



The VNA Voice

Edition 45 - Fall 2024 - kansasvna.org

From Our House to Yours: One Last Time in Print

This, the 45th edition of The VNA Voice community newsletter, will be the last printed edition. The newsletter will continue in a digital format that will be sent to everyone who has joined our mailing list and provided a valid email address. If this does not include you, **we hope that you will email us at Marketing@KansasVNA.org to request to be added to our digital newsletter distribution list.** The decision to switch the newsletter to a digital format was not made lightly. In this time of declining Medicare reimbursements, which make up the majority of our revenue, and rising costs, we have to continue to be pragmatic and reduce expenses where we can to ensure we have the funds we need to care for our patients regardless of their ability to pay for services.

We hope you'll understand our need to make this change to prioritize our patients, as we always have. We will continue to provide updates about VNA, stories about our patients and staff, and much more through our digital newsletter. Please sign up for the digital newsletter to stay aware of all things VNA, home care, health, and more!

The VNA Voice is going digital in 2025! If you would like to continue to receive our newsletter, please email us at marketing@kansasvna.org to be added to the digital distribution list.

VNA in the Community: Fun, Friendship, and Fitness with Kristine

Five days a week, for thirty-minute increments the sound of laughter, chatter, and songs like "La Bamba" fill the air at senior living facilities throughout our community; thanks to an evolving VNA program for community health. It may not seem like a

great deal of time, but as the Community Wellness Liaison, it gives me the opportunity to be a part of the residents' lives. They are each a story, full of experiences and history. I admit when I accepted this position, it was not until day two

of orientation that I even knew what my job was. Months in, I find it not a job at all- it is a perfect fit. I can rarely sit still. As a child, my mother coached track, so summers for me were running. I loved it! Despite being a coach, my mother did not start running

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OUR MISSION

Improving quality of life through
compassionate patient care
wherever you call **home.**



VISITING NURSES

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VNA in the Community: Fun, Friendship, and Fitness with Kristine (cont.)

until she was in her 50s. And boy did she ever.... She ran religiously for the next 15 years, she did road races and participated in Senior Olympic games. I have every one of her medals. The last race my mother did, she came in dead last. The water truck followed behind her and those cheering on the sidelines had left, except me. With a smile on her face, she crossed that finish line. She was the only runner over 60. I could not have been prouder. My mother instilled in me not only the importance of physically moving, but also to keep going, even if you are dead last. That is why I am so inspired by each resident who shows up to class. If they show up, I will be on the sidelines cheering.

Workouts such as Paper Plate Olympics intertwine with weights. Mind games and Balls-in-the-Basket competitions continue to prove George Bernard Shaw



Pictured above: Kristine, VNA's Community Wellness Liaison, leads an exercise class at Arbor Court.

correct in saying "we don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing," so we keep playing...

Exercise benefits the body, but also the mind and soul. Moving the body moves the mind; not only can one reduce the chance of physical ailments and strengthen the body, but anxiety, stress, and depression can be alleviated as well. The list of benefits from exercise is endless.

The soul benefit, however, is my favorite – those moments are

what make this program have an immeasurable impact. The classes are a unique opportunity for the social aspect of exercise. The feel-good moments of coming together. Being a part of a group, no matter the size. There is comfort in connecting with those around you. It is not so much about the repetitions, but the residents. That to me is the most meaningful part of community and of wellness.

Exercise is such an important aspect of being human. The body is the only vehicle we never trade in. It must get us all from Point A to B. As the Community Wellness Liaison, I am honored to be a part of the journey, my mother was such an inspiration, just as each resident is. In the end, it does not matter when you cross the finish line, as long as you cross it - smiling.

Home Sweet Home: Happy 25th to the Community Health Facility

Picture it: Lawrence, KS 1993 a Health Facilities Board was formed to study space needs as well as recommend options to the City and County Commission for a health campus to house Visiting Nurses, Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center and Lawrence Douglas County Health Department (now known as Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health). Through the valiant efforts of this group and the citizens of Douglas County, a county-wide one-cent sales

tax for capital improvement in Douglas County went to vote and passed in February 1994. A part of that tax was to construct adequate facilities for the three agencies. All three agencies were adamant about being housed together within the same building, preferably near the Lawrence Memorial Hospital (LMH) campus. Through several twists and turns the final decision to utilize the space near LMH to create the new building was confirmed.



Three years later, on October 9, 1997, the groundbreaking ceremony was held for the 85,543 square-foot health facility.

On August 23, 1999, VNA moved from two office sites to the

VISITING NURSES



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Home Sweet Home: Happy 25th to the Community Health Facility (cont.)

Community Health Facility at 200 Maine Street, along with Bert Nash and the Health Department. Occupying 17,870 square feet on the third floor provided office and meeting space as well as room for growth. This was an incredible gift from the community.

25 years later on August 23, 2024, a building-wide celebration was held to commemorate the anniversary of the Community Health Facility. Staff from all three organizations: Visiting Nurses, Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center and Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health gathered in the north parking

lot for games and delicious drinks and treats from Rainbow Ice and Torched Goodness. Representatives from each organization spoke about the significance of the anniversary. The City Proclamation was held on August 20th and the County Proclamation was held on August 28th.



Pictured above: Leadership from each of the organizations housed in the Community Health Facility at the County Proclamation for the facility's 25th anniversary. Photo courtesy of Jeff Burkhead.



**The home of
community care for
25 years**

**Community Health Facility
1999 - 2024**

Community Corner: Support on the Journey of Grief and Loss

As the golden leaves crunch under our feet this time of year, we are reminded of the seasons of time and life. The inevitable escape of living is that of dying. As the trees lose their leaves, they still must go on in the absence of that which was a part of them. When we lose someone we love, we too, are faced with going on without someone who was a part of us.

Grief is a part of coping with death. It is a part of being human. Oftentimes, loss lessens over time but their absence never does. It is the absence that will remain present in our lives. Their absence is now filled with memories and moments in time. Hold on to those. All of them. As we face grief, we should embrace how we



Pictured above: VNA's Hospice Memorial Garden is a beautiful place of remembrance located just outside of the north entrance to the Community Health Facility. Plants can be donated in honor of a loved one.

feel. And feel it. All of it.

Coping with the absence of a loved one is a personal journey. But there are others on the same path. Walk with them. Walk as slow as you need to - healing has no time frame.

Stumble, but get back up. Be gentle and kind to yourself.

Reach out if you need help, our community has many resources to cope with grief, including VNA. VNA's grief support programs provide shoulders to cry on, ears to listen, and most importantly peers to understand.

We all deal with loss in our own way, but know - you are not alone. Find your forest to lean on.

Over time, green leaves will appear and the sun will shine. The trees, once again, will remind us of the seasons of life, and that even in their absence, we never really lose those we love.

If you would like more information about VNA's grief support groups, visit: kansasvna.org/grief-support-adult, email: griefsupport@kansasvna.org, or call: (785) 843-3738.

Program Spotlight: 43 Years of Hospice Care for Our Community

The Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) Hospice program celebrated its 43rd anniversary in August. The hospice program started in 1981, twelve years after VNA opened its doors as the first home health agency in Douglas County. VNA Hospice is the only community hospice in Douglas County, improving the quality of life for the patient through dignity

and compassion, regardless of their ability to pay. Hospice helps patients at the end of their lives to achieve physical and emotional comfort. Hospice neither prolongs life, nor hastens death. Rather, it provides special care to address the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the patient and family.

In addition to a physician-directed care plan for each patient, which includes nursing, social work, care aides and more, the success of VNA's hospice program can be attributed to its robust volunteer program that provides haircuts, massages, yardwork, end-of-life doulas, caregiver relief, music therapy and much more, wherever the patient calls home.

In addition to a physician-directed



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