



The VNA Voice

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From Our House to Yours

Continuous learning is an important value to Visiting Nurses. To that end, we have offered two educational opportunities to our staff this fall and are providing another to our healthcare community. In today's environment, there is an increasing threat of encountering an "active shooter" in the workplace or our society. Active shooter education provides tips for safety and response when exposed to this unfortunate scenario. Visiting Nurses was proud to partner with Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center and the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department to have the Lawrence Police Department provide this important education.

As our community has increased its focus on mental health initiatives, Visiting Nurses strives to ensure our staff have the tools

to continue providing the highest quality care. In September and October, our staff are participating in "Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)." The courses are designed to give individuals the skills they need to help someone who may be experiencing a mental health crisis or developing a mental health problem. Julia Gaughan, Bert Nash MHFA Training Supervisor, and her team are teaching the eight-hour course. In addition to the standard curriculum, Julia, et.al., are including an "Older Adults" module to integrate Visiting Nurses' primary population.

As a Hospice provider, Visiting Nurses recognizes the importance of having healthcare partners understand Hospice and its approach to care. Julie (Juls) Baldwin Andrews became certified in End-of-Life Nursing Education (ELNEC) in 2017. The principle

goal of this program is to provide education, information and resources on end-of-life/palliative care to integrate content into clinical practices. This fall, we are partnering with LMH Health and presenter, Nicole Apprill, to offer three-part continuing education to their staff and other interested community providers.

Lifelong learning is part of our culture at Visiting Nurses. I'm proud to share information with you about how the agency supports this for our staff.



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.



Patient Care Corner: A Helping Hand for Hannah

Everyday seems like *Groundhog Day* - the daily routine of dad leaving for work and mom preparing breakfast for the kids, cleaning the house, letting the dogs out, doing laundry and running errands, never knowing the "routine" would change in one quick moment. In an instant, Hannah Gentry's life, along with her husband, Trevor, and two boys, Scott and Alex, changed forever.

Hannah was at the dojo where her oldest son was taking Tae Kwon Do classes when they asked for volunteers to do backflips on the trampoline. "I didn't make it and ended up landing on my head. I was conscious and knew I couldn't feel or move, which was kind of a strange thing," Hannah explained.

"All the kids were there, which was pretty awful, so they took all of the kids in the other room and called 911."

Hannah was transported to Kansas City for emergency surgery to realign her C4 vertebrae and to hold her C4 and C5 together with a metal plate. The surgical team also removed a large hematoma on her C5 vertebrae and treated blood clots that had developed in her left calf. "It was kind of three major surgeries all at once. I had a sinus infection on top of it, so all of that kept me in the ICU for 10 days," said Hannah.

After six weeks in rapid recovery,

the transition to homelife was met with many challenges. Being paralyzed from the neck down, the reality of the situation came quickly as Hannah and Trevor were faced with a major role reversal. "I was a housewife. I used to cook and clean. All of that, they never had to deal with. Going from husband and wife to basically caregiver and dependent was really hard," Hannah explained.

Trevor made modifications to their home, took time off from work to be home with Hannah when her accident happened, and again later to attend training to learn how to care for her. Before her accident, Hannah was teaching her oldest son, to cook. Now, it became a necessity and not just for fun. "If he didn't cook, then we didn't get to eat. It was a lot of responsibility, but really the kids have been very malleable. I think they adjusted easier than we did.



Pictured above: VNA aide Jennifer helps Hannah Gentry eat lunch.

"I've always been mom, and I still was mom, so that helped a lot," said Hannah. Finding their "new normal" was challenging, but it was made easier with the help they received from VNA.

"Jennifer (CHHA from VNA) has always been with us since the

beginning, right when I came home from KU," said Hannah. "She helped cook and clean and keep the house running while we adjusted to different roles. That was really great. She is great with the kids. She is great with the dogs. She helps me. Since she has been with us since day one, it is almost like her family is part of our family. It's nice to know that we have someone we can count on."



Pictured above, from left to right: Jennifer, Hannah, Trevor

Like so many of VNA's staff, Jennifer has become part of the Gentry home. "I can't stress enough how much Jennifer has fit into our family," said Hannah. Through it all, they have drawn strength from the challenges. Their family bond is unshakable. They greatly appreciate the services they have received from Visiting Nurses.

"The services you get are services you can rely on. When you're in a position like we are, being able to rely on somebody is a big deal," said Hannah.



The Heart of VNA: Caring Cuisine Provides More Than a Meal

Dealing with a terminal diagnosis and entering Hospice care can be an incredibly difficult experience. Sometimes loved ones pass away suddenly, but in other instances, the diagnosis gives family precious time to cherish with their loved one before having to say goodbye. Hospice care has a specific and unique purpose. Rather than focusing on quantity of life through curative treatment, Hospice care focuses on quality of life, helping patients at the end of their lives achieve physical and emotional comfort. It provides special care to address the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the patient and family.



Pictured above: Merchant's Pub and Plate, on Massachusetts St., Lawrence, KS.

At the end of life, seemingly simple things can bring great joy to families. Something most people might take for granted can suddenly become immensely meaningful, like a nice family dinner. Thanks to Merchants Pub and Plate and their Caring Cuisine program, some of VNA's Hospice patients are able to enjoy such a meal with their family without having to do any of the work. The delicious meals are cooked and donated by Merchants and delivered to the family by a VNA

volunteer. It's a chance to enjoy a special family meal that will provide meaningful memories for years to come. One family wanted Merchants, VNA, and everyone else to know how much they appreciated this gift.

We would like to thank Merchants Pub and Plate for their Caring Cuisine program that provided us with fresh and good food. The meal they surprised us with was not only from their kitchen, but from their hearts.

Merchants Pub and Plate showed our family what care and concern for their community really is.

We would also like to thank Visiting Nurses Hospice for their help in bringing together Merchants and our family.

Thank you to all who made this wonderful meal possible. Thank you from our hearts to yours in breaking bread with us. God bless.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Coffman and Family

The Coffman family, like many families who benefit from this partnership, appreciate the generosity Merchants puts forth as well as the volunteers at VNA who help make it possible. "Every



Pictured above: The Coffman Family.

family has thanked me profusely and expressed appreciation for the meals," said Jennifer, a VNA volunteer who delivers the Caring Cuisine meals. She recalls one special memory from a delivery made a few years ago that brought tears to her eyes. "When I arrived at the couple's home, the wife invited me into their kitchen. The dining room table was set for two with a lit candle in the center of the table. She told me it had been a few years since they had been able to eat out so she wanted to make the meal special."

Chef TK and Emily Peterson, co-owners of Merchants, shared why this act of kindness is so important to them. "Being able to reach out and provide some comfort and care to Hospice families is part of our sense of duty. There is incredible power in sharing a meal. It's this basic act of hospitality, of breaking bread, that connects our hearts to our community."

VNA is thankful for this partnership with Merchants to provide Hospice patients and their families a little joy during a challenging time.

VNA in the Community: Learning About Loss

Visiting Nurses provides various presentations and classes for community members every year, many of which are related to bereavement and grief support. These classes are a vital part of VNA's Hospice program. It's one way VNA helps family members of patients who have passed. Grief can be complicated and difficult to navigate, but there are strategies that can help people cope. Learning how to process the complex emotions that follow a loss is important knowledge for everyone. Since everyone will experience the loss of a family member or close friend at some point, it makes sense to start learning about grief and loss early in life. VNA Hospice team members Sarah Rooney (Hospice

Volunteer Coordinator) and Brittany Klinger (Social Work) visit students at Eudora High School to help provide education on grief and loss. In Coach Erpelding's health class, Sarah and Brittany teach students about Hospice, loss, and grief. They also invite students to share their own experiences with grief and what was or was not helpful for them. One of the most valuable lessons learned by the teenagers



Pictured above: Sarah Rooney (left) and Brittany Klinger (right) educate students on grief and loss.

in this presentation is that they are never alone in their grief, and there are always people to listen and provide support.

"Sarah and Brittany come to class and talk to my students about some difficult topics and do a fantastic job! The kids really enjoy them. They bring tons of energy and entertainment to topics that are not easy to talk about," Coach Erpelding said.

VNA would like to thank Eudora High School and other community partners for the opportunity to provide education about these difficult subjects! If you have a group that is interested in a presentation, please contact Visiting Nurses Association at (785) 843-3738.

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