



# The VNA Voice

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## *From Our House to Yours*

In “normal” times, VNA would be celebrating our biennial 3.d Fundraiser with you. However, there is very little normal about the past 16 months. As a local organization, we understand the impact that COVID-19 has had on our community. That is why we chose to not hold our 3.d Fundraiser as planned in 2021. We appreciate ALL the support you’ve provided our organization over the years, and for those who are able and willing, there is still the opportunity to give through our 3.d appeal. We look forward to a time when we can come together again to “Dine, Dance, and Donate!” Thank you for your continuous support.



*Cynthia Lewis*  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**Help VNA through this tough time and donate in support of a patient need.**  
*Though we’re not able to host our 3.d Casino Night Fundraiser this year,  
we still need your support!*

**Help make a difference in the lives of our patients  
by providing your support at**

**[KansasVNA.org/Donate](http://KansasVNA.org/Donate)**  
(click the 3.d Casino Chip)

**or call (785) 843-3738**

**On behalf of all of the patients we serve each  
year, thank you!**



## OUR MISSION

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



## *The Heart of VNA: Sewn with Love - The Magic of a Teddy Bear*

There is something inherently comforting about a teddy bear. Hugging a teddy bear makes everything at least a little bit better, no matter how sad or scared someone is. This is why teddy bears are included in VNA's Healing Kits. The loss of a loved one is difficult for anyone, but can be especially challenging and complicated for a child. VNA's Healing Kits include a variety of books and activities to help children understand, express, and cope with their grief and the many emotions that come with it, but for some children, the teddy bear might bring the most immediate comfort and healing of anything in the kit.

of kindness, positivity, love, joy and wisdom that emanates from Florine and somehow permeates every teddy bear she sews.

Sewing has long been a part of Florine's life, but it is certainly not the only thing she has done. She has worked in a bank, babysat, and worked as a guest service agent at a hotel in Yellowstone National Park. The latter has been a very important part of her life. Inspired by her son, Dennis, and his wife, Tam, who met each other at Yellowstone, Florine and her husband had planned to spend time at Yellowstone when they retired. Sadly, Florine's husband died in 1978. They had been married 30 years at the time.



Pictured above: Florine O'Rourke with some of the many teddy bears she has sewn and donated to VNA.

***"There was a period when I thought my life was over, but I sure found out it wasn't. I didn't want to sit and whine," Florine says.***

To understand what makes Florine and the teddy bears she sews so special, there are some important things to know about Florine. She started sewing when she was five years old. She made a little striped pair of overalls for her doll and has been sewing ever since. "I love to sew," Florine says. "I sewed all through high school and 4-H. I've done custom sewing for about 25 years. Everything from pep club clothes, to regular clothes, to wedding dresses, and furniture coverings." She made alterations, sewed her own clothes, sewed her sons' clothes, and made all of her husband's shirts. Despite her tremendous experience and expertise as a seamstress, Florine charged only \$2 for a dress.

She kept the plan that she had made with her husband and went to Yellowstone after she turned 65. She continued to spend her summers in Yellowstone for the next 25 years, making many friends along the way. "I quit when I was 89. I was afraid they wouldn't take me at 90," Florine says with a laugh.

Three years ago, Florine moved from Pleasanton, Kansas to Meadowlark Estates in Lawrence. She no longer spends her summers working and hiking in

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## *The Heart of VNA: The Magic of a Teddy Bear (cont.)*

Yellowstone, but at 96 years old, Florine still stays busy. She puts placemats and napkins on the dining room tables after breakfast for the next meal, walks two floors, sometimes gets on the rowing machine for a little bit, and then has coffee with some people around the fireplace. Around 10:30 a.m. is when Florine starts working on a teddy bear and usually has one done before noon. She usually sticks to making one bear a day, as making two in one day can be too much time in that position. After she has made at least six bears, she stuffs them and finishes sewing them up.



Macular degeneration has made parts of the process more difficult for Florine, such as matching ribbons to the patterns, but with a little help from her

family, she continues making the bears. Florine does all of the sewing, but the process of making the teddy bears is a team effort. Her daughter-in-law, Tam, picks out fabric for the bears and helps with the patterns. Florine's grandchildren also help cut out the patterns for the bears. "We make quite a team," she says. Florine doesn't know the exact number of bears she has made, but says she has made over 500 since she started making them five or six years ago. When she lived in Pleasanton, Florine's bears went to a variety of organizations and individuals. Since moving to Lawrence, Florine has given at least 60 "comfort bears" to other residents at Meadowlark Estates. "When they first come or when they lose someone or something, I just say would you like a comfort bear," Florine says. She is happy to know that her bears are

continuing to provide comfort as a part of VNA's Healing Kits. "I'm so glad we found a place, because sure it's fun to make them, but it's a lot more fun to know they're going to go somewhere and do some good. I know they're not perfect, but if they're good enough for somebody to enjoy them, that's all that is necessary," Florine says.

While every stitch may not be perfectly spaced, Florine's teddy bears may be the perfect thing to provide comfort to a grieving child, and luckily Florine has no plans to stop sewing anytime soon.



## ***Intern Spotlight: Meet Moira***

In early March, Visiting Nurses welcomed a physical therapy intern from the University of Kansas. Moira Myers is currently in the final year of her 3-year master's program and will be receiving her Doctorate of Physical Therapy in a few weeks. Moira's interest in physical therapy came from playing soccer in college and seeing injuries that needed rehabilitation through physical therapy, and from her grandmother, who she is very close to, who has had physical therapy as well. She recalls, "I

started shadowing a lot in high school and college and just really enjoyed being able to both use my mind and use the knowledge of the human body as well to be able to help people in that way." Moira has been able to shadow in several different settings; outpatient, hospital and a skilled nursing facility. She heard about VNA through her Clinical Director at the University of Kansas and saw this as an opportunity to shadow in yet another setting, home health. "I just thought this would be a really unique setting.

I want to work with geriatrics, and this would be a really cool opportunity to get to see every span of the recovery. In the hospital, a lot of it is modeling what you would do in the home, whereas when you actually go home, you have everything there that you're doing every day. You're able to make a lot of the interventions and exercises really functional for that person and be able to really craft it to their lifestyle, their home and be able to work with them where they live and where they're at."

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## Intern Spotlight: Meet Moira (cont.)

Moira has had the opportunity to shadow with two of VNA's Physical Therapists, an Occupational Therapist and a Speech Language Pathologist. "Everybody works together in the setting. You're not really with each other on a daily basis, but you're still all overlapping in your care of the patients. I'm getting to treat the patients and learn specifically how to be a PT in the home."

During the home health visits, Moira noticed the relationship the clinicians have with their patients, how they are focused on the patients, what their needs are, and how they help them achieve their goals.

"I've enjoyed building the relationships and learning about people and what they're getting



Pictured above: Moira Myers, VNA Physical Therapy Intern.

back to, and learning about their goals and what they want to be able to do after they get their mobility back. You get to be creative with every patient. You cannot go into one home and do the same treatment with every single person. You have to change it, adapt it to the home and the patient." Through her internship, Moira has had a chance to learn about Home Health and about Visiting Nurses.

***"I've enjoyed learning about VNA because there's such a rich history, and I think it's cool to see how that tradition lives on," she said.***

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