



# NEWSLETTER

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**VOL. XVII Issue 2 Fall 2007**

## Hospice Patient Marvels at Program's Impact on Her Life



Hospice Patient Debra McCurrey with  
VNA Northwest Nurse  
Lea Alberghini

*Photo by Maryanne Spring, LPN*

Even if it causes her some physical discomfort, Debra McCurrey likes to laugh heartily. A petite woman with a mischievous twinkle in her dark eyes, "Deb" was a Hospice patient with VNA Northwest during the summer and early fall of 2007.

During an interview at Sharon Health Care Center in August, she expressed praise and affection for the agency staff and Hospice team.

"When I first came into the program, I was on the outs with my family. Lisa (Michetti) got me to bury the hatchet, and it worked out terrific. It would have been bad if it wasn't for them," she said, referring to nurse Lea Alberghini and Lisa, who served as her social worker. They joined Debra for the interview.

"These two make me comfortable. We're just like sisters — I'm waiting for the sleepovers," she said, turning to Lea with a chuckle. "I look forward to visits from them and Libby, my Hospice volunteer," she said.

After reconciling with her mother and siblings, Debra said she began looking forward to their visits and phone calls, too.

Earlier this year, Debra was working for Sharon Hospital as a cook and planning to go back to school to become a medical receptionist. It was then that she became "severely sick" and was diagnosed with lung cancer. She had surgery and tried chemotherapy, "but it was not working," she explained.

After learning her case was terminal, she entered the VNA Northwest Hospice Program in May of this year. "The Hospice team was able to guide me, and I'm comfortable and happy here," she said, referring to her surroundings at Sharon Health Care Center.

"Without Lisa and Lea I wouldn't have been able to make it through this transition," she said. "All I want is to die pain free, and to have someone hold my hand for at least five minutes while I am dying. When I told them this, they said, 'how about 10 minutes?'"

"These beautiful people have been helping me, and they're just like family," she said, adding, "it's really a miracle how strangers can become your family." **Editor's Note:** *In October, Debra McCurrey was voluntarily discharged to the care of her mother, who lives in another area of Connecticut. She is receiving hospice care there.*

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## 8th Annual Golf Tournament a Great Success

Dr. Terrence Ryan, at left in photo, and golf partner John McCarthy enjoyed the 8th Annual VNA Northwest Golf Tournament on Sept. 24. With more than 100 golfers and many new sponsors and donors, this was the most successful tournament to date. All proceeds from the event go directly to support our Hospice and Home Care Programs.

(Photo by Richard Loughney)



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## *November is National Hospice and Palliative Care Month: First Annual Garden Party Supports Hospice*



On September 15, about 50 people enjoyed a sunny Saturday afternoon at the first-of-its-kind Garden Party for VNA Northwest. Victoria Elliot of Portfolio Properties Group and her husband, Dr. Marvin McMillen, sponsored the event on the grounds of their home in Harwinton. They prepared a delicious meal for the appreciative guests, and all proceeds were donated to our Hospice Program.

“It was a wonderful event, and our agency is very grateful to our hosts and to all those who attended or sent donations to the program,” said Nancy Deming, VNA Northwest Executive Director. Plans are underway for another garden party to be held next summer.

### *Nurse Lea Alberghini Named Agency’s New Hospice Director*

VNA Northwest Nurse Lea Alberghini will assume the position of Hospice Director for the agency on November 19. She replaces Lisa Michetti, who took a position closer to her home in New York.

Lea has been an RN since 1985. She obtained her BSN at Sacred Heart University, where she is currently completing her Master’s degree. She has worked at Bridgeport Hospital, Ashlar of Newtown, Bethel Health and Rehabilitation Center and Martha’s Vineyard Association of Nursing. Prior to joining the staff of VNA Northwest, she had extensive Hospice experience through her work in long-term care facilities and home care nursing. Lea and her husband, Chick, live in Newtown.

*Here is a recent letter to VNA Northwest from the friend of a former hospice patient:*

“It has been almost two years since my beloved friend Willy (Wilma) Dailey passed away and, as always, when I think of that dark time your wonderful organization comes to mind. You made a horribly difficult time a bit easier and I will be forever grateful for that.

The young nurse...was always right there for us, ready and willing to do what we needed. She knew from the beginning that Willy was not emotionally ready yet for all that she was offering and she approached it so gently and with such tremendous understanding.

You do wonderful work and I am sure many, many people have benefited from your help and compassion. Just know that your services are invaluable to those of us dealing with such hard times. From the bottom of my heart I thank you. Just an interesting note... W. Bradford Walker delivered three generations in my family (one uncle, my brothers, cousins, nieces, nephews, my children and myself) and my daughter (now 35 years old) was the very last baby he delivered! It is a ‘warm fuzzy’ to think that even long after his death he still provided his loving care to me through VNA Northwest.” --Goshen



*In August, many of our staff members participated in the Tour of the Litchfield Hills, an event supporting the Center for Cancer Care in Torrington.*

*(MaryAnne Spring Photo)*



# Many Join Us for Legacy Tree Dedication

Families of former patients gathered with staff, board members and other supporters of VNA Northwest to formally dedicate our Legacy Tree on June 8. The 6-by-12-foot sculpture was commissioned to symbolize our agency's spirit of compassion and caring, and to honor our donors, patients and friends.

Leaves and doves may be inscribed to commemorate special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries or graduations, or to honor or memorialize specific individuals.

Two brass leaves placed on the tree are engraved with the names of patients who passed away earlier this year, Rocco Lucia of Torrington and Berkley W. Kelsey, Jr. of Falls Village. Mr. Lucia's widow, Laura, and Mr. Kelsey's widow, Susan, participated in the dedication, along with other family members. In photo at right, Board President Art Mulligan presents a rose to Susan Kelsey.

A silver dove placed by the Legacy Tree is engraved with the name of Philip S. Rockefeller. This Litchfield resident and his wife received care from our agency, and he named VNA Northwest as a beneficiary of his estate. Another former patient, Elizabeth Kelleher of Litchfield, died just ten days before her 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in March.



*Art Mulligan with Susan Kelsey*

Her husband Joseph had a dove engraved to commemorate their anniversary, and it is perched among the branches. Legacy Tree contributions go directly toward our Home Care and Hospice programs. To learn more about how you can participate, please call our fund development office at (860) 567-6000.



## Please Keep in Touch!

Our new mailing address is:

**607 Bantam Road, Unit F, Bantam, CT 06750**

If you use the internet and would like to receive periodic updates about VNA Northwest events and services, please send your E-Mail address to [jdunn@vnanw.org](mailto:jdunn@vnanw.org). You may also submit general questions to [info@vnanw.org](mailto:info@vnanw.org).

## *We Now Have a Certified Wound Care Nurse*

Earlier this year, Kristin Callaway, RN, took a week-long skin and wound management course from the Wound Care Education Institute. In the course, she learned about the science behind healing wounds, the best practices in wound care and the most current standards of practice. She is now certified through the National Alliance of Wound Care as a specialist in this important area of patient care.

Kristin has begun visiting patients with wound care needs to offer advice on the best possible plans of treatment.

## Volunteer Opportunities and Training Available

Five individuals have just completed an eight-week hospice volunteer training course conducted at our agency office. If you or someone you know would like to learn about the many volunteer opportunities available at VNA Northwest, please call Patty Anderson, Volunteer Coordinator, at (860) 567-6000.

## Telemonitoring Program to Begin Soon

VNA Northwest has purchased 15 telemonitors to be installed in patients' homes with funding from the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA). In June, the agency received the grant award of \$67,500 to begin a telemonitoring program in our 18-town service area.

VNA Northwest was one of 11 non-profit organizations from Connecticut to receive grants from the Authority.

Telemonitors are easy-to-use devices that measure and report a patient's vital signs and other information that is transmitted to the agency's clinical software system.

Using this technology, VNA Northwest nurses will be alerted to changes in patients' conditions and will be able to make timely interventions when necessary. The agency's goal in implementing the telemonitoring program is to reduce the amount of hospital readmissions and emergency room visits made by patients during their home health lengths of stay.

## *Funding for Medical Devices Comes From Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation*

A grant request from VNA Northwest, Inc. for \$1,500 to purchase medical equipment was approved by Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation, Inc. in September.

With these funds, the agency will buy six new pulse oximeter medical devices. Our nurses use pulse oximeters to measure patients' blood oxygen saturation and pulse rates.



*A shopper browses the men's rack*

### **Thrift Shop Expands**

Thrift Shop Manager Sandy Ray is thrilled with the recent renovation of the New Preston store. "We've added five new racks for clothing. And we're putting new merchandise out daily," she said.

The newly-expanded shop has more wall space to display artwork, framed photographs, clocks and other wall hangings. In addition to more clothing, the children's section now features shelves of colorful books and bins filled with toys.

Some of the items displayed for sale on a recent Tuesday included a Giorgio Armani tuxedo, a wedding gown, a Coach purse and a vintage metal cake plate that played "Happy Birthday."

Proceeds from the VNA Northwest Thrift Shop provide an important source of income to our Home Care and Hospice agency. The shop is located in the Armoury Building (Route 202) in New Preston.

Hours are Tuesdays through Fridays from 10-4, and Saturdays from 10-3. For more information, please call 860-868-0884.

You may bring donations to the Thrift Shop or leave them at the VNA Northwest office in Bantam. Call us at (860) 567-6000 to arrange for pick up.

## **Friends of VNA Northwest's 8th Annual Golf Tournament**

- |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| All About Accessories             | Litchfield Car Wash                |
| Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield | Litchfield Golf Center             |
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*Where the Care Comes to You*

*(MaryAnne Spring Photo)*

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