

Caring Matters

Summer 2023

Physical therapist helps patients reach healthcare goals, reclaim lives

Far too often, Joanna Donato, DPT, sees how pain and physical limitations brought about by an injury or illness drain people's sense of hope.

As she works one-on-one with her physical therapy patients, she knows how important it is to "help them access the deeper part of themselves that they didn't know was in there" to restore hope and reclaim their lives.

"Just knowing you can overcome something that's hard and something that hurts with the right tools, with the right plan, and with the right support, it definitely helps to get that out of people," said Joanna.

Her career as a physical therapist was sparked by her determination to recover from a sports-related injury. She turned to a friend who was a physical therapist for help.

Joanna found herself interested in the "why of the body and the connection of the anatomy to functional importance." She was hooked and earned a doctor of physical therapy degree as well as certification as a lymphedema therapist, providing specialized care to patients with this incurable condition that causes swelling in parts of the body.

Joanna spent the first phase of her career at an outpatient sports medicine clinic. She made the transition to VNA Care's home health



Joanna Donato, DPT, (left) brings expert physical therapy into patients' homes to help individuals recover from accidents, injury, or illness.

care team seven years ago and never looked back.

She appreciates having the time to get to know her patients. Joanna cares for residents of Boston. She sometimes finds patients living in incredibly difficult situations. There are instances of neglect, and homes that are in complete disrepair.

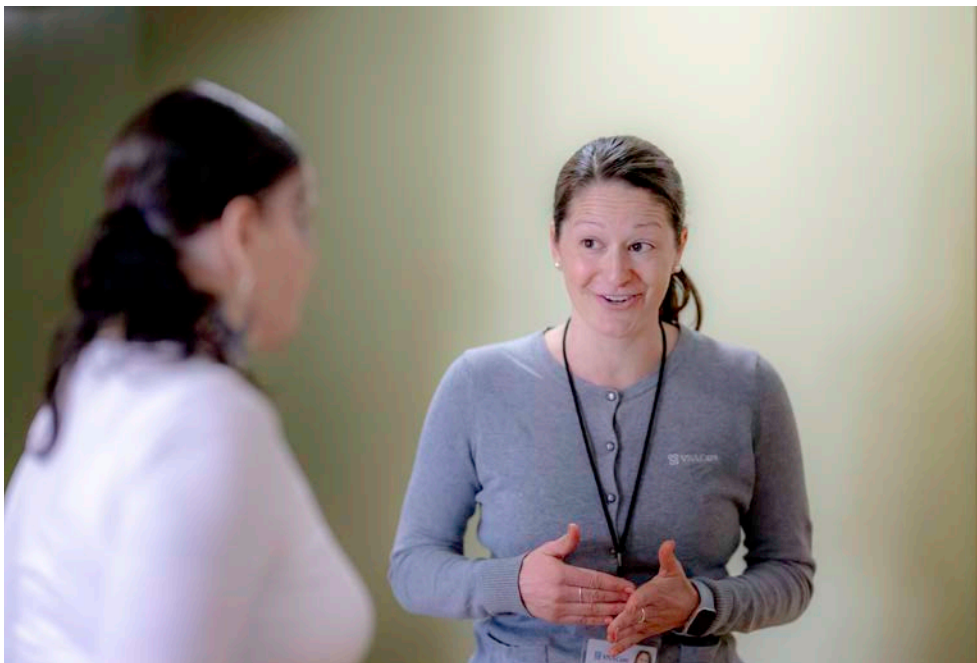
"In home health care, you're looking at the whole person – the social, physical, and financial aspects – and the quality of life," said Joanna. "In the outpatient setting, if someone comes in for knee

pain from running six miles, you're isolated to that knee and that run."

Challenges beyond a patient's diagnosis can dramatically impact their ability to heal. VNA Care's approach to helping patients remain independent at home includes case management services.

Clinicians, including social workers and nurses, help patients overcome a wide range of barriers to improved health by linking them to resources, such

Physical therapist helps patients reach healthcare goals, reclaim lives...continued on page 2



Joanna Donato, DPT, (right) discovered her calling as a physical therapist when she was recovering from a sports-related injury. She joined VNA Care's home health team seven years ago.

as free and subsidized medications, as well as serving as advocates and offering support. Charitable gifts aid VNA Care's clinicians in helping some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Joanna's patients range in age from early 30s to over 90 years old. Some have experienced a traumatic accident, like being hit by a car, while others are dealing with chronic conditions such as heart failure or recovering from knee or hip replacement surgery.

Among them was a woman who'd gone through chemotherapy, which impacted her mobility. She spent her days isolated in a tiny room on the second floor of her home, sitting in a reclining chair with a commode nearby. Joanna focused on helping the woman improve her mobility while her colleague, Andrea Segel, OT, addressed the patient's ability to perform activities of daily living.

The patient slowly made progress and could eventually get out of the chair

on her own, walk down the hallway, and use the bathroom and shower with adaptive equipment. The patient was also able to walk to the stairs and get on a stairlift to the first floor where she could once again use the kitchen and the rest of the house.

Joanna said, "Helping patients access parts of their home they haven't been able to use is rewarding on a different level. You're changing someone's life."

Another patient was in her 80s and had been independent until she fell and broke her hip. She was in a wheelchair, and relied on her son for nearly everything, including lifting her out of the wheelchair to get into bed.

"She was a fighter," remembered Joanna. Over the course of six months, Joanna focused on the patient's goal of getting back on her feet.

Their efforts were successful. During their last visit, the patient used a walker to take a stroll outside with Joanna and had plans to return to Tuesday night Bingo with her friends.

Joanna remembers their immense gratitude, but is quick to recognize the dedicated efforts of patients and their loved ones in reaching their goals.

She added, "It's a team effort."

RN became patient's rock throughout debilitating health ordeal



Cheryl Tubert

Pain took over Cheryl Tubert's life.

Ulcers on her legs, caused by poor circulation, made every day a challenge. At times, she found herself bedridden or forced to use a walker to get around her home. The pain would bring her to tears.

"I couldn't do anything. It was very hard, very painful, and very depressing," remembered Cheryl.

She went through multiple surgeries. A procedure known as debridement removed unhealthy tissue and cleaned

the wounds. Stents were placed in her legs to help keep blood flowing and avoid additional and potentially even more serious health problems.

Her doctor called upon VNA Care to help Cheryl heal at home. Cheryl was unfamiliar with home health care, but soon came to rely on her visiting nurses Lori Zinkevich, RN, and Susan Carrigan, RN, WCC, manager of VNA Care's wound, ostomy and continence team of nurse specialists.

*RN becomes patient's rock
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VNA Care to honor Heroes in Health Care at annual signature gala

VNA Care is excited to announce Alexandra Drane and Lauren Smith, MD, MPH, will be honored as 2023 Heroes in Health Care! Each year at the Heroes in Health Care Gala, we celebrate the dedication of the most influential individuals who are leading the way to a better tomorrow.

We are delighted to honor Alexandra Drane for spearheading a national movement to recognize and support the millions of unpaid caregivers who provide essential care to those suffering from difficult conditions and long-term illnesses. She is a successful entrepreneur and the co-founder of ARCHANGELS, Engage with Grace, and Eliza Corporation (acquired by HMS Holdings Corp).

In recognizing Dr. Lauren Smith, the Chief Health Equity and Strategy Officer for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Foundation, we honor her pursuit to address systemic racism and other structural inequities and their impact on vulnerable populations' health, wellbeing and resiliency.

Latoyia Edwards, the Emmy-award winning morning anchor on NBC Boston, will be this year's Emcee. Recently named one of Boston Magazine's Most Influential Bostonians, Edwards is one of the most sought-after emcees.



Lauren A. Smith, MD, MPH
Chief Health Equity & Strategy Officer
CDC Foundation

Alexandra Drane
Co-Founder & CEO
ARCHANGELS

EMCEE Latoyia Edwards
NBC Boston

We invite you to join us in recognizing our Heroes in Health Care on October 13 at the Mandarin Oriental in Boston.

Stay tuned at VNACare.org/Gala.

RN becomes patient's rock...continued from page 2

"I was in so much pain that they couldn't even touch me at first. They are very patient and compassionate and always made sure I was OK," said Cheryl.

Lori became Cheryl's "rock." They saw each other nearly daily when Cheryl's treatment began two years ago.

Susan explains that by caring for patients in the home setting she is able to get a more complete picture of what that person is facing. She was able to take the time to get to know Cheryl and make recommendations

for the latest and most effective wound care treatments.

Cheryl recalled how during this challenging time, "Lori and Susan were always looking for better ways to heal me. When I asked questions, they'd have answers."

Their teamwork over the past two years has paid off. Cheryl feels like a new person. She can walk again without pain and take care of things around her home that she used to take for granted.

Lori said, "Cheryl's progress is amazing. Each visit brings us closer to finally healing her legs. It's great to see her so close to her goal."

Susan added, "It's a wonderful feeling to know you can give somebody their life back. I love what I do. I wouldn't trade this for anything."

Cheryl is incredibly grateful for Lori, Susan, and VNA Care. "They just did wonders. They're wonderful people. You couldn't ask for anyone better."



From left: Needham Area Community Cabinet members and event sponsors Kerrie Patten, Louise Condon, and Ellison Patten



From left: Laura Wise, manager of Fund Development for VNA Care, with Bryan Manandhar, Julie Llav, and Joel Concepcion, all of Brookline Bank, an Advocate Sponsor



From left: Advocate Sponsors Tony and Gail Nannini with Father Michael Ssenfuma and Angella Burns



Anne Fagen (front, second from left) surrounded by members of VNA Care's hospice team who cared for Anne's mother and supported her entire family.

Needham Area celebrates milestone benefit

Our community of friends and supporters joined VNA Care's nurses and clinicians for a magical evening to celebrate the 10th annual Needham area benefit, the Summer Solstice Gala.

Thanks to the generosity of many, more than \$45,000 was raised to provide the highest quality hospice and home health care to patients and families in the Needham area that enhances their quality of life.

The celebration included joyful music performed by Jen Aldana from The Voice, and our Fund the Need program, led by co-chairs Louise Condon and Ellison Patten, which inspired so many to give of themselves and make a difference.

During the evening, Lindy Hayden-Queeno, hospice volunteer coordinator, shared, "We are blessed to have 105 volunteers with huge hearts serving our patients, their caregivers and our staff. They are a quiet presence when words cannot be spoken, and a compassionate ear for an exhausted caregiver."

We appreciate the meaningful support of everyone who took part, and recognize the dedication and commitment of our event sponsors.

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508-658-7700 or
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26th annual Step Out for Hospice Walk/Run

Put on your sneakers and step out for a great cause on Sunday, Oct. 1, at the Irish American Club of Woburn.

The day features a fun run for kids at 11:30 a.m., 3-mile walk at noon, and 5-mile road race at 12:30 p.m.

Join us outside the Club for live music from the Offramps, refreshments including chowder from the Green's Grille and Pub, silent auction, raffle and more!

Learn more at VNACare.org/StepOut.



Step Out for Hospice is a tradition for the Jamieson family, who walk in memory of Susan Coakley Jamieson.

Family cherishes "long goodbye" at home with beloved husband, father...continued from back cover

stuff that I think people associate with hospice. They know how to go to the personality of the patient."

Michael had time to say goodbye to his friends, and be with his wife, four children, and nine grandchildren in the comfort and familiar surroundings of his home.

Meg recalled that a particularly meaningful moment for her dad was a pinning ceremony the hospice team held to recognize Michael's service in the United States Navy Seabees division during the Vietnam War.

As part of the We Honor Veterans Initiative of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, VNA Care recognizes the unique needs of veterans and honors those who served as they reach the end of life.

The team presented Michael with a pin, which he added to his Seabees hat, and a patriotic quilt. Family members who couldn't be there in person joined on Zoom.

"My dad used that quilt until the day he died. He loved it. When we held the celebration of life, it was on display because he was so proud of it," said David. Meg added, "It was very special to all of us."

Brenna was always a phone call away. Meg said, "Brenna was really caring. She'd talk to my dad even when he wasn't conscious. She would say, 'Your

family is all here. You can let go when you're ready.' It was helpful for us to hear how to talk to him when he wasn't conscious. Then we all followed suit."

Michael made his wishes known when he was still able to speak. Not one to stand on tradition, he wanted his family to hold a party instead of a wake or funeral after he was gone. He had an appreciation for whiskey, and asked his family to have a shot of Jack Daniels in his honor before he passed. As the time drew near, his wife and four kids gathered around his bed and made their toast.

Meg said, "I swear he was waiting for that because the next day he passed."

In the celebration of life that took place days later, 350 people joined the family to commemorate and remember Michael at the country club where he loved to golf. A seat was saved in Michael's honor with a glass of whiskey and one of his favorite cigars.

Meg and David are grateful for their family's experience with VNA Care's hospice. "Brenna was absolutely phenomenal," said David. "We wouldn't have been able to do it without her."

Meg shared, "Some people don't get to have that long goodbye. They don't get to say all the things they wanted to say and spend all the time they wanted to spend, but we did."

The two have since found themselves as resources for their friends who are coping with a parent's or grandparent's terminal illness, and urge them to consider hospice care.

Meg said, "The one regret that we had is that we didn't use hospice earlier. It was so helpful to us as a family to have that guidance and that extra set of eyes and ears."

David added, "Now I see how important hospice is and how much it made our lives better."



The Farrer Family relied on the support and guidance of Brenna Ferrentino, RN, throughout Michael's last month of life.

Couple finds comfort, compassion, and support with VNA Care's hospice

Leona Keefe found herself drawn to the Rose Monahan Hospice Home on the fifth anniversary of her husband David's passing there.

VNA Care's hospice team was a source of compassion and comfort for the couple in their final months together. As she spent time reflecting in the residence's peaceful surroundings, she knew their decision to transition from hospice care at home to the Monahan Home had been a good one.

Leona and David met in 1972 while working together at Raytheon. They became best friends and later partners. They blended their families, David with two children and Leona with one, and bought a home. They were married for 15 of the 35 years they spent building a life together, and loved seeing their family grow with the addition of six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

During their retirement, David's health began suddenly failing. His time would now be measured in months instead of years.

Leona and David turned to VNA Care's hospice program for medical care, counseling, and support during this incredibly difficult time. The team, including hospice nurses, social worker, and spiritual counselor, initially visited the couple in their own home.

Hospice focuses on helping people faced with terminal diagnoses live with dignity through expert pain and symptom management and a comprehensive range of physical, emotional, social, practical, and spiritual support. The hospice team prepared the couple for what they could expect during the end-of-life journey, and introduced the Rose Monahan Hospice Home as a homelike alternative for care should David be unable to remain at home.

Leona was dealing with her own health issues while also caring for David. She said, "It was a big relief having the hospice staff here. I think it was also a relief for David. That put him at ease as well."

As David's needs changed over the course of two months, the team adapted the care plans to promote his quality of life. They arranged for a hospital bed to be placed on the home's first floor when David could no longer safely use the stairs to his bedroom. David had a long talk with the hospice team's spiritual counselor, who later reassured Leona that David was at peace with what's happening.

She said, "There were so many aspects of their help – the concern, the care, the compassion, and the willingness to go the extra mile to get information."

Considering David's deteriorating condition and Leona's own health, the couple opted to transition to end-of-life care at the Rose Monahan Hospice Home. The residence has nurses available around the clock to provide general in-patient and residential hospice care.

"We loved it right away," shared Leona. "It's very homey, very picturesque. David loved looking out at the lake with every window at the home facing Coes Pond. He loved the birds, ducks, swans, and everything."

Nearly one month at the residence brought the couple "a lot of support. The nurses and other staff were very compassionate and understanding," said Leona.

The team kept David comfortable, and he passed away peacefully.

Leona, wanting to give back to VNA Care, asked for donations to be made in David's memory to the Rose Monahan Hospice Home. She said, "It's what served us beautifully, and that's where I wanted the money to go. Why not keep it local?"

When Leona learned that a family friend was facing a terminal cancer diagnosis, she recommended the woman's family seek care from the clinicians at the Rose Monahan Hospice Home.

They took her advice, and Leona's friend was soon in the same room where David had lived his final weeks. Leona remembered her friend was just as appreciative as David had been with the care and beautiful setting.

Leona said that no matter where the hospice care was provided, "everybody was so helpful and so kind. They were great."

Tickets on sale now for Celebration of Caring to benefit patients and families across Central Massachusetts



Dena McDonough and Liisa Holm of Celebration of Caring sponsor Marsh McLennan Agency. Liisa is also a member of VNA Care's Worcester Area Community Cabinet.

Join us on Thursday, Sept. 21, at the Beechwood Hotel, Worcester, for an evening of inspiration and celebration in support of your visiting nurses!

Celebration of Caring provides vital support for home health care and hospice services, including the Rose Monahan Hospice Home.

For more information and to purchase your tickets, please visit VNACare.org/Worcester or call 508-658-7700.

North Shore benefit recognizes clinicians, raises funds for patient care

Thanks to our generous sponsors and dedicated North Shore Community Cabinet members, VNA Care's 11th annual North Shore spring benefit was a wonderful success!

Guests at "Caring Together, Let's Celebrate!" enjoyed live music, great food and wine, and heard firsthand what it is like to be a visiting nurse in the community from Kim Connelly, RN, home health care nurse, and Joan Fitzpatrick, RN, wellness nurse.

All funds raised through the event are directed to keeping individuals healthy and in their own home where they most want to be. The programs and services that fulfill this mission would not be possible without the support of our donors.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to the area businesses and organizations that are standing by our clinicians as sponsors of this benefit.

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From left: Cape Ann Savings Bank leaders Dennis J. Acker, assistant vice president; Marianne Smith, president; and John Brennan, senior vice president. Cape Ann Savings Bank was an Advocate Sponsor.



From left: Caroline and Paul Lane of Armstrong Advisory Group, a Caregiver Sponsor, and Deborah O'Malley, member of the North Shore Community Cabinet



From left: VNA Care team members Amy Calhoun, OT, Sue Spencer, PT, Georgia Menard, OT, Kim Connelly, RN, and Caroline Walton, RN



North Shore Community Cabinet members John Archer, chair, and Christine Gauthier-Kelley

North Shore Community Cabinet

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Healing at home with expert nursing care



Summer Solstice Gala an enchanting night



North Shore benefit celebrates caring



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Family cherishes “long goodbye” at home with beloved husband, father

VNA Care’s hospice team gave the Farrer family one last month together at home – filled with friends, laughter, and new memories they hold dear when reminiscing about their late father and husband who was larger than life.

The only thing they’d do differently was enlist the support and expertise of the hospice team sooner.

Much of Michael Farrer’s time over the preceding two years was devoted to doctor’s visits and procedures for heart failure and numerous other health issues. He spent more and more time in hospitals and rehabilitation facilities, sometimes apart from his wife of 52 years, Sandra, and their home for as long as six weeks.

His daughter, Meg Rivett, remembered accompanying her dad on a visit to his primary care doctor last summer. They weren’t familiar with hospice, so the doctor introduced this special branch of medicine that focuses on managing pain and symptoms and helping

patients live with dignity at the end of life while providing support to loved ones before and after their loss.

Michael was hospitalized again in November. The situation was “really weighing on all of us,” said his son, David Farrer. They gathered for a family meeting to talk about the options. Michael was weary of the constant hospital visits and stress it caused his family. His biggest wish was to stay at home. The family decided it was time for hospice.

Brenna Ferrentino, RN, a hospice nurse case manager at VNA Care, made her first visit with Michael and his family on the day before Thanksgiving and would serve as their primary clinician in the coming weeks.

David said, “Hospice made the whole process easier and understandable. Brenna was really good about explaining everything each step of the way and what to expect at each change in him.”



Michael Farrer was known for his larger than life personality. The retired engineer and United States Navy Seabees veteran was able to remain at home with the support of his family and VNA Care’s hospice team.

Meg said her dad was the “biggest jokester,” loved to laugh, and known for his sharp wit. “The hospice team that came in went right along with him. That’s what my mom loved the most. ...Everybody was laughing when they were here. It wasn’t this somber, sad

*Family cherishes “long goodbye”
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