, Dawn King, RN, BSN, in the true nurse spirit of always wanting more people to be taken care of, said yes immediately. We knew there were details that had to be worked out, but yes!

In the first week of this month, the three nurses arrived from South Korea. They were given an introductory overview of VNA Philadelphia’s history and our business model. They met with members of our different teams that all play a role in providing care. They even went on patient visits, out to a marketing call, and they had a trip to Temple University Hospital with our Palliative Care Team. They packed a lot into a short visit!

We learned from them, too! South Korea has universal health care and hospital stays are very long (think two weeks for wisdom-tooth removal!). So by the time a patient leaves a facility, there is no need for home-health care. You can imagine how shocked they were when they saw patients at home with wounds and catheters, etc. The universal health-care model is solely starting to change and this hospital in Seoul wants to be ahead of the curve.

We hope to work with our new associates again some day soon! Maybe a VNA Philadelphia goes to Seoul! We know we’ll have three friends waiting!
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