



# THE VAHHA VOICE

*The Newsletter of the Vermont Assembly of Home Health Agencies*

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## Legislature Supports Non-Profit Home Care System

Vermont lawmakers this session passed legislation designed to establish clearly defined state protection to the 12 non-profit home care agencies. The legislation was passed in response to an investigation by the federal Department of Justice concerning whether the state's non-profit home health agencies constitute an illegal monopoly. The legislation was approved by the House on a unanimous 132-0 vote and by the Senate on a 24-2 vote.

"There is bipartisan support, which means it is a good bill," Rep. Margaret Flory, R-Pittsford, the House minority leader, told her colleagues. Flory and fellow Republicans Patti O'Donnell, Carolyn Branagan and Don Bostic and Democrat Floyd Nease helped lead the support in the House. Also crucial to the success were the 11 members of the House Health Committee led by Chair John Tracy, the six members of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, led by Senator Jim Leddy and Speaker of the House Gaye Symington.

"It seems that just about everyone on the two health committee played a key role," said Peter Cobb, VAHHA Director. "From Republicans Joe Baker, Chris Louras and Malcolm Severance to Democrats Steve Mier, Bill Keough, Lucy Leriche, Topper McFaun, and Ginny Milkey. Janet Ancel ably carried the cause to the

floor of the House and Harry Chen helped thwart a proposed eleventh-hour rewrite that could have delayed the bill and prevented passage this year."

"It was the same in the Senate, bi-partisan, across-the-board support. Support from all six Senators, Leddy, White, Flanagan, Kittell, Lyons, and Mullin was crucial. Senator Bartlett, Chair of the Appropriations Committee and Rep. Martha Heath, Chair of the House Appropriations Committee also played key roles as did House Human Services Chair Ann Pugh, whose support was very important. Rep. Tom

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### ***What Does This Legislation Do?***

The proposed legislation codifies the existing system of home health agencies in Vermont. It expressly designates geographical areas to be served by each of the twelve, non-profit home health agencies. It makes a clear statement of state policy that supports the non-competitive community based non-profit model for the delivery of home health services and reiterates the responsibility of the home health agencies to meet the needs of their respective communities. It continues the present standards for approving new, competing home health agencies. It continues the collection of data on cost, access, and quality by the Department of Banking Insurance Securities and Health Care Administration (BISHCA) and the current oversight by the Agency of Human Services, and adds additional oversight functions by AHS.

It codifies long standing state policy in the area of home health services as reflected in Vermont's State Health Plans of 1980-1985, 1985-1990 and 1990-1993, Health Resources Management Plans of 1993-1996 and 1996-1999 and the Certificate of Need (CON) guidelines that have been in effect since 1999. The state policy described in these plans favors the delivery of home health services by the community based and supported, non-profit home health agency system and expressly favors collaboration among these agencies over a competitive, market driven system. It expressly recognizes that the Vermont system has 1) demonstrated both the commitment and capacity to provide universal access to

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## Support for Non-Profit Home Care System (from page 1)

Koch, who initially opposed the legislation, helped rewrite the final draft. His work was crucially important in gaining the unanimous vote in the House. There were so many who helped that unfortunately I can't name everyone," Cobb added.

Vermont's 12 non-profit home-health agencies are under investigation by the Justice Department because Vermont allows the non-profit caregivers to cooperate in administering care. The home care agencies contend that cooperation allows for a more effective way to contain health care costs and ensure access to quality care. Legislators agreed.

"We don't want the federal government dictating how we deliver care in this state more than they already do. This bill is intended to protect a Vermont-solution to providing care for the home bound that works," said Senator Jim Leddy, the Chair of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee. The legislation started in Leddy's committee and received a 6-0 vote there. The House Health Committee also voted unanimously for the legislation as did both the House and Senate Appropriations committees.

"The proposed legislation provides the best hope of keeping these decisions in the hands of Vermonters and the best chance of moving this process along as quickly as possible, to the benefit of all involved - VAHHA members, the state of Vermont, Vermonters who get home care services and the Department of Justice. The legislation also presents the best chance of preserving Vermont's role in defining exactly what kind of home health system best serves the citizens of this state," VAHHA Director Peter Cobb told both the Senate and House Health Committees.

The legislation establishes an explicit state policy permitting and regulating the existing cooperation and coordination currently investigated by the Justice Department. Senator Leddy said the current system fosters cooperation and helps keep costs down. He said the investigation interferes with states' efforts to efficiently and effectively deliver health care. Vermont has the lowest cost-per-visit for home-health of any state.

"We are fortunate in Vermont to have a non-profit, cooperative home health system for the efficient delivery of this kind of care," said President Pro Tem Peter Welch.

"I am disappointed that the Bush administration continues to obstruct states' best efforts to control health care costs, whether on prescription drugs or non-profit care, while it shifts more and more of the burden of health care to the states," he added.

"It is long overdue that we place in statute a part of the health care system that works so well. Our home health agencies provide great services and save us all money," added Chair of Appropriations Senator Susan Bartlett.

"We are really pleased," said Ron Cioffi, chief executive officer of the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice. "It allows Vermont to make decisions about how to do home health care rather than the feds telling Vermont how Vermont should do home health care."

Under the legislation a for-profit agency can still apply for a Certificate of Need (CON) as those rules were not changed. A CON is required to start a Medicare-certified home care agency.

"We felt it was important for a new home health agency to be able to apply for a certificate of need under certain circumstances," Rep. Janet Ancel, D-Calais reported to fellow House members. "But at the same time we did not want to hurt our existing system, which we think provides great care."

Ancel said the noncompetitive relationship allows Vermont's 12 non-profit agencies to treat more patients per capita than any other state at the cheapest price in the nation. In 2002, Vermont served 108 per thousand Medicare eligible people compared to the national average of 61 per thousand and the New England average of 81 per thousand. Vermont also has had the lowest cost per visit every year for which VAHHA has collected data from the federal government (1990-2002) and had the lowest cost per episode (60 days of care) of the 50 states in 2002, according to the National Association for Home Care.

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## What the Legislation Does (continued from page 1)

medically necessary home health services to all Vermonters, regardless of ability to pay or location of their residence and 2) has consistently maintained the lowest average cost per-visit of any state in the nation for at least the past 15 years.

Along with this clearly articulated state policy, the act expressly provides for active supervision of that policy. It continues the active oversight of the system as it exists

today and adds additional oversight functions to the Agency of Human Services.

It expressly states that the intent of this legislation is to displace state and federal antitrust laws and provide state action immunity for the home health agencies acting in furtherance of and within the scope of this act and its purposes.

The legislation takes effect upon the signature of Governor James Douglas.

## Dorset VNA Earns Award for Run Girl Run! Program



*Run Girl Run! Participants from the Dorset Area*

**D**orset Nursing Association has been awarded a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of VT to offer a Run Girl Run! program for middle school-aged girls (10-14 year olds) in the Dorset area. The fun-filled program created and sponsored by the Vermont Department of Health, combines training for the Vermont Race for the Cure, a 5k (3.1 mile race) to support breast cancer research, with self esteem building warm-ups and workouts that encourage the development of each girl's mind, body, and spirit.

Dorset School Nurse, Ellen Goepel and volunteers will be coaching approximately one dozen girls from Dorset,

with support from DNA VISIONS Camp coordinator, Vicki Swenor, RN. The program begins with eight weeks of intensive training where the girls will meet twice per week for 90 minutes at the Dorset School or the Manchester Recreation Department.

Activities include games and incentives, cross-training, nutrition and health workshops, character development, visits by local women runners, and much more. Studies show that between the ages of nine and fourteen, young girls tend to lose self-confidence. This lack of confidence leads to behaviors where girls become less active, perform poorly in school, and lose sight of their own dreams and ambitions. Run Girl Run! aims to build girls' confidence and self-esteem by drawing them into physical activity in a fun and rewarding way. The lessons teach girls about healthy lifestyle choices and help them to appreciate the wonderful, strong "girls-becoming-women" that they are.

The program is free and targets middle school age girls in the Northshire who are not actively involved in sports and who may have limited financial resources. The program is supported by the Vermont Department of Health, the Vermont Department of Education, BlueCross/BlueShield of Vermont, the American Heart Association, and the American Cancer Society. DNA encourages Run Girl Run! girls to sign up for the upcoming VISIONS daycamp for middle school girls, July 26-Aug. 6.

For more information or to sign up call Ellen Goepel at the Dorset School: 362-2606, or call DNA office. (See related article on page 7.)

## Two Agencies Honored for Employee Health Promotion

**G**overnor James Douglas and the Vermont Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports awarded 31 businesses with Worksite Wellness Awards on May 19, at the State House. Franklin County Home Health Agency (FCHHA) and Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice (RAVNAH) were present to accept the Governor's Rising Star Awards in the medium-size business category.

Recent wellness activities at the two home health agencies included pedometer walking challenges. During a three month challenge, employees of RAVNAH formed nine teams of three to complete the equivalent of the 265-mile Long Trail. They logged enough steps to total 12,724 miles. At FCHHA, 90 employees participated in a pe-

dometer walking challenge designed to encourage individuals to set and meet personal walking goals.

For the past 11 years, these annual awards have honored small and large worksites that support access to physical activity and help build a healthy Vermont workforce. Successful worksites provide knowledge, skills and strategies for employees to build better health on and off the job.

The Vermont Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, a physical activity promotion and advocacy group created by state legislation in 1982, persuade Vermont citizens to get involved in better health through exercise and sports.

## New Hampshire Association Files Suit on Rates

The Home Care Association of New Hampshire (HCANH) has filed a legal complaint against the New Hampshire's Department of Health and Human Services concerning rates the association says are too low. The Association's filing seeks implementation of legislation passed in 1997 requiring the state to annually review and establish Medicaid rates to better reflect the average cost to deliver care. DHHS has ignored the law for six years, according to HCANH Director Susan Young, last examining Medicaid reimbursement rates in 1999.

According to Young, in 2004 New Hampshire home

care agencies lost more than \$5.5 million in Medicaid reimbursements. In the near future, agencies will not be able to fill the growing gap between the cost of services and Medicaid reimbursement, she said. Consequently, agencies will be forced to eliminate care programs and services for clients. Several visiting nurse associations (VNAs) have already discontinued their homemaker programs. At the same time, DHHS is proposing to increase caseloads in home and community-based care to save money and balance the state budget.

## Martha Lunbeck To Lead VNA Development Office

Martha Lunbeck has been appointed the new Director of Development and Community Relations at the Visiting Nurse Association of Chittenden, Grand Isle Counties. She succeeds Dawn Stanyon who left the agency in November to spend time with her family.

For the past two years, Martha has been the VNA's Friends-for-Life campaign manager. In that role she led the most ambitious fundraising effort in the agency's history to its present total of nearly \$4.9 million in gifts from community friends. (The campaign will continue to grow through its completion next year.) In her new position, Martha will lead

the talented team that is responsible for community, government and press relations as well as for garnering over \$2 million every year in gifts, grants and other financial support from our community and friends. She also will be joining the agency's Executive Team.

Prior to joining the VNA, Martha led the successful Committee on Temporary Shelter's capital campaign and she was the PartnerShop program manager for Ben and Jerry's. She is a classics graduate of Brown University and holds an MBA with an emphasis in marketing from the University of Michigan.

## RAVNAH Staff Members Receive National Certification

Eight licensed nursing assistants with the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice recently received the national designation of Certified Hospice and Palliative Nursing Assistant (CHPNA). Anne Broderick, Melissa Fox, Martha Johnson, Janet Kehn, Lucy McCoy, David Perry, Anne Sheehe and Pat Tripp successfully passed the examination that recognizes their knowledge and competency in caring for those with life-limiting illnesses.

Under the supervision of a registered nurse, hospice and palliative nursing assistants provide nursing care to patients and families on the end of life journey and through the bereavement process. Hospice and palliative care involves a team-oriented approach to expert medical care, pain management, and emotional and spiritual support expressly tailored to the patient's needs and wishes, with support extended to the patient's family as well.

The Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice is a not-for-profit Medicare-certified home health



agency providing health care services ranging from highly-technical skilled care to wellness programs in the Rutland community.



*The Logger Cuts Wood in Dorset - Rusty DeWees, the Logger, entertained nearly 600 friends of the Dorset VNA recently at the Dorset Playhouse. The event raised nearly \$5,000 for the agency. Pictured with DeWees are Terry Tyler, Ellen Fograshy, DNA Director Phyllis Tarbell, and Karin Hegedus of the Dorset staff.*

## Advanced Directives Bill Approved

The House and Senate passed legislation that should increase the use of Advance Directives for use during periods of incapacity and at the end of life. The legislation, which was two years in the writing, enables adults to retain control over their health care through the use of advanced directives, including the appointment of an agent. The legislation was written, in part, in response to a report that showed use of advanced directives in Vermont was below the national average. The effort was led by the Attorney

General's office and included input from several dozen groups including home care and hospice.

An advanced directive is a written record that includes instructions that can be used if the person who wrote the directive is not longer able to express his or her preference concerning health care decisions. An advanced directive includes documents designated as a durable power of attorney for health care or a terminal care document.

## Telemonitors Available Across VNAH-VNH Region

More than 50 telemonitor machines are now in use throughout the Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice of Vermont and New Hampshire service area and more are available for use in patients' homes. These machines, the size of a small clock radio, remind the patient each day to take specific measures related to her/his medical condition, such as temperature, blood pressure, blood oxygen, and weight. A nurse monitors these reports which are transmitted on phone

lines. Action can be taken immediately if the patient's reports vary from their normal readings. This enables a nurse to respond without making a home visit and reduces the need for a doctor or hospital visits. People who benefit most from this technology include those with congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease, diabetes, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

## Helping Children Understand Death and Dying

Every April, the VNA & Hospice program of the VNA & Hospice of Vermont and New Hampshire and area health care providers hold informational programs for the public to increase understanding of death and dying. This year, Virginia Fry presented a program entitled Helping Children Understand Death & Dying, designed to help adults see loss and grief through the eyes of a child.

The purpose of this interactive program was to provide the tools and support to understand and to help terminally ill children, adolescents, and grieving children, and to support those that are helping children work through difficult

times with loss.

Caregivers, educators, medical professionals, counselors, adolescents, parents, and grandparents learned grieving techniques that they are able to transfer to their own settings and circumstances.

The workshops have been traditionally offered on four Mondays in April at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. This year, however, they were held in four different locations for increased accessibility: DHMC, Springfield, Gifford, and Brattleboro and were attended by nearly 200 people.

## Chittenden and Franklin Staff Speak on Hospice at NNE Conference

Angel Collins, RN, MS, program director for the VNA's End-of-Life Care program, co-presented "A Blended Hospice and Palliative Care Program: Balance and Best Practices" with Annette Blanchard, RN, CHPN, clinical manager for Franklin County Home Health and Hospice at the recent Northern New England Conference held in Portland, Maine. Their presentation was on the evolution of the VNA's pilot Bridge program to the formal Palliative Care program it is today. The early Bridge program was designed for HIV/AIDS patients who could benefit from the skills of the Hospice team while continuing to pursue treatment. The resulting Palliative Care program is now available to any home care patient with a life-threatening illness. The workshop will describe the advantages and challenges of a

blended Hospice and Palliative Care program from operational, budgetary, regulatory and quality perspectives.

Jennifer Riggs, RN, VNA Adult Home Care Educator, co-presented "Intern and Preceptor Development: Adaptation of the Vermont Nurse Internship Project to Home Care" with Susan Boyer, M.Ed; RN, director of the Vermont Nurse Internship Project at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Hospital. The Vermont Nurse Internship Project incorporates preceptor training and an internship model to transition new graduate nurses to the workplace, and is being adapted for use in home health care. In addition to discussing program development, implementation and results, they will also share information about strategies around recruitment and retention of registered nurses, and pitfalls to avoid.

## VNA & Hospice of Southwestern Vermont Health Care Moves

VNA & Hospice of Southwestern Vermont Health Care has moved to its new home at 160 Benmont Ave. The decision to move off campus was an easy one to make, with financial and productivity benefits. From a financial standpoint, the VNA will save the hospital over \$1 million in renovation costs. The VNA will save approximately \$20,000 per year in rent expense.

"The majority of VNA & Hospice staff are mobile. They spend most of their time out of the office caring for patients in the community. They need to be able to get in and out of the office quickly and efficiently," said Julia Maroney, executive director.

The Benmont Avenue location and parking provide easier access for the clinical staff. That will help improve productivity. "The space is an old mill with wide sunny windows and old wooden fixtures – it is really beautiful," Maroney said.

VNA & Hospice staff members will continue to work closely with Southwestern Vermont Medical Center staff to

coordinate care for patients who leave the hospital and will be getting home care or hospice services. For example, the VNA & Hospice intake coordinator will continue to attend discharge planning meetings at SVMC.

The VNA & Hospice main phone number (442-5502) and fax number (442-4919) have not changed. The general public should use only that main number, because the VNA receptionist triages the calls.

VNA & Hospice of Southwestern Vermont Health Care, formerly Bennington Area Home Health, makes more than 39,000 home visits each year to residents of Bennington, North Bennington, Pownal, Shaftsbury, and Woodford. In addition to offering home nursing, high-tech care, and rehabilitative therapy, among other services, the agency houses Bennington's only full-service, Medicare-certified hospice program.

VNA & Hospice is part of Southwestern Vermont Health Care, a not-for-profit family of health care providers that exists solely for the benefit of the communities it serves.

## Summer Fun Fair To Benefit RAVNAH

Milky Way Organic Farm hosted their 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Summer Fun Fair on Saturday, June 18 in Ira, Vermont. A *Mr. C's* lobster bake and barbecue, live music from the band *Extra Stout*, children's games and activities, a magic show and tractor hay rides are just some of the fair highlights. Proceeds from the event will benefit the programs of the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice (RAVNAH).

"RAVNAH was incredibly supportive and instrumental in allowing my ailing mom to remain in her home

and maintain her independence," says Mary Saceric-Clark who is sponsoring the event with her husband, Bob Clark and son, Rob, owner of Milky Way Organic Farm. "We wanted to give something back to this wonderful organization that helps so many people in our community."

Admission was \$3 per person or \$10 for a family of four, with all food and several activities additional. For more information, contact Mary Saceric-Clark at 235-2246.

## Killington Pico Rotary Hosts 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Hospice Golf Classic

The Killington Pico Rotary Club hosted their 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament on Wednesday, May 25 to benefit the Hospice Program of the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice. The Tournament was held at the Green Mountain National Golf Course in Killington, Vermont. Over the past several years, the Killington Pico Rotary Club has donated more than \$50,000 in support of the Hospice Program.

“This annual event is an opportunity for Killington Pico Rotary to raise much needed funds to continue the vital end-of-life Hospice services provided by the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice,” explains Ken Lee, Tournament Coordinator.

“Through successful fundraisers such as the Killington Pico Rotary Tournament, we can continue our commitment

to provide essential Hospice services to all Rutland County residents, regardless of their insurance limits or financial situation,” says Ronald Cioffi, Executive Director of Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice.

Hospice is a specially coordinated program that helps children and adults with a terminal illness, along with their families, cope with end-of-life issues. The interdisciplinary hospice team offers the patient comfort, pain relief, and unsurpassed skill, with care extended to the patient’s loved ones through guidance, education, and grief support.

For information on golf sponsorships, foursomes and other activities for the 2006 tournament, call Ken Lee at 422-2288 or Bernadette Robin at 747-3634.

## Devil’s Bowl Speedway Hosts 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Benefit Race and Fireworks

Devil’s Bowl Speedway hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Judith L. Richards Memorial Race on Sunday, June 12, 2005 at the Devil’s Bowl Speedway in West Haven, Vermont. Along with door prizes, a bicycle raffle, and a driver’s autograph session, there was a new and exciting fireworks display. The proceeds from the ticket sales benefited the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice (RAVNAH).

Since 1997, Devil’s Bowl has hosted events in memory of Judith L. Richards to benefit RAVNAH. “Following Judy’s cancer diagnosis, we were introduced to the most wonderful group of people at RAVNAH,” says CJ Richards, Judy’s husband and founder of Devil’s Bowl. “It was with RAVNAH’s professional assistance and caring that we were able to keep Judy in the home she loved so much, and near

her family, allowing her to spend her final days with us in comfort and with dignity.”

“The tremendous support of Devil’s Bowl Speedway enables RAVNAH to carry on its commitment of providing essential home health care and hospice services to all Rutland County residents, regardless of their insurance limits or financial situation,” says Ronald Cioffi, Executive Director of Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice.

The Rutland Area VNA and Hospice serves the 60,000 residents of Rutland County and provides more than 100,000 visits each year to more than 2,000 county residents. For more information about the agency, contact Bernadette Robin at 747-3634.

## Dorset Nursing Association Changes Becca’s Life for the Better

*(The following is reprinted, by permission, of the Vermont Women’s Fund. VWF honors women whose lives have been empowered with help from Vermont social service agencies. Becca, from Manchester Center, was helped by the Dorset Nursing Service.)*

Becca’s life was transformed last summer when she spent just two weeks at Dorset Nursing Association’s Visions Camp. Until camp, Becca preferred to be sedentary; her flexibility and balance were compromised and her willingness to participate in many new physical activities was limited. She arrived at camp somewhat unsure of both herself and her ability to participate in camp activities with the other girls.

With the encouragement of the counselors and other campers, Becca tried many different and new activities, including cooking, sewing, boating, and dance. She shared with all the campers the exhilaration of trying something new - from threading a needle to make a pillow, to paddling a two-person kayak on the stage with the girls!

At the Visions Camp, reunion party this winter, Becca announced that she had joined the soccer and basketball team and was trying out for the school musical. She embraced the Visions Camp motto “Expand your vision or who you can become.” Becca emerged a more confident and physically active young woman. (See related article on page 3.)

**Vermont Assembly of Home Health Agencies, Inc.**  
**10 Main Street**  
**Montpelier, Vermont 05602**

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## **VAHHA Voice Contributors**

### **Blue Cross/Blue Shield**

Box 186  
Montpelier, Vermont 05601-0186

### **Brad Borbidge, P.A.**

Five Warren Street  
Concord, NH 03301

### **Keene Medical Products**

P.O. Box 439  
Meriden Road  
Lebanon, NH 03766

### **Life Plus**

338 Commerce Street  
Williston, Vermont 05495

### **Merriam-Graves Medical Products**

VT Locations  
Bennington, Rutland, St. Johnsbury & Winooski  
NH Locations  
Lebanon

### **Northeast Health Care Quality Foundation**

15 Old Rollinsford Road  
Suite 302  
Dover, New Hampshire 03820

### **McKesson**

[www.mckesson.com](http://www.mckesson.com)

### **White Oak Systems**

[www.whiteoaksys.com](http://www.whiteoaksys.com)