

# Caring & Giving

A Publication of  
**Connecticut VNA**  
Home Healthcare and Hospice by Masonicare

Summer 2007

*Excellent Care, Excellent Outcomes. . .*

## Telemonitoring Helps Connecticut VNA Patient Manage Illness

**I**magine waking up in the middle of the night and not being able to breathe. For Gladys Young of New Haven, that used to be a common -- *and very scary* -- occurrence. Between September 2005 and March of 2006, the 93-year-old New Haven native underwent four hospitalizations and two emergency room visits for that very reason. "They would rush me to the hospital and give me oxygen," recalls Gladys, who has congestive heart failure, a condition in which the heart does not pump blood properly. "They would discharge me the same day."

The frequent hospitalizations ended when Gladys' doctor referred her for home healthcare visits by Connecticut VNA's New Haven office. The addition of a telemonitoring device, beginning in March of 2006, enabled Connecticut VNA to monitor Gladys' condition daily, while she learned ways to eliminate the need for late-night emergency room visits.

"Telemonitoring is usually used to monitor patients with heart problems," explains Patricia Cartwright, RN, BSN, who is

Gladys' visiting nurse. "By monitoring a patient's pulse, blood pressure and weight daily, we can tell if a patient is getting into trouble." Gladys would weigh herself every morning and take her own blood pressure. The telemonitor would then register that vital sign information and electronically send the information to Connecticut VNA, where the VNA nurse would review it. If any issues or problems arise, the nurse then collaborates with the patient's physician to make adjustments to the patient's plan of care.



**Connecticut VNA helped Gladys Young (right) manage her congestive heart failure through telemonitoring. Gladys is shown here with her Connecticut VNA nurse, Pat Cartwright, RN, BSN.**

According to Cartwright, a weight gain of 2 lb. in one day or 5 lb. in one week can signal a problem for patients with congestive heart failure. It often means they are retaining fluid, which can back up into their lungs and cause serious problems. "If you are retaining fluid, it can go into your lungs -- especially when you are lying flat," Pat explains. "This is what was previously happening to Gladys; then she would get up and call 911.

Teaching people what to do in those cases helps alleviate the panic. Now, she doesn't panic as much," says Pat. Pat is one of 18 recipients of the 2007 Nightingale Award for Excellence in Nursing, presented by Masonicare. Connecticut VNA, the state's largest home healthcare provider, is an affiliate of Masonicare.

While telemonitoring is an effective tool for monitoring patients with congestive heart failure, not all patients are as

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"I couldn't have had any better care than I have had with Pat. It's been excellent."

--Gladys Young  
Connecticut VNA Patient

*Remembering Beulah ...*

## Connecticut VNA's Hospice Provides Skillful, Compassionate Care



As a way to say “thank you” for the hospice care her mother, Beulah Hendel, received, Linda Posilkin is donating half the proceeds from the whimsical handbags she creates to Connecticut VNA’s Hospice through Aug. 31.

**H**eaven-sent. That’s how Linda Posilkin of Bethesda, Maryland, would describe the skillful and compassionate care her mother, Beulah Hendel, received over the last several months of her life from Connecticut VNA’s Hospice. “The staff from the Norwich office of Connecticut VNA’s Hospice are very special,” says Linda, whose mother died peacefully in her Norwich home on April 26, 2007, at the age of 89. “They are like angels from heaven.”

Beulah’s caregivers included two nurses, a social worker, home health aide, minister, massage therapist, expressive arts therapist, and a Hospice volunteer. “They were all very attentive to her needs,” says Linda, a mother of two who works as a school psychologist in the Montgomery County Public School System in Maryland. “I will never forget the massage therapist gently rubbing the pain from my mother’s hands and feet -- or the minister

learning songs from ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ to sing to her. These people really have a passion for what they do,” she says.

Beulah -- a mother of four and a grandmother with six grandchildren and one great-grandson -- had congestive heart failure and uterine cancer when her family enlisted the help of Connecticut VNA, Masonicare’s home healthcare and hospice affiliate, last fall. “I know my mother was a little reluctant at first to receive the services,” says Linda, “but as those workers came in, gently and softly offering her support, they became close friends to her. She felt surrounded by people who really cared about her.”

Linda says she and her sisters, Deborah Beebe of Ledyard, CT, and Susan Andres of New York, NY, stumbled upon Connecticut VNA’s Hospice program by sheer luck. “My younger sister took a class on death and dying at Three Rivers Community College,” says Linda. “When we were trying to figure out what to do about my mother, Debbie is the one who said my mother fit the criteria for hospice. Most people don’t realize their loved ones qualify for hospice,” she adds. “Most people think of hospice as for people who are just days short of death.”

According to Marion Donahue, President of Connecticut VNA, the criteria for hospice care includes terminal illness with a prognosis of six months, certified by the patient’s

attending physician and the hospice medical director. The second criterion is patient choice -- when the patient declines curative and life-prolonging treatments and chooses to focus instead on comfort and symptom management.

Linda describes her mother as a strong, determined woman who overcame many obstacles in her life, including breast cancer and other serious illnesses. “She had been through a lot, but she had always recovered beautifully,” says Linda. Beulah was also devoted to the care of her son, Leonard, who preceded her in death on Feb. 4, 2007, at age 63.

“It never ceases to amaze me how unselfish people can be at a time when there is a good excuse for being selfish,” says Sharon Miller, MSW, LCSW, a Connecticut VNA medical social worker and a member of Beulah’s caregiving team. “Beulah was funny that way. She would be talking about something important to her and to her life, and in the middle of it she would ask, ‘Can I get you anything? A drink or piece of fruit?’ Despite her own tiredness, she always wanted to make sure that we were nourished.”

In tribute to her mother and as a way to say “thank you” for the hospice care her mother received, Linda is donating 50 percent of the proceeds from her special line of handbags to Connecticut VNA’s Hospice through Aug. 31, 2007.

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*Helping Children in Need. . .*

## Unity Lodge Pledges Support to Connecticut VNA's Pedi-Pal Program



Masons from Unity Lodge No. 148, New Britain, presented Marion Donahue, President of Connecticut VNA (second from right), with the first \$10,000 installment of a \$50,000 pledge toward the Connecticut VNA's Pedi-Pal Program earlier this year. Pictured with Donahue (l-r) are Eloise Mongillo, Director of Development, The Masonic Charity Foundation of Connecticut; Unity Lodge members Brothers Harry Needham, Curtis Holtman and Mark Parasaliti; and Jennifer King, President of The Masonic Charity Foundation of Connecticut.

Master Brother Mark Parasaliti. "The main focus of Unity Lodge has always been helping youth, both Masonic youth and within the community. We invited Eloise Mongillo from The Masonic Charity Foundation and representatives from Connecticut VNA back to tell us more." The Masonic Charity Foundation and Connecticut VNA are both affiliates of Masonicare, based in Wallingford.

Pedi-Pal, the only program of its kind in the state, provides care for children with life-limiting illnesses and their families. A team of professionals, including medical directors, nurses, a social worker, bereavement counselor, clergy and home health aides, is brought together for each case, supporting not only the child, but also parents, siblings and other relatives. In addition to pain control, Pedi-Pal provides therapeutic massage, expressive art, music and pet therapy. "The story of Connecticut VNA's Pedi-Pal Program touched our hearts," says Mark. "We were all almost in tears. When you can help a child spend his or her last days at home, what more can you ask? It's a beautiful program, and a perfect fit for Unity Lodge."

On January 16, 2007, the Lodge presented Marion Donahue, President of Connecticut VNA, with the first \$10,000 installment on its five-year pledge. The \$50,000 donation will help make palliative care possible for children and their families from the greater Hartford area who are in financial need.

Children have a special place in the hearts of the members of Unity Lodge No. 148 of New Britain. Their recent gift to The Masonic Charity Foundation of Connecticut in support of the Pediatric Palliative Care (Pedi-Pal) Program -- a program of Masonicare's Connecticut VNA -- is testament to that. Last year, members of the Masonic organization voted to double all future tribute gifts to The Masonic Charity Foundation of

Connecticut to \$100 each and direct them to the Pedi-Pal Program, which provides care for terminally ill children and their families.

In a further act of generosity, Unity Lodge members made an additional \$50,000 pledge to the Pedi-Pal Program, which will take the form of \$10,000 per year, payable over five years to The Foundation. "A light just went on," recalls Unity Lodge Past

### Did You Know?

Connecticut VNA is the state's largest provider of home healthcare and hospice services with 11 offices statewide. It is an affiliate of Wallingford-based Masonicare, the leading not-for-profit provider of healthcare and retirement living for seniors in Connecticut. The Masonic Charity Foundation of Connecticut is Masonicare's philanthropic affiliate.

Using the enclosed envelope, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to help fund Connecticut VNA programs, such as Pedi-Pal, through The Masonic Charity Foundation of Connecticut at 22 Masonic Avenue, P.O. Box 70, Wallingford, CT 06492.



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Wallingford, CT 06492

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## Connecticut VNA Offers Wide Range of Services and Specialty Programs

Committed to excellence in providing home health-care, Connecticut VNA offers a complete range of in-home services and specialty programs statewide:

- Skilled Nursing / Case Management
- Medical Social Work / Companion Services
- Maternal-Child Care for Moms & Newborns
- Pediatric Home Care / Wound & Ostomy Care
- Arrangement for Durable Medical Supplies
- Homemaker & Home Health Aide Services
- Diabetic Teaching & Monitoring
- Home Telemonitoring / Geriatric Care
- Hospice & Palliative Care
- Physical, Speech & Occupational Therapies
- Disease Management Programs / Behavioral Health

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Billed as “Snazzy Felted Handbags,” the purses are made from 100% wool and are embellished with decorative yarns, buttons and snaps. “My mother was an avid knitter and she taught me how to knit,” Linda says. “Knitting makes me feel close to her.”

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For more information about the felted handbags, log onto <http://feltfine.com>.

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motivated as Gladys, Pat notes. “She’s in a routine and has been very careful about a low-salt diet and the ongoing need to weigh herself daily.”

Today, Gladys is doing so well that she no longer needs to be telemonitored and her weekly visits from Pat have been scaled back to twice a month. “I couldn’t have had any better care than I have had with Pat,” says Gladys. “It’s been excellent. I think that is why I am better -- and I hope to stay that way.”

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**Donations to Connecticut VNA’s Quality of Life Fund have underwritten the cost of telemonitoring devices. To donate to the Connecticut VNA Quality of Life Fund, please use the enclosed donation envelope found in this publication.**

### Connecticut VNA Offices

Brookfield	(203) 775-0675
Danielson	(860) 774-1366
Greater Hartford	(860) 528-2273
New Haven	(203) 624-6664
Norwalk	(203) 831-8882
Portland	(860) 342-3300
Shelton	(203) 735-6664
Wallingford	(203) 679-5300
Watertown	(860) 417-4100

### Connecticut VNA, SE Offices

Norwich	(860) 889-7198
East Lyme	(860) 691-4630

~Connecticut VNA “Caring & Giving” newsletter is published by The Masonic Charity Foundation of Connecticut. Sharon Napolitano, Editor~  
If you would prefer not to receive any future fundraising communications from The Masonic Charity Foundation of Connecticut, please write to us at MCF of CT, P.O. Box 70, Wallingford, CT 06492. In order to ensure that we accurately reflect your request, please provide your full name and street address. Please note that it may take six to eight weeks to make your request fully effective.