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LSRVNA at Home

The Newsletter of the
Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice

Autumn 2020

A TIME OF CHALLENGE...AND CELEBRATION

While the tragedy and hardship of Covid-19 cannot be overstated, Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice adapted quickly and successfully. Through the ingenuity, hard work, flexibility and dedication of our entire team, we have continued to provide the care that helps people stay in the homes they love. We have learned a lot since the early days of the pandemic, making unanticipated changes and, surprisingly, realizing these changes could have a positive impact for years to come:

- We adapt...and adapt well. Whether that is staff taking on new roles, shifting daily priorities, exploring creative ways to secure personal protective equipment, revising policies and safety guidelines, and countless other daily adjustments, we adapt.
- We lean on the expertise of the CDC and State of NH by attending weekly, sometimes daily, conference calls to follow ever-changing information and guidelines.
- We focus our energy not only on patients, but on staff. Finding new ways to communicate with employees is vital in our strange new remote world. Weekly calls and e-mail updates to engage the entire team, inspiring musical moments, virtual support groups for all staff, virtual "meet and greets" for new staff, surveys to ask how the team is doing, remote lunches...and more...reflect how much communicating matters.
- With extra support from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and The CARES Act, and with a strong financial foundation in place, we have experienced no lay-offs. We have also been able to sustain staff benefits and pay employees the majority of their regular wages even when hours needed to be reduced, sometimes significantly. Why? Because, after all, without our people we wouldn't be much! Keeping them whole is essential.
- With the cancellation of the *Women Who Make A Difference Luncheon*, we again shifted gears and asked past supporters to give to our "Covid-19 Employee Assistance Fund," providing extra help with basic needs such as food, fuel, rent and utilities for any team member struggling to close this gap.

50 YEAR GIVING CHALLENGE

In honor of our 50th Anniversary, and made possible by the extraordinary dedication of an anonymous donor from our community, first-time or increased annual donations this year will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to \$50,000!

Charitable organizations like us rely on consistent and diverse annual support as the foundation for a culture of philanthropy. Because few investments yield anything more important than health and quality of life, let's embrace the incredible opportunity before us and meet the challenge!

Visit
lakesunapeevna.org/about/celebrating-50-years
for 50th Anniversary updates!

Contact Cathy Raymond
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- Over 30 office staff began working from home almost overnight, requiring us to rethink our processes and secure technology, such as laptops, quickly...and we did.
- We incorporated new approaches and technology such as virtual meetings with staff and virtual visits with patients, increasing efficiency, meeting health needs and ensuring safety.
- Celebrating our 50th Anniversary, even when traditional gatherings are not possible, goes on! Whether through a series of ads reflecting historic moments, magazine articles honoring this milestone, pins, banners and flags showing our pride ... or an exciting matching gift challenge ... we know the value of celebrating, of seeing the gifts perhaps hidden behind the challenges.

2020 is a year like no other. But through it all we have relied upon the many strengths we knew we had...and have proven beyond doubt ... always looking to the future, always blessed by the confidence and generosity of our community.

Providing care in 32+ towns

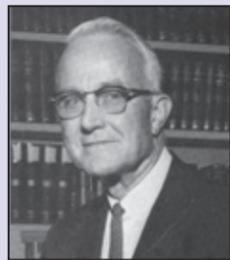


- Home Health Care
- Private Personal Care
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603-526-4077

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A LASTING IMPACT



Dr. John L. Norris Society

A resilient organization can't predict the future but can prepare for it. If Covid-19 has revealed anything it is that our lives and the challenges we face can change suddenly and significantly. Just as Dr. Norris had a vision for home care so many years ago, members of the society that bears his name envision a strong future for Lake Sunapee VNA & Hospice. By naming the agency a beneficiary of their estate plans, often through a simple bequest, their thoughtful planning leaves a legacy to help ensure that home care remains an impactful presence for another 50 years! Contact Cathy Raymond for information at 603-526-4077 x231 or craymond@lakesunapeevna.org



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Letter to the Community

Like most health care organizations, our preparations for 2020 began early in 2019. We held numerous meetings to plan for regulatory changes that would significantly impact our home care program, and adjust to new Medicare billing changes going into effect in 2020. We developed education plans for mandatory dementia training required for virtually all our staff. Another exciting *Women Who Make A Difference Luncheon* was taking shape. And to top it all off, we began plans to celebrate our 50th anniversary this year ... 50 years of providing care to people in their homes throughout the communities we serve. Focusing on this historic milestone was creating great excitement as we brainstormed a variety of activities, including a special summer gala that would bring us together to celebrate the incredible work we have done over five decades. I'm guessing you know what happened!

Beginning in early March, regulatory changes were no longer a priority. Billing changes and dementia education requirements were put on hold. The *Women Who Make A Difference Luncheon* would not be taking place. And live events for our 50th Anniversary, including our annual party, were cancelled. Covid-19 arrived and altered the world we live in, forcing us to adapt to ensure that our core services would continue safely and responsibly regardless of the extent of the pandemic. And we did adapt, as we have for 50 years. Galas can be rescheduled ... and will be for 2021. But what I now see as perhaps the greatest reason to celebrate, this year and always, is the exceptional support shared by you and so many others. Since 1970, these relationships have been the foundation of Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice, giving us the strength to endure.

Thank you.
Jim Culhane, *President & CEO*



COVID-19: Personal Reflections from Staff



GREG COYLE, RN Case Manager: This pandemic has caused me to look in the mirror and remember why I chose nursing: to care for, educate and serve my community. My older son was preparing to deploy on the USS Mercy. My youngest son was sent home from West Point and my daughters came home too. I remember talking to my family about how Covid was going to change us. Maintaining a safe balance was difficult in the beginning, and the not-knowing was even harder. I can tell you that the leadership and staff of Lake Sunapee VNA worked as a team in assisting hospitals and the surrounding areas, making the securing of personal protective equipment (PPE) a top priority. Educating our patients and their families was also a priority. From the way we wash our hands to our careful use of all PPE, I feel we are a vital part of making our region a better and safer place. The community's support was and still is incredible. Receiving masks made by my neighbors, for instance, was one of many humbling experiences. As bad as Covid is, it has made me see the outpouring of love from so many.



CHERIE LEAVITT, Paraprofessional Scheduler: I schedule visits for Home Health Aides, Personal Care Service Providers and Homemakers. We have a wonderful team and it's a pleasure to work with each person. I can count on them to go the extra mile and always give clients what they need and deserve. Since working from home due to Covid-19, I do have fewer interruptions and commotion. Not having to commute leaves me with more time to get schedules done as early as possible so the field staff can get their days started and best use their time. While I miss seeing colleagues (some communication is just better face-to-face!) and feel a bit of a disconnect at times, I was pleasantly surprised to find that I really do like working from home 80% of the time. Change is tough, but we have all done our very best and it's working. My husband had a great idea to put in a pool this summer, probably the best thing that happened during these uncertain times. We have enjoyed it tremendously, especially when our grandchildren come for a visit!



KIM BORCUK, Personal Care Service Provider: I joined Lake Sunapee VNA in February 2020. Covid-19 has impacted my life in a few challenging ways but family sticks out most to me. My beautiful daughter and her two children resided with my husband and I when the pandemic broke out. This required us to make some quick changes to protect the grandchildren, one of which has lung issues. My husband and I decided it would be best to stay in our RV to avoid contact with the children. When we realized this pandemic was not going to go away anytime soon, we decided it was best just to settle into another home altogether. How we deal with negative events can only make us stronger moving forward. This also applies to the care I give to each and every client. All great changes are preceded by chaos, so be kind and patient.



TERRY HALL, Quality Review Nurse: Covid-19 has impacted my role in several ways, both positive and negative. In terms of the positives, it has "forced our hand" to work remotely, which subsequently enabled us to better use existing technologies that allow us to meet and communicate from a distance. One negative for me personally was that we initially had a significant drop-off in volume of new referrals due to the pandemic. This made it challenging in terms of filling an 8-hour workday. The agency was great, though, in the strong support it provided to lessen the financial impact due to a decreased workload. I miss being able to see my office colleagues in person during this time, but we are all learning new ways to connect and still stay safe.



LORI O'CONNOR, Volunteer Manager/Staffing and Bereavement Assistant: The greatest impact that Covid-19 has had on my role is that all volunteer services, other than The Renaissance Shoppe volunteers, have been placed on hold since March. As a result, my daily work in the beginning had dropped from 8 hours to 2-3 hours a day. As time went on, I leaned further into my roles as Bereavement/Staffing Assistant, took on more administrative responsibilities, furthered my education and connected with staff members in new ways, specifically the Spiritual Care Team. This whole experience has been hard, but I am grateful beyond words to work with such an amazing team and an even more amazing organization.



GEORGE GAGNON, Physical Therapy Assistant: Covid-19 has made me even more focused on and attentive to hygiene practices and the safety of our patients and has definitely made me more computer literate, if that's possible! One of the hardest parts for me in this new normal is wearing a mask, which I know is essential but does make me hotter and less comfortable especially when exerting. I've really liked team meetings via computer because it's a big timesaver. When meetings were held in-person, often at 8:00 am, I left home very early and couldn't make my daily calls to patients before I left because most of them would still be sleeping. With virtual meetings I can contact the patients on my schedule earlier, which is reassuring to them and helps my day run more smoothly. While I don't miss trying to find a restroom while out on the road, I do miss the face-to-face time with my team! Early on in the crisis when our volume dropped, I appreciated extra time at home when I was able to get to long-awaited unfinished projects on my 239 year old house, and fully appreciate the fragility of life with my 8 grandchildren and great grandchildren.



LYNNE NEUWIRT, Occupational Therapist: In the beginning when we as an agency were trying to navigate our way through the unknown complexities of Covid-19, I felt very stressed. First because there was so much that we didn't know about how the virus was transmitted, and because we were learning together how best to implement precautions. Once I started wearing a mask in people's homes, I realized how much I rely on a smile to communicate. I really had to adapt and work on concentrating to let my smile come through my voice to best connect with patients and put them at ease. From a personal perspective, I worried about how to keep my family protected from an illness that I could be at risk for contracting. I live with someone who has heart disease and although relatively healthy, it was a real concern of mine. Although much of my fear has dissipated because we know so much more today, I feel stress about how long it will be before I can see my children, two of whom can visit only by plane. While each day can feel harder not knowing when I can safely spend time with family, each day also gets easier in some ways as I get more accustomed to the changes that have had to take place.



GRACE RAPETTI, Music Therapist: These challenging last several months have been a lesson in just how essential human connection is for our well-being. Since physical visits have been put on hold at most of our skilled nursing facilities, I have started offering outdoor concerts on the lawns to combat patient isolation, provide a sense of togetherness and keep everyone safe and protected. It has been incredibly moving to witness our patient responses, including a recent facility performance where patients waved white handkerchiefs out of open windows. This time of Covid-19 can easily feel so isolating and unfamiliar but, as a music therapist, I'm forging new inroads in this unfamiliar landscape so that our patients are still offered comfort, familiarity and opportunity for connection.