

Caring Matters

Summer 2024

Family takes comfort in the wonderful care provided to their father at the Rose Monahan Hospice Home and gives back in his memory

One of Edward Bergman's fondest memories of his father William was pulling into the driveway of the family home and seeing his dad sitting in the garage with the door open, enjoying the sunshine and fresh air and watching the world pass by.



William Bergman, a Korean War veteran, was devoted to his family and community.

"He would offer us a chair to sit with him, and many times our conversations would turn to topics of his life. He would frequently tell us that he felt so blessed and thankful to have his wonderful family and friends," shared Edward.

When end-stage cancer prevented William from remaining at home, the Rose Monahan Hospice Home gave

him and his family a new, homelike place to continue enjoying special moments like this. William loved the view from his room overlooking the garden, and watching the swans glide across Coes Pond. Family and friends were always welcome to pull up a chair alongside him to talk.

The preceding weeks had been difficult ones for the Bergman family. William, at age 93, had just started showing signs of slowing down after a lifetime of putting family, friends, community, and country first.

William married his high school sweetheart Ruth in 1949, and they had two sons, Edward and John, and daughter Mary. He served in the Korean War, and devoted his career to the City of Leominster as the Superintendent of Fire Alarms and Wire Inspector for 37 years. He was known for his random acts of kindness and amazing ability to fix almost anything. When his wife's health began declining, he devoted years to caring for her at home before she passed. They were married for 70 years.

William called Edward one day last spring saying he needed to go to the emergency room. He was hospitalized, and, even though there had been no prior symptoms, received the devastating news that he had advanced prostate cancer.

The hospital arranged for VNA Care's home health care team to provide nursing and other services so William's wish to return home could be fulfilled. Edward said, "Every staff person who came into the house was equally as caring about my dad and his health as they were for me and my siblings as his support system."

Over the coming weeks, William's health declined, and he decided against further medical interventions. The family was familiar with hospice before they even began considering this option. His daughter Mary was a nurse and well acquainted with end-of-life care. Edward and his spouse Miguel completed a hospice volunteer training program where they learned about all the ways hospice promotes patients' dignity and quality of life while supporting loved ones before and after their loss.

William transitioned seamlessly from VNA Care's home health to hospice program. On the day of his hospice nurse's first visit, William suddenly lost his ability to stand and support his own weight. Their nurse let them know about VNA Care's Rose Monahan Hospice Home as an option for William's care should they have any concerns about William remaining at home.

Family takes comfort...continued on page 2

Family takes comfort in the wonderful care provided to their father...continued from front cover



"It was just such a comforting, wonderful experience the way they cared for Dad. They not only took care of his physical needs, but his spiritual needs as well. We couldn't ask for a better place for him to be at that point in his life."

—Edward Bergman

"I knew about the Rose Monahan Home by word of mouth. I'd always heard good things from other people who received hospice care there," said Edward. They were thankful this was an option, and it soon became apparent that it was the best possible thing they could do for their dad and their family.

"Dad was always so happy there. That was a very comforting thing," said Edward. He saw how well his dad connected with the residence's staff and volunteers and that they, in turn, got to know William. It was also an enormous relief for the family knowing that expert care was available 24/7. William's pain and symptoms were well managed, staff kept the family informed about his condition, and "we observed firsthand the outstanding care and attention the staff gave to his every need."

During his two months at the Rose Monahan Hospice Home, William continued pursuing his favorite hobbies. He played guitar and sang. Anyone at the residence celebrating a birthday would get a special performance of *Happy Birthday*. He spread his love for cribbage by giving lessons, and played with his son John during his visits. He kept goodies stashed in his nightstand drawer,

and no one could leave without some cookies, chips, or other snacks.

As William's passing drew near, one of his children was always by his side. A chair in the room converted into a bed to make overnight stays easier, and volunteers and staff "made us feel really comfortable being there and made sure we were well cared for too."

William passed peacefully at the home. The Bergmans were so appreciative of the care that they wanted to give back. They asked for donations to be made in their father's memory in lieu of flowers. They also made a special gift to the Monahan Home in their Dad's honor, and his name is now on a memorial plaque at the residence.

Edward said, "It was just such a comforting, wonderful experience the way they cared for Dad. They not only took care of his physical needs, but his spiritual and emotional needs as well. We couldn't ask for a better place for him to be at that point in his life."

He added, "We could never, ever have imagined how great every person we encountered in the whole organization would be not only to my Dad but to our entire family."

Celebration of Caring

An Evening to Benefit VNA Care
and the Rose Monahan Hospice Home

Thursday, September 26 | 6 to 8 pm | Worcester Art Museum

Cocktail Reception | Small Plate Dining | Live Music

Tickets on sale now: VNACare.org/Worcester

Clinical manager recognized as an Emerging Leader in health care

Sara Bowdridge, RN, Clinical Services Manager at VNA Care, received the 2024 Emerging Leader Award this summer from the Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts.

The award recognizes Sara's exceptional commitment to patient-focused care as well as her strong leadership. She oversees one of the agency's interdisciplinary home health care teams.

Catherine Frasco, MSPT, DPT, COS-C, Vice President of Home Health Operations, said, "Sara has a way of inspiring everyone around her to be their best so they can do their best for our patients. She cares deeply about her colleagues and team members, actively listens, and pays careful attention to details and processes that make all the difference in fostering a supportive workplace and exceptional outcomes for our patients."

Sara joined VNA Care over two years ago as an Assistant Clinical Manager and was quickly promoted to Clinical Services Manager. She began her health care career more than two decades earlier in the field of occupational therapy, but had always been interested in nursing. Sara recalled when a loved one suffered a brain aneurism years ago, and she took the evening shift staying by her family member's side in the



neurocritical care unit of a Boston hospital. She was amazed by the care provided by the nursing staff and inspired to finally become a nurse herself.

While she's worked as a nurse in a variety of settings, home health care is by far her favorite. Sara said, "As a nurse, the home setting means you're not being called from one room to another and your beeper's not constantly going off. You can give your undivided attention to patients, and they know we are here for them."

She draws on her experiences providing direct patient care as she guides her team of nurses, rehabilitation therapists, social

workers, and other clinicians in helping patients achieve their optimal health.

Sharon Gilgun, RN, Assistant Clinical Manager for VNA Care, has known Sara in several roles throughout their nursing careers. She shared that Sara is the epitome of grace under pressure and has the ability to deliver critical, straight-forward analyses of situations with positivity and a touch of humor.

She said, "Sara's a force to be reckoned with in a good way. She has unbelievable leadership skills, unbelievable clinical skills, and has the greater and higher good of all as her mantra. She deserved this award more than anyone I've worked with in my entire career."

Step Out for Hospice Walk/Run to mark 27 years of making a difference

Join the Woburn Friends of Hospice for family-friendly fun at the annual Step Out for Hospice on Sunday, Oct. 6, 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. Participants can also enjoy live music from The Offramps, refreshments, silent auction, raffle, and more! Online registration opens in July. Learn more at VNAcare.org/StepOut.



Team Lanie Allen brings together three generations to walk, stroll, and run on behalf of VNA Care's services for local individuals and families facing a life-limiting illnesses.

Speech therapist dedicated to helping patients find ways to do things they never thought they would be able to do again

By the time patients with stroke, Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, and other debilitating conditions are under the care of Danielle Gordon, MS, SLP, they've often heard about all the things they will never be able to do again.

"Maybe they aren't going to talk the same way as before. Maybe they aren't going to eat the same way as before. Speech-language pathologists play a big role in reassuring people that you're going to be able to do these things again, but it's just going to be a little different," said Danielle.

VNA Care's speech-language pathologists (SLPs) focus on patients needing therapy at home for challenges with communication, such as slurred speech; swallowing; and cognition, including memory and problem solving. Of the many goals she helps patients achieve, one of her favorites is helping people with swallowing disorders progress to eating a specific food.

"Food and eating are such a big part of our day-to-day lives. If somebody has trouble swallowing, it can be really disruptive to their social life, especially in younger people with degenerative diseases like MS," said Danielle.

She remembered a patient with a swallowing disorder who had a

gastrostomy tube, also known as a G-tube, which delivers nutrition through a tube directly to the stomach. The patient could only eat ice chips and lollipops. His goal was to eat Thanksgiving dinner with his family instead of watching everyone else enjoy their meal. Danielle and the patient worked together on exercises, and his efforts paid off. By the holiday, he was able to have pureed foods, which meant he could eat mashed potatoes and other foods being served at this special family gathering.

Danielle first saw the impact SLPs have on people's lives when a loved one was receiving speech therapy. A college student at the time, Danielle changed her business major to pursue a bachelor's and then a master's in speech-language pathology.

Her studies included a clinical rotation at VNA Care where she gained exposure to the field of home health care while shadowing an SLP for several months. VNA Care partners with numerous colleges to offer educational opportunities in home health, palliative, and hospice care for future rehabilitation therapists, nurses, and nurse practitioners.

While she's worked in skilled nursing, outpatient, and inpatient facilities, "home care is my favorite setting by far. You're able to personalize the treatment in a way that makes the most sense for the patient. If someone has aphasia (a language disorder that impacts communication due to brain damage), you can use the pictures they have on the wall to talk about their grandchildren or their travel rather than stock photos or items in a hospital room. I think patients do a lot better at home," said Danielle.

She's been part of very touching moments, like helping someone with aphasia learn to say a loved one's name again, and "graduating" a person with Parkinson's Disease from

therapy when he mastered speaking loudly enough that others could hear and understand him.

Danielle collaborates with her team, including physical and occupational therapists, to help patients achieve their goals. A person may want to master going from a seated position in their wheelchair to standing. The physical therapist will focus on helping the patient be able to stand through therapeutic exercises, but that may not be enough. Some patients have difficulty remembering the steps to safely stand, so Danielle will create a visual aid or mnemonic device to help the patient remember the process.

"My job is to help them verbally repeat the steps, not actually do the steps. We can get more repetitions in than would be appropriate in a physical therapy session," said Danielle.

She will sometimes make joint visits with her colleagues to work with patients on improving certain skills. One of Danielle's patients had a brain tumor that impacted her balance, speech, memory, and other cognitive issues. Danielle and an occupational therapist used the patient's love for cooking as a therapeutic opportunity. They gathered in the patient's kitchen to bake chocolate bread.

"I was helping the patient remember the steps and making sure she could do them in the right order. I had her say the steps out loud because the patient was also having difficulty speaking. The occupational therapist was working on balance and upper body issues," remembered Danielle. "When you have the patient multi-tasking, and an SLP is there working closely with OT, it really pushes what we can do for the patient."

"I like being able to help people do the things they didn't think they'd be able to do again," said Danielle. "That's my favorite part of being a speech therapist."



Danielle Gordon, MS, SLP

Trailblazers to be honored at VNA Care's signature gala this fall

VNA Care is excited to announce Dr. Vin Gupta and Dr. Nancy Oriol will be honored as 2024 Heroes in Health Care! Each year at our largest fundraising event, we celebrate the dedication of the most influential individuals who are leading the way to a better tomorrow.

Currently the Chief Medical Officer for Amazon Pharmacy & New Initiatives and Medical Analyst for MSNBC and NBC News, Dr. Gupta has spent decades as a practicing lung specialist while also advising organizations worldwide to improve public health including at the Institute for Health Metrics & Evaluation and the World Health Organization. He is concurrently on active commission as a Major in the United States Air Force Reserve Medical Corps.

Dr. Oriol, the inaugural Faculty Associate Dean for Community Engagement at Harvard Medical School, started a groundbreaking movement in 1992 in co-founding The Family Van, a mobile health clinic designed to increase access to health care and improve the health of residents in Boston's underserved communities. Over the last 30 years, this model has spread across the country to countless other cities. Dr. Oriol also pioneered multiple medical breakthroughs including the "walking epidural."



Vin Gupta, MD, MPA
Chief Medical Officer of Amazon
Pharmacy & New Initiatives



Nancy Oriol, MD
Co-Founder of The Family Van

The Heroes Gala will spotlight the honorees' trailblazing work and feature extraordinary musical performances and great food and wine. We invite you to join us in recognizing our honorees and celebrating VNA Care's nurses and clinicians on Nov. 2 at the Mandarin Oriental in Boston.

Tributes, sponsorship opportunities, and tickets are available at VNAcare.org/Gala or please contact Laura_Wise@VNAcare.org.

Retiree calls VNA Care a "Godsend" for getting her health back on track ...continued from back cover

Suzanne began isolating herself from others. She shared, "You don't want anyone to see you like that."

The surgeon referred Suzanne to VNA Care's home health care team for expert care and support at home as she recovered from surgery and learned to manage the new colostomy. Carrie has been an invaluable resource to Suzanne.

"Carrie can see what I'm going through and what I need. She's easy to talk to and understands, too," said Suzanne.

Carrie obtained samples of equipment she thought would work best for Suzanne. With the vast array of options, the guidance of an experienced nurse specialist makes an enormous difference. Together, they found the equipment that best suited Suzanne and gave her the confidence to leave the house and spend time with family and friends.

"VNA Care was a Godsend to me," said Suzanne. "The nurses get us back on track, and give us our lives back."

How to reach us

Service Information:
800-521-5539

Donations and Mailing List:
508-658-7700 or
giving@vnacare.org

Website:
VNAcare.org

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Former engineer finds fulfillment as RN caring for people at end of life

Although Oya Celik, RN, BSN, CHPN, occasionally finds herself wondering what her life would have been like if she continued working as an engineer, there is no doubt in her mind that nursing is her true life's calling.

"I have a deep passion for helping others and making a positive impact in their lives. Nursing allows me to provide support and care to patients and their families during their most challenging times," said Oya.

After moving from Turkey to the United States with plans to enter a PhD program in engineering, she pivoted to fulfilling the prerequisites needed for nursing school, obtained a bachelor's of science in nursing, and began her new career five years ago at a skilled nursing facility.

At the time, an uncle living in Turkey was facing a terminal cancer diagnosis, and the family was trying to keep him alive at all costs. Oya remembered her uncle suffering, but cultural differences and lower awareness of the benefits of hospice care in the area were significant barriers to a more peaceful end-of-life journey.

Her uncle's situation stood in stark contrast to what she witnessed at the skilled nursing facility. Terminally ill patients had access to hospice care

focused on the individual's comfort, dignity, and quality of life.

"When people are in those final stages of serious illnesses, it brings up physical, emotional, and psychological challenges," said Oya. Her enormous empathy for these patients and desire to provide care and comfort during this difficult time prompted her to specialize in hospice care. She joined VNA Care two years ago as a Hospice RN Case Manager, providing one-on-one care to terminally ill patients and supporting families during their last months together.

Oya is honored to be welcomed into patients' homes and families' lives. In each interaction, she strives to be fully present and "create a warm and supportive environment where people feel respected." Meeting the wide-ranging needs of patients and loved ones at the end of life is a team effort, and Oya works closely with the hospice team's other nurses, physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers, spiritual counselors, bereavement counselors, hospice aides, and trained volunteers to provide the best possible care.

Among the many patients and families who have made an impact on Oya was a man with Parkinson's who was nonverbal. While the patient's

family was dedicated to his care, it was difficult for them to accept the changes in their loved one and adapt accordingly, like not feeding him when he was no longer able to safely swallow. Oya focused on educating and supporting the family through each and every change, and worked closely with the family's trusted primary care doctor on medication changes that would control his pain and symptoms. Oya enlisted the hospice team's spiritual counselor and social worker to have important conversations with the family as they grappled with the idea of losing their beloved husband and father. Through the team's attentive care and support, the patient's last days were comfortable and the entire family was at peace.

Oya also has the privilege of taking part in milestone celebrations in patients' lives. One of her patients, a military veteran, celebrated his 100th birthday while under her care. She and a social worker organized a combination birthday party and pinning ceremony to honor his service. His entire family gathered and cheered as he blew out the candles. Oya presented the patient with an American flag pin and patriotic quilt as part of the We Honor Veterans program, a national initiative in which VNA Care takes part to elevate end-of-life care for our country's veterans and their families. As a patriotic march played, the patient "marched along" while sitting in a chair to set a good example for his great-grandchildren. "That was a very emotional moment for me," remembered Oya.

Those in her care often make her feel like she's part of the family. "They trust you, and feel comfortable in your presence," she said. "I find it very fulfilling to be able to offer the comfort, empathy, and professional care to those who are in need. It's an opportunity to make a difference in people's lives. This is what drives me."

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-Oya Celik, RN, BSN, CHPN



Inspirational evening was written in the stars for VNA Care benefit

Thanks to the generosity of our wonderful sponsors and friends, our spring benefit, Evening Under the Stars, raised nearly \$50,000 to support compassionate care for patients with life-limiting illnesses and their families and community nursing provided by VNA Care in Needham and surrounding towns.

The evening was held on May 23 on the terrace at the MIT Endicott House in Dedham. Guests enjoyed an incredible performance by the talented vocalist Shalyah Fearing from *The Voice*, remarks from VNA Care's Hospice Physician Charles Rosenbaum, MD, 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.

We appreciate the meaningful support of everyone who took part, and recognize the commitment of our event sponsors. "Our dedication to delivering the highest quality and most compassionate care to everyone in our community is made possible by the kind generosity of our sponsors and donors," shared Laura Wise, Manager of Fund Development.

Inspired Leaders



Changemakers



Advocates

Gail and Tony Nannini
Ellison and Kerrie Patten

Joyce and James Patten, MD
Charles Rosenbaum, MD



Caregivers

Beth Israel Lahey Health
Beth Israel Deaconess Needham



Needham Area Community Cabinet

Louise Condon	Gail Nannini	Stephanie Perkins
Mary Lou Hughes	Harding Ounanian, Jr.	Kathy Whitney
Debra Kazarian	Ellison Patten	Laura Wise
Edward Mulhall	Kerrie Patten	



Needham Area Community Cabinet Members and Sponsors, from left: Kerrie Patten, Louise Condon, and Ellison Patten.



Representatives from Advocate Sponsor Brookline Bank joined the celebration. From left: Diana Bell, Laura Wise, Manager of Fund Development for VNA Care, Bryan Manandhar, Joel Concepcion, and Tom Smith.



Shalyah Fearing, who starred on *The Voice*, gave an incredible performance in the intimate setting of the MIT Endicott House's terrace.



From left: Maryellen Jennings, Devra Bailin, Advocate Sponsor and Cabinet Member Gail Nannini, and Gina McClellan



VNA Care Network
VNA of Boston
VNA Hospice & Palliative Care

Fund Development Office

100 TradeCenter, Suite G-500
Woburn, MA 01801

Retiree calls VNA Care a “Godsend” for getting her health back on track

Suzanne Lolar was in a state of despair after surgery to move her colostomy upended her life and left her at a loss for how to move forward. She soon found hope and comfort in VNA Care’s visiting nurses.

Her team included Carrie Bergman, BSN, CWON, nurse specialist in wounds, ostomies, and continence issues, who quickly got to work on ways for Suzanne to return to her active lifestyle.

“Carrie’s such a blessing. If I didn’t have her, I don’t know what I would have done,” said Suzanne.

A colostomy is a type of ostomy, a procedure that allows bodily waste to pass through a surgically created opening in the abdomen and be collected in a pouch. The surgery is used to treat numerous digestive tract issues including Crohn’s disease, diverticulitis, and colon cancer.

While a life-saving procedure, Carrie noted that it is also life-altering. She

finds herself in the role of counselor and cheerleader as her patients learn to adapt. Identifying the right equipment is key so patients can easily manage on their own and confidently leave home without worrying about malfunctions.

Suzanne’s first colostomy was done more than 30 years ago, but had to be moved this spring in order to repair a hernia. Since Sue was familiar with how to care for a colostomy, she returned home with a plan to see her surgeon in two weeks. However, it soon became clear to Sue that her new colostomy would require completely different equipment, and, after all these years, her life was once again in shambles.

She remembered that during those two weeks, “I was afraid to go anywhere. I’m 75 years old. I want to be able to go out and do things.”

The day of her niece’s bridal shower was particularly difficult. Suzanne attended and tried to be as careful as possible to avoid any equipment



Carrie Bergman, BSN, CWON, (left) helped Suzanne Lolar get her life (and her smile) back after colostomy surgery.

problems. She said, “I had half a glass of water. I didn’t want to eat anything. I was afraid to move.” She left just an hour into the celebration because the equipment began to leak.

*Retiree calls VNA Care a “Godsend”
...continued on page 5*