



# The VNA Voice

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## From Our House to Yours

One of the many things I've learned over the course of my healthcare career is that connections are a key element of success. In this edition, there are several examples of the variety of ways that VNA connects with our patients and community.

The root of some associations is not as desirable as others, but the result can be very positive. Such is the case with our recent presentation by the Lawrence Police Department to train our staff on personal safety in a culture of uncertainty. Captain Troy Squire and his team could not have been more thoughtful and sensitive to their audience, and the VNA team is grateful for their commitment to public safety.

Another highlight in this edition is truly a "feel good" connection. VNA periodically has patients who are or become centenarians under our care, but this year we've had the privilege of having many. What a joy to celebrate 100 years

of history with Mary, Thelma, and others meeting this milestone. They have doubled VNA's longevity which is astonishing! Congratulations to everyone who blew out 100 candles in 2019!!!



Pictured above: The birthday cake for Thelma's 100th birthday. Thelma receives the services of VNA's Help at Home program.

Our final story in this issue of the Voice moved me from the moment I heard the wish to the day it occurred and beyond. Gail Renee's connection to our Hospice program helped her realize a dream to reconnect with her passion for horses. The

relationship with her care team who created the opportunity for her is just one of many examples of the psychosocial element of Hospice care. Everyone involved in Gail Renee's extraordinary day was uplifted in a way that can only result from a close connection.

"Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard and valued - when they can give and receive without judgment." (Brene Brown, Ph.D., LMSW)

Thank you for your connection to VNA!



*Cynthia Lewis*  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## OUR MISSION

To provide excellent community-based health care and support services throughout the continuum of care.

## OUR VISION

To be the home health and hospice provider of choice to our community through continued excellence in health care service and business practices.



## Development Corner: Community Partnerships

VNA loves working with other organizations in the community, especially to benefit patients or staff. Recently VNA partnered with the Lawrence Police Department to help keep VNA employees safe in the event of an active shooter. VNA's safety committee coordinated with the police department to run through active shooter drills. Captain Troy Squire reviewed the proper responses in an active shooter scenario with VNA's staff before conducting the drills. While there is no perfect way to drill for an active shooter scenario, Captain Squire and the Lawrence Police Department tried to create circumstances that would help staff be more prepared in the event of an active shooter.

"The more we practice and train on active shooter drills, the better



Pictured above: VNA's safety committee poses with Captain Squire and the other officers that assisted in the drills.

we will respond in real life," said Captain Squire.

The idea of an active shooter drill was a little intimidating for some of VNA's staff at first, but after the drills, most staff members felt it was a very helpful exercise. Some members of VNA's staff even expressed interest in doing

the drill every year to be better prepared, just like a fire or tornado drill.

"It's not something any of us want to think about having to use, but after receiving training from the LKPD, we have given our staff valuable information to use in the event of an active shooter situation. Staff were grateful for the training and the knowledge they received," said Pat Deaver, VNA's Help at Home Manager and chair of VNA's safety committee.

While everyone hopes to never be anywhere near an active shooter situation, the training and drills provided by the Lawrence Police Department have helped VNA's staff feel safer and more confident in the actions they would take in the event of an active shooter scenario.

## Patient Spotlight: Celebrating Centenarians

There are many special birthday milestones in life. Whether it is the fun and mess of a smash cake to celebrate a child's first birthday, or the comedy of the "over the hill" gag-gifts to celebrate someone

turning 50 or 60, but one birthday milestone has an extra special feel to it because of its rarity. Few people live for a full century, but when they do, it is something to celebrate! VNA has been lucky enough to help two patients celebrate turning 100 in 2019. Mary turned 100 in February and celebrated the occasion with a small gathering of family and friends. Thelma celebrated her 100th birthday in late September with a gathering of over 200 people at her church. Thelma also received many cards for her 100th birthday and has enjoyed reading through them. Both of the centenarians utilize VNA's Help at Home services to help them stay independent and in their homes.

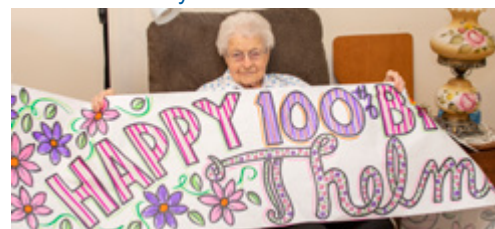


Pictured above: Mary poses with her family at her 100th birthday party.



Pictured above: Thelma poses with a cake and candles to celebrate her 100th birthday.

Pictured below: Thelma holds up a banner from her birthday.



## The Heart of VNA: How Hospice Has Helped Gail Renee

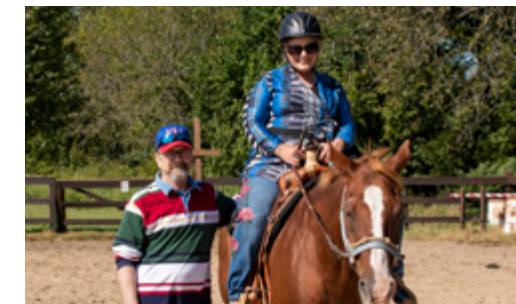
"I wish more people knew about Hospice. You can't call them too soon. I wish I had really understood what Hospice care was. There are several choices I would have made differently and earlier on," said Gail Renee, VNA Hospice patient.

Hospice can be a difficult subject to talk about, but it is a very important thing to discuss. The care and support that Hospice provides for patients and their families can make a huge difference in quality of life. One of VNA's Hospice patients wants everyone to know more about Hospice care and how it can help those with terminal illness make the most of precious time.

Gail Renee Johnson has received VNA's Hospice care services for about six weeks, but she wishes that care had started sooner. Gail Renee was first diagnosed with ovarian cancer in April of 2016. Her treatment started within days of her diagnosis. It started with chemotherapy, surgery, and more chemotherapy. When the cancer spread to her breast, she had surgery again, radiation treatment, and more chemotherapy. After years of treatment and the difficult side effects of those treatments, it became clear to the doctors and to Gail Renee that the treatments would only buy her a little more time, at best.

"I had been through many rounds of chemotherapy, surgery, radiation, and I had started taking an oral medication. I was so sick from it, but I was determined to

fight. Then I realized that Hospice would be the best way for me to fight. I didn't know much about Hospice, but what I have learned has been it's the best thing that could have happened to me," Gail Renee said.



Pictured above: Gail Renee posing with Mr. T and her husband, Randy.

For Gail Renee, the decision to turn to Visiting Nurses for Hospice care was based on the desire for a better quality of life. Once it became clear that her cancer was terminal, her focus shifted from quantity to quality of life. Though it is never easy for anyone to think about the end of their life, it can be for the best to do so if it helps that person make the most of the time they have. Although there was a chance that further treatment could help her live a little longer, she also knew that she would spend much of that time struggling with the side effects of that treatment. Severe nausea and other side effects of the cancer treatment made it difficult for Gail Renee to get out of the house or even visit with friends. She also spent many hours traveling to and from appointments for treatment. The efforts being made to extend her life were actually keeping her from living her life.

**"There comes a point, when you have to decide. Do I want quality or quantity, and you'll know when that is. I knew when it was. It was time to take a hard look at things. I'm so happy Hospice was my choice, I really am. It took all of the stress away for my family, for myself, and gave me quality of life," Gail Renee said.**

Gail Renee not only benefits from the care and support that Hospice provides in her home, but was also helped with a very special outing. One day during a visit from her Hospice Nurse, Meagan, Gail Renee happened to mention her love for horses. Meagan recognized that this was something that was very important to Gail Renee. Along with other members of the Hospice team, Meagan helped arrange for Gail Renee to visit New Horizon Ranch in Rantoul, Kansas. The ranch's mission is "to enrich the lives of individuals through equine assisted activities and therapies."



Pictured above: Gail Renee and her husband, Randy, pose with the New Horizon Ranch team.

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## The Heart of VNA: How Hospice Has Helped Gail Renee (Cont.)

On a beautiful, sunny September day at New Horizon Ranch, Gail Renee got to groom and ride Mr. T, one of the ranch's horses. She also got to visit with the Miller family, who runs the ranch. Just spending a little more than an hour at the ranch was a special experience for Gail Renee.

***"It was so much fun," she said. "You'd be amazed at what a distraction can do for your mental health. It was just a calming place from the moment I got out of the car. I was just at peace with Mr. T. It was such a sweet thing. Without Hospice I would have never done that. I would never have that time with Mr.***

***T or get to feel normal for a while. It was such a sweet thing."***



Pictured above: Gail Renee poses with Mr. T.

Although Gail Renee's situation is very difficult, Hospice has helped make it a little easier for her and her husband of 17 years, Randy. VNA's Hospice care has helped Gail Renee live her life to the fullest, while also taking stress off

of Randy so he can enjoy his time with her. "It gives me peace of mind knowing that they come by and check on her," Randy said. "I know there is backup, somebody to call, instead of just dragging her into the hospital every time there is a flaw in something." Gail Renee summed up the effect Hospice care has had on her with a short phrase. "It's given me life where I wouldn't have any," she said.



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