



## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2020 has certainly been a time of challenges and change here at VNHCH. The COVID 19 pandemic has changed so much - how we deliver care to our patients, how we interact with our community and the type of care our dedicated staff provides on a daily basis.



What has not changed is our commitment to caring for our community, a fact supported by our not missing a single day of service throughout the pandemic from the outset. And it's our promise to continue to do so until its end.

While our quality of care hasn't changed, how we provide care is evolving to meet the need. We are using technology such as telehealth to provide a hybrid model of care, moving some client interactions to phone or services like Zoom. We have modified programs like our Crossings childhood bereavement group, with the support of volunteers who have helped keep us connected even as the meetings have moved to virtual.

If you are looking for a silver lining in this pandemic, we have found it through the amazing support of our community partners. From volunteers sewing face masks and fashioning PPE gowns, to local farms and businesses donating food, our community has come out strong to help us meet the need. This has helped us continue our mission despite the financial challenges COVID 19 has presented, and we know we can count on your continued support to see us through.

We are proud of the work of our staff and the support of our board, volunteers and community. Their actions have shown us how to have hope in a time of hardship.

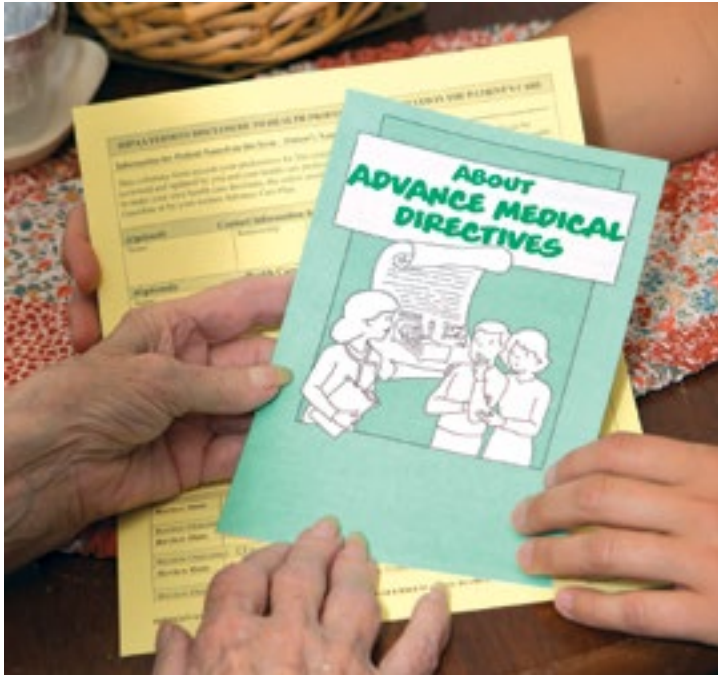
Sandy Ruka, RN  
Executive Director

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# ADVANCE CARE PLANNING DURING A PANDEMIC

According to the National Institute on Aging, advance care planning is not just about old age. At any age, a medical crisis could leave a person too ill to make healthcare decisions.



*“I signed the document, the ICU nurse witnessed it then it was notarized. It is now part of my medical record. My family was very emotional and concerned for me. I was so ill. Having the advance directive completed let them know exactly what I wanted.”*

With people of all ages catching COVID-19, it’s never been more important to have an advance directive. VNHCH has offered advance care planning services for many years. With the onset of a pandemic, VNHCH met the need by pivoting to providing them virtually to help hospitalized patients with COVID, or anyone who prefers to avoid face to face contact.

In mid-March 2020, the first COVID cases began appearing in Carroll County, NH. That’s when VNHCH advance care planning coordinator Jennifer Robinson got a phone call that a patient in the ICU at Memorial Hospital wanted to create an advance directive. The patient was diagnosed with COVID pneumonia and did not have advance directives created to guide the family and healthcare providers. The patient, who wishes to remain anonymous, shared their story.

“I wanted my family to know my preferences and I hadn’t discussed it with them before I was hospitalized. A friend contacted VNHCH on my behalf and put them in touch with me. They arranged for me to get the paperwork, then

went through it step by step with me using Facetime on my iPhone. I hadn’t really thought about these decisions before and she helped me to clarify what I wanted. She knew the ins and outs of it. She allowed me to be more specific. I had my son set up as my healthcare proxy, but she advised me to also name a friend who is not related, so that a second person can step in. I never would have thought of that.”

“I signed the document, the ICU nurse witnessed it then it was notarized. It is now part of my medical record. My family was very emotional and concerned for me. I was so ill. Having the advance directive completed let them know exactly what I wanted. I’d recommend that people get an advance directive. You feel more confident. Anything can happen at any time.”

VNHCH’s advance care planning coordinator Jennifer Robison shared the story from her perspective.

“I got the call and was determined to figure out how to make it possible. I did it virtually to walk her through it ... we used Facetime, but now we use Zoom for Healthcare. Seeing each others’ faces helped us have the conversation. It was awesome to be able to help her come up with this plan and document. If there’s ever been a time you need a document like this, it’s now.”

In this case, the patient had nurses in the ICU to witness and notarize her document. In cases where there are no witnesses available, NH’s governor had authorized remote notarization of documents. VNHCH can offer this service to those who may be living alone and wish to complete advance directives from home.

Jennifer continued, “We also go to people’s houses to complete the documents, but some are still nervous about having anyone come to their home. If someone needs it, they can just call and I can have it notarized and recorded and saved. I would see them sign the document, then they would mail it to me, and I would notarize it. We save the Zoom recording for a certain period of time to comply with the law. We put a copy in their records with us, or I get an original back to them and then a copy to their one or two healthcare proxies. I also deliver it to their primary care doctor and their hospital, such as Memorial.”

*Advance Care Planning During a Pandemic:*  
**Continued on page 3**

# CROSSINGS BEREAVEMENT GROUP EVOLVES

Since 2017, VNHCH has offered free bereavement services to children and teens, ages 3-18, and their adult caregivers, supporting grieving from loss through community.

Now, in the wake of COVID, Crossings has evolved to meet the needs of these families while also addressing the need to stay socially distanced. VNHCH used an innovative approach that was both virtual and in the home.

An important part of Crossings, pre-COVID, was the sharing of a group meal as part of the gathering. To continue this practice even as the meetings became virtual, VNHCH volunteers delivered healthy dinners to their door so that all had the same meals “together.”

Crossings program manager Julie Lanoie shared, “Crossings has offered two virtual bereavement groups over the summer. To continue the group meals, we partner with Farm to Table who provides the food at a discounted rate. We followed the lead of national bereavement programs to see what they were doing. We have continued to offer one on one bereavement counseling by phone.”

Other local partners included Mountain Beet Farm in Effingham, who donated greens for the salads. VNHCH volunteers made salads and sweets, in addition to delivering the meals.

Those who wish to support Crossings may donate a dinner for a bereaved family for \$25, or any dollar donation to help out.



*“...even as the meetings became virtual, VNHCH volunteers delivered healthy dinners to their door so that all had the same meals “together.””*

*Advance Care Planning During a Pandemic: Continued from page 2*

Jennifer highly recommends that everyone have an advance directive on file. “It’s a gift for your family just in case anything was to happen. It puts in place exactly what you want and there’s no question. Your family doesn’t have to stress about what you would or would not want because they’ll know.”

To create your advance care directive, whether in person or virtually, call VNHCH 603-356-7006 or call Jennifer directly at 478-951-4543.

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Andrea Masters

2020-2022

Gail Paine

2020-2022

Diane Ryan

2020-2022

Susan Ruka

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## STAFF HIGHLIGHT



VNHCH employs 54 dedicated professionals, with backgrounds ranging from nursing to physical therapy to social work to administration. Throughout this difficult year, despite COVID-19 and operating through a pandemic, they tirelessly tended to the needs of our patients. While they are all an indispensable part of our team, we'd like to call out the fine work of Ashlee Chaine.

Ashlee Chaine received the 2020 Community Service Partner Award by the Partnership for Public Health. The award stated that "Ashlee has been instrumental in reaching out wherever needed and helping isolated older folks with their long-term care (LTC) applications - both pending and needing to apply. Her commitment and compassion are evident in her work with community members. Ashlee truly is a caregiver for the community she serves and an incredible community partner to work with."

"We extend our deep appreciation and sincere gratitude to Ashlee Chaine of Visiting Nurse Home Care & Hospice of Carroll County as a Partnership for Public Health 2020 Community Service Partner Award Recipient."

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## KATHLEEN SHEEHAN SCHOLARSHIP

Our very own Regine Chapman was awarded the Kathleen Sheehan Memorial Award. We are proud to watch her progress through school and toward a rewarding nursing career.



# VOLUNTEER PROFILE

VNHCH is grateful for the 40+ volunteers who donate their time, talents and compassion, supporting programs ranging from Crossings Childhood Bereavement Group to our hospice services. Due to COVID, volunteer time is being used differently. For instance, volunteers help with courier runs with supplies. When a nurse does a lab draw, a volunteer drives to the hospital so the nurse has more clinical time.

While we greatly value the work of all our volunteers, we would like to highlight one volunteer for this report, who supports our hospice program.

Conway Daily Sun staff photographer Jamie Gemetti was initially drawn to volunteer for hospice due to his spiritual practice of Zen Buddhism.

Jamie shared his thoughts on what drew him to volunteer, “I’d been contemplating the end of life and what is life. After you sit with it for a long time, you get a sense of compassion for those who are going through that mystery. I wanted to help people and share that experience and be there for families.”



Jamie got involved after hearing about an upcoming hospice volunteer class that VNHCH was offering. “They were going to do a class and I’d been talking about it and wanting to volunteer and learn about it. I called, had an interview, then joined the class. It was about 7-9 classes over a number of weeks. It really gave me an appreciation for the courage it takes to die, and an appreciation for the ability to bear witness to it without judgement. It’s part of my practice and part of the practice for hospice volunteers, just being there for families and patients. Lots of time at the end of life, hardships come up and lots of emotional things. Volunteers can be ears and eyes. It lets the patients be themselves and go through their own process.”

Hospice usually takes place in the patients’ homes, though services are also offered at the Merriman House nursing home. An average volunteer visit is 1-3 hours. It is also for respite for the caregiver.

Jamie offered, “To anyone considering volunteering, I would say it’s a great idea because for me it made my life more rich. I think it helps make the inevitable death more real. A great part is connecting to the caregiver as well as the dying person.”

Currently, the hospice volunteer program is on hold due to COVID, as are most volunteer services for VNHCH. Executive Director Sandy Ruka stated, “For the health of volunteers, we are doing essential visits only and have suspended volunteer home visits for the time being. The safety of our volunteers and patients are our priority.”

## VNHCH BY THE NUMBERS

### FISCAL YEAR 2020

- **Homecare Visits**  
19,510
- **Homecare Patients**  
763
- **Hospice Visits**  
1,677
- **Hospice Patients**  
86
- **Miles Driven**  
183,404

## FINANCIAL REPORT - Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2020

### Where the Money Comes From:

#### Operating Income

Medicare	\$1,963,306
Medicaid	\$284,607
Private	\$609,306
Bad Debt	(\$29,926)
<b>Total Patient Services Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,827,293</b>
Grant	\$225,496
Other	\$263,009
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,315,798</b>

### Where the Money Goes:

#### Operating Expenses

Direct Expenses	\$2,701,974
All Other Expenses	\$543,949
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,245,923</b>
<b>Gain From Operations</b>	<b>\$69,875</b>
Contributions / FundRaising	\$84,105
Investment Income	\$69,406
Change in Fair Value	\$82,285
<b>Total Non-Oper / Gains</b>	<b>\$235,796</b>
<b>Excess Revenue over expenses</b>	<b>\$305,671</b>

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## FOUNDATIONS SUPPORT CROSSINGS, PALLIATIVE CARE AND ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

This last year we applied for funding for programs including Palliative Care, Simple Comforts supports for low-income clients, and advance care planning. We'd like to thank the NH Charitable Foundation, New Hampshire Electric Co-op Foundation, Samuel P. Hunt Foundation and New England Grassroots Environment Fund for their generous support.

We also made progress with a grant funded initiative underwritten by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation in 2019. It supported the creation of a concept plan for a computer app that would "gamify" the creation of an advance care directive.

While advance care planning is often encouraged for older adults, people of all ages should have them in place. The purpose of this app is to make the process interesting and appealing to a younger demographic. It will allow users of all ages to play through different scenarios and capture their thoughts on how they would want their wishes to be honored.

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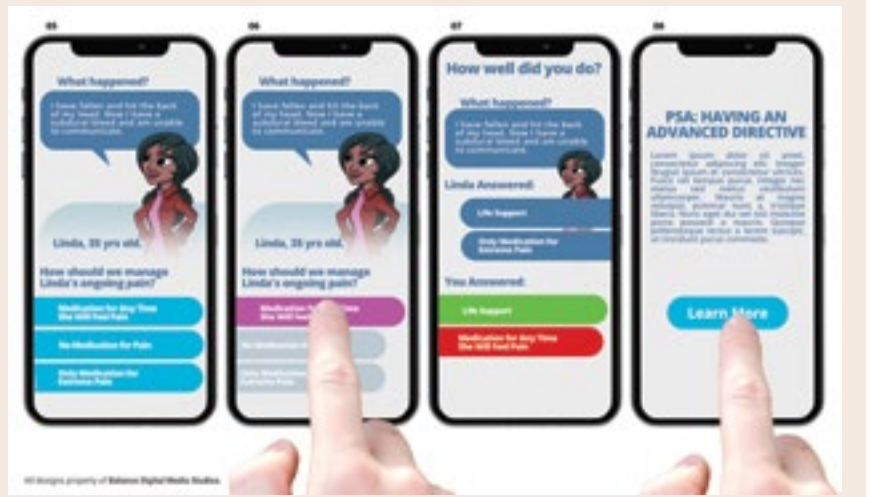
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To develop the app “blueprint,” VNHCH worked with Balance Studios, a digital design agency out of Wisconsin, who has also created apps for the Smithsonian Institute.

While this initial grant supported this first step towards developing the full app, the blueprint will provide the detail and scope necessary to garner additional foundation support to proceed with the project. When it's complete, the vision is that it could be distributed nationwide.





*“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’”*  
- Fred Rogers

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## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS LEND SUPPORT DURING COVID

In times of difficulty, it’s good to have friends. Hospice Program and Volunteer Manager Julie Lanoie shared her story of how the community came together during these difficult times.

Early on, masks were in short supply everywhere. While they were difficult to procure through the traditional channels, there was a network of volunteers willing to meet the need.

Julie explained, “We started a volunteer program in March to ensure everyone had access to masks. A team worked to streamline what our design would be and we set up a courier system to get volunteers the supplies to different people sewing to manage the logistics.” Help also came in the form of financial assistance from the New England Grassroots Foundation who donated \$1,000.

From there, the good will spread. “In May we were contacted by Tamworth Farmers Market which was reopening. We were asked if we would be willing to provide masks at the Market. It was a mutual aid effort to ensure everyone would be safe.”

“Once that need was met with free masks, we made them available at a low cost. We then donated the mask proceeds to the SNAP program.” SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families. “We’ve raised over \$5,000 for SNAP.”

To purchase a mask with net proceeds donated to VNHCH, go to The Local Grocer in North Conway or Spice & Grain in Fryeburg.

www.VNHCH.org

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PO Box 432  
North Conway, NH 03860

