

Newsletter
Fall 2020



An alliance dedicated to enhancing the health and lives of those we serve

2020 Year of the Nurse Honoring Two of the Best

VNA | Visiting Nurse Association
Easterseals Nebraska

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125 years



Shaping tomorrow's care.
Today.

From VNA President and CEO, James Summerfelt



In January, the World Health Organization proclaimed 2020 The Year of the Nurse. Anyone with knowledge of the impact of the nursing profession on our lives and our well-being knew nurses deserved a full year of celebration. What we didn't expect

was the COVID-19 pandemic and the many twists, turns, and unknowns it's brought to our lives, our communities, and our nation.

True to form, nurses have been on the forefront of the battle against COVID-19. Practical and tactical, they have been in the room to problem-solve, make informed decisions, and assume the risk of caring for vulnerable patients while wearing layers of protective gear. I'm sure you've seen the term "Healthcare Hero" around the community; and I honestly can't think of a better description for the way nurses have stepped up in new and amazing ways during this unexpected and unnerving time.

At VNA, we've been caring for patients affected by COVID-19 since March as one of the only post-acute options in the community. VNA clinical staff and patients have been safe because we have listened to our infection control specialists and instituted new policies and procedures. VNA nurses have continued to serve clients in every local homeless and domestic

violence shelter, while also working alongside shelter administrators to establish safety protocols for their transient population. VNA has been a Test Nebraska COVID testing site since August 5, and when a COVID vaccine is available, we will partner with authorities in Nebraska and Iowa to encourage immunization.

None of this happens without great leadership, and as we celebrate The Year of the Nurse, two of our very best are featured on the cover of this newsletter. Bridget Young and Joanie Kush are retiring at the end of October, having established a legacy that will live in perpetuity. Between them, they have made a 90 year investment into Visiting Nurse Association – impacting our culture, mentoring, innovating, establishing collaborative relationships, and insisting on the highest standards. Anna Millard Rogers founded VNA 124 years ago, but we would not be the dynamic, life-changing organization we are today without Bridget Young and Joanie Kush.

On the next page, you'll read more about these two amazing women. This newsletter also features VNA and Easterseals Nebraska programs from a perspective you may not know. Thank you for taking time to consider our mission and identity in this new light. And thank you for the support you provide!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James C. Summerfelt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".

CARES Act: 2020 Charitable Giving Incentive

As the end of 2020 approaches, please consider a donation to Visiting Nurse Association or Easterseals Nebraska based on the Giving Incentive established by the CARES Act, Section 2204. For 2020, federal taxpayers are entitled to deduct up to \$300 in cash donations to eligible nonprofits like us. If you are filing jointly or are married, your deduction is limited to \$300. Taxpayers can take this universal deduction whether they itemize or take the standard deduction on their taxes.

Taxpayers who itemize can deduct cash charitable contributions up to 100% of adjusted gross income in 2020. **Consult your tax advisor for guidance.**

2020 Year of the Nurse: Celebrating the Impact of Two Great Leaders

Most people have a career while others leave a legacy. Once in a lifetime, an organization is lucky enough to benefit from the impact of two exceptional long-term leaders. Bridget Young and Joanie Kush have “grown up” at Visiting Nurse Association. And as they’ve grown, the organization has flourished alongside them:



- VNA has benefited from their intelligence and insight;
- From their commitment to our community and the VNA mission;
- From their focus on partnerships and creating great programming;
- From their embrace of innovative opportunities;
- From their shaping of a vibrant company culture;
- From their dedication to home healthcare, hospice, and supportive services that provide peace of mind, quality of life, and independence;
- And from their mentoring of so many people who now carry their legacy forward.



BRIDGET YOUNG

Years of service: 45

Positions over the years: Public Health Nurse (district work in homes, schools, child health clinics, adult health maintenance clinics); Supervisor; Clinical Manager; Director of Clinical Practice; Vice President of Clinical Services; Vice President of Business Services; Vice President of Quality and Accreditation; Vice President of Operations; Chief Operating Officer.

Recognition: Mary Longmaid Offutt/Employee of the Year Award in 1987; Named the Administrative Manager of the Year by the Visiting Nurse Associations of America in 2006.

Bridget received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Creighton University and Executive MBA from UNO. She has been a member of the Creighton University College of Nursing Alumni Advisory Board since 2013. She was inducted into Sigma Theta Tau International, Iota Tau Chapter in 1988.



JOANIE KUSH

Years of service: 45

Positions over the years: LPN Infant Stimulation, Mothering Program; Manger, Immanuel/VNA Home Care; VNA School Nurse, Flanagan High School; Hospice Case Manager; UNMC Hospital Coordinator; Clinical Manager, Hospice; Director of Hospice; Vice President of Hospice, Palliative Care and Pharmacy Services.

Recognition: Mary Longmaid Offutt/Employee of the year award in 1990; Past president and current board member for Nebraska Hospice and Palliative Care Association

Joanie received her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Nursing from Creighton University. She was inducted into Sigma Theta Tau International, Iota Tau Chapter in 1988. In 2005, she became certified as a Hospice Administrator.

CONGRATULATIONS . . . AND THANK YOU!

Cards and retirement wishes can be sent to: 12565 West Center Road, Suite 100, Omaha, NE 68144

In recognition of Bridget and Joanie's dedication to VNA, an endowment fund has been established.
For more information and to donate, go to www.vnatoday.org/endowment

COVID Update

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a sweeping impact with no person or business untouched. VNA is a stronger organization today because of the challenges we've faced while being innovative community leaders in the battle against COVID-19.

In addressing the pandemic, we instituted emergency protocols and updated policies, procedures, schedules, responsibilities, and adjusted the workplace environment. Our infection control experts trained and educated staff on how to keep patients and each other safe. Here's a snapshot of VNA and Easterseals Nebraska over the last seven months:

Office operations.

VNA and Easterseals offices are locked down, with most office staff working from home and extra precautions in place to assure the safety of those like our pharmacy staff who need to be in the building.

Service operations.

VNA clinical staff are caring for a steady stream of patients with the coronavirus in addition to our regular patient population. VNA nurses are back in the school system, in area homeless shelters, and providing vital home education through parenting programs. Our clinical liaisons and business development team are slowly easing their way back into facilities, as allowed.

Flu shots.

VNA started drive-through Flu Clinics on September 14. The overlap of COVID-19 and influenza this year has many concerned that we may be facing two epidemics at the same time. If you haven't already – please get your flu shot! www.vnatoday.org/flu



Test Nebraska.

VNA has served as a Test Nebraska site since August 5, offering drive through COVID testing on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Heightened safety protocols have required clinical staff to wear up to four layers of personal protective equipment. When a COVID vaccine becomes available, VNA is ready to partner with Nebraska and Iowa to immunize as many community members as possible.

Easterseals Camp.

Every summer, individuals of all ages who live with disabilities look forward to participating in Easterseals Camp – the only overnight camp option in Nebraska that accepts all ages and all levels of physical, developmental and behavioral disabilities. Because of COVID and the fragile health issues many of our campers face, we had to cancel 2020 on-site camping and move to “Camp Away From Camp.” Camp Director Jami Biodrowski got really innovative, and created a very memorable virtual camp experience.





EVERYONE IS TIRED OF COVID!

When we've reached our limits, it can be easy to become complacent as our minds and hearts look for relief from COVID fatigue. We let down our guard, and suddenly we've been exposed to COVID by a friend or family member or during a special event. So let's go back to the basics, courtesy of Dr. Anthony Fauci, who tells us to **Mind Our Three W's: (1) Wear a mask; (2) Wash your hands; (3) Watch your distance.**

In addition, substitute the term "physical distancing" for "social distancing." Why? Because it recognizes COVID-19's horrible ability to be transmitted from person to person, but also recognizes that the virus has no power over our ability to support one another in this extraordinary time. Nurturing relationships provide comfort and keep us forward-focused.

Protect yourself so you can protect others! We all need to stay careful and healthy.

DO YOU NEED MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR COVID-RELATED ILLNESS?

You or your physician can contact VNA to discuss home healthcare options. We are one of the only post-acute options for COVID patients discharged from the hospital who need additional healthcare and supportive services.

Call 402-342-5566.

YOUR SUPPORT CHANGES PEOPLE'S LIVES.

COVID-19 has devastated so many lives. And its impact is even more frightening for those who can't afford care. Lost jobs during the COVID pandemic have led to higher unemployment, higher numbers of uninsured families, and higher need for assistance. VNA is the safety net provider for those who need healthcare but have no means. We use donations to provide high quality, compassionate healthcare – wherever people call home.

VNA goes where others don't, and we serve who others won't. Support those in need and the nurses who provide their care by returning a check in the enclosed remittance envelope or giving online at:

[www.vnatoday.org/donate.](http://www.vnatoday.org/donate) 



CONGRATULATIONS TO JUDY RIGGERT!

Congratulations to Judy Riggert, VNA's Infection Control Preventionist, on winning the Mary Longmaid Offutt Employee of the Year Award! Judy's infection control expertise has saved lives this year, and we are grateful for the way she's educated our staff and many collaborative partners through the unknown twists and turns of COVID-19.

Your Support. Our Expertise. Their Lives Changed.



It's an honor to walk through your door, wherever you call home.

When your **neighbor** needs us, when a **family member** needs us, when **you** need us....
providing healthcare, hospice, and supportive services.

A 124 year mission has endured –

To help the vulnerable. To help those who struggle to pay for healthcare, medicine, and support. To help those who need assistance to remain independent and safe in their homes. To help position families for lifetime success.

VNA believes so passionately in our foundational purpose – caring for those who cannot care for themselves – that each time someone chooses VNA's expert care, we invest a portion of that revenue into the care of additional patients who are unable to pay. With increasing numbers of unemployed and uninsured individuals in our community, plus increasing complexity of health issues referred to our expert staff, support of the mission programs listed on the next page is needed more than ever.

**Together, we can improve the life and health of people in
Nebraska and western Iowa.**



Home Healthcare

VNA is the only local home healthcare provider that delivers exceptional care for injury, illness or terminal disease, regardless of a patient's ability to pay. An expert clinician is placed in the home, eliminating a lengthy, costly hospital stay yet providing all the necessary support for peace of mind, quality of life and independence. Donations help cover medical costs for growing numbers of patients who are uninsured or underinsured.

Hospice Care

VNA hospice never walks away from those overwhelmed by terminal illness who feel helpless and afraid. At VNA, we believe hospice is about living until one's last breath. We walk alongside everyone who cannot afford hospice care, honoring last wishes and achieving final goals in a collaborative effort between patient, family, hospice team and doctor.



Parenting Programs

VNA's nurses, social workers and parent coaches visit vulnerable families in their homes, using strengths-based approaches and interventions to improve the health, parenting skills and self-sufficiency of families. It's more than temporary help, it's positioning families for lifetime success.

Shelter Nursing

VNA shelter nurses provide health assessments, education, medication compliance and management of chronic health conditions and mental/behavioral health. Our nurses help patients experiencing homelessness navigate local medical services, access health and community resources and communicate with healthcare providers. As the exclusive provider of these services in the Omaha Metro, VNA's Shelter Nursing program is an essential component within the local continuum of services that meet the needs of the most vulnerable and help them move toward stability and self-sufficiency.

Easterseals Nebraska

Easterseals Nebraska (ESN) merged operations with VNA in 2012. Together, VNA and ESN are dedicated to providing exceptional services that ensure people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to live, learn, work and play. Services provided by Easterseals Nebraska include job placement assistance, employment follow along support, benefits planning and work incentives counseling. ESN programs means expanding possibilities for Nebraskans. Services include workforce development through job training and placement assistance, employment support, benefits planning and incentives counseling, alternative financing for assistive technology, camp, respite and recreational opportunities.

Camp

Easterseals offers the only overnight recreational camp in Nebraska that accepts everyone, regardless of age, level of disability, or ability to pay. Camp is a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment that fosters independence, social interaction, and advanced life skills.

AgrAbility

Many Nebraska farmers and ranchers battle illness and injury that limits their passion for agriculture. The AgrAbility team guides farmers and ranchers in understanding unique disability benefits and issues related to self-employment and rural independent living. The team also recommends assistive technology, or equipment which improves functional capabilities, and can help traditions and livelihoods continue with disabilities.

We invite you to invest in people. With your generosity, no matter a person's resources, VNA is proud that our services are always available. If you'd like to know more about VNA and Easterseals Nebraska programs, please contact Carole Patrick (cpatrick@vnatoday.org).

125 Years: Staying Home Has Always Been Our Mission.

vna Visiting Nurse
Association

125
YEARS

In 2021, VNA celebrates 125 years of serving our community. We're proud to be an Omaha-based organization with Omaha values. Driven by honesty and integrity, our history is a pursuit of progressive excellence in healthcare and a commitment to local people.

Home healthcare is more vital today than it ever has been. VNA is leading the way, providing the highest level of expertise with innovative and compassionate care.

CELEBRATE WITH US!

VNA invites you to donate in recognition of 125 years of excellent service.

In honor or in memory of a loved one we have served.

In gratitude for a nurse who provided care.

In celebration of an organization that will continue to impact the lives of men, women, and children in our community.

From a history to present day, our actions reflect a vision for what a healthy community can be.

Today. Tomorrow. And the next 125 years.