



News from  
the Natick  
Visiting  
Nurse  
Association

# Healthy at Home

Fall 2015

Each November, we celebrate those who provide much-needed home-based healthcare services to patients and their families. They are our unsung heroes: our nurses, rehabilitation therapists, hospice and palliative care workers, social workers and home health aides. Here, we help you understand the value of home care.

**Value to the Individual:** People prefer to remain at home. Whether you're an elderly person who needs a little assistance around the house in order to remain independent, a person with a medical condition who can stay at home with visiting nurse or remote monitoring check-ups, or someone recovering from surgery or an accident who requires physical or occupational therapy, a home health agency can help.

**Value for Policymakers:** Home health offers a strong value proposition for policymakers, especially in an era of health care reform and system transformation. As the Medicare population grows and the baby boomers age, increasingly the emphasis will need to be on helping seniors to maintain independence at home. Remaining at home is not simply a patient preference; it is also a fiscally efficient option for public payers as home health care can prevent or delay hospitalizations and facility-based care that drive up costs. With solutions like home telehealth and innovative chronic disease management programs, home health care improves health outcomes and can further reduce the burden on Medicare and Medicaid.

**Value for Other Health Care Providers:** Higher patient satisfaction and reduced costs are both key parts of the value equation, but home health agencies are also masters of quality. The comprehensive and compassionate care provided by member agencies of the VNAs of New England (VNANE) rank above the state and national average in most quality measures reported online via the Medicare Home Health Compare tool.

Many of these agencies work with physician practices to manage patient health at home. Home health care is proven to reduce re-hospitalizations and increase adherence to medication regimens.

In short, home health care is making a valuable contribution to the general health of our communities.

*Adapted from Home Care Alliance of Mass.*



## In this Issue

- Neighbors Caring for Neighbors 1
- Let Me Tell You About... from the CEO 2
- You're In the Loop: Happenings & Events 2
- Healthy Habits 3
- Donor Profile 3

## Neighbors caring for neighbors

When Judy, a Framingham resident, was preparing for her hip surgery, she chose Natick VNA for her post-surgical care.

She knew of Natick VNA but wasn't aware of the extent of services we offer. "I never had a personal experience with you, nor did I know anyone else who had," she said. "But when I was given the choice of home care providers, I chose Natick VNA, because you're local."

She returned home on a Thursday in February – a month during which a total of four feet of snow blanketed the region. On Friday, three Natick VNA clinicians visited Judy at her home. "It worked like clockwork," she said. "It was such a lousy day, and they just blew me away!"

Not only did Judy's clinicians never miss a scheduled appointment, but they always showed up on time – and with smiles. "They were very dedicated. That really and truly impressed me," she said. Additionally, when her husband asked questions of any of the clinicians, they answered him respectfully, thoroughly and with patience, she added.

Her team included a nurse, a physical therapist and an occupational therapist, the latter of whom felt confident to cease those services after only one home visit and a phone conversation, "because she knew I was safe in my home environment."

While she was pleasantly surprised that she was eligible for nursing services, those visits were incredibly important. It would have been very difficult for Judy to go to an outpatient facility to get her incision's staples removed in the midst of the awful winter weather.

But what really impressed Judy more than anything was the communication between members of her clinical team. "When I had a problem over a weekend, the answering service immediately picked up my call, and a nurse got back to me within minutes. The agency literature said that there was coverage 24/7, but it really happened! And it happened the way it was supposed to," Judy said. "I was able to ask my questions and get the information I needed. Even on a weekend."

And Natick VNA's clinicians know the community very well. Judy's clinicians gave her all of the resources she might need after her services with Natick VNA ceased.

"The information and general background they provided, and how they work with other professionals, was invaluable. They are very familiar with the whole picture of available services in MetroWest. And if someone needed to find an answer, they always got back to me."

The bottom line: "They did everything they were supposed to do. They were very sound medically in what they did and told me. It was serious medicine, and they were spot on for everything."

*Note to readers: Are you a patient or a family member who would like to share your own personal success story with us and our readers? If so, please contact Lauren Schiffman, Director of Communications, at 508-653-3081, and your story may be considered.*

## Let Me Tell You About...

Natick VNA was recently named a Home Care Elite agency for the fourth year in a row. The 2015 HomeCare Elite™ is the compilation of the most successful home care providers in the United States. OCS HomeCare, a product of National Research Corporation, uses publicly available data from Home Health Compare on the Medicare website and the Medicare Cost Reports to create the HomeCare Elite List of agencies. Now in its tenth year, this market-leading review names the top 25% of agencies nationwide based on performance measures. The listing measures each agency's performance across a collection of clinical operational and financial metrics including:

- Quality of care
- Quality improvement
- Patient experience
- Process measure implementation
- Financial management

The listing is vital in evaluating individual agency performance and the Natick VNA's position relative to our colleagues and competitors. Agency performance in each of the domains was compared against the performance of other organizations in their state and nationwide (including U.S. territories). The top 25% of agencies in each region, both facility-based and free-standing, were identified and added to the national list.

The data results are critical in evaluating and impacting care delivery to our patients in managing chronic medical conditions, gauging patient satisfaction and ultimately staying healthy and out of the hospital.

Congratulations to Natick VNA for achieving this level of distinction and to all of you who have made this possible through your continued quality efforts on behalf of the patients we serve!

*Judith Boyko, RN, MS, MBA*



# You're in the Loop

## Happenings and Events

### "Fresh Taste" a Delicious Success

Thank you to the entire Fresh Taste 2015 team for making our 9th annual fundraiser a delicious success. Special thanks go to our event co-chairs: Judie Ham, Sandy Joseph and Arlene Taros, who worked tirelessly on our behalf. Thank you to our many sponsors, donors, participating restaurants, volunteers and the committee for helping us to net almost \$60,000, which will be used to provide care to patients in their homes. We are especially grateful to WCVB reporter Kelley Tuthill, who generously took time out of her schedule to serve as event host.



*Natick VNA Board of Trustees, L to R: Board Chair Michael Murphy; Lynn Falwell; Board Vice Chair Clint Heyd III; Amy Wood Schelling; Daniel Mainzer; Board Clerk Judie Ham; and Board Treasurer David Shorey*



*L to R: Ralph Letner, Chief Lending Officer, Wellesley Bank; Mary Beth Mahoney, Director, Wealth Advisor, Wellesley Bank; Thomas Fontaine, President and CEO, Wellesley Bank; and David Zaltas, principal, Sunrock Development Corp.*



*From left, event co-chairs Judie Ham, Arlene Taros and Sandy Joseph*



*Judith Boyko (left), Natick VNA CEO, and Fresh Taste host Kelley Tuthill, WCVB reporter*



*L to R: Sheila Ingalls, AVP, Middlesex Savings Bank, Westborough Operations Center; Sally M. Eastman, Senior Vice President, Sales and Customer Service Director, Middlesex Savings Bank and Century Health Systems board member; and Karen M. Curtis, Executive Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer, Middlesex Savings Bank and Century Health Systems board member*

# Healthy Habits...How to speak Alzheimer's

I don't know about you, but it seems as if most places I turn, there's a news story about Alzheimer's Disease (AD), dementia or other forms of cognitive impairment. And for good reason: AD is the sixth leading cause of death in the US, and about 5.2 million Americans live with dementia. Worldwide, that number is a staggering 44.4 million.

So, how do we, as family members and caregivers, speak to those who have a difficult time just getting through the day?

I spoke with my colleagues, Juanita Allen Kingsley and Shana Hermans, both of whom have trained the clinicians at Natick Visiting Nurse Association and its affiliate, Distinguished Care Options, in the Alzheimer's Association's Habilitation Therapy. Among other topics, the clinicians learned how to communicate effectively with a person who suffers from AD and dementia.

As AD progresses, the Alzheimer's Association says that "the communication skills of a person... will gradually decline. Eventually, he or she will have more difficulty expressing thoughts and emotions. Ultimately, the person will be unable to understand what is being communicated and lose the ability for verbal expression."

Following are some tips that may be helpful when you talk to your loved ones who are suffering from AD or dementia.

- An individual who has a cognitive impairment may have a tough time understanding even the simplest of words and may need additional time to process what you say. So be patient, use your words deliberately and try not to get frustrated.
- Be sure to speak clearly and announce your words. Be direct in what you say, and consider introducing yourself at the beginning of a conversation so your loved one knows who you are.
- Do not argue or try to challenge what your loved one is saying. Arguing can indicate that you are frustrated or angry, and these emotions can easily transfer to your loved one, who may mimic your behavior.
- Minimize distractions. Information that is unimportant or irrelevant to a conversation may not be easily filtered out by someone whose brain is in decline. So, during the course of your conversations, turn off the radio or TV; find a space that's comfortable and quiet; and choose a location that will "support the person's ability to focus on his or her thoughts," says the Alzheimer's Association.
- Try to relax. Though people with AD struggle to understand verbal communications, they are very sensitive to body language. "They are often able to detect if a person's body language depicts happiness, anger or other emotions, and then mimic the cues they see. If a frustrated caregiver, for example, gives off a certain negative energy, the individual with the disease might mirror back the emotion and respond with an equal amount of anger or impatience," says the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.

While these are very basic tips and address a very simple group of ideas, it is also important to understand that each person's condition is as unique as they are.

In an effort to better understand what your own loved one is experiencing, consider a support group that brings dementia caregivers and family members together. Support groups are a wonderful way for caregivers to get the tools they need to effectively care for someone with any condition - and a great venue to address one's own challenges, fears and successes.

## Donor profile

Wellesley-based **Balance Wealth Advisors** is a financial advisory firm with deep roots in MetroWest. "We engage in projects close to our hearts... our volunteers help make an impact in neighborhoods where we live and work. We especially enjoy supporting associations that provide services to seniors, families, children and individuals in need and support charities that make a real, tangible difference in people's lives. My team and I are very proud to support Natick VNA, because they provide home health care services to individuals in MetroWest who would not otherwise have access to care. By donating our time and resources, we are able to make a difference in the lives of families in our community. Our goal is to ensure that no one feels that they are without hope and to help ensure patient access to home health care. We are proud to continue working towards making this dream a reality."

-David Allen, owner

## Board of Trustees

Michael J. Murphy  
Chair

Clint Heyd  
Vice Chair

David Shorey  
Treasurer

Judie Ham  
Clerk

Lynn Falwell

Dan Mainzer

Amy Wood Schelling

Arnold I. Zaltas, Esq.  
Emeritus

## Executive Staff

Judith A. Boyko      CEO  
Claire P. Cofran      CFO/COO

## Professional Advisory Committee

Judith Boyko, RN, MS, MBA

Artemis Coble, PT

Judy Engstrom, RN, COS-C

Maureen Hafner  
DNP, MBA, RN

Anne Hosking  
RN, BSN, MA, COS-C

Jill Kukis, OT, COS-C

Raul Laguarda, MD, FCCP  
Volunteer Medical Director

Susan Nazarko, BSN, RN

Anita Ouellette, SLP

Sally Tipton, LCSW



209 West Central Street  
Suite 313  
Natick, MA 01760  
508-653-3081  
www.natickvna.org

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT #89  
NATICK, MA

# You Make a Difference!

Your generosity assists us in providing quality home health care to many MetroWest residents who are sick, disabled and terminally ill and who lack the financial resources to pay for care.

Your contribution will be acknowledged in our annual report unless you request that your gift be anonymous.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

This gift is:  In Memory of  In Honor of  Commemorating

Please send notification of this gift to: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of Donation:  \$100  \$75  \$50  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Does your company offer a matching gift program? If so, please let us know.

Name of Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your check to:

Natick VNA, 209 West Central Street, Suite 313, Natick, MA 01760

You may also make your gift online at [www.natickvna.org](http://www.natickvna.org)

*The Natick VNA, Inc. is an independent, charitable, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. Your gift is tax deductible.*

