



VNA & Hospice of VT and NH

# Bringing Health Care Home

March, 2004

## Our Mission

Our hearts, skills, and resources are dedicated to delivering outstanding home- and community-based health and hospice services that enrich the lives of people who live throughout our region. We do this in active partnership with other organizations and with the individuals and families we serve.

## Our Core Values

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Innovation
- Accountability
- Team Work
- Respect

## What is Home Care?

Helping our patients become more independent, manage their recovery and illness, and regain optimal health.

## What is Hospice?

Providing comfort and dignity to individuals with life-threatening illnesses who decide to forego curative treatments with the support of loved ones, and continuing support for their loved ones after the time of death.



## Assuring a Safe Home for our Elderly

BEFORE THE SAFE STEPS PROGRAM came along, 86-year-old Lillian Marcotte of Hartland, Vermont, never thought about grab bars. After all, she has good balance, had never fallen in her home, and has always kept herself in good physical shape. But after the VNA and Hospice conducted a home safety assessment as part of its Safe Steps Fall Prevention Program, she said, "Why not!" Three bars were installed in her bathtub area. A handrail was also installed along a steep stairway leading to her second floor. "I never considered grab bars before," says Lillian. "I'd hold onto my windowsill or the faucet if I needed support. Now I feel much more secure, and I'd definitely recommend them to others," she adds.

The Safe Steps Program is helping Lillian and others to be safer in their homes—and for good reason. "As people age, they are more likely to fall and become injured," says Eileen Katchen, program coordinator. "In fact, each year, one out of every three people age 65 and over will experience a fall, and that figure increases to almost 50 percent by age 80. Almost 60 percent of these falls occur in the home!" she adds.

For an older person, a simple fall can result in the loss of an active independent life. For some, it can even mean long-term placement in a nursing home. One study found that falls are a contributing factor in 40 percent of all admissions to nursing homes.

Falls are not an inevitable consequence of aging, however. Many falls can be prevented by addressing multiple risk factors such as health problems, the misuse or over-use of medications, plus balance and strength problems, and hazards in the home environment.

"Small changes can make big differences," says James Bannister, physical therapist and clinical coordinator for Safe Steps. "Consider the grab bar. With it, a person can take a shower and be assured stability and support. Without it, a person could easily fall and become injured. Presently, the average hospital charge

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# VNA News

*"VNA saved my life last year. Thank you. Unbelievable care! Wonderful people!"*

## President's Message

### Moving Forward

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*President & CEO*

THE YEAR 2003 was another challenging year for VNA and Hospice as we faced an 11 percent reduction in Medicare reimbursement and began the implementation of a new information system. The resiliency and commitment of staff have been commendable.

In looking forward, the Board of Trustees embarked on a strategic planning process to continually position and strengthen the organization. Through an invigorating process, the Board and senior leadership revised our mission statement and core values (see front page), and recognized our name did not truly reflect who we are as an organization and hospice provider. Hence, we have changed our name to Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice of Vermont and New Hampshire.

We committed ourselves to providing services that truly reflect the needs and expectations of our patients, family members, and community partners. In providing these services, we recognize that we must be aware of the changing needs of those we serve and the fiscal realities we face.

Through our planning process, we identified critically important issues and efforts. We have reaffirmed our commitment to providing a full range of

individualized services that support the well being and dignity of seniors and others with health and physical needs. We also recognize that all of our services must be built on a solid foundation that reflects our core values.

So, to truly respond to the present and future needs of those who count on our care, we have laid out these strategic initiatives.

- Strengthening our program's distinction and evaluation.
- Strengthening regional collaboration.
- Being the employer of choice in health care.
- Strengthening our service delivery, responsiveness, and quality.
- Ensuring fiscal and operational excellence.
- Enhancing our Board of Trustees.
- Strengthening community awareness and fund development.

We wish you a safe and fulfilling new year, and we look forward to each and every chance we have to serve you, your family and our community.

Susan H Larman  
President and CEO

#### Woodstock Wellness Center

### Ready, Set, OPEN!

BY THE TIME this newsletter is out, the greater Woodstock community will see progress underway at the new Wellness Center located in suite 6A at Gallery Place on Route 4 in Woodstock.

In 2002, Josephine and Stephen Spear donated an office condominium to the VNA. Through the collaboration of the local nursing team and the Friends of the VNA in Woodstock,

a creative plan to develop and fund a community Wellness Center is becoming a reality!

The center will provide places for area residents to come for a blood pressure or cholesterol clinic, a chance to have a private visit with a nurse, or to attend a health-related education program. Details on the center will be released soon in the local papers. The VNA is

very grateful to the team of individuals whom we call "Friends."

If you are interested in the services we offer, stop by the Woodstock Senior Center on Tuesday or Wednesday mornings and ask for Vicki Strousse, our community nurse coordinating this program. Renovations at the New Wellness Center are scheduled to be completed in early May. Stay tuned!

## Assuring a safe home

*From front page*

for a fall in Vermont is \$12,000. Compare that with the cost of a \$14 grab bar!" he adds.

The purpose of the Safe Steps Program is threefold. It provides community education programs to educate people about fall risks and ways to avoid injuries; it provides free home safety assessments and modifications in order to make the home a safer place; and it identifies people with balance problems and suggests ways balance can be improved.

During the home assessment, a trained VNA and Hospice staff member identifies potential hazards and suggests ways these problems can be eliminated. Improvements are made on-the-spot or shortly after, all free of charge or by donations.

Home assessments have been provided for almost 100 people so far, and improvements made for all of them. The most common improvements have involved bathrooms, where falls often occur. Night-lights are provided as well as non-slip rugs and tub mats, tub seats, hand-held shower hoses, and raised toilet seats. Grab bars are especially popular and many have been installed through the program.

Stairways and rugs are of special concern. Rugs are secured and handrails installed in order to prevent falls. If someone needs their bedroom moved downstairs, Safe Steps can help. If a banister is needed outside on the front steps, Safe Steps will build it.

Good lighting also is important, and everyone that has a home assessment receives a free power failure light that has been an especially popular item.

For people with arthritis or limited motion, reacher sticks or dressing sticks are available as are replacement tips and ice tips for canes and walkers. Although fire prevention is not the focus of the program, after discovering that more than half of all clients lacked smoke detectors, Safe Steps now provides and installs them as well.

In addition to the home environment, information is provided on the many risk factors for falls through the Personal Fall Risk Checklist. An optional balance screening also is completed.

When asked how helpful the changes that we made were, some typical responses included:

"The stair rail is very helpful. I can now use my tools again since I can get to my basement. I use my tub bar all the time and find it a big help. Grab bars were extremely helpful, especially on one side of tub to help me get in and out. The outdoor banister you built was a huge help for mother (who recently had a stroke)."

Additional comments included: "Splendid program. We would never have thought about grab bars if it hadn't been for your program—we love them!"



*Note:* An elderly couple was visited after we installed grab bars for the husband who was recuperating from a hip fracture (from a fall). The wife commented how happy she was to have this help for her husband. This sprightly 94-year-old commented, "and maybe someday I'll even need the grab bars myself." Several months later, she reported she was now using them all the time and never knew what she was missing! This sums up the feelings of many.

This program was seed funded by the generous support of the Ottauquechee Health Foundation to launch in the greater Woodstock Community. The VNA and Hospice is expanding this program so that it might serve its entire 86-town service area. In order to start such a program in any given community, the VNA and Hospice is seeking both financial support and a network of individuals who can help by identifying the seniors who most need this program and through whose introduction a senior might allow an otherwise stranger into his or her home. Please contact Eileen Katchen (603-675-6726) if you are interested in helping.

Four Mondays in April  
SEVENTH ANNUAL  
LECTURE SERIES 2004

# Reflections ON OUR mortality

Every year, Hospice and area caregivers invite the general public to a four-evening series that helps each of us explore our own mortality. By looking at this head-on, we will be able to engage more fully in life and with those around us today.

## Annual Meeting

### Come Celebrate Another VNA and Hospice Year

PLEASE JOIN US for our 2004 annual meeting. This is an opportunity to learn about the accomplishments of the organization in 2003 and get a glimpse of the future. Robert Fazzi, Ph.D., a noted health care planner and consultant, will provide a look into the future of the care and needs of the aging population. This insight provided a framework for the Board of Trustees to develop the organization's strategic initiatives for the next three years. We invite you to learn more about the VNA and Hospice, our future, and how you might help. We hope you will join us!

*Date* June 16, 2004

*Time* 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

*Place* Quechee Club,  
Quechee, VT

The Friends of the VNA and Hospice in Woodstock are hosting this event. Your invitations will be mailed soon.

#### LOCATION

Auditoriums E & F at  
Dartmouth-Hitchcock  
Medical Center,  
Lebanon, NH

#### ADMISSION

Free

#### PROGRAM

6:30 to 7 pm  
Light refreshments  
7 to 8:30 pm  
Program and Q&A

#### INFORMATION

VNA and Hospice  
of VT and NH  
46 South Main Street  
White River Junction VT  
VNAEvents@hitchcock.org

#### SPONSORS

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cock Alliance, Alice Peck Day  
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Nurse Association, VA  
Medical Center

## April 5

### Giving and Getting "The Best Care Possible" at the End of Life

Understanding how health and community stake-holders communicate to provide quality care which is aligned with the personal preferences of the patients and family.

**Ira Byock, M.D.** *Director of Palliative Medicine, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Clinic*

## April 12

### Dying Operatically: Part II Nell'ora della morte (The Hour of Death)

Looking at death through opera.

**Peter Fox Smith** *Producer and host of Saturday at the Opera on VPR*

## April 19

### Getting Everything in Order

A check list to help us get life in order today.

**Daniel Stadler, M.D.** *Executive/Medical Director, Hospice of VT and NH*

**Tim Caldwell** *Upper Valley planned giving and estate planning attorney*

## April 26

### Wit, Wisdom and Gifts: The Legacy Project

Preparing a legacy of your life to leave to those you love.

**Donna Soltura** *Social Worker, VNA and Hospice of VT and NH*

# Hospice News

*"Thanks to all who give their hearts and energy in caring for people."*

## *A Special Hospice Story*

### **Help of a Hospice Nurse/Coach That Made a Difference**

#### **Hospice Board**

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*President & CEO*

THE AD IN THE Connecticut Valley Spectator, February 5, 2004, starts like this:

*I would like to thank the people who cared for my husband, Dr. Christopher Nice, for 15 to 20 years and male nurse John Young from Hospice at the end, as Robert's wish was to die at home, and he did.*

When the Hospice team learned of this appreciative reflection, we wanted to learn more from Rita Morris, Robert's surviving spouse. The words Rita used to describe the nursing care that came from John, she said, "He was times ten. Kind. Sweet. Energetic. Had foresight." Rita shared her fear that by inviting Hospice in to help her, she would lose some of the closeness she had experienced throughout Robert's illness. She fought the inclination to bring help into her home. She didn't want to share him, as she knew they had precious little time together.

Rita had been his constant caregiver for quite some time, providing care 24/7. Seeking respite help to keep her batteries charged, she worked with the doctor to help Robert feel comfortable

and dignified in his home.

She admits, "If I had not been as selfish in my love for Robert, I would have met John sooner." There is much that the Hospice team can offer, provided adequate time with the patient and the family. And, this extraordinary care is never meant to replace the love of the family. It's meant to provide help at a very difficult time.

Rita shared that the coaching that John gave her helped so greatly when the end was coming. "John told me what to say so that neither of us would panic. I'll meet you later; save a place for me in heaven." Those words worked for Rita when the time came. Robert went peacefully with Rita lying beside him, feeling his heart pounding and their fingers locked.

"No one can fill Robert's shoes." Rita said. This is a difficult time at best. What the Hospice team provides is support for the caregiver and tools and support to work through this very difficult time.

*The VNA and Hospice is grateful to Rita for sharing her story.*

#### *Hospice Program Update*

### **Hospice Program Continues to Offer New Services and Quality Care**

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP of Dr. Daniel Stadler, who joined our team full time in January as executive/medical director of Hospice, the program is growing as we reach more individuals. In the past year, the number of individuals choosing Hospice has more than doubled as has the length of time patients are under our hospice care. As we continually strive to strengthen and improve our program and services, we are doing a number of things we would like to share with you.

- We are forging strong relations with palliative care services at DHMC.
- We have a dedicated hospice nurse available 24 hours a day to provide consult and support for our hospice patients.
- We are developing alternative care programs such as meditation and massage.
- We have developed the role of the social worker who will visit all newly admitted patients and begin to address the complex social and emotional issues involving a family with a member who is actively dying.

We will continue to look for ways to provide the highest level of care to our patients. Innovation is our gold standard with the patient in the center of our work.