

Newsletter Fall 2021

VNA | Visiting Nurse Association
Easterseals Nebraska



Uncommon Care



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Shaping tomorrow's care. Today.

From VNA President and CEO, James Summerfelt



Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) is proud to use the term *uncommon*. Our greatest impact over 125 years has been in service to those who are underprivileged through means that are often underestimated.

In July, our business model changed when we sold VNA Medicare certified Home health and Hospice (government and insurance-funded home health and hospice programs) to national healthcare provider Amedisys. In doing so, we separated ourselves from a very competitive business (and all the exorbitant costs, rules, and regulations of the insurance industry and managed care) **so we could focus resources on the care of patients who are marginalized, uninsured, and under-resourced.**

If you're not familiar with the term Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), it's the conditions in which people are born, live, work, and age that shape their health. VNA is passionate about home health because we are the eyes and ears in homes where other medical professionals don't go. In those homes, we see the Social Determinants of Health first-hand: including signs of abuse, lack of resources, hunger, and dangerous conditions that contribute to dysfunction and death. Through home-based care, we individualize services for people who have nowhere to go and no way to pay for their healthcare. **Literally and figuratively, VNA meets them where they are to improve peace of mind, quality of life, and independence.**

Every day, VNA addresses the interrelated issues of:

- poverty
- food insecurity
- poor health
- lack of healthcare resources
- family economic instability
- homelessness
- low health literacy and

We evaluate those issues in the context of healthcare, determining what people need, how we can provide care, and how we can collaborate with community partners by making referrals to their services.

Providing dignified community health services to those who are marginalized and isolated requires uncommon generosity. We invest in ourselves through a VNA endowment and revenue generating programs like immunizations and home infusion therapy. But we rely on grants and donations to care for the ever-growing needs of individuals, children, and families in Omaha and Council Bluffs.

Thank you for helping VNA make a difference in this community we all love!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James C. Summerfelt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

What makes VNA Uncommon?

Visiting Nurse Association was founded in 1896 when Anna Millard Rogers saw people in the streets of Omaha who were sick and injured with no access to healthcare. She took care to the streets and into homes, and provided unique services like education for moms and their babies that no one else offered. 125 years later, healthcare practices have advanced, but **VNA's commitment to bring quality care into the community and into homes remains steadfast.**

Caring for people, wherever they call home

For some, that is a homeless shelter. For others, an apartment or home where they raised their family and retired. VNA nurses see signs of abuse, lack of resources, and dangerous conditions in home settings that doctors never see in a clinic or hospital. Through home-based care, people are served who have nowhere to go and no way to pay for their healthcare needs. **VNA goes where others won't, and we serve who others don't.**

Providing for the marginalized and under-resourced

VNA cares for those who are uninsured and under-resourced. We are compassionate caregivers and educators for individuals, children, and families who are excluded from significant resources because they live in poverty. **VNA provides for those who need our services, no matter their ability to pay or their living circumstances.**

Stability in the midst of crisis

Facing uncommon circumstances isn't new for our organization. VNA has been at the forefront of care during the polio epidemic, Spanish influenza, HIV/AIDS, and H1N1. We were prepared in advance for the COVID-19 pandemic, and we've been part of the solution from the beginning. Infection control, community education, and direct care of COVID positive patients have been part of our practice since March 2020. Today, there are over 70 VNA nurses giving COVID vaccinations in Omaha clinics and in the homes of our city's most vulnerable.

We believe our community deserves expert guidance and compassionate care, no matter one's station in life or ability to pay. That's

Uncommon.





Uncommon Obstacles . . . and the people who overcame them

HOPE

Hope was referred to VNA through the Physician-Directed Mother/Child program. She was five weeks old and diagnosed with failure to thrive, poor weight gain, malnutrition, and severe reflux. She was hospitalized four times, and the hospital staff contacted Child Protective Services (CPS) out of concern that Hope was being neglected. But working with Hope's parents, the VNA nurse saw a caring mom and dad who were overwhelmed by their circumstances.

There were no local daycares that accept babies with feeding tubes, so mom couldn't work. Dad was fired for missing too much work while Hope was hospitalized. The added stress to their already limited resources made every obstacle look bigger. But Hope's mom and dad worked with her VNA nurse to find the right solutions, and Hope started to gain weight – reaching 12 pounds when she turned seven months old! VNA also educated mom and dad about developmental delays and connected the family to a financial assistance program. **With your support, VNA has helped Hope and her parents begin to thrive.**

COOPER

Cooper is a U.S. Navy veteran who lost his housing when he had to choose between paying rent and buying his mental health prescriptions. On the streets of Omaha, he stopped all medications and spun out of control. He met a VNA nurse while eating at one of the local homeless shelters, and she provided care and resources.

VNA's shelter nurse connected Cooper to Community Alliance, who helped him begin to stabilize his mental health. She also addressed his severe stomach issues that were related to eating spoiled food out of dumpsters while living on the street. In partnership with shelter staff, Cooper was housed and became eligible for veteran's benefits that he never knew existed. **Because you help VNA provide nurses in every local homeless and domestic violence shelter, a proud veteran regained dignity.**





JOLENE

Jolene suffered a spinal cord injury during a diving accident when she was 19, leaving her a quadriplegic. For years, her mother was her primary caretaker as they shared a home together. As both Jolene and her mother aged, they knew they would need assistance to remain in the home they both loved, but their resources were limited.

VNA's Home Health Aide (HHA) program has been a great support for Jolene and Judy. Providing non-medical care, HHA staff assist with bathing and personal care, range of motion exercises, repositioning, and transfers to a motorized wheelchair using a Hoyer Lift. Because VNA staff work with Jolene regularly, they see subtle or abrupt changes that might concern her physician. With the support of HHA, Jolene and her mother have maintained their overall health and well-being. VNA staff have also been a wonderful source of social interaction and emotional support when Jolene and Judy felt isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Because you care, a family remains at home with the support they need.**

CESAR

Cesar had an active lifestyle and owned a thriving business providing lawn care and snow removal. Because he was uninsured and the majority of his income went to living expenses, he rarely went to the doctor. That changed when a wound on his foot got infected. He was hospitalized and diagnosed with diabetes and high blood pressure, then he tested positive for COVID-19. When his foot didn't heal, a doctor had to amputate his lower leg.

As one of the only post-acute options for COVID patients, VNA was there when Cesar's doctor discharged him to go home. VNA funding provided nursing, social work, and therapy. VNA nurses provided education that not only helped him recover from COVID, but also helped him manage his diabetes and high blood pressure. They helped Cesar and his girlfriend access home equipment and assistive devices to strengthen his body so he could safely navigate their apartment after his amputation. Community partners were contacted to provide rental assistance and access to prosthetic support. **Because you supported VNA, Cesar could return to work and support himself.**



Uncommon Access

Under the umbrella of VNA, Easterseals Nebraska provides exceptional services to help ensure all people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to live, learn, work and play. At a time when diversity and inclusion are emphasized, the population often overlooked is those with disabilities, who represent 22% of Nebraskans.

Some of the ways Easterseals Nebraska makes a difference:

AgrAbility: case management and rehabilitation services for farm and ranch family members affected by mental and physical disabilities. Farmers and ranchers attain the expertise and technical support necessary to continue farming and ranching with their disability, as well as peer support from individuals who have similar disabilities and educational programs about accommodating disability in agriculture. For more information, go to agrability.unl.edu/

Camp, Recreation and Respite: Camp Easterseals has the only overnight camp for people of all ages and abilities in the state of Nebraska. With engaging, healthy, and lively programs, campers can experience the joys and challenges of camp while gaining independence, trying new things during immersive and constructive activities, and making new friends or catching up with old ones, in a safe and adapted environment. campesn.com/

Workforce Development: Nebraska Ticket to Work is a free employment service program developed by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Easterseals Nebraska works with the SSA to offer this program to individuals who are receiving Social Security disability benefits and are interested in obtaining or advancing employment. Work IS possible for those with disabilities, and Easterseals' experts help with career planning, coaching, resume preparation, job search assistance, and benefits education. Need more information? Go to nebraskatickettowork.org/

Donate to any of these Easterseals programs by using the enclosed remittance envelope or giving online at vnatoday.org/donate





Uncommon Services

VNA's Infusion Pharmacy has 35 years of expertise in hospice and home infusion care. As an independent, non-retail pharmacy, we partner with local physicians, hospice, and home health agencies to administer nutrition and medication.

VNA Pharmacy includes a state-of-the-art compounding facility, and our expert pharmacists provide antibiotics, nutrition therapy, pain management, specialty therapies (including intrathecal baclofen), medication education, and drug interaction screening.

VNA Pharmacy services also extend to those who are uninsured or under-resourced. Our pharmacy team will work with individuals and their physicians to assure home infusion services are available with costs covered through the VNA Foundation.



Uncommon Generosity

THANK YOU! VNA depends on your generosity to provide healthcare and supportive services to those who cannot afford or access care on their own.

Please send your tax deductible year-end donation by midnight on December 31st to help our community's most vulnerable. Your gift directly impacts men, women and children who are uninsured or under-resourced, providing expert and compassionate care by VNA staff.

Donations can be made using the enclosed remittance envelope, or online at vnatoday.org/donate



Art & Soup save the date

25th Anniversary Art & Soup

Sunday, February 20, 2022

Patron Party: 1 to 2 p.m. (\$100)

General Admission: 2 to 5 p.m. (\$50)

NEW LOCATION: Omaha Design Center

1502 Cuming St., Omaha

All proceeds assure there are
VNA nurses in **every** local homeless
and domestic violence shelter

EAT SOUP. BUY ART. CHANGE LIVES.