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on the Home Front



VNSW RN Lisa
Osbourne-Eden
with patient

On the Front Lines of COVID-19 Care

No one could have predicted, at the start of 2020, the unprecedented crisis that we would all be facing with the onset of COVID-19. With Westchester emerging as an epicenter of the pandemic early on, VNSW and our affiliate Westchester Care at Home (WCAH) sprang into action to create a COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan to safeguard our

patients, our staff and our community as we prepared to provide in-home care for COVID-19 positive, and other vulnerable patients. *(Continued on page 2)*

A Patient's Recovery Story

“VNSW was most instrumental in helping my husband recover from the residual effects of COVID-19. Aside from being professional and knowledgeable in helping us to manage lingering symptoms, Nurse Debbie Vaughn was a joy to welcome into our home. She made it feel like we were inviting a friend over.

Your Physical Therapist, Stacy Hinson-Austin helped him gain back the muscle strength he lost during his illness. She is motivating, encouraging and friendly. Debbie and everyone from VNSW was conscientious and meticulous in infection control. We felt safe having them in our home. We are grateful to VNSW for helping us come through a very trying time.”

DEBORAH F., RYE

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RN Diana Valdes
with patient



On the Front Lines

Protocols in Place for Safe Patient Care

As local hospitals and other acute care facilities discharged scores of COVID-19 patients, VNSW and WCAH were ready to provide safe transitions to our home care services to help patients complete their recovery and get back on their feet. Keeping pace with fast-changing mandates from national and state health authorities, our team swiftly put into place a rigorous system of safety and treatment protocols, enabling our agencies to provide comprehensive care for over 250 COVID-19 positive patients and clients in the comfort of their homes. In the event of a possible second wave in the months ahead, we are prepared to respond quickly, utilizing the time-tested systems we have set in place and applying the valuable lessons learned to date.



Going Above & Beyond

We are extremely proud of the numerous ways our staff went above and beyond from day one of the crisis. Aware of the risks to their own health and safety, many members of our home care team immediately volunteered to treat COVID-19 positive patients in their homes. Others volunteered to train all of our field staff on advanced infection control procedures, including how to self-screen for symptoms and how to properly don and doff Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to avoid contamination. Others learned how to conduct fit-testing to ensure that the N-95 face masks worn in the field were air-tight -- a key safety precaution -- for every member of the home care team.

Quality and Compliance Specialist, RN Maria Creadore, gets ready to fit-test N-95 masks for staff

Tremendous efforts were undertaken by staff to secure often hard-to-obtain PPE, including donations from several public and private agencies. Several employed their “DIY” skills to create PPE from other types of apparel. All of these exemplary efforts stemmed from our teams’ determination to ensure that our patients received the safest, most effective care possible during these difficult times.

VNSW Telehealth RN, Sally Wilson and WOCN, Claudia Weiner transformed overalls into a usable protective gown.



Field Hall Foundation Telehealth Grant

We are grateful to the Field Hall Foundation for providing our agency with a \$3,500 grant as part of their COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund. The grant helped offset a portion of the costs of leasing 25 additional Telehealth devices to support our patient care services during this challenging time. See story on page 3.



COVID-19 Drives Telehealth Expansion

Now, more than ever, Telehealth remote patient monitoring is playing a critical role in patient care at home. For patients recovering from COVID-19, our clinical team utilizes Telehealth to keep a close watch on patient vital signs, coronavirus symptoms and overall health status remotely, minimizing exposure to the virus among our patients, their families and our home care staff. We are also employing Telehealth on a larger scale for our non-COVID-19 patients -- especially our higher-risk patients -- as a means of preventing the spread of infection during home care visits. This allows us to reallocate staff resources for visits to patients who require in-home procedures such as oxygen therapy or insulin injections. Our recent addition of 25 additional Telehealth devices has enabled us to expand our program to accommodate the increased need for remote patient monitoring during and beyond the pandemic.

New Initiatives

Friendly Visitor Calls Launched



Health experts report that many seniors, especially those who live alone or have limited family or community ties, experience feelings of loneliness and isolation that can lead to declines in physical and emotional health. To address this issue, VNSW recently launched our Friendly Visitor Program, a complimentary service available to all VNSW patients. Friendly Visitor calls provide support to our patients who would benefit from a friendly “virtual visitor” to speak to on the phone. These are not medical calls, but social calls – an opportunity to talk to one of our compassionate volunteers about the patients’ cares and concerns, hopes and wishes, or any topic on their minds. Patients enrolled in the program benefit from social companionship;

helpful referrals to other social services, if needed; and an increased sense of well-being and social connection. Program volunteers, many of whom are also seniors, benefit from an increased sense of purpose and fulfillment.

A New Name for Westchester Care at Home

In concert with its 30th anniversary, Westchester Care at Home, an affiliate of VNSW, recently rebranded and is now doing business as VNSW at Home. According to agency Administrator, Eileen Killeen, “we believe that our name change will result in significant benefits for our agency, and more importantly, for our patients. It will reinforce our link with VNSW within the homecare arena, allowing us to take better advantage of and share in the premier reputation VNSW has established over the past 119 years.” The change will also reinforce the cooperative and complementary efforts undertaken by both agencies to ensure the best possible patient care, including seamless transitions from VNSW’s Medicare-based home care services to VNSW at Home’s outstanding in-home personal care.



Coming Soon! VNSW to Launch Care Navigation Agency



VNSW is pleased to announce a new addition to our family of agencies. Scheduled to launch in January 2021, VNSW Community Care Navigation, Inc. (CCN) will offer comprehensive life planning, care navigation and wellness services to individuals, families, company employees and residents of senior living and other facilities. Our CCN affiliate will build on VNSW's tradition of providing the highest caliber of care to those who wish to age in place safely and achieve the best possible quality of life as they transition through different life stages. Services include the development and oversight of customized life plans, personal health care navigators and assistance with securing and maximizing entitlements, such as Medicare and Medicaid. For more information, contact Regina Melly at rmelly@vns.org

VNSW Agencies Move to New Location

We are moving! In early October, we will be relocating our headquarters to 1311 Mamaroneck Avenue in White Plains. The new space will accommodate the evolving needs of our staff and our community amidst the fast-changing landscape of home care. In the wake of COVID-19, agency leadership has worked closely with our architectural design team to incorporate social distancing measures and other safeguards to ensure the safety of our staff and our visitors. The new space will also, for the first time, bring together all of our agencies -- VNSW, VNSW at Home, the VNSW Foundation and VNSW Community Care Navigation -- in one contiguous space. This will enable us to better leverage staffing and other complementary resources to provide an enhanced patient experience and a seamless continuum of high-quality home care for the over 10,000 patients we serve annually.



In the Community

NYS Teacher's Union Interviews VNSW RN

VNSW Intake Nurse, Valerie Fitzgerald (photo left), was interviewed by the New York State United Teachers Union (NYSUT) about VNSW's role in COVID-19 care at home. Valerie, who also serves as President of the Westchester Federation of Visiting Nurses, discussed our agency's role as "...the next line of defense, as patients are discharged from hospitals and need follow-up care at home." She also discussed the challenges of securing PPE. We are grateful to NYSUT and their Labor Relations Specialist, Sarah Arbitrio (photo right) for their generous donation of 1,500 surgical masks to our agency. Read the interview [here](#).



Journal News Spotlights VNSW Field Nurse

A May 11th story in The Journal News and lohud.com featured VNSW RN, Joann Bykowski-Warner in their article, "Critical care after the hospital stay." The story pointed out that, "many patients treated for the coronavirus are still contagious when they are discharged from the hospital, and may need support as they build back strength." Joann described the many ways VNSW supports COVID-19 patients, from careful monitoring of lingering symptoms to patient education, including how to do breathing exercises. "Medical stability and support are the keys to a successful recovery at home," Joann observed. Read the story by clicking [here](#).

Educating Peers & the Public



VNSW Director of Patient Services, Joann Parliament, shared her expertise on COVID-19 related issues with diverse audiences throughout the year. She was interviewed by the Putnam County Courier in an April 27th article: "Visiting Nurses Face Challenges Due to COVID-19." Click [here](#) for the story. Joann also provided valuable information on "How to Keep Your Family Safe at Home During COVID-19," in a May 21st interview on the Facebook Live video, "Time to Talk" with Jen Graziano. You can view the video by clicking [here](#). She also served on a panel of health care professionals during a free educational Virtual Round Table Discussion, hosted on May 28, by Artis Senior Living of Briarcliff Manor, on the effects of COVID-19 on homecare and geriatric management services.

WVNS Group President Appointed to Nonprofit Board

Westchester Visiting Nurse Services Group, Inc. (WVNSG) President & CEO, Timothy P. Leddy, was recently appointed to the Board of Directors of the Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle. A New Rochelle resident, Leddy brings to the nonprofit organization over 30 years of experience as a healthcare leader and advocate for accessible, high-quality healthcare for individuals and families in our community.



Annual Gala: Looking Ahead to 2021

Normally we would be providing readers with highlights of the VNSW Foundation's Annual Spring Gala. However, in light of COVID-19, we decided to cancel our 2020 Gala to ensure the safety of our staff and our guests. While we know many missed the opportunity to attend our signature event of the year, we are happy to share some exciting news about next year's festivities. Our 2021 Gala will celebrate VNSW's 120th anniversary – a milestone event that will feature a host of surprises and special guests (date to be announced)! We will be celebrating our 120th anniversary all year long, so stay tuned for news about other activities we have planned for our friends, colleagues and donors in 2021.

Please Donate to our COVID-19 Home Care Response Fund

It is critical to maintain sufficient supplies of Personal Protective Equipment as we continue to care for COVID-19 patients and prepare for possible surges in cases in the months ahead. Your donation will help us to achieve this goal and ensure the safety of our staff, our patients and the broader community.

To make a secure, tax-deductible donation, [click here](#).

VNSW at Home Home Health Aide, Beverly White (left) and VNSW RN, Darnel Amuyal (right) make up the dedicated team caring for VNSW patient Dorothy Hurst.



Staff Honors

Home Care Association of NYS “Home Care Heroes”

VNSW RN, WOCN Laura Maldonado (at right) received well-deserved recognition by the Home Care Association of New York State (HCANYS) as one of their “Home Care Heroes.” Shown here conducting a N-95 fit-test with RN Christine Johansen, Laura has been indispensable to her patients and to other staff members throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Read the story [here](#).

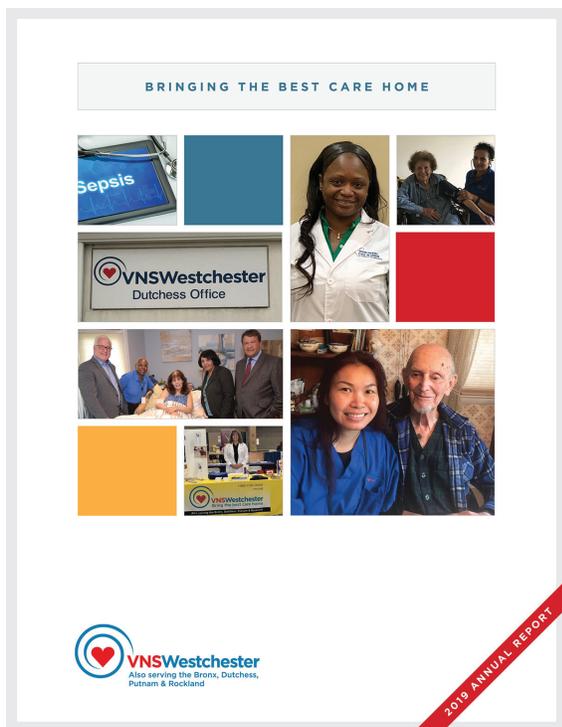


VNSW at Home Home Health Aides, Latoya Connolly (left) and Angel Yohoulamanga (right) were also honored as “Home Care Heroes” by the HCANYS. They are among our team of courageous Aides who bravely, and without question, volunteered to work with COVID-19 patients during the pandemic. To read their story, [click here](#).

“Galleria of Good” Award Winner!

Congratulations to our own Susan Fassett who was chosen as the first winner of the Galleria of White Plains’ “Galleria of Good” contest. This award celebrates local residents and workers who have had a positive impact on the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Susan plays a key role in providing critical support services for our Clinical team, our Home Health Aides and the office staff at VNSW at Home and Visiting Nurse Services in Westchester.





VNSW 2019 Annual Report Available

For a summary of VNSW and WCAH news, activities and a “By the Numbers” review of 2019, click here to download our latest annual report.

Westchester Visiting Nurse Services Group, Inc.

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