

The Distinguished Reader

VNA
Community
Services



3/01/2023
Volume 1, Issue 1

Fighting the Good Fight

Through the trials of the world such as rising inflation, staffing shortages, gas prices, and the ever dubious eggs and milk costs, the VNA still stands strong in the community “fighting the good fight.” And in fighting for the good of the people of Knox County, we have made leaps and bounds in achievements and support for the older adults of our community. Upon starting the new year, we completed our open enrollment season for Medicare, saving over \$37,000 in Medicare Part D costs for our older adults. Beyond that, reliable nutrition has also been an important to us as well, and with our Home Delivered Meals program, we have currently provided over 4000 meals for our older adults in January alone. Also in January, we have begun our ADRD program (Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias) at the first of the year and have already provided approximately \$3,500 in financial aid for seniors with Alzheimer’s and related dementias.

Beyond the aid we have already given, the VNA has been focusing more on those that are often forgotten when it comes to support and service: caregivers. VNA Community Services has begun pairing with Alternatives for Older Adults to find methods and resources that our Family Caregivers can use to not only help themselves but also help those that they aid as well. Along with Family Caregivers, the VNA is also striving to provide similar aid to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. In the effort to help, the VNA will begin their Stress Busting courses to give strategies for Family Care Givers of a PWD (Person with Dementia) starting on March 7th (more information will be provided in this issue). Despite all these accomplishments, we at the VNA Community Services are continually “fighting the good fight” to help those older adults in Knox County. If you or someone you know would like to take advantage of these resources the VNA Community Services is providing, please have them reach out to us at (309) 342-1152 or stop by our office at 2262 Grand Avenue, Galesburg.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- New Year, New VNA Team
- VNA grossed over \$37,000 in Medicare savings
- VNA provided over 200,000 meals for Home Delivered Meals
- VNA has begun the Get engAGED program to alleviate isolation for our seniors



Get engaged at VNA

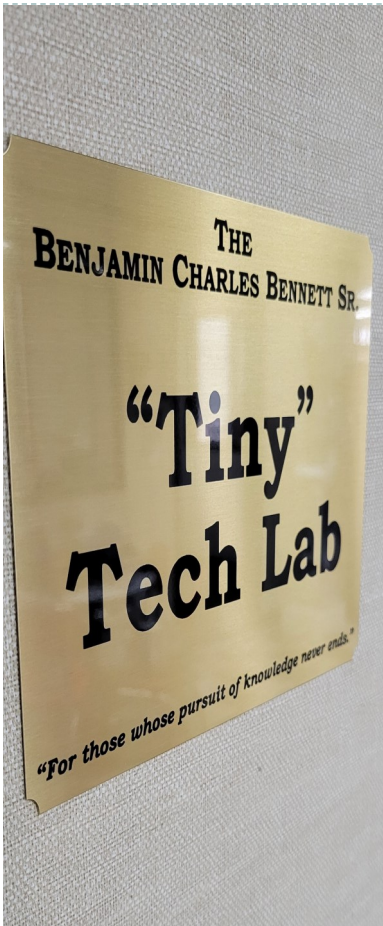
The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are still prevalent, even today. And one of the biggest issues we at the VNA have tried to alleviate among our older adults is that of isolation. As part of this effort, we have developed the program, Get engaged, as a means of providing engaging activities for our seniors to make some new connections with others in the community. VNA Community Services currently has four classes that are part of the Get engaged program that our older adults can sign up for.

The first of these is a modified Yoga class that meets every 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 10am at the VNA. These Yoga classes provide modified seated and standing Yoga stretches. Also, we have begun PAGE Turner, a book club that meets every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the

month at the VNA at 2pm. The first meeting of the book club discusses the first half of the current book of the month, and the second meeting looks at the book as a whole.

There is also the On The Page class, a drawing course for older adult at any skill level. This course allows them to tap more deeply into their creative sides. On The Page meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at 3pm. Finally, there are some tech courses (more information below) that will provide safety tips and step-by-step education on email, web browsers, smart devices, etc. Those interested in any of the engaged courses can contact VNA Community Services for more information.

“The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are still prevalent, even today.”



Big Ideas— “Tiny” Tech Lab

With each passing year it seems that technology is becoming a bigger part of each of our lives, and we at the VNA Community Services hope to help bring some modern resources to our older adult population. Therefore, we are pleased to announce the addition of our “Tiny” Tech Lab. Within it are four separate computer stations, access to the internet, and a means to copy and print important documents. Not only are we happy to answer any questions in regards to the computers, but also we are providing tech assistance with the help of our two volunteers: Ben Bennett and Zach Hunter, also known as Mister I.T. Ben Bennett’s Tech Literacy course is designed to help our seniors learn how to safely and effectively use PCs for their needs and to avoid protentional scams and other harmful risks that can come with computers.

The Tech Literacy course will meet virtually through Zoom every 2nd and last Tuesday of each month at 2pm. In addition, Zach Hunter will be providing office hours for older adults who come in to use the tech lab at their convenience. These office hours will provide beginner and intermediate software competency assistance for older adults, and Mister I.T. will not only help troubleshoot with computers but also help with smart devices such as phones and tablets. Mister I.T. will be available on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month from 9:30am-11am. Technology can be a scary things, but it is our goal at the VNA Community Services to help effectively teach our older adults to become confident in their knowledge of proper computer skills. If you are interested in using the “Tiny” Tech Lab, please come in to the VNA at your convenience and take advantage of our resources here. Also, if you are interested in taking the Tech Literacy course, come sign up for the meetings. And also take advantage of Mister I.T.’s office hours for assistance at your convenience.



Nutritiously balanced and easy to prepare. A large variety of diet specific choices and

Home Delivered Meals—Feeding the Need

Balanced nutrition has continually been a staple of the VNA Community Services. Our teams strives to provide balanced meals not only on site but also to the homes of our seniors through our 3rd party partnership: Mom's Meals. In January alone, the VNA has provided over 4000 meals to our older adults through Home Delivered Meals. The Home Delivered Meals program provides 2 deliveries a month of cold meals consisting approximately of 5 meals for each week day. Meal costs are a \$5 suggested donation per meal. The menu consists of diabetic-friendly, pureed, gluten-free, and other options as well. Home Delivered Meals are resources to those who are homebound or significantly struggling financially. If you feel you would benefit from this program, please call us at the VNA and get an assessment done today.

Along with this, the VNA also provide Shelf Stable meals to those who receive Home Delivered Meals which consists of 10 bags of non perishable items. Our volunteers deliver these Shelf Stable items to the homes of our HDM recipients every few months. Also, we provide a Congregate Meal on site every day for those who are more mobile. You can eat in or take away the meal for the day at your convenience. These meals are also a \$5 suggested donation. Menus are available at the VNA Community Services for pick up. If you'd like to make a reservation for our Congregate Meal, please call 24 the VNA for more information.

MEET THE NEW VNA TEAM

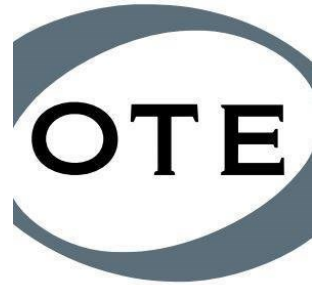
As the new year has begun, the VNA Community Services has found itself a change of hands with it's staffing. Michael John Bennett, who has served the VNA for 3 years, remains as the devoted Executive Director of the VNA. Walker Kelly, who has been with the VNA for almost 2 years now, has been promoted to the Program Director position. Also, we have your dedicated Caseworkers: Jackie Weidenhamer, who has been with the VNA for 5 years, and Marcus Bailey, who recently joined the VNA team in November. Shaun Pittman also joined the team in November as the cook for the congregate meals at the VNA. Last but certainly not least, Joyce Robbins continues to be the bright and shining face of the VNA as its Administrative Assistant for over a year now. This diligent team is working hard to provide every resource possible for the seniors of Knox County. If you ever have any questions, come in and meet our team or call the VNA Community Services at (309) 342-1152.



VNA Community Services is partially funded by WIAAA to provide these services. Suggested donation of \$5 per meal, but no one will be turned away due to inability to pay.

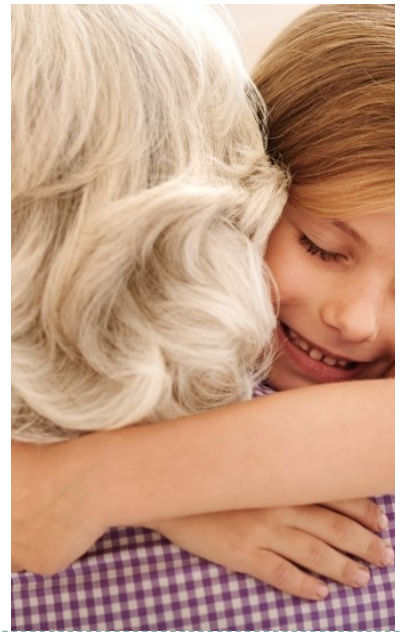



Official Sponsors of our 4th annual "Put Your Heart into It" fundraising event to support the plight of food insecure seniors of Knox County.



GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN/ KINSHIP CARE

Grandparents are a big part of any grandchild's life, but there are some out there that are an even bigger and crucial role in the lives' of grandchildren. There is a lot of respect and admiration due for these modern day superheroes. We at the VNA have turned our focus to providing help and resources to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. We have worked tirelessly to reach out to the population of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren over the last few months. Some of the efforts we have taken within our community include reaching out to the school districts, the libraries, the YMCA and many other places in the community to provide information for those Grandparents Raising Grandchildren about the VNA. Some resources we are providing include help with schools supplies and information on getting help with respite care and supplemental funding through Alternatives for Older Adults. If you or someone you know is a Grandparent Raising Grandchildren, let them know to reach out to the VNA or stop by our office today for information. There is so much that grandparents have done for the people they care for, and we at the VNA Community Services would like to give back any way that we can.



“There is a lot of respect and admiration due for these modern day superheroes.”

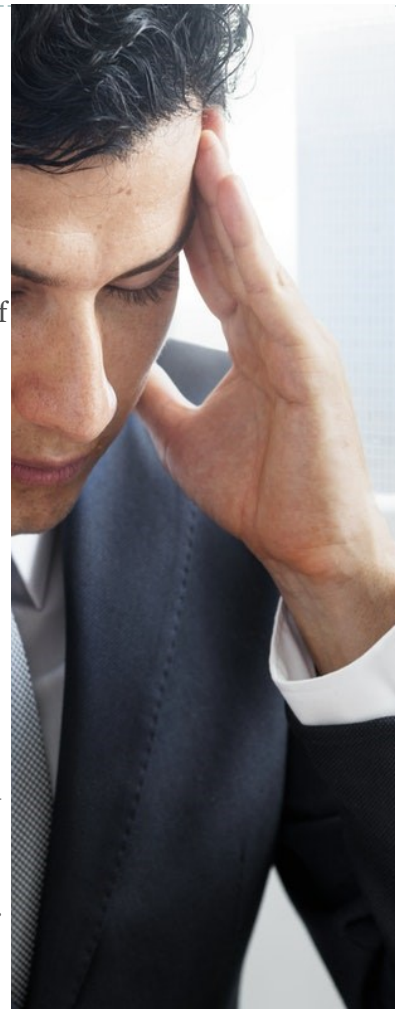
BUSTIN' STRESS WITH THE VNA GANG

Being a Family Caregiver is an admirable thing. There is nothing more fulfilling as a husband, wife, son, daughter, friend, or neighbor than to provide for our loved ones in need and to ensure their independence and safety. However, even though we get so much out of helping others, it is just as important to remember to help ourselves.

We at the VNA Community Services will begin in March a class dedicated to teaching “stress bustin'” strategies. This program will be geared specifically for Family Caregivers of a PWD (Person with Dementia). The class will teach strategies not only to help with physical stress relief such

as massage therapy and chair yoga, but also it will teach mental and emotional stress relief such as nutrition, proper sleep schedules, and hobby development. The aim of the class is to teach older adults who spend much of their time helping an adult with dementia to find some time for themselves as well .

Classes will begin on March 7th from 1:30pm-3pm and will take place over 9 weeks with one class meeting each week. If you or someone you know is interested in signing up, please reach out to the VNA Community Services. It would be a good way to learn some strategies to help ourselves as well as help others whom we care about.



VNA COMMUNITY SERVICES

VNA is the premier senior social services agency of Knox County. It is our mission to provide access to services and programs that either maintain or improve the quality of life for the seniors of our community allowing them to remain thriving in their homes.



Michael John Bennett
Executive Director

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Greetings,

As I sit here at my desk pondering the inner workings of the VNA, I cannot help but smile at the thought of all the great work that has brought us to this point.

It was way back at the end of October in 2019 when I stumbled through the side door amongst the Nautilus exercise equipment and local radio station keeping some health-conscious seniors up to date with news and banter. I made my way into the office of the then Executive Director, Ellen Larsen, for a highly anticipated interview for a Program Director position that had opened. Behind a nervous smile and somewhat make-shift charm, I managed to intrigue her just enough to get the job. Little did I know what adventure and amazement we set in motion on that dreary day in October.

Fast forward to March of 2020, I am still getting my footing under me when the stay-at-home order was mandated and we began our "two-week" hiatus from in-office service. Two-weeks

became two months, and then two years... You see where this is going...

We were then tasked with an inconceivable notion at the time of continuing services in the face of a mysterious/deadly pandemic. We could have easily placed our collective tails between our legs and found alternative work. But with a skeleton crew that was a mere shadow of years past we managed to hunker down and provide services at an exponentially higher rate than previously exhibited in years prior.

As the current Executive Director, I can say that I am incredibly delighted by all that we have been able to accomplish since that fateful day in March.

I am elated and proud to say that we have gone from an agency struggling to maintain consistent service throughout the county to a proverbial powerhouse that provides crucial services and programs that help Knox County seniors continue to thrive in their own homes. Even more so, I am pleased to have accomplished such feats while staring in the face of adversity.

For a bit of perspective, pre-pandemic we served a maximum of 80 recipients per month with meals from our Home Delivered Meals program while maintaining a waiting list of about 60 folks at any given time. This was an average of 1600 meals per month going out before March 2020. As of today, we currently have anywhere from 5,500 to 6,500 meals per month with a recipient list of 275+. We have served north of 200,000 meals to local seniors since the start of the pandemic, and we are able to coordinate these efforts with only 5 administrative staff members, 3 kitchen staff, and a handful of very helpful volunteers.

With that, I would just like to say thank you for allowing me and the VNA to serve this county to the best of our ability. It has been a very educational process and has taught me a lot about myself and what I am personally capable of when given dire circumstances. Our staff and myself will continue to work diligently to make sure Knox County seniors have every chance possible afforded to them. Thank you and remember that at VNA even life itself can be...better with age.

VNA Community Services
2262 Grand Ave
Galesburg, IL 61401

Phone: 309-342-1152
Fax: 309-342-1153
E-mail: frontdesk@myvna.net

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

...better with age

