There’s a funny stereotype that nurses and doctors make the worst patients. Kathleen Wilson, RN, laughs as she recalls how well she fit that image, at first, while coping with a total hip replacement.

Kathleen’s daughter, a nurse practitioner, advised her to purchase a shower seat and other adaptive equipment before surgery to make recovering at home easier. Kathleen promptly ignored the recommendation.

Kathleen said, “As a nurse, I thought I could take care of myself.”

Her nursing career has spanned more than four decades and nearly every health care setting, including hospitals and skilled nursing facilities. Kathleen joined VNA Care 10 years ago as a visiting nurse.

Today, she serves as director of clinical/specialty services, which brings telehealth, IV home infusion, and other services to patients at home. Kathleen also took on the role of interim director of the patient admission center, overseeing the team that supports individuals, families, and others in need of home health, palliative or hospice care.

Kathleen describes herself as fiercely independent, but she struggled to take care of herself when she returned home after surgery. Everyday activities, like showering, were a challenge.

VNA Care’s home health team began visiting Kathleen at home and saw she was having a difficult time. Their gentle and encouraging approach got Kathleen to realize that even though she’s a nurse, she’s human too and it’s okay to let others care for and support her during this time.

“Once I listened to my great team, I was on the road to recovery,” said Kathleen.

She looked forward to visits from Denise Brehme, RN, Nicole Kallio, OT, Janet Mancuso, OT, and Deborah Tanner, PT. They guided her on equipment and ways to rearrange her home that would help her be safe and regain her independence. Kathleen learned exercises to improve her mobility, and was monitored every step of the way. In a matter of weeks, Kathleen was driving again and back at work.

“From the time that I was admitted to the time I was discharged, the compassion, dedication, and empathy the staff showed was incredible,” Kathleen shared.
In memory of Gloria Powaza, retired CEO of VNA of Worcester

The VNA Care community was saddened by the passing of Gloria Powaza, CEO of VNA of Worcester Home Health Systems from 1985 to 1998. The nonprofit, now part of VNA Care, included the VNA of Central Massachusetts and Hospice of Central Massachusetts.

“She was a very progressive and forward-thinking person. She had high standards for everyone, including herself,” remembered June Grace, former vice president of planning and development.

Gloria’s focus on providing the best possible patient care led the organization to become one of the first home health agencies in the United States to receive accreditation from the Joint Commission. She added cardiac and wound/ostomy nurse specialists to the staff to meet the needs of acutely ill patients who otherwise would have needed to be cared for in a hospital.

Gloria recognized that for people to receive truly comprehensive health care in the home environment, providers would need to work together. Among these collaborative efforts was home infusion therapy, a service that had previously been reserved for hospitals.

Under Gloria’s leadership, VNA of Worcester Home Health Systems became known as a cutting edge organization. The agency’s staff were sought after speakers throughout the United States and Canada as others looked to replicate the VNA of Worcester’s exceptional patient care. The organization grew as other visiting nurse associations, including the Leominster VNA, joined the agency. VNA of Worcester expanded services to MetroWest and opened an office in Westborough.

James Cosgrove, a longtime board member, said, “Gloria had her finger on the pulse of everything going on in medicine in Worcester and beyond. …She was an extremely caring, extremely bright woman. She was just the right person for home health care.”

Gloria’s compassion for others is still felt today, most especially at the Rose Monahan Hospice Home, the first hospice residence in Central Massachusetts. Gloria and her dedicated staff, board members, and volunteers worked tirelessly for years to make the home a reality. The house was dedicated on Sept. 9, 1997, and has brought care and comfort to those in need every day since.

Gloria passed away peacefully at home on Sept. 21, 2019, with her husband Frank at her side. Our thoughts are with her family. We will forever be grateful for Gloria’s contributions and dedication to advancing home health and hospice care in Massachusetts.

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 in Cambridge, Rose Monahan Hospice Home in Worcester, or Stanley R. Tippett Hospice Home in Needham.

Our Fund Development staff is available to provide personalized assistance. Please contact us at 508-573-8027 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.
Woburn Friends’ 22nd annual Step Out for Hospice raises vital funds for end-of-life care

Volunteers on the Woburn Friends of VNA Hospice & Palliative Care rallied the community in support of end-of-life care, raising nearly $70,000 through the walk, road race, and children’s fun run at the Irish American Club of Woburn.

Save the date for the 23rd annual Step Out for Hospice on Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020.

Our sincere appreciation to the many individuals, businesses, and foundations that made charitable gifts in support of Step Out for Hospice, including:

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Harry Allen of Arlmont Fuel Company, a longtime sponsor, brought his grandson to the event.

Marguerite Upton (left) and Barbara McElhinney, a member of the Woburn Friends

Dan and Carolyn LeBlanc represented SBLI of Massachusetts, a Gold Sponsor

Team Maisie raised money in memory of their grandmother, Mary McDonough.

Gold Sponsor Winchester Co-operative Bank’s team walked in support of local hospice care.
You can make a difference: 25th anniversary campaign for Tippett Home

Since the Stanley R. Tippett Hospice Home opened its doors 25 years ago, thousands of people have found refuge and comfort from the stress of terminal illness in this peaceful, homelike setting.

The Tippett Home’s dedicated hospice clinicians and volunteers provide care focused on each individual patient’s wants and needs, including that their wishes and values are respected, their dignity is maintained, and they can spend cherished time with those they most love.

Families receive support throughout the end-of-life journey and after their loss. One family member wrote, “We, as a family, are indebted for all you did during my brother’s last days. We could not have done it without you.”

As we celebrate the Tippett Home, VNA Care is in the midst of a special 25th anniversary campaign to address critical needs to ensure the future of the residence, including interior and exterior improvements that will promote the comfort of those in our care.

With the support of many, we have reached 79% of our $250,000 goal. Your donation today will help us reach this important goal so the needed projects and improvements can begin. 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. You may also make a gift using the enclosed donation envelope.

Special thanks to our lead donors –

Visionary: Rands Foundation

Trustee: Middlesex Savings Bank, Mutual of America and Stephen & Melanie Sadler

Newlyweds celebrate good fortunate by donating in honor of wedding

Newlyweds Sheila and Wally Durkin were entering their retirement years when they finally walked down the aisle. The couple met as children. Wally took Sheila to her high school senior prom, but the two then lost touch for decades. Their paths crossed again in 2016 after they both lost their mothers.

Sheila and Wally celebrated their love and good fortune by marrying on Friday, Sept. 13, surrounded by their children and grandchildren. Invitations to the reception a week later let friends know that their “presence was present enough.” A number of people still chose to give cards with cash gifts.

“We said, you know what, we can do something with this at this point in our lives,” remembered Sheila.

Both have their favorite charities, so they discussed all the options.

Sheila had first-hand experience with VNA Care. She worked for the nonprofit for more than 10 years, retiring in 2018 from the Fund Development team. Her mother was also cared for by VNA Care’s home health team, including nurses, wound care specialists, and physical therapists, over the course of two years.

“I know how hard everybody works and cares. Not just the clinicians who came to the house, but in the office too. You see how much time people are putting in,” said Sheila.

The newlyweds chose to make a gift to VNA Care in honor of their special day.

Wally said, “We’re happy to do it.”

The gift was also incredibly meaningful to Sheila’s brother, Gary, who appreciated all that VNA Care did for his mother. Gary framed the thank you letter from VNA Care so Sheila and Wally could hang it next to their wedding portrait.

Sheila and Wally Durkin made VNA Care part of their wedding day by making a generous gift in support of the agency’s mission of caring.
Worcester volunteers’ fall fundraiser gathers community in support of home health, hospice

The Worcester Area Community Cabinet’s Halloween On Ice brought the fun of the season to the Worcester Ice Center. Guests enjoyed a private reception, ice skating, auction, and more. The afternoon raised more than $64,000 for home health, palliative, and hospice care and the Rose Monahan Hospice Home. 

Halloween On Ice was generously sponsored by:

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Mary Whalen, former vice president of hospice, (center) with members of her family

Jackie Brennan (left) and Lisa O’Connell, both of VNA Care

Nicole Hamm, RN, WOCN, with her family

Reggie, Maria and Molly Hamm

From left: Ellen Cellini, RN, Worcester Railers’ Mascot Trax, Jamie Ehrets, RN, and Amy Daley, RN, hospice clinical services manager
Respite can help you care for yourself when caring for another

You are a caregiver if you care for someone who needs help. Caregiving can be hard on you despite the great sense of reward you may feel. To continue being a good caregiver, you need to take care of yourself. One way you can do that is to make sure you have consistent breaks from your caregiving responsibilities. This is called respite. Short breaks can be a key part of maintaining your own health.

What is Respite Care?
Respite care allows the caregiver some time off from their caregiving responsibilities. It can take the form of different types of services in the home, adult day care, or even short-term nursing home care so caregivers can have a break or even go on vacation. Research shows that even a few hours of respite a week can improve a caregiver’s well-being. Respite care may be provided by family, friends, a nonprofit group, or government agency. Some of these services may be free or low-cost.

Family and Friends
Here are some suggestions for getting help from people you know.

1. Identify a caregiving task or a block of time that you would like help with. Perhaps there’s a book club meeting you’d like to go to that you’ve been missing because of your caregiving responsibilities. Be ready when someone says, “What can I do to help?” with a specific time or task, such as, “It would be really helpful for me if you could stay with Mom Tuesday night so I can go to my book club for two hours.”

2. Be understanding if you are turned down. The person may not be able to help with that specific request, but they may be able to help another time. Don’t be afraid to ask again.

3. If you have trouble asking for help face to face, try writing an e-mail to your friends and family members about your needs. Set up a shared online calendar or scheduling tool where people can sign up to provide you with regular respite.

Your Doctor or Health Care Provider
Does your doctor know you are a caregiver? You have special needs as a caregiver that your doctor should be aware of. Be sure to let your doctor know if your caregiving responsibilities are making you feel depressed or anxious. Health care professionals may also know about support groups offered in the community.

Let your doctor (or your care recipient’s doctor) know that you need help finding respite care. A doctor may be able to write you a “prescription” for respite services via Medicare’s PACE program. PACE services are available to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries in some states.

Nonprofit Organizations or Government Agencies
A great source for respite services are Area Agencies on Aging. If you are having difficulty locating your local agency, contact your city or town’s Council on Aging or Senior Center for assistance.

Other resources include organizations that advocate for people with specific diseases, such as the Alzheimer’s Association or the American Cancer Society.

This article first appeared on the CDC’s website. This information is intended for educational purposes only. For health, legal, tax or financial advice, please contact your professional advisors.

Cranes and crafts ...continued from back cover

Sandra’s other guests include members of the Yarn Club. They crochet, knit, talk, and laugh together in Sandra’s room that overlooks Coes Pond. Sandra’s finished several projects, including a granny square afghan.

She’s also inspired Monahan Home staff to jump into crafting. Amy Daley, RN, hospice clinical services manager of the residence, learned how to use finger loop yarn to make scarves for Christmas gifts. Amy, in turn, got her daughter involved in the scarf-making project.

Amy said, “It’s not always about what we as hospice staff do for patients. We get to know the residents, and they share so much with us. It’s an incredible experience, and we’re so grateful for the chance to be part of their lives.”
Two hundred and fifty people attended the recent Heroes in Health Care Gala at the Mandarin Oriental, Boston, helping to raise a record-breaking $340,000 for VNA Care’s nursing services.

Thank you to our most generous donors who made Heroes in Health Care such a tremendous success!

To participate in the 15th annual Heroes Gala in the fall of 2020, please contact Laura Wise, manager of fund development, at 617-886-6460 or Laura_Wise@vnacare.org. View more photos on Facebook at – www.facebook.com/vnacare.org.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following donors:

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Cranes and crafts among passions grandmother shares at Rose Monahan Hospice Home

Sandra Armstrong attributes some of her longevity while facing end-stage cancer to the 1,000 paper cranes hanging in a corner of her room at the Rose Monahan Hospice Home in Worcester.

The vibrant cranes were inspired by a Japanese legend that anyone who folds 1,000 origami cranes would be granted a wish by the gods. Sandra’s daughter, Jennifer Carlson, gathered family and friends to make the cranes while Sandra was undergoing treatment.

The paper cranes symbolize far more than the Japanese legend. They bring together Sandra’s love for her family and passion for crafts and animals that she generously shares with the Monahan Home’s staff, volunteers, and guests.

While recounting the legend, Sandra talks about the plight of the cranes and the work of the International Crane Foundation to conserve all 15 species of cranes around the world. She beams as she talks about the “phenomenal growth” she’s seen in her 10-year-old granddaughter, who raises money for the cause by making and selling origami cranes.

“To say we are animal lovers is an understatement,” said Sandra.

Her dogs, who she trained and competed with nationally in obedience and open routine, are among her visitors at the Monahan Home. The hospice residence, like VNA Care’s Elizabeth Evarts de Rham Hospice Home in Cambridge and the Stanley R. Tippett Hospice Home in Needham, is an actual home and gives residents more flexibility than they would have in other settings for end-of-life care.

Cranes and crafts...continued on p. 6