Dear Friends:

Recently, Visiting Nurse & Health Services of Connecticut announced that for the fourth consecutive year it has been named to the 2010 HomeCare Elite, a compilation of the most successful Medicare-certified home health care providers in the United States. This annual review identifies the Top 500 of agencies, ranked by an analysis of performance measures in quality outcomes, quality improvement and financial performance.

Being noted as one of the top performers in the nation in this very competitive environment shows that VNHSC is dedicated to providing patients with optimum care while performing at the highest level.

We see our mission as a sacred trust between VNHSC and the residents of the 25 towns we service throughout north central Connecticut. We not only provide exceptional, personal health care, but also promise that we will continue to be here for a long as people need us. We are an institution on which hundreds of patients and families rely on every day. Without us, their wounds cannot be healed, their pains cannot be abated, their sorrows cannot be soothed, their loneliness cannot be filled. It is an awesome responsibility, and we strive each day to be there where and when we are needed.

So, this issue of Pathways To Caring is a celebration of our accomplishments, and a testament to our commitment to provide excellence in care, one patient at a time.

On behalf of the board of directors, our incomparable staff and volunteers, we cannot thank you enough for your contributions. And, especially we thank you for believing in our mission and helping us to care for your neighbors and family.

Sincerely,

Judy Stone
Planned Giving Advisor
Dear Friends,

Last month Claudia Marcinczyk, CEO/President of VNA East and I hosted two breakfast meetings at VNHS C for both federal and state legislators, health care providers, and community leaders. The purpose of the gathering was to educate the attendees on the negative draconian impact the proposed Medicare home health reimbursement reduction will have on home health care providers.

At the October 4th presentation, we urged federal legislators to support Senate Bill 3315 and House Bill 5802 entitled “The Home Health Care Access Protection Act”. The Bill calls for the establishment of a transparent process for determining whether payment cuts are needed to account for improper changes in the “case mix scoring”. In my message I explained that this act would require the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to work with the home health care industry to develop criteria and examine a valid sample of actual medical records rather than relying on abstract and hypothetical statistical extrapolations which we believe have not fully explained change in real patient acuity.

At the October 20th breakfast we urged state legislators to invest in home health care by enacting Medicaid rate increases. State legislators were encouraged to revisit last year’s Senate Bill 1122. We showed them how home based care is a more cost effective way to treat patients with ongoing health problems than extended hospital stays and explained that if home health care providers are not being given increased reimbursement rates, they will be unable to continue to provide quality care. In fact, the proposed reduction will put some agencies at high risk of closure.

US Congressman Joe Courtney addressed the group. And, State Senator Prague invited both Claudia and I to consider addressing members of the legislature at the State Capital and share the aggregate data depicting the dire situation that home care agencies are facing due to reimbursement and funding cuts.

While the challenges we face are many, intuitively and optimistically we understand that with challenge comes opportunity. Be assured that VNHS C is well positioned to meet those challenges and will be here to witness the days of prosperity for home health care providers.

Sincerely,

Todd Rose, President/CEO
Welcome

VNHCS is pleased to announce that we have a new staff member. Janet Gallugi, RN, BSN, joined the agency in July as Vice President of Marketing & Community Development. Janet’s role is principally to execute the agency’s strategic growth plan with a focus on developing partnerships and cultivating new referral sources.

Prior to joining VNHSC, Janet was Vice President of Marketing & Private Duty Services at VNA HealthCare. Janet and her husband live in South Windsor and are the parents of three grown daughters.

Generous Supporters

Jimmy Paradise Memorial Golf Outing

The Jimmy Paradise Memorial Golf Outing, founded in 2005 by Paula Paradise, raises money for North Central Hospice & Palliative Care, a program of VNHSC. Paula Paradise first experienced hospice in 2002 with the passing of her father after he lost his battle with cancer. Two years later, in November of 2004, Paula lost her husband of 21 years to the same disease. Following the death of her husband Jimmy, Paula became a strong advocate for hospice care and is committed to telling others about the peace and dignity that allows every person and family to participate fully in this stage of life.

Swiss Cleaners

Swiss Cleaners and Lite 100.5 FM WRCH partner on an annual basis to host a fund drive benefiting North Central Hospice & Palliative Care. Swiss Cleaners, family owned and operated since 1913, donates a portion of the proceeds of incoming orders from all 8 locations. Through this campaign, Swiss Cleaners has contributed over $35,000 to support specialty services of North Central Hospice & Palliative Care.

“CAST” Fund Raising Event

At a recent fund raising event held at the Funny Bond Comedy Club at Buckland Hills, Manchester three community agencies representing “Community Allies Serving Together” (CAST) welcomed a crowd of more than 150 for an evening of laughter and fun.

Collectively Hockanum Valley Community Council, Woodlake at Tolland, and Visiting Nurse & Health Services of Connecticut provide needed care and support to thousands of individuals in our communities. Together the three organizations provide services ranging from basic human needs such as the provision of food, clothing and transportation to complex medical and mental health care, rehabilitative services and compassionate end-of-life hospice care.

Hospice & Palliative Care
Tree of Life

The 3rd annual HOSPICE TREE OF LIFE celebration will take place on Thursday, December 9, 2010 beginning at 6 p.m. at the Vernon Circle (junction of Route 83 and 30). As in the past, the tree will shine throughout the holiday season with thousands of lights in remembrance/honor of those we love.

To purchase a light(s) please call Pat Callahan at 860-872-9163, x2221. Final date for name(s) of those to appear on the Hospice Memorial Banner is November 26th. Lights may be purchased at the event, however names will not appear on the banner.
The Visiting Nurse & Health Services of Connecticut

ENDOWMENT FUND

In 1998, the Board of Directors of VNHSC, on the recommendation of the Development Committee, voted to establish an endowment fund to provide for care rendered to clients of the agency who demonstrated a financial need and an inability to privately pay for the cost of such care, now and in the future. The modest sum of $100,000 was designated to start the fund which today approaches $2 million.

THE CORNELIA CIRCLE

Early in 1912, a group of dedicated women known as “The Cornelia Circle” chose as its annual theme “Women’s Work in Modern Times”. This led to a study of family and welfare problems in the community and the need for a public health nursing association.

Following a meeting in 1913 at the Superior Court in Rockville, it was voted to establish the Rockville Public Health Nursing Association.

Those who contribute to the Cornelia Circle also contribute to the health of our community. Members receive recognition of their generosity in the annual report of VNHSC and are invited to special events throughout the year.

Member levels include:

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<td>$5,000-$9,999</td>
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<td>Bronze</td>
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For additional information on other ways to support VNHSC, please contact Judy Stone, Planned Giving Advisor at 872-9163, ext. 2465.
VNHSC Planned Giving Corner:

When a family member returns home to recover from an illness or injury, you call and rely upon the skilled staff at Visiting Nurse and Health Care Services of Connecticut (VNSHC) for assistance. When a loved one faces a life-ending illness, you call and rely upon the care and support of the hospice team at VNSHC. VNSHC provides your family with expert care regardless of their ability to pay. However, providing these services requires consistent and sustained funding of VNSHC. Forward thinking organizations like VNSHC must look beyond the annual budget cycles and inherent fluctuations in Federal and State funding to establish a stable and independent financial base that they can draw upon in times of need.

Development and use of planned giving and endowment programs provide additional funding beyond Medicare, Medicaid and private health insurance. One major source of this funding is the public support we receive from family and friends like you. There are many ways to give, so please consider helping VNSHC continue to provide services to your community and loved ones by making a donation to VNSHC, charitable bequest to VNSHC, or designating VNSHC as a beneficiary of an asset.

With pending changes in the income tax and estate tax laws, making a donation of appreciated assets rather than cash may provide more benefits than ever. An immediate donation of an appreciated asset allows you to claim a charitable deduction on your income tax return for up to the fair market value of the asset donated and avoid income taxes on its sale. Consider for example, Jack and Jill, who have each decided to make a $50,000 donation to VNSHC in memory of their Mother. Jack and Jill each own $50,000 worth of stock which they bought for just $10,000 several years ago. Jack sells his stock and donates the $50,000 in cash to VNSHC. He receives a $50,000 charitable deduction for income tax purposes, but must report and pay taxes on the $40,000 capital gain from the sale of the stock. Smart sister Jill, before making her donation, discussed it with her tax advisor and instead of selling the stock and donating cash to VNSHC, she donates the actual stock to VNSHC. Jill receives the same $50,000 charitable deduction as Jack, but avoids having to pay the income tax on the sale of the stock. VNSHC is thrilled to receive the stock donation from Jill, and as a tax-exempt entity, it can sell the stock and convert it to cash without paying any tax. In addition, if Jack or Jill would otherwise be subject to estate taxation (scheduled to apply for taxable assets in excess of $1 million in 2011), they have effectively removed $50,000 plus any future appreciation in the value of the stock from their taxable estates.

On another note, for those of you considering donations to VNSHC who are actively working, consider discussing your intent with your employer. Many employers have programs that allow the employees to set aside a portion of their regular paychecks to be applied toward a charitable donation of the employee’s choice. The regular set-aside may be small, but the cumulative donation over time can be significant. In addition, if asked, many employers are willing to match all or a part of the charitable donations made by their employees, so don’t miss out on this opportunity to leverage a small regular donation into a large contribution to VNSHC.

With planned giving to VNSHC, we offer you the opportunity to make a lasting gift to the well-being of your community. If you are interested in discussing options for making your gift to VNSHC, please contact a member of VNSHC’s planned-giving staff. More information on giving to VNSHC can be found on the VNSHC website at www.vnhsc.org. Remember, at budget time and throughout the year, VNSHC needs your help and compassion in maintaining its ability to provide quality care and services to your community.

Stephen F. Sutton
Former Chairman of the Board, VNSHC
Attorney / CPA
Kahan, Kerensky & Capossela, LLP
Our Commitment to Quality Care is Clear

Providing home health care is a very unique, and a wonderful experience. It is a service that is challenging and gives one a sense of accomplishment. There is nothing better than caring for and serving a fellow human being.

As the industry moves toward a pay-for-performance reimbursement system, greater demands for compliance with diagnosis coding, best practices of care, home care regulation, public reporting of care outcomes have meant strong leadership in all things related to quality.

Under the guidance of Rita Grimes, MSN, HCS-D, COS-C, Vice President of Performance and Quality, VNHS C’s strong quality improvement program continuously redefines its scope and practice in response to the industry’s growing emphasis on doing the right thing at the right time to meet patient and family care needs.

As early as 2003, Rita recognized the need for an expanded role in quality when she incorporated utilization functions into the department. Since then the department has expanded to include diagnosis coding and audit specialists and a clinical education specialist. This represented a major commitment to compliance, clinical care and education to ensure positive effects of our services on patients and families.

Rita has led numerous quality initiatives to continually improve the integrity of the electronic health record (EHR), reliability of documentation and, improvement in patient satisfaction. It is anticipated that publically reported patient outcomes, re-hospitalization rates and patient satisfaction will factor greatly into value-based purchasing by payers.

To assure compliance, documentation for compliance with regulation, patient safety and adherence to agency care practices requires continuous oversight. Documentation is reviewed throughout the records cycle to ensure the record accurately reflects the patient condition that led to care decisions and services rendered. This year the VNHS C achieved an all time high of 98% for diagnosis coding, exceeding the national homecare accuracy rates.

The department also plays a major role in investigation of claims for real or potential rejection. The department audits throughout the record cycle to ensure or correct documentation to be certain that accurate representation of the patient condition and payments for which the agency is due.

Future challenges are the preparation for the advent of electronic health information exchange, personal health record, national adoption of the next version of diagnosis codes and chronic disease management initiatives. In preparation the department is setting documentation standards, use of templates and care protocols based on best practices. The ultimate goal is to improve care through information sharing across all provider settings.

The public reporting of health care quality data is a good thing. At VNHS C we strive for excellence in patient care. As we look to the future, we will continue to be open, honest, and clear about the things we do to take care of our patients and the result of that care.
When speaking of Frances Segal, one could say she is a mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. However, that hardly begins to describe this exceptional lady.

At age 101, Frances is a respected expert in literature. She has authored three books, is a poet, and in 1994, at age 84, graduated with an Associate of General Studies degree from Manchester Community College.

Born in Danielson, Connecticut on August 11, 1909, Frances graduated from Bryant College with a Bachelor of Commercial Science degree. Following graduation in 1928, she applied to teach at the Norwich Free Academy but was told while very well qualified, she was “too young” to teach high school.

While residing in Norwich, CT, Frances met her future husband, Dr. Jacob Segal. On completion of medical school, Dr. Segal, a cardiologist, opened his practice in Framingham, Massachusetts. Not long after he suggested that since he was earning $60 a week and owned an automobile, it was time for them to consider marriage. Soon after the birth of their two sons, Joseph, an attorney in New London, and Robert, a Doctor of Forensic Pathology, the family moved to Manchester. Dr. Segal served as Chief of Cardiology at Manchester Memorial Hospital for many years.

Following her husband’s passing in 1970, Frances began spending winters in Spain. Later she joined Elderhostel and visited nearly every country in Europe as well as Israel, Thailand, Egypt, China, Japan and “a few islands”. Interestingly, she still continues to correspond with families of travelers she met along the way. With some assistance from VNHSC’s “A Caring Hand” program, Frances continues to maintain her independence. She does her own meal preparation and enjoys weekly grocery shopping.

Back in college again, Frances takes two classes, one on Tuesday and the other Thursday. A security guard escorts Frances to her class and Dial-A-Ride is available to take her to and from school.

While visiting the college bookstore Frances struck up a conversation with a student who told her she was a single, working parent and was struggling to make ends meet in her quest to complete her education. Soon after, “The Frances Segal Book Fund” was established to assist young women in similar circumstances.

When asked the secret to longevity Frances is quick to say: “That’s simple. Avoid stress, eat healthy foods, walk every day ‘so as not to clog the arteries’ and, lastly do something you enjoy every day”. Having a sense of purpose, keeping close relationships with friends and family all helps Frances maintain her “I can do” attitude. Our congratulations and best wishes to Frances as she looks forward to her 102nd birthday!
Endowment

We encourage you to consider a bequest to the Visiting Nurse & Health Services of Connecticut Endowment Fund. Your good deeds, accomplishments and caring spirit can continue to help others in the future.

There are many ways to structure your estate to benefit VNHSC while still providing for the needs of your loved ones. Some considerations are:

➤ Name VNHSC in your will
➤ Donate a specific dollar amount or percentage of assets
➤ Donate stocks, bonds, CDs, real estate, art, or other property
➤ Name VNHSC as beneficiary of IRA or pension plan
➤ Name VNHSC as beneficiary of an existing insurance policy or purchase a new policy and name VNHSC as the beneficiary
➤ Honor deserving friends and remember loved ones with honorary or memorial gifts.

Your attorney can help you prepare a will or amend your current will to include our agency as a beneficiary. Support through planned giving ensures our ability to carry out our mission of quality home health and hospice care to all in need. For more information please call the Development Office at (860) 872-9163.