Defining quality of life makes all the difference for couple facing cancer

When Bill Lawton, MD, and his wife Patsy Lawton, PT, learned that Bill had pancreatic cancer, their gastrointestinal doctor asked, “What do you consider a good quality of life?”

Answering that question, said Bill, “makes all the difference.”

“Quality of life is being with Patsy and with our two kids, our six grandkids, our four sisters, and our daughter- and son-in-law,” said Bill.

VNA Care has supported the Lawtons in making this possible for more than two years. By offering a continuum of health services, VNA Care is able to respond to Bill’s changing needs.

Bill and Patsy first learned about VNA Care just before Bill’s cancer diagnosis, when he was returning home from the hospital after a stroke. Home health clinicians Shannon Jannery, RN, Kelsey Murray, PT, and Lisa Sternstrom, OT, focused on helping Bill regain his functionality and remain safely at home.

In the coming months, Bill and Patsy relied on VNA Care for home health care services as Bill underwent several rounds of chemotherapy. The team helped them manage an infection, taught them about caring for the ports and PIC line used in his chemotherapy, changed wound dressings, and more to support them during treatment.

The Lawtons also took advantage of the agency's Care Choices program, also known as a “bridge” to hospice. The program gives home health patients dealing with a serious illness the opportunity to be seen by a hospice and palliative care nurse. This nurse can assist individuals and families with making decisions about their health care goals and pain and symptom management.

Care Choices, said Patsy, “was really helpful because not only did it give Bill the opportunity to build a relationship with Regina (Cunningham, RN, hospice nurse), but then Regina had the chance to see Bill before his illness became more involved. It was a two-way road of deepening communication.”

When it was time to change the focus of Bill’s health care, Patsy said, “We know that there are different choices on hospice, but we had already made the decision. We were really pleased with VNA Care.”
Regina is now part of the hospice team caring for the Lawtons. Patsy described Regina as “very warm, very caring, very compassionate.” Regina’s a source of encouragement and always a phone call or text away.

Bill and Patsy also appreciate the wonderful care provided by Glorimar Maldonado, home health aide. She visits several times each week to help with Bill’s personal care.

Bill said that he’s been taking “one day at a time” and “adjusted” his expectations as his health has changed. Their faith and giving back have been an important part of Bill and Patsy’s life together. The couple made 17 short-term mission trips to 12 different countries before Bill’s cancer diagnosis. Their last trip brought them to Cameroon in West Africa where Bill was involved in teaching internal medicine residents and fellows about peritoneal dialysis, a way to remove toxins from the body without expensive, high maintenance machinery.

Today they continue giving back without leaving the country. As Chair Corps Volunteers for Joni and Friends Wheels for the World, they collect used wheelchairs and other equipment that are restored and given to people in need around the globe.

Time with loved ones remains central to Bill’s quality of life. He and Patsy are grateful for their family, who stay with them for weeks at a time to support Patsy in caring for Bill and running the household. Friends have come to visit from as far as Egypt.

Patsy said, “They keep coming, and we’re always glad that they do.”

Bill said, “I’ve been very grateful for all of the family events that have happened in the past two and a half years. Partaking in the kids’ activities, their school plays and shows have brought such enjoyment.”

Gratitude books filled with pictures of these family times sit on the living room table, and the fireplace mantle is lined with photos of Bill and Patsy’s children and grandchildren.

Bill said, “Even now having the cancer, I wouldn’t have done anything differently.”

VNA Care celebrates centennial in Leominster

VNA Care’s Leominster office got its start in 1919 through the support of the Red Cross and the Fortnightly Club. We’ll mark the occasion with a special reception on Wednesday, Sept. 25, from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Leominster Senior Center, 5 Pond St., Leominster.

Please join us for refreshments and free bone density and hypertension screenings throughout the morning. Beginning at 9:15 a.m., we’ll have special remarks from Elizabeth Chen, secretary of Elder Affairs for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and Holly Chaffee, president and CEO of VNA Care. Sen. Dean Tran and Rep. Natalie Higgins will also present citations to VNA Care in honor of this milestone anniversary.

For more information, please contact Deborah Corkum at 774-502-8290 or Deborah_Corkum@vnacare.org.

Defining quality of life ...continued from front cover

“Always at Your Service,” a painting by Emile Gruppe (1896-1978), will soon be on public display at the Cape Ann Museum, Gloucester.

One of VNA Care’s Gloucester visiting nurses served as a model for the painting, set overlooking the waterfront. The artist is believed to have created the portrait around 1960 and donated it to VNA Care. Since then, it has been enjoyed by staff in our North Shore offices.

Pictured with the painting, from left, are Amber Wingerson and Leon Doucette, both curatorial assistants at the Cape Ann Museum, and Karen Webber, director of fund development for VNA Care.

“We’ve been part of Cape Ann since 1914, when the Gloucester visiting nurses began caring for patients in their own homes and at public health clinics,” said Karen. “This painting is a wonderful piece of not only our history, but Cape Ann’s as well. We hope the community will enjoy Gruppe’s painting as much as we have.”
North Shore Community Cabinet raised nearly $45,000 for home health at annual benefit

The volunteers on VNA Care’s North Shore Community Cabinet hosted an evening celebration at the Corinthian Yacht Club in Marblehead to raise vital charitable support for home health care services. Guests gave generously to a special “Fill the Nursing Bag” initiative at the event to ensure staff have essential medical supplies needed to care for patients in the unique environment of the home setting.

We are grateful to the sponsors of the 7th annual North Shore benefit for making a difference in the lives of VNA Care’s patients:

**Platinum Sponsor**

**Mutual of America**
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Mary Jo Wagner
Karen Webber

Max and D. L. Kaulbach were honored during the event for their community service.
More than 100 supporters and staff gathered at a special donor appreciation event to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Stanley R. Tippett Hospice Home.

Guests enjoyed a perfect spring evening for the outdoor reception at the MIT Endicott House, a beautiful estate in Dedham. Louise Condon of the Needham Area Cabinet welcomed guests, and Holly Chaffee, president and CEO, led a champagne toast.

The event was organized by the Needham Area Community Cabinet as part of the 25th Anniversary Campaign for the Tippett Home, *Continuing the Legacy of Compassion and Caring*. (Read more on page 5).
Continuing the Legacy of Compassion and Caring: 25th Anniversary Campaign for the Stanley R. Tippett Hospice Home

This year marks a special milestone for the Stanley R. Tippett Hospice Home in Needham.

Over the past 25 years, the staff at the Tippett Home has cared for thousands of terminally ill patients and supported their family members, who find the Tippett Home to be a place of comfort and peace. While our nurses and clinicians continue to provide the highest level of care to patients, the Tippett Home is now in need of repairs and renovation.

In recognition of the 25th anniversary and these important needs, we have embarked on a campaign to raise $250,000 in philanthropic gifts to help sustain the future of the residence. When completed, these projects will increase the care and comfort available to patients and families, as well as ensure the integrity and energy efficiency of the Tippett Home.

We extend our warmest appreciation to all those who already generously supported the Campaign. Through the generosity of these donors, together we have raised nearly $180,000 so far!

We hope everyone touched by the Tippett Home and hospice care will join us as we continue this important campaign throughout the year. For more information about how to make a gift to the campaign, please contact Laura Wise at 617-886-6460 or visit www.vnacare.org/25celebration.

Special thanks to our lead donors –
 Visionary: Rands Foundation
 Trustee: Middlesex Savings Bank Mutual of America Stephen and Melanie Sadler

Please join us. Your support makes a difference!

Step Out for Hospice
October 6
Irish American Club of Woburn
The Woburn Friends of VNA Hospice & Palliative Care host this 22nd annual benefit for end-of-life care. Put on your sneakers for the 3-mile walk, 5-mile run, and Fun Run for kids. The benefit also features live music, raffle, silent auction, and refreshments. Registration is $30 in advance/$40 day of/$15 students, and includes a sweatshirt. Fun Run is free. If you can’t join us that day, sign up as a virtual walker/runner and we’ll mail you a sweatshirt. More: 774-502-8290 or www.vnacare.org/stepout

Halloween On Ice
October 26
Worcester Ice Center
Start your Halloween with some fun on and off the ice at our Worcester Area Community Cabinet’s annual fall fundraiser to benefit home health and hospice care and the Rose Monahan Hospice Home in Worcester. Enjoy a private reception with hors d’oeuvres and cash bar, costume contest (optional), ice skating (optional) on private rink, and silent auction. Tickets are $25 for adults/$5 children and students (includes skate rental). More: 508-573-8027 or www.vnacare.org/halloween

Heroes in Health Care Gala
November 2
Mandarin Oriental, Boston
The 14th annual Gala will raise vital funds for nursing services and honor Tony Coles, MD, chairman and CEO, Yumanity Therapeutics, and executive chairman, Cerevel Therapeutics; Patricia Joyce, RN, community nurse, VNA Care; and Steven Strongwater, MD, president and CEO, Atrius Health. The Gala begins with a cocktail reception and auction followed by dinner, awards ceremony, and live music. Tickets at www.vnacare.org/gala. To become a sponsor or place a tribute to our Heroes in the program book, please contact Laura Wise at 617-886-6460 or Laura_Wise@vnacare.org.
Time saved is brain saved for someone experiencing a stroke.

“A stroke happens when something interrupts the steady flow of blood to the brain. From the onset of the first symptom, every minute is critical to prevent more and more brain cells from dying,” said Beverly Salate, RN, director of Wellness for VNA Care.

The FAST system can help people recognize 75% of strokes (see graphic below). Other warning signs are:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

“The sooner you spot the warning signs and call 9-1-1, the more likely you are to help save a life and reduce the chance of disability,” added Beverly.

This information is intended for educational purposes only. For health, legal, tax, or financial advice, please contact your professional advisors.
VNA Care recognized for commitment to exceptional home health and hospice care

VNA Care has once again earned the Gold Seal of Approval® for home health and hospice care from The Joint Commission, the nation’s preeminent health care accreditation and standards-setting organization.

“I’m incredibly proud of our staff’s dedication to making a difference in people’s lives. Whether it’s helping someone regain the ability to walk again after hip replacement surgery or easing the pain of a terminal illness, VNA Care’s staff provides the best possible care to patients and their loved ones,” said Holly Chaffee, MSN, BSN, RN, president and CEO of VNA Care.

During the re-accreditation process, VNA Care underwent a rigorous, onsite review. A team of Joint Commission reviewers evaluated compliance with home health and hospice care standards spanning several areas including documentation of patient care, infection control, policies, and procedures. Surveyors also accompanied VNA Care home health and hospice clinicians on patient visits.

VNA Care has maintained accreditation from The Joint Commission for many years as part of its continuous quality improvement efforts in patient safety and quality of care. The Joint Commission’s standards are developed in consultation with health care experts and providers, measurement experts, and patients. The standards are informed by scientific literature and expert consensus to help health care organizations measure, assess, and improve performance.

Donors choose how to make an impact

Because of the generosity of our donors, we’re here for the community 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Donations help us care for patients in need, provide end-of-life care in patients’ homes and at our hospice residences, develop new health care programs, provide advanced training to staff, purchase medical equipment, and much more.

Donors may ask that their gift be used for the greatest need or direct their support to:

- VNA Care Network
- VNA of Boston
- VNA Hospice & Palliative Care
- Elizabeth Evarts de Rham Hospice Home, Cambridge
- Rose Monahan Hospice Home, Worcester
- Stanley R. Tippett Hospice Home, Needham

Our Fund Development staff is available to provide personalized assistance. Please contact us at 888-663-3688, ext. 1365 or giving@vnacare.org. You can also learn more about ways to support home health and hospice care, including memorial donations, and make a gift at www.vnacare.org/donors.

VNA Care’s home health team...continued from back cover

Jessica Whalen, OT, and Tom McGrath review exercises to help Tom regain use of his shoulder.

VNA Care’s home health team...continued from back cover

disease, and 77% have at least two chronic conditions. VNA Care’s services include chronic disease management for a wide range of conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, and COPD.

Tom’s diabetes had caused ulcers on his leg, ankle, and heel that needed special care. David Heredia, LPN, has taken care of dressing changes as directed by Tom’s doctor. The leg has gone from looking raw to nearly perfect under David’s care.

Tom said, “Dave will take the extra time with you. …I look forward to his visits.”

“God forbid if something else ever happened to me, I would want them (Jess and David). They are the best,” Tom said.
Tom McGrath woke up without any memory of being taken by ambulance the night before from his home at an assisted living community to a local hospital. The 82-year-old had developed pneumonia, an infection in the lungs that can be deadly if left untreated. The diagnosis required a hospital stay, but Tom couldn’t wait to get back home to Barbara, his wife of 62 years.

Tom said, “I'm here to take care of her...” “...And I'm here to take care of him,” Barbara added.

Before long, Tom was able to continue his recovery at home with the expert support of VNA Care’s home health team. His services included nursing care, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

In addition to being weak from the pneumonia, Tom was experiencing extreme shoulder pain.

“I’d wake up in the morning and thought I was going to die from the pain. I thought I was just getting old and had to live with it,” said Tom.

Jessica “Jess” Whalen, OT, felt otherwise. She started Tom on a targeted exercise program, which he followed faithfully. Tom no longer has any pain and said his shoulder works perfectly.

“I couldn’t even raise my arm before. It’s a miracle. If you have Jess in your corner, you have the best,” said Tom.

Like many older adults, Tom is living with a common chronic disease, diabetes. According to the National Council on Aging, approximately 80% of older adults are living with at least one chronic