



HOME

A NEWSLETTER OF THE
VISITING NURSE
ASSOCIATION OF
NORTHERN NEW JERSEY, INC.

Caring

**Unsung Heroes:
A Salute to
Caregivers**

**Important News
For Medicare
Recipients**

**Free VNA
Speakers**

SPRING 2011

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This newsletter is published by the Visiting Nurse Association of Northern New Jersey.

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Faith F. Scott, FACHE, President & Chief Executive Officer

Planning a Brighter Future for the Elderly and Their Caregivers

The New Jersey Chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) recently called attention to the greatest concerns of current and future retirees with the announcement of the results of a member survey:

- Nearly 75% of age 50+ respondents said they're worried about cutbacks in Social Security and Medicare benefits.
- 45% are worried that they'll be unable to afford medical care in their golden years.
- 84% would prefer aging in place with home care assistance over moving to an assisted living or nursing home facility.

These findings came as no surprise to anyone immersed in providing elder care each day. At the VNA, we are acutely aware that the vast majority of seniors want to maintain their optimal level of independence and dignity by remaining in the comfort of their own home. Unfortunately, we also encounter many who have financial and other practical issues that impact their quality of life, as well as the lives of family members who often serve as their primary caregivers.

That's why our VNA encourages its constituents and supporters to make their voices heard whenever the government seeks to reduce or eliminate funding for essential home care services. It is also what motivates our fundraising efforts which ensure the availability of care for current and future generations of seniors with financial hardship. However, those activities are no substitute for individual planning for home care needs.

Future generations of seniors can ensure a brighter future for themselves and their loved ones by making aging in place a goal when planning for retirement and taking meaningful steps to make that a reality. To assist with the planning process, we've prepared some helpful tips that can be found on our blog at vnanj.org. With potential cutbacks to government elder care programs constantly looming, I urge you to take proactive steps to create a viable private care plan.

Faith F. Scott, FACHE

PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Unsung Heroes:

VNA Salutes Caregivers

Throughout history, the dynamics of the American family have shifted for a variety of demographic, economic and sociological reasons. In recent years, the graying of our society has been responsible for one pronounced adjustment: Someone is now caring for another adult in nearly one of every four households.

Caregivers come in varied ages, races and genders.

They are the spouses, adult children and extended family members who support loved ones that require assistance and supervision due to advanced age, chronic illnesses or disabilities. While most people become caregivers as an expression of love and commitment to family, many ultimately discover that it's more physically, emotionally and spiritually demanding than anticipated. That's when they turn to the VNA for a helping hand.

Our team includes staff and volunteers who are devoted not only to improving the quality of life of the homebound, but also to "caring for the caregiver" by providing encouragement, practical assistance, respite time and referrals to other community resources. In this edition of Home Caring, we salute caregivers and provide insights into an array of services available through the VNA for those who are caring for a loved one or anticipating caring for someone with a degenerative physical or cognitive condition.



Caregiver Support Benefits Generations

Maureen Pietri is part of a growing "Sandwich Generation." She's juggling parenting a 14-year-old, caring for her mother and a full-time job - and she's taken extraordinary steps to successfully meet the challenges of all three roles without "dropping the ball." By living next door to her mom and changing careers to reduce her commute and work hours, she's managed to take on additional caregiving chores. She also relies on the VNA for a helping hand. In fact, while Maureen is at her demanding but rewarding job working with autistic children, she's relieved to know that her mother is being visited by a certified VNA home health aide who helps the legally blind senior with her mail and housework.

"The VNA has been a godsend for my family. My parents have always taken great pride in their home and the VNA has allowed them to realize their dream of remaining there for their entire lives," she said. "As a result, my son has been able to grow up close to his grandparents and learn the value of strong family relationships." In addition to the assistance her mother currently receives through the Community Home Health Aide Program (CHAP), Pietri's parents previously received aide services under another program and her father transitioned to the VNA Hospice a few months before his death. For this family and many others, the availability of services supported by grants from the Morris County Office on Aging and the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services are making it possible for the VNA to ensure the continuity of care as their needs change.



A short time ago, Frances Sickles was the primary caregiver for her late husband. Today, her own health restrictions require her to look to her daughter and Valerie Dickerson, a certified VNA home health aide (pictured here), for help. "The VNA encouraged us to make small adjustments that help Mom continue to feel secure in her home," observed her daughter, Maureen Pietri. "Despite vision impairment, Mom is still able to cook her favorite soups and other recipes with her aide serving as her eyes in the kitchen." With Valerie by her side, Frances also looks forward to going outdoors and enjoying the scent of spring flowers in her garden.

Free In-Home Caregiver Training

All uncompensated caregivers in Morris County can receive up to five free in-home training sessions with VNA professionals under the Caregiver Education and Support Program, a service funded by the Office on Aging.

Grant-Funded Assistance

Certified home health aide assistance is available a few hours per week at no charge to those who meet income and eligibility requirements for the Statewide Caregiver Respite Program. Seniors who live alone and meet eligibility requirements can also receive care for their grooming and household needs under the Community Home Health Aide Program (CHAP).

Private Care Services

Recognizing that screening, hiring and managing someone to provide in-home care can be an added stressor, the VNA now offers flexible private care services that can be tailored to meet specific needs of families with varied lifestyles and resource levels. Certified VNA home health aides and companions are available for a few hours each week, or on a full-time, part-time, or live-in basis.

Adult Day Care

Friendship House, the VNA's social adult day care center located in Boonton, has been a safe haven for area families for more than a decade. The center affords seniors with cognitive and physical limitations the opportunity to enjoy companionship and therapeutic activities while the loved ones who serve as their primary caregivers enjoy stress-free respite time.

Volunteer Assistance

Clients in the final phase of life and their caregivers who are enrolled in the VNA Hospice often receive comfort and support from specially trained hospice volunteers who work side-by-side with staff members to ensure that practical, emotional and spiritual needs are met. Another volunteer



House Call Groceries for Seniors is one of numerous VNA services that address the special needs of homebound seniors. For many shut-ins, deliveries by friendly VNA volunteers provide a welcome break from the isolation of living alone. Judy Rogers, the shopper pictured here, also works with the VNA Hospice as coordinator of the volunteer bereavement support program. For further information about volunteer opportunities at the VNA, call Alison Mazie at (973) 451-4128 or e-mail amazie@vnannj.org.

program, House Call Groceries for Seniors, pairs shut-ins with community members who deliver groceries to their door along with encouragement.

For further information about any of these VNA programs, call 1-800-WE VISIT.

A Family Friendly Support Group



"We love Friendship House," said caregiver Gail Little (pictured here with her husband, James, and mother-in-law, Ruth). Until a recent health decline required Ruth to transition to residential care, she looked forward to attending the VNA day care center. In fact, Gail credits Friendship House with helping her family cope with the demands of caregiving and deferring Ruth's transition to a nursing home. She continues to participate in the Friendship House Caregiver Support Group. "It's nice to talk with others who are on the same page and understand what we're going through," she said. "It's a perfect outlet for caregivers to vent their frustrations and share information."

Friendship House hosts free monthly caregiver support meetings for the families of loved ones who attend the center. "These meetings are a perfect outlet for caregivers to share their experiences and frustrations with others who are in very similar circumstances," said Courtney Conway, MSW, a VNA social worker who serves as the group leader.

"Our meetings emphasize the importance of self-care because caregivers too often neglect their own health and well-being when they're immersed in caring for a loved one," Conway observed.

"Many caregivers are relieved to discover that the range of emotions and practical challenges they're encountering are not uncommon. They're happy both to give and receive coping tips."

For further information about Friendship House, call Referral Services at **1-800-WE VISIT**.

Important News for Medicare Recipients: In-Person Physician Evaluation Requirement

In an effort to improve patient outcomes and support coordination among physicians, acute and post-acute care providers, Medicare implemented a new regulation as of January 1, 2011. It requires an "in-person" physician evaluation and certification for every patient referred to home care. This process must be completed within a 120-day period that encompasses 90 days prior to the start of services and the first 30 days of home care. Under these new provisions, physicians must document the medical condition that necessitates home care and provide clinical evidence that a patient is homebound.

For the convenience of patients who need support upon discharge from the hospital, this requirement can be satisfied at bedside either by their doctor or a hospitalist (a staff physician employed by the hospital) in coordination with their personal physician. Physician assistants are also authorized to complete the evaluations. However, the patient's physician is ultimately responsible for signing and authorizing the appropriate forms.

The VNA has helpful representatives available to work in coordination with clients, doctors and hospitals to ensure access to essential home care services on a timely basis. VNA clients who require assistance should contact their physician's office directly or call Referral Services at **1-800-WE VISIT**.

VNA Speakers Address Caregivers

Representatives from the VNA Speakers Bureau are available to give free, informative “Care for the Caregiver” talks at meetings for civic and workplace groups across Morris County throughout the year.

In each of their talks, Program Services Coordinators Deborah Castro and Mary Curoski offer simple but effective advice for avoiding caregiving anxiety, depression and social isolation. They also advocate for caregiver respites and provide information about caregiver assistance programs.

“I’ve spoken to groups as small as five people and as large as several hundred. Going out into the community to educate the public, listen to their concerns and answer their home care questions is the most rewarding part of my job,” Curoski said recently.

In addition to Care for the Caregiver, the Speakers Bureau can arrange presentations about numerous other home care topics. To schedule a free VNA presentation for an upcoming meeting with your club, civic organization, employee or church group, contact Mary Curoski by phone at **(973) 451-4161** or e-mail mcuroski@vnannj.org.



Program Services Coordinators Deborah Castro and Mary Curoski, pictured here, enjoy meeting with community groups who want to learn about home care topics.



Trustee Honored for Community Service

The Reverend Tony MacNaughton, a long-term member of the VNA Board of Trustees, recently marked his fortieth anniversary as pastor of the Hildale Park Presbyterian Church in Cedar Knolls. Since his four decades of service there also qualifies as the longest continuing, active service to a house of worship of any faith in all of Morris County, civic leaders joined parishioners for a celebratory dinner and “roast.”

Rev. MacNaughton is well known throughout the community for his many activities which include serving as chaplain for the Cedar Knolls Fire and Hanover Police Departments and involvement with the Hanover Township Juvenile Conference, the Rotary Club and the Montclair Operatic Club.

“Rev. MacNaughton has been a great asset to the VNA as a member of our Board, as well as an inspirational, spiritual presence at many of our milestone events including the grand opening of our second century headquarters and our recent inaugural Tree of Life ceremony,” said Faith Scott, President and CEO. “We join in the celebration of his personal and professional milestone and thank him for sharing his time and talents with us.”

Helpful Tips for Caregivers

- **Set realistic goals for yourself and your loved one**
- **Simplify and structure your daily routine**
- **When a situation becomes too stressful, take a “time out”**
- **Attend to your own physical, emotional and spiritual health**
- **Seek training to improve your caregiving skills**
- **Avoid isolation, reach out for support**

Gala Preview...

Annual Spring Event has Uplifting Theme



The theme for this year's Lighting the Way fundraiser is "Brightening the Day" and the popular event is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Friday, May 6 at the Madison Hotel in Convent Station. Under the leadership of a new chair, Christopher Moran, the gala will celebrate the many ways the VNA makes a difference in the lives of homebound residents in more than 40 communities each day.

Moran, who has several years of volunteer service with the VNA Hospice and House Call Groceries for Seniors program along with prior gala committee experience, brings a unique perspective to the event planning. "Getting to know VNA clients has been a rewarding, enjoyable experience. I've witnessed the joy that they derive from remaining in the comfort of their own homes first-hand," he said. "My volunteer work in the field has also heightened my awareness of the significance of fundraising activities such as the gala which help to ensure that there's a safety net available for everyone who needs home care."



Lisa Appleby, who was last year's event chair, is pictured here with Christopher Moran, this year's event chair.



CEO Faith Scott is pictured here with Allen Kopelsen, AIA, PP, Chief Executive Officer and Founding Partner, NK Architects (left) and Chris Martin, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Provident Bank and Provident Financial Services (right), who were honored at last year's event.

The annual tradition of honoring two distinguished guests at the gala will continue with the presentation of the Caroline J. Cauldwell Corporate Founder's Award to Eisai, Inc, an international pharmaceutical company, and presentation of the Anna B. Hillock Community Service Award to Dan Hajjar, Executive Vice President and Managing Partner of Willis, a global insurance brokerage firm.

The dinner event will also feature live music and dancing, as well as a silent auction of luxury goods including fine jewelry, travel packages and electronics. The auction, under the leadership of returning co-chair Kristin Sostowski and Lisa Appleby, has been a crowd-pleaser and a resounding success in recent years.

For reservations or information about sponsorship, print and online journal advertising opportunities, please call Amanda DeFelicce at **(973) 451-4159**.



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1-800-WE VISIT
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CALENDAR

April

Nurse Recruitment
Open House – April 6
Administrative Professional Day – April 27
Bring your Child to Work Day – April 28

May

Lighting the Way Gala – May 6
Nurses Day Celebration – May 12
Therapy Recruitment Open House – Date TBD

For more information about these events, go to vnannj.org.

Tell us your story...

Have you noticed that *Home Caring* and other VNA materials feature actual clients who recount their experiences to help inform others? If you've had a positive experience with our home care team that you'd like to share, please call Amanda DeFelice at **(973) 451-4159** or e-mail adefelice@vnannj.org.



National Volunteer Week
April 10-16, 2011

We salute everyone who generously volunteers their time and talents, especially those who are making a difference in the lives of homebound local residents by choosing volunteer service with the VNA!



May 6-12 is National Nurses Week. The VNA joins in this celebration with a heartfelt thank you to our own home care nursing team and all nurses who are trusted to care for patients in diverse settings!