



The VNA Voice

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From Our House to Yours

Life's most persistent and urgent question is, "What are you doing for others?" (Martin Luther King, Jr.). That question captures the role of a mission statement for organizations. One of my goals has been to invigorate VNA's mission statement to better speak to what we do for others.

With that in mind, VNA's staff and Management Team engaged in focused activities through which we honed in on words that describe VNA's purpose, aspiration and outcomes. During our all-staff exercise, three words rose to the top: care/caring, compassion/ate, and family. With that information, a facilitator

surveyed the Management Team and walked us through a process in which we identified the most inspirational verb we associate with VNA, the most

important place when you think of VNA, the most aspirational outcome we hope to deliver, etc. Care/caring, home, and quality of life most consistently answered those questions.

All of that collective information forms VNA's newly stated mission, purpose, aspiration.

I'm so proud of the commitment and focus

we bring every day to live that mission with you. I hope you feel it too!



Cynthia Lewis
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

OUR MISSION
Improving quality of life
through compassionate patient care
wherever you call home

The Heart of VNA: Michael is All Grown Up

Michael Douglas is not what most people would picture when they think of a Visiting Nurses' patient. He is a senior, but in a different manner than most home care patients. He is a student at Ottawa University (OU). He has been the Director of Basketball Operations for

the OU men's basketball team for four years. He is also the Sports Information Intern at OU, a member of the student alumni board, president of the Sigma Alpha Alpha honor society and completing the final credits needed to graduate at the end of the semester. Michael's ability to

balance his many responsibilities at Ottawa University is an impressive feat, but it's even more admirable considering he does it all while wearing oxygen to help with the symptoms of interstitial lung disease, a condition that doctors thought would make Michael too tired to even attend

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The Heart of VNA: Michael is All Grown Up (cont.)

school. This rare lung disease is what brought VNA into Michael's life when he was only five years old.



Pictured above: VNA's Director of Clinical Services and RN, Debbie Ahlert-Caffey, gives Michael his steroid treatment in 2014. Pictured below: Debbie provides the same treatment to Michael in 2020.



Since then, consistency, comfort, convenience, and high-quality care is what Debbie Ahlert-Caffey, RN and Director of Clinical Services for VNA, has provided for Michael every six weeks for the last 17 years. Debbie has provided nearly 150 treatments for Michael in his home, so it's no surprise that she is like part of the Douglas family. "It's been wonderful, it really has. You don't usually get to stay with a family that long," Debbie says. The Douglas family has tremendous respect and appreciation for Debbie and everything she has done for Michael.

"She is top notch." Michael says. "She is the best. One poke and we get the IV."

Michael's father, Mike Douglas,

expressed the family's gratitude for her efforts to always accommodate Michael's schedule. "We've just been pretty blessed because Debbie has really gone out of her way just to accommodate his schedule. Sometimes it probably doesn't work well for her, but she does it anyway and that's amazing," he says.

The steroid infusions Debbie provides for Michael help him live a life that is not defined by his rare lung disease, but by his determination, positivity, passion for sports, and love for life. Michael likens the re-energizing steroid treatments to a car filling up with gas.

"Sometimes my body will start to feel tired and not how it usually is, so Debbie coming down to help keeps my body going for the next six weeks and I can keep going, doing the basketball stuff and feel like a normal 21-year-old," he says.

VNA providing the steroid treatments to Michael in his home is another important part of allowing him to live his life. Michael is not only more comfortable at home, but is also spared the time and effort it would take for him to get to the hospital and back every six weeks. Another benefit of Michael receiving the treatments at home is flexibility based on his schedule.

"Debbie has been very flexible," Michael's mother, Lisa says. "Depending on his schedule, we just do it at different times

depending on when he has class, which has been very nice." Thanks to this flexibility in the scheduling of Michael's treatments, he doesn't have to miss class or basketball games.

"The steroids really help, and since it's at home as well, if I have something to do later that night, I can get done here and go straight over there to campus," Michael says.



Pictured above: Michael high fives his teammates as he is announced in the starting lineup on Mike Doug Day. Photo by: Matthew S. Hicks/OttawaBravesPhotos.com

The time that Michael saves by getting his treatments at home allows him to have a more immersive college experience. As the Director of Basketball Operations, Michael runs the team's social media pages, helps tutor athletes, keeps stats, runs the clock and acts as the DJ at practices, but his contributions to the team go well beyond these responsibilities. He is an inspiration to the players and coaches and is well-respected by all of them. "I'm one of the coaching staff and kind of one of the players. Whenever it's the coaches I'm there and then whenever the players are doing stuff I'm there as well. It's really cool. I've made a lot of memories and friendships," he says. One extra special memory will stand

The Heart of VNA: Michael is All Grown Up (cont.)

out for Michael for years to come. On January 25, 2020, "Mike Doug Day" was an incredible recognition of Michael and everything he has done for the OU men's basketball program. Michael was announced in the starting line-up for the team's game against conference rivals, University of Saint Mary. "Hearing my name in the starting lineup was so special. Usually I'm the guy giving high fives and cheering on the players, but the roles were reversed and everyone was cheering for me," Michael says. He was on the court for tip-off as a raucous crowd cheered for him, but the biggest cheers came just before the final buzzer. Michael reentered the game with moments left and made a basket to the delight of everyone in attendance. "The experience was incredible. I've never been

a player, so being able to be in a game was really special and scoring a bucket was something I will never forget," Michael says.

"When my teammates picked me up and lifted me up on their shoulders, it felt like we just won the championship. It was one of the best days of my life!"



Pictured above: Michael's teammates lift him on their shoulders to celebrate his basket on Mike Doug Day. Photo by: Matthew S. Hicks/OttawaBravesPhotos.com

Michael will enter the next phase of his life after he graduates from Ottawa University this spring. "It will be pretty cool to get the degree and hopefully advance to a job, hopefully at KU when I apply," Michael says. His plan is to pursue a job at the KU Athletic Department. He hopes to continue the type of work he does now as an intern with the Sports Information Director at Ottawa University. "I did the stats, Twitter, all that stuff. So I want to do that at KU," Michael says. With a little help and support from his family, friends, and Visiting Nurses, Michael will likely exceed all expectations in his career, just like he has exceeded all expectations since he was first diagnosed with interstitial lung disease almost 20 years ago.

Intern Spotlight: Meet Reagan, VNA's 2020 Community Health Intern

At the start of this year, Visiting Nurses welcomed an intern from the University of Kansas. Reagan Wood, a senior at KU, will be graduating in May with her degree in Community Health. She is from Ft. Riley, Kansas where she visits her family often. She recalls, "My passions for this field blossomed, growing up volunteering at an Assisted Living facility where my mother works." Reagan has worked as a Dietary Aide at Brandon Woods at Alvarado, for two consecutive summers during her college career. She balances school and work, currently waitressing at On The Hill Italian Cuisine at the Oread. With a plan to further her education and experience in the health field, she

is confident VNA will lead her in the right direction.



Pictured above: Reagan Wood, VNA's Community Health Intern.

Reagan shares, "The staff here have made me feel so welcomed and have included me in a lot." She started her internship off strong shadowing in various department areas. Eager to begin, Reagan had the

opportunity to help the Marketing and Development team push current projects forward, shadow clinicians in the field, and has attended multiple community events where she says she "is making important connections." Her favorite experience so far is when she had the chance to join Hank Booth from KLWN 1320 for a live radio interview. She exclaims, "I have never had the chance to do something like that before and it was fun to be able to represent VNA and KU!"

Although Reagan will only be with VNA through the first week of May, her initiative and willingness to help out however she can has made it a beneficial experience for both her and VNA.

A New Type of Doula: VNA Hospice Expands Programming

"The end of life deserves as much beauty, care, and respect as the beginning."

This statement is the inspiration behind VNA's new End-of-Life Doula program. VNA recognizes that the thought of life coming to an end can be a very scary and overwhelming concept, but it is also a part of life and something everyone will have to face at some point. VNA's End-of-Life Doulas will assist community members with this process by advocating, educating, and providing support. The Doulas will serve as guides to assist individuals and their loved ones with end-of-life decisions

and choices so they can focus on living life to the fullest. "The Doula's main job is to be that individual's person. That allows the individual to have someone to reach out to as a resource and it guarantees that they have someone to help follow their journey the way they see it. The Doula is going to follow them from the beginning of the process



through to the end," said Monica Rose, VNA Hospice Manager. The Doula service is free to anyone and is independent of VNA's Hospice program. The Doula service can help someone who is not ready for Hospice services yet or can provide additional support to someone who is receiving Hospice care.

VNA hopes this service will benefit many people in the community who are going through a difficult time in their life. Through advocacy, education and support, the End-of-Life Doula program will treat the end of life with the beauty, care, and respect it deserves.

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