

Caring Matters

Winter 2023

Home health care team's collaborative approach helps young patient begin healing after traumatic accident leads to functional quadriplegia

Mary received the phone call that every parent fears. Her 23-year-old son Eddie had been in a traumatic, life-threatening accident.

While details remain unknown, it resulted in Eddie suffering a brain injury and stroke. Pandemic restrictions left Mary unable to see her son for the first three months of his four-month hospitalization. Eddie was unable to speak during much of his hospital stay because he needed to be intubated, or have a breathing tube to move air in and out of his lungs.

Eddie spent an additional four months at a long-term care facility. When he was finally able to transition home with the support of VNA Care's home health care team, he was bedbound with a diagnosis of functional quadriplegia. Mary remembered the most he could do with his legs was wiggle his knees. He couldn't tolerate having the head of his bed elevated and hadn't even sat up during his eight months in facilities. Eddie couldn't move his left arm and his right arm was weak. He could barely use a telephone never mind do other things most people take for granted. His condition was further complicated by painful wounds that wouldn't heal.

VNA Care's home health care team was determined to find a way to improve Eddie's strength and mobility.

The agency uses an interdisciplinary team approach to patient care, with nursing, rehabilitation therapies, and other clinicians and specialists on staff who serve as resources not only for patients, but also for each other as they treat complex diagnoses and injuries.

Sharon Matulis, OTR/L, occupational therapist, said team members not only worked on "their piece of the puzzle" but also consulted each other on what approaches were effective and how to "work together on the treatment plan to find ways to wake up his body again neurologically." Team members often overlapped their visits to assist each other and make each visit as effective as possible.

Among the collaborative efforts were Sharon and Margo Kiss, RN, treating Eddie's bedsore that was the size of a grapefruit. Healing had stalled and pain from it made sitting unbearable for Eddie. Sharon has a wealth of experience in treating wounds using special modalities, such as ultrasound and electrical stimulation, and these were incorporated into the plan of care. They were able to restart the healing process and shrink the wound to the size of a large grape. The improvement meant Eddie was finally able to tolerate sitting again.



Mary said the clinicians who helped her son were "unbelievable. You couldn't ask for anyone better." Members of the team included Sharon Matulis, OTR/L (top), Jeremy Gately, PTA (above, left), and Lauren McKay, PT.

Sharon and Margo were joined on the team by Jeremy Gately, PTA, Lauren McKay, PT, and Christopher Varney, OT, with specialists in such disciplines as speech therapy providing additional support as Eddie's needs changed.

*Collaborative approach helps young patient
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Collaborative approach helps young patient...continued from front cover

Mary said that every team member would “go above and beyond.” She was always able to reach them between visits. The occupational and physical therapists provided guidance

on the best wheelchair for Eddie and other equipment to support his independence.

Through the state’s brain injury program, the family was able to have modifications made to their home to improve accessibility. Sharon provided input to the contractors to make the modifications a success.

Over the course of nearly one year, Eddie “made a lot of gains,” said Mary. The team served as cheerleaders for the entire family, and Eddie shared that it felt great to finally make progress.

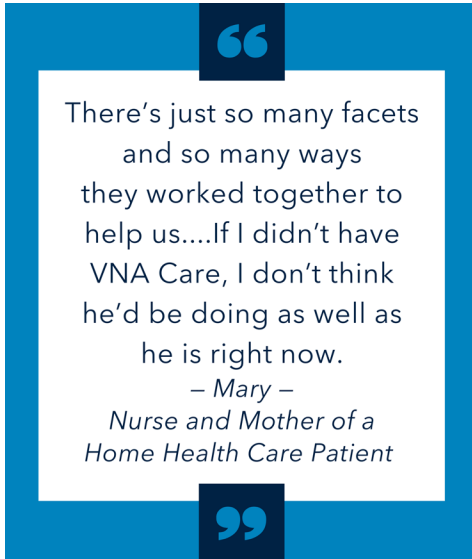
“I’m a nurse myself for 39 years. This team was exemplary. They were unbelievable. You couldn’t ask for anyone better,” said Mary.

By the time VNA Care’s home health care team transitioned Eddie to

outpatient care, they had helped him regain motion in both his arms and hands. He not only can sit up in bed, but he can also sit in his wheelchair and drive it himself. Eddie is no longer bedbound, and can leave the house in his family’s wheelchair accessible van.

Most importantly, Eddie is hopeful for the future and planning to enroll in college classes this winter – something that would have been impossible just months before.

“There’s just so many facets and so many ways they worked together to help us. It was a challenge. There was a lot Eddie needed. If I didn’t have VNA Care, I don’t think he’d be doing as well as he is right now,” said Mary. “Just to know them and have them help my son was absolutely wonderful.”



Hospice aide “in tune” with patients to provide personalized care

Marion Kettell loves her work as a hospice aide at VNA Care because it gives her the opportunity to connect with people from all walks of life.

Marion listens to her patients’ life stories as she provides personal care and other day-to-day support that promotes her terminally ill patients’ comfort and dignity.

One patient signed up for the military at age 13. Standing at 6 feet 6 inches tall, the patient recalled that no one questioned whether he was old enough to serve and he was accepted. She’s heard first-hand accounts of living through the Great Depression, and tales of what it was like to have a career as a semi-pro football player.



Marion Kettell is known for her compassion and kindness. As a hospice aide, she provides personal care and other support for terminally ill patients.

Like other members of the hospice team, Marion works to help patients remain comfortable and listens to and respects their wishes. Should a patient no longer be able to speak, Marion watches facial expressions and body language for signs about how they are feeling.

“You really have to be in tune with the person you are caring for and make adjustments based on their response. Every day, every moment is different for that person. You sometimes have to think outside the box and come up with creative ways to give a shampoo or other personal care,” said Marion.

During her time with a patient, Marion encourages loved ones to take a break from their caregiving responsibilities even if it’s just to relax with a cup of coffee. “If you can be that one hour of respite for the family, that’s a huge thing.”

In appreciation for Marion’s exceptional care and dedication to her patients, families are inspired to make donations to VNA Care. Staff and clinicians honored in this way are named to the Thanks for Caring Society and recognized publicly in VNA Care’s donor report, employee newsletter, and website.

Each patient and family that she’s cared for stays with her – their stories, their advice, and even some amazing family recipes. Marion said, “To me, this isn’t just a job. It’s so much more.”

Nurse, home health patient finds excellence in care at VNA Care

Christine Gauthier-Kelley, RN, has a passion and commitment to excellence in health care. Through her volunteerism and experience as a home health care patient, she found kindred spirits at VNA Care.

Christine first came to know the nonprofit visiting nurse association nearly a decade ago as the Manchester Woman's Club liaison on VNA Care's North Shore Community Cabinet.

The Club established the visiting nurse association's home- and community-based health care services in the town in 1910. Members of the Club remain involved in VNA Care's mission to this day, serving on the Cabinet to raise awareness of and vital charitable support for home health and palliative care, hospice for the terminally ill, and wellness programs.

Christine saw another side of VNA Care this year when she became a patient after knee replacement surgery. She said she was "very blessed" to have Robert J. Pillis Jr., MPT, physical therapist with VNA Care, supporting her recovery at home.

When making decisions about health care for herself and loved ones, Christine draws on her extensive career in health care that includes nursing, clinical research, and as worldwide director of continuous improvement and customer-focused quality in the pharmaceutical industry.

"I'm very particular and selective when it comes to healthcare. I have a desire for healthcare providers to spend time with their patients and deliver excellence in care the way I used to teach customer-focused quality," said Christine. "I had a remarkable experience with Robert and VNA Care."

As a healthcare consumer, she evaluates her experiences based on three key factors: reliability, expertise, and responsiveness. She said Robert was "perfect in all those different ways."

Robert put Christine at ease with her sudden lack of mobility, and taught her exercises during each visit so she could achieve her goal of walking again without assistive devices.

He offered encouragement and alternate ways to approach the exercises whenever she had difficulty. If she had any questions or concerns, she knew that Robert and the VNA Care team would respond quickly.

In just a few weeks, Christine progressed from using a walker to two crutches to one crutch. She and Robert even took a walk outside together, which, for Christine, felt like she was beginning her normal life once more.

Christine shared that she simply can't say enough about the care she received. "Robert is friendly, reliable, approachable, knowledgeable, and simply amazing."

She advocates for people to take an active role in their healthcare and to know that visiting nurse associations are not all the same. Each is unique, just like hospitals and doctors.

"People need to know that they have a choice when it comes to home health care," said Christine. "VNA Care is the state's original visiting nurse association, and the nonprofit's commitment to the community remains as strong as it did when it began over a century ago."

She added, "Mediocrity has no place in medical care. You should seek excellence in your care, and you can find it at VNA Care."



Christine Gauthier-Kelley, RN, chose VNA Care to help her recover at home after knee replacement surgery.

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SBLI was a Presenting Sponsor of the event to support VNA Care’s mission “to provide the right care with kindness and compassion to every person we serve.”

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Step Out for Hospice marks 25 years of raising vital funds for end-of-life care

Hundreds stepped out for hospice this fall, making the 25th Anniversary Walk, Run and Children’s Fun Run one of the most successful yet! More than \$80,000 was raised through the generosity of our sponsors, donors, and attendees.

The benefit was organized by the Woburn Friends of VNA Hospice & Palliative Care in partnership with the Irish American Club of Woburn and the Shamrock Running Club. Guests enjoyed live music by The Offramps, the Green’s Grille & Pub’s amazing clam chowder and other refreshments, silent auction, and raffle.

Save the date for the 26th annual Step Out for Hospice: Sunday, Oct. 1, 2023!



Left: Brian Kelley and Jamie Kelley are co-chairs of the Woburn Friends, volunteers dedicated to raising awareness of and charitable support for hospice care. Right: The Jamieson Family walked in memory of Susan Coakley Jamieson. Their company, Jamieson Management, was a Platinum Sponsor and The Coakley Family a Gold Sponsor.

Woburn Friends of VNA Hospice & Palliative Care

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
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Nurse dedicates career to helping patients remain healthy at home

Delsye West Mason, RN, owes her nursing career to a meddling colleague.

She was working as a secretary in a medical unit at Massachusetts General Hospital, taking liberal arts classes at UMass, and trying to figure out what she wanted to do with her life.

"A nurse said to me, 'Delsye, stop all this nonsense and go to nursing school,'" she remembered. Since GPS wasn't available on cell phones just yet, the nurse gave Delsye directions to her alma mater, Lasell University.

Fortunately for VNA Care's patients, Delsye decided to give nursing a try. After gaining some experience working as a nurse at Mass General, Delsye joined VNA of Boston, part of VNA Care, over 30 years ago.

"Being a visiting nurse really honed in my nursing skills," said Delsye. "When I'm in the home, it's just me. I have to know what I'm talking about. I have to know what I'm doing. Over the years, I gained all of these exceptional, wonderful skills. I feel like there isn't much that goes on inside the hospital setting that doesn't happen in the community."

Delsye has cared for patients and supported families throughout the City of Boston as well as Brookline, Quincy, Randolph, and other nearby communities. A self-described people

person, she finds a lot to love about caring for patients in the home setting. She strives to ensure her patients become experts in their disease or illness and have the knowledge and tools they need to remain safe at home.

"Every home, every situation is different. I could have two people living next door to each other and they both have diabetes. I have to approach them differently because the settings are different and they might have different social issues. I have to adapt my skills and my training to reach people where they are at. I love that."

Among the patients who have particularly touched her was a man she met over a decade ago when he was 19. He had a bad heart and was on the transplant list by age 30. Delsye has been involved in his case over the years, including times when he needed IV therapy and post-surgical care for a pacemaker and artificial heart. She was recently assigned to his case once more to provide nursing care after a successful heart transplant.

Delsye said, "I was so happy to see him. We've come such a long distance together, and his life is on track. It's just such a really good feeling."

Her decades as a visiting nurse have shown her just how vital home health



Delsye West Mason, RN, loves the one-on-one time she has with patients as a visiting nurse and empowering patients to manage their illness or disease.

care is in the overall health care system. "Studies have shown that patients do best when they stay out of the hospital. I think the visiting nurse is that liaison between the hospital, the patients, and the physicians who allows that to happen and be successful. I don't think people realize how important the role of the visiting nurse is in the process."

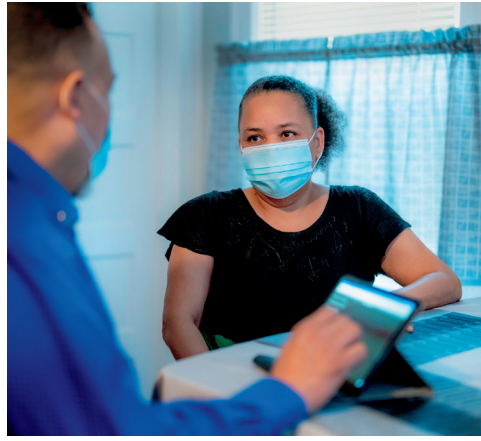
While Delsye said she "fell into" her nursing career, she has absolutely no regrets. She added, "Becoming a visiting nurse was the best thing for me, really and truly."



Kathy and Kevin Mooney, DDS, Gold Sponsors, walked in memory of Ann Mooney, Kevin's mother and longtime Woburn Friends volunteer.



Team Lanie Allen brought together three generations and some furry friends in support of Step Out for Hospice. Melissa Allen, front row, center, has organized the team for many years in memory of her mother Elaine.



From your emails and letters

Has a VNA Care clinician made a difference in your life? We'd love to hear from you. Email us at giving@vnacare.org or use the enclosed envelope to send us a note. Clinicians who are also honored with a donation are recognized in our tribute program, Thanks for Caring Society.



Seeing a loved one become increasingly dependent on others and then become so ill is extremely difficult. Your caring and dedicated staff provided an extraordinary amount of support and information to help us. You are a remarkable and gifted group of people who are blessed with compassion, providing the kind of dignity to patients they truly deserve.

My mom's physical therapist was extremely knowledgeable, patient and kind. It was very comforting to know my mom was in her care.

Our family is extremely grateful for the empathy and care given to our loved one during his stay at the Rose Monahan Home. It was quite comforting to us to know that he was at ease both physically and emotionally, and we cannot say enough about the caring and understanding nature of all involved in his care.

I came home from the hospital after an extensive surgery. In spite of assurances from the medical staff, I was worried about my recuperation. That worry was erased the next day by my VNA Care nurse. With expert skill, she examined my incisions, re-wrapped my bandages, and instructed my wife on daily care and what to expect... Today with stronger legs and a more confident outlook, I'm about ready to re-enter life.

I will be forever grateful to VNA Care for the wonderful care they provided my sister... The compassion and dedication that her nurse displayed not only prevented her suffering, but made it easier on her partner and me to keep her at home.



Hospice team brings comfort and peace...continued from back cover



Andrew Tripp, MDiv, PhD, hospice chaplain

who served as they reach the end of life as part of the We Honor Veterans initiative of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

Andrew Tripp, MDiv, PhD, hospice chaplain, said, "There's an ethical component to the work of making sure our Vietnam Era veterans are given the respect they are due that our country didn't give them. If the kindness I can offer is just at the end of life, that might be a drop in the bucket. But it's letting them know there's another human who recognizes and honors the sacrifices they made."

James' youngest daughter and her husband were at his side when Andrew presented James with a Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal pin, which he proudly displays on his Marines baseball hat. James said the moment "felt terrific."

Andrew also had a certificate recognizing James' achievement issued to the family by the Department of Defense.

While James wasn't familiar with hospice care before he became a patient, he's an advocate for the services provided by VNA Care. He wants others to know "how great they are and how much comfort and peace they give you. You call them, and they'll be right there to help you."

He added, "They're all such wonderful people. I love them all."

Start a reverse bucket list to cultivate gratitude

The start of a new year has many of us looking to the future. We may be filled with plans for tackling those new year's resolutions or checking off a few items on our bucket list.

But the new year is also the perfect time to reflect and be grateful for what we've already accomplished or experienced. Creating a reverse bucket list helps us appreciate things that have brought our lives meaning and can reveal themes that help us better plan for what may bring us more joy in the future.

The reverse bucket list is simple. Rather than writing down things you hope to accomplish in the future, you instead write down a list of all the things you've already accomplished.

Ready to get started? Set aside some time to brainstorm whether on paper, tablet, or computer.

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. The list doesn't need to be dedicated to major activities or achievements; meaning and happiness can be found in daily activities like caring for a pet. Any positive accomplishment or activity that brought you happiness or fulfillment warrants a place on the list.

If you aren't sure where to start, consider:

- Health-related achievements like making exercise a regular part of your life
- Challenges you've overcome or fears you've conquered
- Places you've traveled
- How you've helped others
- Personal achievements like education or career
- Time with family, friends, pets, and others who matter to you
- Goals or milestones you've reached
- Stories about your life that you share with others

- New friends you've met
- Time dedicated to volunteering for a nonprofit organization
- Hikes or long walks to appreciate nature
- Fun things you've done you never expected to do



Once you have your list, take time to reflect on and be thankful for what you've accomplished and experienced. Numerous studies have shown that practicing gratitude can bring many benefits, such as increased happiness and reduced feelings of depression. (To get the most out of this practice, make it part of a daily or weekly routine.)

Be sure to keep your reverse bucket list someplace safe, so you can reflect on it when you need some positivity. Most importantly, resolve to celebrate YOU and remember all that you are thankful for each and every day of the year!



VNA Care

How to reach us

Service Information

800-521-5539

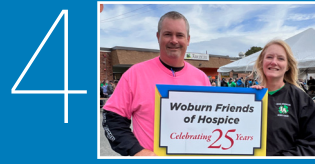
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508-658-7700

Giving@VNACare.org

Website

VNACare.org



4 Step Out for Hospice raises over \$80,000



5 RN finds fulfillment as visiting nurse



7 Why you should start a reverse bucket list



VNA Care Network

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Fund Development Office

199 Rosewood Drive, Suite 180
Danvers, MA 01923

Hospice team brings comfort and peace to U.S. Marine Corps veteran

At age 81, James Capenito discovered he'd been awarded the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal for his service six decades earlier. VNA Care's hospice team knows it's an honor and a privilege to care for veterans and set out to recognize his service to the country.

James enlisted in the Marines during the Vietnam Era. At just 17 years old, military service enabled him to have a future out of the reach of an abusive father and mother with an alcohol use disorder.

He remembered having a rough start, "sassing back to the sergeants" and having two court martials in three months. His second court martial officer observed that "sometimes a man just doesn't have the proper training." He offered James the chance to work for him in a warehouse and get back on track with his military career.

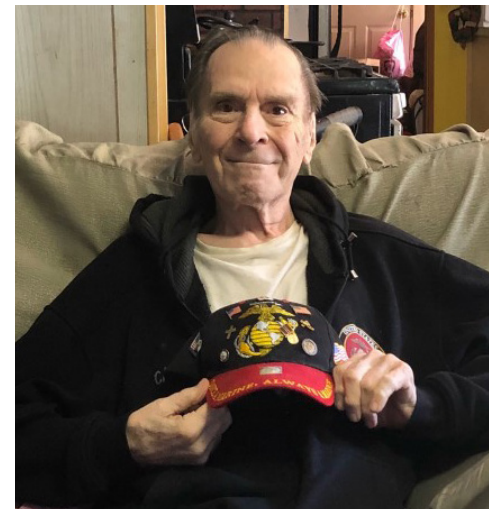
After four years in the Marines, James returned to Massachusetts and soon met his future wife Jacqueline. They

had two daughters, and he committed himself to breaking the cycle of violence that had plagued his youth. His strong faith is a source of guidance and comfort through good times and bad, including the loss of his wife in 2012 after 48 years of marriage.

James turned to VNA Care's home health care team more than two years ago for expert care and support in managing heart disease and cancer. After pursuing a variety of curative treatments, he chose to transition to hospice care to prioritize the time he had remaining.

"Hospice is making it possible for me to stay at home," said James.

The hospice team takes a holistic approach to patient care. Gina Grady, RN, is an invaluable resource, helping James manage 23 pills a day and making sure his pain and symptoms are under control. The team goes beyond just physical health issues to address emotional, social, spiritual, and practical concerns to enable



VNA Care's hospice team added a long overdue Good Conduct Medal pin to James Capenito's United States Marine Corps baseball hat.

terminally ill patients to live as fully as possible and have meaningful time with loved ones. The team also supports family members during this time and after their loss.

VNA Care recognizes the unique needs of veterans and honors those

*Hospice team brings comfort and peace
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