Hello VNA Philadelphia Family,

In the Summer edition of this newsletter, I told you that we’d be implementing a Telehealth Specialty program. It’s called HELM (Health and Education Lifestyle Monitoring) and I’m proud to say it has been launched with great success!

HELM will first serve medically challenging patients who are at risk for hospital readmission. We also plan to use the HELM program with the patients we take care of who have chronic illnesses like Congestive Heart Failure, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, and Diabetes. We aim to help our patients learn how they can take good care of themselves after they are discharged from our care and to improve their quality of life. As the program develops, we’ll expand it to all patients who would benefit from this advanced technology.

How it works is this:

• Patients are provided with a 4G tablet that is pre-loaded with a software product. There’s a way to keep track of the patient’s activity, weight, diet, and medication. This info can be shared by the patient with their family (anywhere in the world) and their clinician for review.

• Caregivers and Clinicians can review special alerts when there is a missed or abnormal reading so any problem can be addressed immediately, which will prevent an unnecessary trip to the doctor’s office or hospital.

• Patients have access to teach-back quizzes and more than 2,000 educational videos on many subjects.

• Patients and clinicians can instantly communicate by video chat.

• All biometric readings are sent to the primary care physician weekly (or as otherwise requested).

• Clinicians can check a patient’s blood pressure, temperature, and other vital signs. There’s even a stethoscope so a clinician can actually hear the patient’s heartbeat and breathing on a video chat.

• Caregivers and clinicians can receive special alerts when the patient is at risk for a readmission to the hospital to prevent it.

VNA Philadelphia is on the cutting edge of technology for our patients and their families. There’s more about the HELM program inside this issue, including photos. Take a look!

Sincerely,

Elwood Hungarter, RN, BSN, MS
Arthina Marks Lee Ordained

Take a moment to learn more about one of our VNA’s finest; Arthina Marks-Lee, who has been with the VNA for 12 years and currently works as a scheduler for the Home Health Department. On August 19, 2018, Arthina was ordained as an Elder with the Master’s Commission International Fellowship. Arthina studied at the Master Commission Bible Institute in Philadelphia and graduated receiving her Bachelor Degree in Biblical Counseling. Arthina plans to continue her education and ultimately wants to volunteer as a Chaplain. Arthina aspires to serve as a Chaplain for Hospice and Hospitals helping people connect with their faith. In Arthina’s spare time she enjoys writing and has authored her first book. To learn more about her life’s work you may want to read her book *Faith Workout*. Congratulations to Arthina, we hope to hear more about her life’s aspirations in upcoming news.

Team VNA Philadelphia!

One hot August night, we gathered after work to play ball at the Second Annual VNA Philadelphia Softball Game! Everyone “pitched in” and brought food and a number of people also brought their families. This year’s event was organized by one of our Hospice Nurse Practitioners, Aileen Allerton, one of our Home Health Patient Care Managers, Beth Hardiman, RN and our Bereavement Coordinator, Zac Adams.

Some of us played, some of us were cheerleaders, and all of us had fun. We’re already planning our next staff get-together!

Remembrance Yarn

Every week, our interdisciplinary Hospice Teams meet. The teams are made up of nurses, chaplains, social workers, our bereavement specialist, and aides. They talk about each patient and the patient’s caregivers and families. What the patient needs and how each member of the team can care for the person in the very best way. Everyone communicating ensures the greatest care and comfort is provided.

During the meetings, the names of the people who have died in the week since the last meeting are read out loud. Each person is remembered. At the meeting, team members take pieces of yarn as the names of the deceased are read and at the conclusion of the meeting, the yarn pieces are tied together. The ball that forms (pictured) represents the memories we keep of all of the people we have taken care of. You’ll notice all the different textures and colors and diversity in the ball, just like all of the people we walk with on this journey.
An Interview with Renee Savarese, New SVP for Hospice

Meet Renee Savarese, RN, BSN, our new SVP for Hospice. VNA Philadelphia has elevated our Palliative Care Program to the same high priority and status of our Home Health and Hospice Programs. Linda McIver, RN, MSN, CRNP, whom you met in the Fall 2017 issue of Vital Signs, has been chosen to become its Senior Vice President.

Let’s get to know Renee…

Where are you from?
I’m a native of South Philadelphia. I was born and raised there and still live there today. I’m a graduate of Stella Maris grade school and St. Maria Goretti High School. Later I graduated from Methodist School of Nursing and I received my BSN from Immaculata University.

When did you know you wanted to become a nurse?
I started out in Sports Medicine, I was an RN for an orthopedic surgeon. Then both of my parents became sick at a very early age and both went into hospice care. That experience entirely shifted my career. When I saw all of the help, support, and passion from the chaplains and social workers and saw all of the clinical disciplines coming together, I knew it was what I wanted to do. Prior to that, I had no idea what hospice was because I was only in my twenties.

And you’ve been in Hospice ever since?
Ever since. I couldn’t imagine doing anything else or providing any different level of care. I can’t imagine being in any other field and I wouldn’t have it any other way. It’s hard work and you need a strong work ethic and the teamwork involved is motivating. You have to have that passion. You can’t do this work every day unless you really, really love it.

What kinds of things do you like to do during your time off from work?
I love the beach, Wildwood is my favorite. I like spending time with family and friends having get-togethers and dinner with them. But not pizza, I’m the only Italian who doesn’t like pizza! (Renee and her interviewer laugh.) I’m also always up for a challenge like an art or a craft project. This kind of clinical work is on your mind 24/7 so balancing work, fun and the rest of your life is huge. I also like tending to herbs and flowers in my little garden, too.

Are there kids or a pet in the house?
Yes, I have two daughters, one 16 and one 22. And there’s Mocha, an eight-year-old Yorkie-Poo who keeps me busy. Walking him after work in the evening is a great way to transition from my day at work to my night at home.

What would you like our newsletter readers to know about you?
That I’m definitely a hard worker. I’m extremely fair, I’m trustworthy, dedicated, respectful, and consistent. As a native of this city, I love that we’re taking care of patients in this community. I know that I’m working with really seasoned nurses and I’m learning from them. I love that this Agency is a nonprofit and I want to make sure that our patients receive all of the resources available to them.

Back to School

Once again this year, the staff donated school supplies for the children and grandchildren of our patients who could use a little assistance. Every day, the collection bins got a little bigger and bigger until they were overflowing with backpacks, notebooks, folders, pencils, crayons, and everything else the kids could use. After all the items were collected, our team sorted into category and by age group then packed all the backpacks. Clinicians came in and picked them up and brought them out to the families they had identified as needing them. Our employees are the VNA Philadelphia Difference!
HELM Program

As a direct result of the dynamic trio Tom Miller, RN (Director of Intake), Donna Swearingen, LPN (Care Transition Liaison) and Nora Cowell, RN (Care Transition Liaison) our first three patients were signed onto our HELM program the week of August 20, 2018. Together they really pushed to find the right patients that could benefit from the services provided through HELM. Patients with Heart Failure and at high risk to be re-hospitalized were placed on the system to improve the patient’s outcomes and reduce their risk of being readmitted to the hospital. By Monday, August 27th the VNA had a total of eight patients enrolled in the program and will reach our goal of 20 by the end of three weeks.

To the right is an example of data from a patient that the team intervened, provided a visit and improved her overall health to avoid a re-hospitalization.

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Two of the three patients on the system demonstrated high alerts that may have resulted in a readmission to the hospital. However, since they were on HELM, the symptoms were addressed and the patients were stabilized in the comfort of their homes. Week one, was a huge success with 100% compliance from our patients, no complaints regarding the equipment and two hospitalizations avoided.

Tom Miller will attend all team meetings and provide a detailed program description and demonstration to ensure all VNA Philadelphia patients benefit from the program regardless of where they live! Stay tuned for more updates, patient successes and anecdotes of how individuals enrolled in HELM have achieved independence and control over their health!
Taking Care of a Former Navy SEAL

There is a gentleman who was our patient in the IPU who was a Navy SEAL during the Vietnam War, in which he served two tours (then four more years in the Navy before becoming a Merchant Marine). When our Veterans Liaison, Bob Haley, heard about this, he went to the VA and got a copy of the document that commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War and that was signed by President Obama. Pictured below is Bob reading the proclamation to the gentleman. The next picture is of (from left) is our chaplain the Rev. Donna, chaplain the Rev. Laura, Social Worker Joanna and Social Worker Emily. A beautiful, emotional moment.

Would you like to know more about our special programs for all military veterans and their families? Veterans Liaison, Bob Haley, would love to talk to you. Reach out to him at rhaley@vnaphilly.org or call him at 610-570-9808.

Our New Nurse Residency Program

On the good advice of our Board Member, Julie Fairman, PhD, RN, FAAN, we recently began a Nurse Residency Program. What that means is that we hire brand-new nursing-school graduates and give them a six-month long opportunity to learn what a career in home-health nursing is really like. Part classroom training and part real in-home visits with our patients provides the new grads with unbeatable experience. In a recent conversation with the residents, we found out that they think this program is as valuable as we do!

Under the watchful guidance and mentorship of our Nurse Educator, who loves her students, they learn proper technique as well as patient care and VNA Philadelphia standards of service. We’ve recently expanded the program to include LPNs as well. In addition, we’re hoping the program can create a pipeline to hiring nurses. Are you interested in learning about working for VNA Philadelphia? We’re hiring and our Clinical Recruiter, LeAnne Hall-Stowe, would love to talk to you! Reach out to her at LHall-Stowe@vnaphilly.org or at 215-581-2073. We offer great pay and benefits!

The VNA Philadelphia Difference at Work

Aileen C. Allerton, CRNP, Hospice Nurse Practitioner received a phone call from the mother of our patient RW. Aileen was out to see RW on Monday and visited with him and his mother for about 45 minutes. She told them his nurse, Ellen Meehan, would be out to see him later that afternoon. About 30 minutes after Aileen left, Ellen called her and asked if there were any issues when she was there because when she called to say she was coming all the mother could say was ‘help me!’. Since there was nothing out of the norm when Aileen was there, Ellen assumed there must be an emergency and called 911. When she arrived to the patient's house, she found out there was a fire in the upstairs apartment (where RW’s mother lives) and the mother was having trouble breathing. Police and fire rescue were already there administering care. Ellen's astute critical thinking skills saved this woman's life, as well as her patient's life who lives downstairs. RW’s mom was released from the hospital the next night where she was treated for smoke inhalation. She said she had to call first thing this morning to say, ‘please tell Ellen thank you for saving my life.’ She said after Aileen left she remembered she had a pot on the stove and went upstairs. She was overcome by smoke and ‘thought she would die.’ She could hear Ellen's voice on the answering machine and crawled to find the phone, 'knowing Ellen would come.'
Testimonials

My husband was put into hospice with your organization in April 2018. I am writing to thank everyone who was associated with his care.

He was on hospice care at home during April and May. He had been assigned a nurse, Lois Nevrincean, and an aide by the name of Brian Brown. I had been visited several times by Chaplain Ron Kinsey and also the Social Worker Stephanie Dingle. I don’t know what I or my husband would have done without all of these people. They were extremely helpful, courteous, professional and just wonderful to both my husband and myself.

I had also spoken on the phone for several evenings when my husband was in distress to a wonderful, very patient, nurse by the name of Jim Halton. I can’t tell you how he not only helped me but had such a calming effect on me.

My husband was brought to your hospice facility at the end of May and died there on June 3, 2018. He was there for 10 days. Every single nurse who was assigned to him was wonderful. They tended to him so graciously to keep him out of pain as much as possible, were caring, professional and just lovely.

I would highly recommend your organization to anyone who was in need of hospice care.

I don’t know the names of the nurses in my husband’s care but please thank everyone who was so helpful and attentive.

Thank you so much for the excellent service you provided my husband and me. When my husband became ill I wasn’t prepared. There was so much to learn and in the beginning it seemed like it would be overwhelming. But when I began to meet all of the people on his treatment team—from the doctors, nurses, and chaplains, to the people who worked behind the scenes I felt peace. Whether it was a home visit or during his stays in the hospital my feelings never changed. It did not feel like you were his “treatment team”, you became family.

Losing my husband/friend of over 40 years has been one of the most painful times in my life. But when I think back over the last few years (and especially the past few weeks) all I can remember is all of the kind people at the VNA who were there for me. My mind replays one kind act after the other and it feels so good to know that during this difficult season of my life I am not alone. Thank you all for being there. I’m sure some of you may feel you were just doing your job, but it’s in the spirit in which you did your job that has made all the difference.

Employee Compassionate Care Campaign

Every year, VNA Philadelphia employees take part in a fundraising campaign known as the Employee Compassionate Care Campaign. It’s a time when all employees are asked to make their own personal donation to the Agency. Our team is so committed to our Agency, our mission, and our patients that many of us make a pledge to support VNA Philadelphia’s financial success.

We always try to make this Campaign as much fun as possible. Every year, a theme is chosen and this year’s was Aloha East Falls Luau. Our offices were transformed into beautiful Hawaii by our colleagues who served as volunteers on the Employee Compassionate Care Committee. We had a bake sale, hot-dog day, a game day, an indoor yard sale, an ice-cream sale, but the biggest hit of the fundraiser is the raffle-basket sale. This year, every single department donated a basket. The items raffled off included great prizes, such as spa treatments, action figures, woodworkings, restaurant gift cards, board games, dog toys, a bike, beach gear…you name it…we even had a prize that was an extra vacation day! We had a total of 55 baskets to raffle…a record number!

On the last day of the campaign, we had a luau lunch. Committee Members brought something they made to share with colleagues. After lunch, came the drawings. The excitement and the crowd watching built! We had fun raising money for our Agency! That’s the VNA Philadelphia Difference! At final count, approximately $14,000 was raised!
Joe Maurone lucky winner of a Day Off!

Andrew Phillips, RN Helping out by serving pulled pork at our Luau.

Kaija Sannicks enjoying some ice cream!

The Reverend Laura Barry and The Reverend Ann Schlossnagle gabbing some lunch on Hot Dog Day.

Ashley Coles, RN - Cashier at the Luau

Woody Hungarter looks on as a patient wins a prize.

Dawn King and Jane Bradley tallying the money raised from the Employee Campaign.

Dominique Scott VNA Philadelphia’s own Hula girl.
Everyone Deserves a Spa Day

Carolyn Kruse is currently a hospice patient residing in a nursing home for long-term care.

In July, hospice nurse, Peggy Salvatore, mentioned to social worker, Emily Ricci and chaplain, Laura Barry that Ms. Kruse’s birthday will be in August and Peggy planned to bring in a cake to celebrate. Upon hearing this, the Team sprung into action. All three discussed how to make this a great day for their patient. After many discussions and some planning, they decided to give Ms. Kruse a spa day.

So on August 10th, one day before her 70th birthday, Peggy, Emily and Laura arrived at Ms. Kruse’s bedside.

To set the mood, Laura played the reverie harp while a eucalyptus diffuser filled the air. Ms. Kruse began with a manicure but not before she had the chance to play the reverie harp herself.

The sound emanating from such an instrument creates a peaceful calm atmosphere.

But what spa day would be complete without having a relaxing facial, compliments of Emily. All the time, Ms. Kruse nibbled on cashews, potato chips and sipped root beer while sharing dating advice and recalling memories of going out dancing and having a night out on the town. Laughing and sharing was a big part of the day for everyone. “It was a joy to do and such fun too!” says Laura.

After her make-up was applied, and her nails dried, Peggy entered with some of Ms. Kruse’s favorite foods: Scallops, macaroni and cheese, stewed tomatoes and a delicious birthday cake.

As the day came to a close, Ms. Kruse was overjoyed and so appreciative saying “I will remember this day forever.”

Therapies Available from VNA Philadelphia

Did you know that we provide more than nursing care in our Home Health, Palliative, and Hospice programs? We also have an outstanding team of therapists across three different disciplines. Our therapists work in harmony with all of our other clinicians.

- **Speech-Language Therapy**
  Speech-Language Therapists work with individuals who need speech, language, communication and swallowing training, after a stroke, surgery or other conditions.

- **Physical Therapy**
  Physical Therapists help you move around better, using treatments such as exercise, gait training, range of motion and others.

- **Occupational Therapy**
  Occupational Therapists help you get better with your activities of daily living, such as eating, dressing and bathing, using training and assistive devices.
If you’ve visited our offices, you would have seen that everyone in Home Health was located on the fifth floor and everyone in Palliative Care and Hospice was on the sixth floor. All of that is changing right now as this edition of the Vital Signs newsletter is going to press! We are combining the teams so we are interspersed throughout both floors.

VNA Philadelphia is one agency with one mission: “to provide comprehensive home health, palliative, and end-of-life care of the highest quality to all people regardless of their ability to pay.” We believe something as simple as having office space combined demonstrates our oneness. Working literally side by side, we can learn more from each other, help each other, and understand each other more. This will translate into taking even better care of patients!

“Last Minute Pop Up Lunch” to get ready for a new season of Football! E-A-G-L-E-S!!!! Eagles!

Lori and LeAnne with a warm Eagles welcome at our front desk. 

Karletta and Roberta

LeAnne, Jane, Zac, Rebecca, Karletta and Sara and Roberta take part in the lunch!

Lakita and Karissa show their team spirit

Our Community Health Workers
Our CHWs help our patients by serving as a bridge between the community and our Agency

Firefighter Stowe teaches a class on fire safety to our clinicians.

Nina and Katy packing up for the Finance Department.

Luis and Rob, our Facilities crew, are literally doing the heavy lifting.
VNA Philadelphia Night at Jazz in the Park

Jazz in the Park has been a tradition for the past six years and it’s sponsored by the City of Philadelphia and Eighth District Councilwoman, Cindy Bass. This year, the event took place most Tuesday evenings all summer at the Morris Estates Park in West Oak Lane.

VNA Philadelphia volunteer in the Hospice program, Serena Sol Brown, is the producer of the show. She invited our Agency to be recognized at the event one sultry night in early August.

Our Chair of the Board of Trustees, Liz Bligan, delivered remarks about our services and Serena herself gave a very moving testimony to the compassionate care we provided her Dad before his passing.

It was also an opportunity to recruit new staff members and volunteers. A number of us attended to represent the Agency and to enjoy some great jazz music.

Are you a jazz fan? Stay tuned for details about the jazz event we have planned to honor the tenth anniversary of the opening of our Inpatient Hospice Unit early next year. Would you like to be on the planning committee? Maureen Murphy, who is heading up the event, would love to hear from you at mmurphy@vnaphilly.org.

Operation: Hydrate Our Clinicians

It was one of the hottest days of Summer 2018. We knew that some of us had the luxury of working in an air-conditioned office building while our field-staff colleagues were driving around the ferociously hot city…getting in and out of their cars all day taking care of people.

We had an idea! Let’s buy them water ice! We looked at a map of the city, divided into north, south, east, and west then picked a central location in each. Next, we searched for the Rita’s Water Ice that was closest to that location. (We chose Rita’s because it had the largest number of stores in Philadelphia and we wanted to offer all of our colleagues the same product!)

We sent an email out to everyone and said we’d meet them at Rita’s between certain hours of the day and off we went! It was a small gesture, but we really wanted our field-staff team to know we cared about them and appreciated how challenging their job can be.

Of course, we brought back the cold, sweet treat to the office team, too! p.s—we’re currently in conversations with Rita’s Water Ice to become a donor!
Project: Calm, Cool, Courageous: Nursing and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic

Aims: To highlight nursing during the Influenza outbreak, focusing on Philadelphia.

How: Extensive series of Twitter and Facebook posts from mid-September to mid-November (in real time) along with news stories on our website and a webpage/online exhibit with a researcher subject guide.

Details: Using the Visiting Nurse Society of Philadelphia (VNSoP) newspaper scrapbook that documents the society’s work from 1918-1919, organize an extensive series of social media posts and build an awareness surrounding the 100 year anniversary of the Spanish Influenza which killed 50 million people world-wide, 650,000 in the United States. Philadelphia was one of the worst cities in terms of city response, people infected, and people who died (12,000). We will supplement VNSoP with materials from approximately seven other Bates Center collections.

The first reported case of the flu in Philadelphia was recorded on September 7th at the Navy Yard. On the 7th, the Center will post a news article to announce the project. We will continue limitedly posting from the 7th through the 28th on military and civilian reported cases. Since these cases were not public knowledge until much later our postings will increase as the public became aware of the illness. In Philadelphia, the disease rapidly spread after a citywide Liberty Bond parade on September 28th, which was held to raise money for the troops. In the week leading up to this date, the Center will post about the VNSoP, including what they were accomplishing during the months prior to the outbreak, as well as what society in general was tasked with during the war. This will provide a base of knowledge about life in the city as well as nurses’ work.

During the “active” weeks of the flu (with postings centering in early-mid October), the Center will post numerous tweets of information, clippings, images and quotes from the scrapbook and other Center holdings. These clippings discuss death totals, the spread of the disease, the nurses’ actions as well as doctors, and the measures taken to stop the spread of disease and aid victims. This will happen as close to real time as possible.

We will supplement the newspaper clippings with reports, minutes, and student files from across our collections to show a city-wide perspective of the epidemic. In addition, contemporary news pieces and documentaries will also be pushed out to provide a larger context of events. Whenever possible we will highlight connections to other Philadelphia institutions, especially those at other Penn archives. We will use secondary sources to show its spread, impact on communities, and symptoms that made this disease more fearful than traditional influenza.

In late October, when the pandemic subsides, the Center plans to focus thematically on documents that are about the flu, but were created after the pandemic occurred- such as the annual reports from the various schools of nursing as well as the VNSoP. This will provide context for how the pandemic impacted all levels of society and also how people, organizations, and institutions recorded or didn’t record their experiences. It will also focus on the actions that the VNSoP took as a result of the epidemic. In addition to the first and last article, there are several articles that take a more in-depth focus on specific topics, including the city and nursing in the midst of the flu, a case study of Presbyterian Hospital student nurses sick with influenza, and the VNSoP.

In addition to the social media blitz, we are also creating a web page (mini exhibit) about the nurses during the Influenza epidemic. The exhibit will be a home base for the articles produced as well as provide context for the selection of documents/images we make available, including the 2-3 smaller galleries we will be curating. A researcher subject guide will be made available as a PDF. This guide will contain a listing of all the collections that have materials related to the 1918 Influenza pandemic with a small synopsis to accompany it. It will also have a bibliography of outside sources that were compiled during the crafting of this project. The website will go live on the 7th, though links to our articles will be updated as we post them.
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### 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:

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mmurphy@vnaphilly.org

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