

LOOK HOMEWARD

*A publication for the supporters of
Visiting Nurse Health System*



The Visiting Nurse Difference

Serving 28,000 Patients Annually Regardless of Their Ability to Pay



VISITING NURSE
HEALTH SYSTEM

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

A day doesn't go by when I don't think about the lives of the 28,000 people we serve, and what healthcare would be like for the less fortunate patients in our community if our organization didn't exist. As time passes, it's becoming more obvious that *providing expert care at home, for all patients*, is the right thing to do and is one key solution to fix our costly healthcare system.

What's also becoming more obvious is the complexity of delivering that care. Long gone are the days of "take two aspirin and call me in the morning." Today, hi-tech care coordination systems and advanced clinical training are the price of entry to deliver the most basic care. But even with these advancements in place we still differ from our competitors in two major areas: the high scores we receive from patients in greater Atlanta for quality of care and overall satisfaction; and, the servant attitude and approach of our nonprofit professionals as they help all who need care, regardless of their ability to pay.

As a nonprofit, Visiting Nurse occupies a special place in the Atlanta community. Our success is not only dependent on our staff working smarter, but also on our supporters' unwavering belief in our mission. At this precarious time in the healthcare field, it is critical that we receive increased donor support for Visiting Nurse to continue to be a shining example of home health and hospice care.

It is my hope, as you read this issue, that you not only think about the dedication of our staff but also the infrastructure and education it takes for them to do the work they love. On behalf of our staff, thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Oshnock". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Mark Oshnock
President and CEO
Visiting Nurse Health System

Our People Make the Difference

Our Staff and Donor Support Ensures Visiting Nurse Provides a Safety Net for the Most Vulnerable in Our Community

When people think about the care Visiting Nurse Health System provides they might envision a nurse providing wound care to a patient recuperating at home, or perhaps a physical therapist teaching a bed-bound patient how to walk again. While certainly realistic, these scenarios and many others require expert, efficient and cost-effective planning and care coordination to create successful patient outcomes. Delivering this quality service requires ongoing upgrades to back-end systems and fine-tuning the logistics to manage complicated medical circumstances.

All healthcare providers face these and other challenges while working hard to provide optimum care in a time of rapid change combined with fiscal limitations. With a long and successful track-record, Visiting Nurse is well-positioned to provide the best healthcare moving forward, but we face our own set of unique challenges as a nonprofit. Our financial constraints necessitate ongoing donor support that will allow us to continue to:

- deliver cost-effective solutions that lower healthcare costs for individuals, hospitals, and the community at-large;
- act as our community's safety net for underinsured patients;
- "raise the bar" by providing the lowest rate of re-hospitalizations, the lowest rate of emergency room visits, and the highest rates of patients recommending our care.

Delivering these services and outcomes requires advanced education and training for our clinicians, technology improvements to deliver that care, evolving programs that serve ever-increasing high-risk populations, and maintenance of the extraordinary Hospice Atlanta Center.

Even with these tools and practices in place, we are fortunate to have the nonprofit "secret sauce": our team of dedicated field clinicians and support

staff. Their devotion to their professional calling and their compassion towards their patients instills in them a sense of pride and accomplishment that many feel sets them apart from their corporate peers.

Join four staff members in the following stories for a look behind the scenes at Visiting Nurse and into their special philosophy of care that is made possible by the generous support of our donor community. ■



FEATURE



Home Healthcare Nurse

Supports Patients' and Families' Varied Needs in Their Homes

For most of her nursing career, Pam worked as a floor nurse in a hospital, cruising sterilized hallways to tend to patients in well-equipped rooms. Three years ago, she decided to leave that career behind and become a home healthcare nurse for Visiting Nurse Health System. Now she spends her workdays in the homes of her patients, tending to their changing needs, surrounded by family members and pets instead of hospital staff.

She couldn't be happier. "It's a much more holistic approach," says Pam.

Rather than just checking vital signs and administering medications, Pam looks at the whole environment—does the patient need a social worker or physical therapist? Are the necessary supplies and home modifications available? What are the needs of the primary caregiver?

And rather than spending 10 minutes with the patient, she is more likely to stay an hour. "It's much more personal," she says. "You're in these people's homes, and you really get to know the patient and the caregiver."

Since many of our patients are low-income and uninsured, the generosity of our individual and corporate donors supplements their patient care needs, covering the cost of supplies that are needed sometimes on a daily basis.

"Everyone deserves the best care possible, no matter what their financial situation is," says Pam. "I'm proud to work for a company that believes that as strongly as I do."

*"It's much more personal,
you're in these people's homes,
and you really get to know the
patient and the caregiver."*

Pam

Despite the hours she puts in during her workdays, Pam's work doesn't end there. She sometimes uses her days off to write and file patient reports so there is a seamless continuum of care. And she takes calls from patients and caregivers even when she is off duty. "I know they need some help, and I try to build up a strong rapport with all my patients, so sometimes they want

to talk to me even when it's on my days off," she says. "And that's fine. My goal is to keep them in their home, which is better for them and better for the community."

That go-the-extra-mile attitude has endeared Pam to her many patients. "I get pretty close to them, I really do," she says. "I got a Happy Mother's Day text from one of my patients, and it made my day." ■

Hospice Nurse

Makes the Hospice Atlanta Center a Comfortable and Caring Final Home

When terminally ill people have symptoms so severe that they cannot be cared for in the home, they come to Hospice Atlanta Center, Visiting Nurse Health System's unique inpatient facility located in Buckhead. Here a team of doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, social workers, chaplains, bereavement counselors, administrators, and volunteers work together to fulfill the mission of allowing patients to live out their final days in dignity and comfort, surrounded by loved ones. The facility even has a sub-specialty team focused on pediatric hospice care.

The Center itself boasts a state-of-the-art computer system, specialized beds, oxygen equipment and sophisticated pain management equipment. All this technology hums quietly in the background, discretely keeping patients comfortable. More noticeable are the homey private rooms, the lush gardens and the comfortable gathering rooms.

"Patients and their families typically come here straight from hospital rooms with little privacy," says Debbie, a hospice nurse at the Center. "The Center is a just gift to these families. They have a welcoming, comfortable, private place to be with their loved one. On pretty days, we often open up the French doors and wheel patients outside so they can feel the sun and wind on their face. When patients and their families come here, this becomes more than a hospice facility. It becomes their home."

The patients for whom Debbie cares for are the frailest. "We are the ICU of hospice," she says. "The patients who come here are the sickest and require the most care. Their medications need to be adjusted on a continuous basis; they require constant re-evaluating."

By providing this intense level of care, Debbie allows loved ones to continue their role as wife, husband, and child instead of primary caregiver. Freed from the fear and responsibility of providing the care, family members can concentrate on living in the moment with their dying loved one.

However, this level of care is costly. So costly, in fact, that the Hospice Atlanta Center operates at a deficit, subsidized by the generous donations of caring individuals. These donations help keep the center open, meaning even the most disadvantaged people have a comfortable place to live out their final days. "We care for everyone who needs our services, even the uninsured. The Center serves a critical role in the community," says Debbie. "I'm just honored to be a part of it." ■

"The Center is a just gift to these families. They have a welcoming, comfortable, private place to be with their loved one."

Debbie



FEATURE

Clinical Coordinator

Weaves a Seamless Continuum of Care



When Visiting Nurse Health System’s nurses, social workers, physical therapists and aides go into patients’ homes, Kim has their back. Kim is a clinical coordinator, and in that role she does a bit of everything to support the staff in the field. “I manage a patient’s episode of care to make sure they have all the disciplines they need in the most cost-efficient way possible,” says Kim. “I schedule the visits, take calls from staff in the field when they have a problem, track down doctors, and troubleshoot all sorts of issues.”

Her goal is simple—to enable the field staff to provide the best care possible. One time a nurse contacted Kim because her 77-year-old patient with COPD was being readmitted to the hospital every time her doctor stopped prescribing steroids. Kim was able to make changes to the patient’s respiratory medicine regimen, and the woman has not been back in the hospital since. Indeed, Visiting Nurse ranks highest overall compared to Atlanta alternatives for reducing hospital readmissions. “We try very hard to prevent hospital readmissions,” she says. “By working together as a team, we were able to break the cycle of readmissions for this lady.”

If Kim has the field staff’s back, who has hers? Training and technology. She attended a rigorous clinical coordinator boot camp when she joined Visiting Nurse two and a half years ago. Every day she takes advantage of a robust computer system that transfers a patient’s medical records from the hospital—all referrals, histories, physicals, lab results, and more. Kim studies the information and conveys relevant items to the field staff.

One time she noticed that a new patient being discharged from the hospital had a tracheostomy, yet the doctor had only ordered physical therapy and occupational therapy. Kim originally had scheduled a physical therapist to make the first home visit, but she changed that to a nurse who was equipped to care for the tracheostomy. “That was unfortunate, but we made sure it turned out all right,” says Kim.

Maintaining this training and upgrading technology is critical and expensive, but with donor funding Visiting Nurse can continue to provide the most effective and efficient care possible.

“I know what it’s like out in the field, to feel like you’re on your own,” she says. “That’s why I love what I do. I’m here to answer questions from the field staff, get them the support they need and handle some of the legwork for them. I never know what my day will hold—each day is different, but I love it.” ■

“By working together as a team, we were able to break the cycle of readmissions.”

Kim

Long-Term Care Social Worker

Coordinates Services to Keep Patients Out of Nursing Homes

Suzanne is a matchmaker of sorts. As a long-term care social worker and care coordinator, Suzanne matches patients' needs with community services which allow them to receive ongoing care in their homes. For one client, she might arrange the delivery of low-sodium meals and deploy an aide to help with house cleaning and laundry. For another client, she might provide an emergency response pendant and access to an adult day care program.

"The goal is keep patients out of nursing homes," says Suzanne. "Nursing homes are terribly expensive—for the family and for the community. Living in one and losing one's independence is frightening to my clients and their family members."

Suzanne meets with clients in their homes regularly to see if their needs have changed and to file the required paperwork to keep the necessary services active. During these visits, she looks beyond their physical needs and delves into their emotional desires. One very scared and nervous 93-year-old woman yearned for human connection but disliked people coming into her home. Suzanne patiently and methodically developed a rapport with her, and now she schedules extra time during her visits to sit with the woman and listen to

stories of her childhood, her son and her cats. "I know telling these stories is very important to her, so I always make sure I have extra time to listen," she says.

Suzanne provides services to her clients through a specialized Medicaid program called Community Care Services Program (CCSP). The program requires that her low-income clients must meet an income threshold in order to qualify. These patients also benefit from items donated by individual

and corporate donors, usually in the form of decorative gift bags containing items such as diapers, nutritional supplements and personal care needs.

Helping this underserved population and working for a nonprofit are two things that drew Suzanne to Visiting Nurse four years ago. "I don't think you should work anywhere where you don't believe in the vision of the company or the program," she says. "If you have the same goals, you will feel more satisfied in what you do

every day. I truly believe in helping people regardless of their ability to pay, and I really care about all my clients and want to make their lives better." ■

"I truly believe in helping people regardless of their ability to pay, and I really care about all my clients and want to make their lives better."

Suzanne



CARING VOICES

Lemonade Luncheon Series Inaugural Event Launched This Summer

□ Author Paul Bodner

□ Visiting Nurse CEO Mark Oshnock addresses attendees



□ Guests Laura Pease, Broc Fischer, and Lou Alvarado, Jr.

□ Visiting Nurse VP of Advancement, Mary Norman



Visiting Nurse Health System recently kicked off a new event series called the Lemonade Luncheon. These invitation-only events feature authors and storytellers who have dealt with a health-related challenge and found a way to turn those lemons into lemonade. Attendees also have the opportunity to hear from individuals served by Visiting Nurse who have a powerful story of their own to share. Attendees walk away with an uplifting experience and more insight into the critical work being performed by Visiting Nurse in Georgia.

Piedmont Driving Club with more than 45 corporate and civic leaders in attendance. The featured speaker was Paul Bodner, author of *The Lemonade Life*. Paul was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer, but faces life's adversities with humor, gratitude and hopefulness, helping others to live life fully and with purpose. Arlette Ricks closed the event by telling her touching story about how she and her late husband Hurshel, a patient at our Hospice Atlanta Center, made lemonade out of his end-of-life journey. ■

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Stay tuned for upcoming events!

To sponsor a future event email Sue Carpenter at sue.carpenter@vnhs.org or call 404-215-6010.



□ Arlette Ricks tells her hospice story

Meet Mary Norman

Vice President of Advancement

Mary Norman sat down for a quick Q & A session to talk about her background and what brought her to Visiting Nurse Health System



You arrived in fundraising through an unusual background, beginning as an on-air personality.

Yes, I began my career in radio and TV after graduating from Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) with a degree in Mass Communications. One of my first TV opportunities was hosting a telethon for a local nonprofit; that was the beginning of my interest in the field.

So you left TV to work for a nonprofit?

I did. After co-anchoring a morning news program in Memphis I moved into the nonprofit field full-time. I spent nine years with the Arthritis Foundation, starting as the Executive Director in West Tennessee and then winding up in Atlanta as Group Vice President of Strategic Marketing Alliances. My mom suffered with arthritis so I had a personal connection. Five years later, I moved to Arlington, VA to work for the Jane Goodall Institute where I served as the Senior Vice President of Development and Communications. I managed our DC team and traveled across the country working with the Institute's top donors.

You returned from the DC area a few years later.

An opportunity arose to work back in Atlanta with at-risk children. After adopting my own daughter from Russia, I felt drawn to helping children who had a rough start in life. I returned to lead the Georgia development efforts for Youth Villages, an organization that focuses on this population.

What was it about Visiting Nurse that attracted you?

Family members and friends have needed hospice services, and the difference it made in their final days was profound. Additionally, I greatly believe in home healthcare as a solution to our national healthcare challenges. Visiting Nurse has the reputation—and well deserved—as the premiere provider of these services in the Atlanta area, and I wanted to be a part of supporting this work.

What do you hope to accomplish with Visiting Nurse?

I see my role as informing donors and the greater Atlanta community both about the depth and breadth of our services and the many ways we support underserved populations. It's important to point out that we are a nonprofit in a world of mostly for-profit providers, serving patients who other providers do not. That means our costs are much higher, but the cost to the community at-large without us is even greater.

In addition, I want to spend time personally thanking those who have supported us for so many years, and expand our base of new donors as well. Our donors will be the ones who help transform our organization in the critical years ahead. Our story is so powerful; we just need to let the voices of the patients and families we have served be heard. ■

“Family members and friends have needed hospice services, and the difference it made in their final days was profound.”

Mary Norman

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

January 1 - June 30, 2014

The following people were thoughtfully remembered with a gift in their name:

In Honor of:

Mr. Jon R. Harris, Jr.
Ms. Nella Rigell
Sherry & Lany Selmer
Miss Callie Vargas
Visiting Nurse Health System Clinicians
Mrs. Lydia Williams

In Memory of:

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Thinking About Attending Next Year's BIG-TO-DO?



Mark Your Calendar on **Sunday, February 8, 2015** for a Day of Winter Fun!

The hot summer weather makes us yearn for cool days outdoors. Almost 900 people enjoyed a snow day at the 2014 BIG-TO-DO, which raised more than \$100,000 to support our Children's Program. Make a difference and be a part of our next BIG-TO-DO by becoming a sponsor or serving on the host committee.

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 To learn more contact Sue Carpenter at Sue.Carpenter@vnhs.org or 404-215-6010.



Like us on facebook.com/VNHS.BIG.TO.DO to view more photos and to keep up with the BIG-TO-DO.

Engraved Pavers to Remember a Loved One



Remember the life of someone dear to you and provide much needed funding to the Hospice Atlanta Center by placing a memorial paver in the Center's garden.

A memorial paver is a lasting tribute to a friend who loved nature, a favorite relative whose personality brought light to your life, or someone with whom you shared special memories. Pavers may be placed with a gift of \$1,000 or more to Visiting Nurse Health System.

Additional memorial opportunities are available and range from teak furniture for patient patios to naming patient rooms or public spaces in the Center. All larger memorials include a plaque engraved with text honoring your loved one.

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 For more information or to make a memorial gift, please visit www.vnhs.org/pavers or call the Office of Advancement at 404-215-6010.



VISITING NURSE
HEALTH SYSTEM

Training and Support Center
5775 Glenridge Drive, NE, Suite E200
Atlanta, GA 30328

Address Service Requested

Look Homeward

Caroline E. Moise
Board Chair

Mark Oshnock
President

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Please address all correspondence to
Mary.Norman@vnhs.org.

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An Evening to Support Hospice Care

Thursday, October 16, 2014
Piedmont Driving Club

6:30 PM Reception & Silent Auction
8:00 PM Dinner

Join us to support hospice care and give tribute to our hospice team. Our dedicated hospice workers and volunteers provide excellent hospice care at home, at the Hospice Atlanta Center, and through our hospital partners. Your participation will help ensure resources are available to serve all who need care, regardless of their ability to pay.

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