



VNA Care Network
VNA of Boston
VNA Hospice & Palliative Care

Caring Matters

Spring 2021



**CELEBRATING
YOUR
IMPACT**

**SPECIAL EDITION:
DONOR REPORT**



**TOGETHER WE CAN
CREATE A BRIGHTER
TOMORROW**

To our Generous Donors and Supporters,

These are unusual times. The past year has been trying and challenging for the world. To say we have been living our founding mission would be an understatement.

The pandemic has been jarring for everyone, but it has taken the greatest toll on seniors and people already impacted with health issues. As our core mission is to care for those most vulnerable, our response to this pandemic has been even more urgent for the individuals and families we serve.

As a donor to VNA Care, you have played a crucial role in our ability to navigate these uncharted waters. No matter the challenge, with your support, we have been able to rise to the call to action.

Thanks to donors like you, we have been nimble, creative, and compassionate in innumerable ways to support our patients and clinicians. We successfully redeployed staff to ensure continuous delivery of essential health services for at-risk populations, mobilized vital resources for those in need, put in place countless safety programs that successfully prevented the spread of COVID-19 among our clinicians and protected our patients.

Above all, our nurses and clinicians have been courageous, frontline heroes, working tirelessly to care for our patients. They are an extraordinary legion of people, so committed to



our patients, their families, and the health of the community. We could not be more proud of these dedicated individuals and our generous donors who make this work possible.

Your gifts have never been more needed to support our health care organization than during this once in a lifetime pandemic. Over the past year, you have opened your hearts like never before, and we are deeply grateful. Thank you!

It is with your ongoing generosity and friendship that together we will create a brighter tomorrow.



Todd Rose, MBA
President and
Chief Executive Officer



Jane Pike-Benton, RN, MS
Chief Operating Officer and
Chief Clinical Officer

Retired board member leaves legacy of service to others

The late Marilyn E. Plue was an inspiration to her fellow VNA Care board members and her family, friends, and colleagues.

Robert LeClaire, her longtime companion, remembered Marilyn's independent spirit that helped her be a pioneer in the workplace at a time when there were few women in management. Over the course of her career, Marilyn's



Marilyn E. Plue

many leadership roles included president of Banner Personnel Consultants, trust administrator with Bowditch & Dewey, and second vice president and assistant treasurer for Paul Revere Life Insurance Company.

Marilyn began giving her time and talent to VNA Care when Nixon was president. Over the course of many years, she served on numerous boards and

committees, helping the organization grow and become a leader in home health and hospice care. Upon her retirement from the board of directors in 2014, VNA Care presented her with the Continuing the Tradition of Caring Award in gratitude for her dedicated service and commitment to the health of the community.

Marilyn's generosity to VNA Care also included becoming a charter member of the agency's bequest society nearly two decades ago. Bequests enable individuals to leave a legacy and provide critical future support for nonprofits that are meaningful to them. These donors, such as Marilyn, are recognized and honored for their thoughtful planned giving.

"I was privileged to be one of Marilyn's friends," said Robin Spaulding, who served on VNA Care's board of directors with Marilyn.

Robin said that Marilyn once shared that she wanted to give back to VNA Care because the agency had been so good to her and her late husband Bradford Plue. Marilyn's unrestricted bequest will help the agency continue its 135-year mission of providing home- and community-based health care services for patients and families.

Honor Roll of Donors

In our 2020 Honor Roll of Donors, VNA Care gratefully acknowledges gifts and pledges of \$250 or more made between January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020.

Our generous donors designated these gifts in support of a wide range of patient care and family support services including wellness and preventive health programs, home health services, palliative care, and hospice. With the onset of COVID-19, the organization also created an Emergency Response Fund in March 2020. The community response was tremendous with more than 775 donors designating a gift to this important initiative.

We are thankful to all of you for your kindness and meaningful partnership. **Your philanthropic support ensures patients and families can continue to receive the best possible care and strengthens the health and well-being of our community.**

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We were out in an ocean,
and you gave us some hope.

“
 Thank you so much for
 caring for those who are
 sick, afraid, and dying while
 putting yourselves at risk.
 You are angels!
 ”

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We could not have gotten
through this without you all!

“
 From the bottom of my heart,
 I want to thank your hospice
 for making my dad's recent
 death as good as it could be.
 Thank you again for all you
 do to enable our loved ones to
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 ”

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We make every effort to ensure that our donors are recognized accurately for their contributions. Please notify us of any corrections by contacting Karen Webber, director of Fund Development, at 508-573-8027 or Laura Wise, manager of Fund Development, at 617-835-9654.

With gratitude we thank the many donors who made gifts of up to \$249. We welcome and appreciate all contributions made to our organization.

Matching gifts multiply giving

Some donors are employed by or affiliated with companies that will match charitable gifts, extending their contributions to our home health and hospice services in the community. The following corporations and businesses generously pledged matching funds to VNA Care in 2020.

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Great-grandmother overcomes COVID-19 with VNA Care

Mary Cameron* doesn't remember much about the day Lindsay Cavalieri, RN, of VNA Care, insisted she go to the hospital by ambulance for a suspected case of COVID-19.

"I was exhausted. I was having trouble putting one foot in front of the other," said Mary. She had only been at home for a few days after weeks of treatment for a heart attack at a hospital and rehabilitation facility. The last thing she wanted to do was go back to a hospital.

Afraid her patient wouldn't survive another day, Lindsay refused to leave her side until she agreed to get in the ambulance. "Thank God she did," Mary recalled later.

Her condition was serious, and Mary was admitted to the COVID-19 intensive care unit. There she found herself at even greater risk due to her other health conditions. But Mary, "a very tough cookie" according to Lindsay, never gave up. The family matriarch and great-grandmother pulled through. Today, she is continuing her recovery at home thanks to Lindsay's keen assessment and through the support of VNA Care's home health care team.

Lindsay and her colleagues, Kristin Bujdos, DPT, Lisa Sternstrom, OTR/L, and Jennifer Robitaille, LPN, are

focused on helping their patient reach her optimal health and remain in her own home for as long as possible.

They've helped Mary and her family obtain equipment, like a hospital bed, and suggested changes around the house that make life safer for her as she regains her strength. Her living room has been converted into a temporary bedroom until she can master the 15 steps to her second-floor bedroom, and everything she needs in the kitchen is now within easy reach.

The team is monitoring such things as Mary's breathing and overall health. They're teaching her new ways to approach routine tasks, like reaching for objects, to make day-to-day activities possible. Meanwhile, she's learning how to improve her mobility and strength. Most recently, with her therapist's encouragement, she's mastered going up and down five stairs, just what she needs to get in and out of her house.

Lindsay has cared for many COVID-19 patients, and is still amazed by Mary's progress over the past month. She said, "Every time I see her and she's doing much better, it's a great feeling."

Mary, in turn, appreciates the care and expertise of the entire team, and especially Lindsay's "sense of humor



Lindsay Cavalieri, RN, helped avert a potentially life-threatening crisis for her patient.

that never quits. She knows how to counter my most stubborn days. She is the epitome of what a nurse should be."

Mary's hopeful that she's done with any new health crises and can remain at home under the care of her nurses and therapists. With the milder spring weather ahead, she's planning to venture outside her front door for physical therapy sessions.

Mary said, "It's good to be home, it really is."

*Name changed at patient's request.

Together we stood up to COVID-19

Emergency Response Fund Contributions

\$247,636

COVID-19 Patient Admissions

2,521

Donated Personal Protective Equipment

40,000 Units

COVID-19 Employee Hotline Calls

3,500+

Volunteer Hours Aiding COVID-19 Response Needs

1,988



2020: A Year In Service

Home Health Care



24,248	0 to 108	381,065	2,400+
Patients Served	Age Range	Total Visits	Referral Sources

Top Diagnoses

- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Heart Disease
- Post-Surgical Care
- Respiratory Diseases
- And more than 2,550 other unique diagnoses

Telehealth

3,993 Patients Served

Clinical and Staff Education

7,924 Sessions

Specialty Services:

**Intravenous Therapy, Cardiac Care and More
70**

Types of Care Provided

- Nursing: 47%
- Physical Therapy: 36%
- Occupational Therapy: 12%
- Home Health Aide: 3%
- Other: 2%



Hospice & Palliative Care

2,282	21 to 105	58,339	54 to 144
Patients Served	Age Range	Total Visits	Average Patient Days

Top Diagnoses

- Cancer
- Cardiovascular
- Dementias
- Respiratory Diseases
- Other End-Stage Diseases
- And more than 500 other unique diagnoses

Rose Monahan Hospice Home

235 Patients Served

Grief Support Services

9,700 Interventions

Volunteers

120

Hospice Care Providers

- Chaplains
- Home Health Aides
- Medical Social Workers
- Nurses and Nurse Practitioners
- Physicians
- Physical Therapists
- Speech Therapists

VNA Care Clinicians and Staff: 824



Hospice team helps mother and daughter deepen their relationship during last months together

Holly Rossignol knew the value of hospice long before her mother, Anne Orser, needed end-of-life care.

"Hospice is about getting the most out of the time you have left," said Holly.

She and her family turned to hospice nearly three decades ago for support in caring for her father, and Holly relied on hospice again when her first husband was terminally ill. She even became a hospice volunteer to give respite to family caregivers.

Her mom, Anne, had managed well with heart disease for quite some time, but she never fully bounced back after returning home from her last hospital stay.

"I was so afraid something was going to happen on my watch, and I didn't know how I was going to handle it," said Holly.

Anne's doctor referred them to VNA Care's hospice program to provide her with care and support at home.

Michel Anne Thorpe, BA, RN, was a "Godsend," bringing calm to Anne as her condition deteriorated and supporting Holly as she shared her mother's end-of-life journey. Krysia Burnham, MA, MDiv, hospice chaplain, provided spiritual support for Holly,

while Jaya Asthana, MSW, LICSW, helped Holly with long-term care insurance and supportive services and provided counseling.

The entire team also helped Anne and Holly improve their understanding of each other and their relationship.

"Mom and I didn't always get along that well. I've been told it was a typical mother-daughter relationship," said Holly. "We were at opposite ends of the personality spectrum."

Holly takes comfort in the day they had a breakthrough while talking to Krysia and Michel Anne.

"It was a pretty emotional moment. I think all four of us were in tears," said Holly. "There's a lot of baggage that needs to get unpacked and dealt with before someone can have a gentle crossing. I think that's one of the reasons my mom held on as long as she did."

Anne had been on hospice for almost one year. When her final hours drew near in December 2020, each of her three children had the chance to say goodbye. She wasn't able to speak, but Holly could tell that she still heard them.

"I checked in on her, gave her medication, kissed her on the



Anne Orser was able to remain at home during her final months with the support of her family and VNA Care's hospice team.

forehead, and said that I loved her. It was a very organic moment, and two hours later she was gone. All of the stars aligned so she could have a peaceful crossing," said Holly.

She remembered telling her mother to send her a sign that she "made it to the other side" and that she was alright even though Anne didn't believe in such things. The morning after Anne passed away, Holly saw two cardinals, her mom's favorite type of bird, outside the kitchen window. When the male cardinal flew away, the female cardinal followed.

Holly said, "I just knew that mom was OK, and that she was with my dad."

RN finds strength...continued from back cover

help the lungs recover. Some patients are new to using oxygen and others are "deconditioned" because of prolonged bed rest and inactivity.

She's seen firsthand the unpredictable nature of the virus. One of her patients was in their 50s and led a very active lifestyle before the virus. This person was someone that most people would have thought would pull through without any problems, yet the patient now needs oxygen continuously and is

short of breath with even the slightest exertion.

Serving as a nurse during the past year has made a lasting impact on Heather.

She said, "All patients teach you lessons of kindness, patience, compassion, and strength. They also teach you that health is the most valuable gift."

VNA Care's mission is to provide the right care with kindness and compassion every day for every person we serve.

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Social worker finds hope and resiliency in end-of-life care

Jaya Asthana, MSW, LICSW, is seeing a welcome change in the community. The anxiety that enveloped so many during the pandemic is turning to hope.

She likes to point out that you can find the word “hope” in “hospice” to which she’s dedicated many years of her career as a social worker.

“I tell people hospice is not for the dying, it’s for the living. It helps you have the best quality of life you will have,” said Jaya.



Behind the mask: Jaya Asthana, MSW, LICSW, provides practical and emotional support to terminally ill patients and their loved ones as a social worker for VNA Care.

Jaya and other members of the hospice team strive to bring hope, comfort, and dignity to individuals and families during a difficult time of life, all the more complicated by COVID-19. During those first months of the pandemic, when there were so many unknowns, clinicians first had to “quiet down” their own fears and the possibility that they could bring the virus home to their families.

They also worked to reassure patients and families. Some were so afraid

of the virus that they refused to let anyone into their homes, even though clinicians already practiced infection control and began wearing personal protective equipment during all patient care.

“We had to change our ways, and be very flexible. It wasn’t easy,” said Jaya.

One patient’s son was so afraid for his and his terminally ill mother’s well-being that he refused to let anyone from the hospice team inside their home. Jaya worked to make a

connection with him over the phone. It took time, but the son began to trust Jaya and she counseled him on his fears. Before long, he welcomed the hospice nurse into their home.

When Jaya talks to people about her role on the hospice team, she often says, the patient’s illness is really a family illness. Her role as a social worker includes providing grief support to patients’ loved ones.

“The family doesn’t have the physical pain or shortness of breath or

whatever other symptoms the patient is experiencing, but they do have the heartache, the sadness, and the tears. They’re also suffering,” said Jaya. “My role is to help you through whatever suffering you have.”

Jaya and her colleagues have employed telehealth to connect patients and loved ones when they can’t be together. Loved ones “were so grateful just to see that their family member was OK. I remember one woman was almost crying because she hadn’t seen her mother for so long,” said Jaya. “Just to be able to see her mother during the dying stages meant a lot to her. Those are the kind of things that really touch you.”

Jaya’s work has also given her the chance to see people’s extraordinary kindness and generosity. One man ran out of money and was being forced out of his home. He didn’t have any family, and his health was failing. The man’s health care proxy was his late mother’s home health aide. She took him into her home that she shared with her two young children and a nephew. She stopped working to care for him with the support of the hospice team until he passed away.

Perhaps the most important thing that Jaya has observed during her career in hospice is people’s resiliency. She said, “Most people somehow have the strength to come through ... and look forward to life again. It’s really good to see.”

Charity Care: \$2,686,557

In 2020, VNA Care improved the lives of those most in need with over 28,000 charitable care patient visits, including nursing, rehabilitation therapies, medical social work, and home health aide support. This wide-ranging care was made possible by the generosity and kindness of our donors listed here. Your giving is critical to providing access to health care. Together with all of you, VNA Care continues its commitment to serving all in need of essential health care services with respect and dignity.

Donors honor VNA Care staff for their dedication

Each year, hundreds of patients, family members, friends, and others in the community make donations in gratitude for the care provided. We recognize these clinicians and staff as members of our Thanks for Caring Society. The following VNA Care Network, VNA of Boston, and VNA Hospice & Palliative Care staff were honored by Thanks for Caring Society donors during 2020. We also wish to recognize the many other clinicians who care for our most vulnerable patients.

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RN finds strength and compassion in home health nursing

For some, it takes years into adulthood to find your calling. For Heather Lambert, RN, she knew her calling was to be a nurse for as long as she can remember. It only took a summer volunteering at UMass Memorial Medical Center during high school to cement her decision.

"I saw nurses as women who are strong, intelligent, and compassionate. As people who make a difference in people's lives, are well respected in the community, and help others at their most vulnerable times. That's something I always wanted to be a part of," said Heather.

She joined VNA Care's home health care team three years ago and has the opportunity to engage with patients on a more personal, individualized basis than other health care settings.

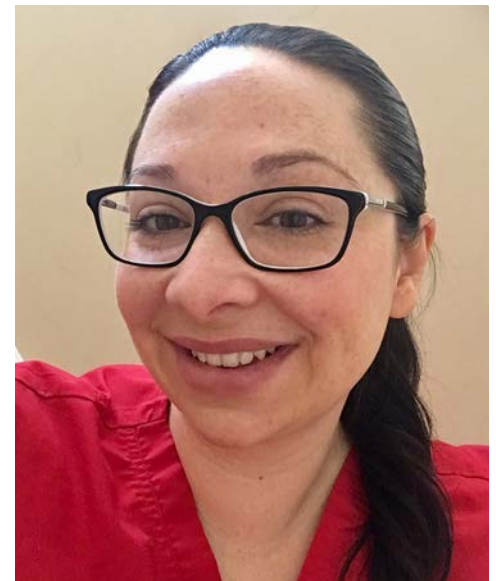
Heather said, "Patients can give us a very specific goal we can help them achieve like, 'I want to be able to get up and down my stairs. I want to be

able to walk to my mailbox.' You can actually see these things and do them with the patient."

She's cared for countless COVID-19 patients during the pandemic as well as patients who are at particularly high-risk for the virus and others with wide-ranging medical conditions. Many of her patients have lived in isolation with the exception of her visits.

"We're a sense of security for these patients, and we're keeping them safe at home too," said Heather. "It's a whole new level of care. I've kind of been a phlebotomist the past year. It's required us to double-down on our assessments and our reporting and trying to keep people out of the hospital."

She often spends a lot of time teaching her COVID-19 patients about managing their condition, including how to monitor blood oxygen levels, which can drop to dangerously low levels in those fighting the infectious



Heather Lambert, RN

disease, as well as the signs and symptoms of respiratory distress, deep breathing exercises, and how to use an incentive spirometer (a device that will expand one's lungs by helping one breathe more deeply and fully) to

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