

The Distinguished Reader

VNA
Community
Services



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The Ever-changing Winds

As the year has progressed, we have found many things changing within the world as a whole and within our own small community of Knox County. One of the biggest changes is that, after May 11th, COVID-19 pandemic protocols will no longer be in effect. For many this may be a scary thought as things will be changing; however, we hope it will be a comfort to know that VNA Community Services will be here with you to get through the adjustments together. Our workers here are very experienced with pivoting from one task to the other as well as wearing many different hats. Some examples of those hats include: providing assistance with application for the Benefit Access to help our older adults get a discount for their vehicle registration, assessing our homebound older adults for our Home Delivered Meals program, providing Shelf Stable meals for our Home Delivered Meal recipients, delivering our Congregate Meals to our outreach sites, teaching informative courses to offer practices to help our older adults, referring clients to other resources within the Knox County community, providing relief for social isolation through our senior center activities and Congregate Meals, and many other hats to help those within our community get any and all resources they can use.

We have always been here taking on anything that comes at us in stride, and we are more than happy to remain here to help all those in the community that need help as the winds change once again. We plan to see you through to the other side and get you back on solid ground. If you or someone you know would like to utilize the resources at VNA Community Services, 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

- Stress Doesn't Stand a Chance
- VNA has helped over 40 Caregivers since October
- COVID-19 Protocols end May 11th
- VNA has had 3 amazing volunteers to great things here

Loving Bottoms and Community Hygiene



Incontinence is a topic that is often avoided by many older adults; however it is nothing to be ashamed of. The VNA is dedicated to help. We have a partnership with **Loving Bottoms Diaper Bank** in Galesburg to offer incontinence products for older adults who may need them. Products are available **once per month** per person. We stock briefs, incontinence pads, and bed pads. Give us a call to place an order and pickup at our office. If you or someone you know feels like they may benefit from this service, please reach out.

Along with our incontinence products, we also offer toiletries through our partnership with the **Community Hygiene Pantry**. Products can also be requested once a month and up to **10 toiletry items** are offered per order. Such items can include: shampoo, body wash, toothpaste, laundry soap as well as many others. If you feel you may benefit from either of these resources, then call the VNA with your requests today. We are happy to help.

"Incontinence is a topic that is often avoided by many older adults; however it is nothing to be ashamed of."

Mister I.T.? Or Mister Popularity?



Zach Hunter is known as Mister I.T. at the VNA; however, he may as well be known as Mister Popularity. Zach began his tech literacy program at the beginning of March and has already begun to gain a large crowd at each of his open office hours. Technological assistance and troubleshooting is something that is quite lacking within the Knox County region. However, our older adults can have the reassurance that there is help within the community at the VNA to offer assistance for anything tech. Zach currently works as a Chaplin at Beacon of Hope Hospice and received his Bachelors of the Arts in Information Technology. He's always been a fan of tech and coding and has a strong passion for not only passing along his knowledge to others but also helping to solve any kind of tech problems that may arise. Through working with the VNA, he's gained a strong passion to help our older adults learn and grow with their tech experience and literacy. Mister I.T. is available from 9:30-11am the first and third Tuesdays of each month within our "Tiny" Tech Lab at the VNA for any who need assistance or have questions.



"For any caregivers out there that are seeking help of any kind, please reach out to us and we can offer our services and the services of others in the community to help not only yourselves but also your loved ones."

Caring for Caregivers

Within the last several months, the VNA has pushed to reach out to those in the community that are Family Caregivers (FCGs) or Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRGs). Though our efforts have been fervent with helping over 40 FCGs and GRGs since last October, we still have many within the community that don't know the help that we can provide and don't know that we are a resource for them.

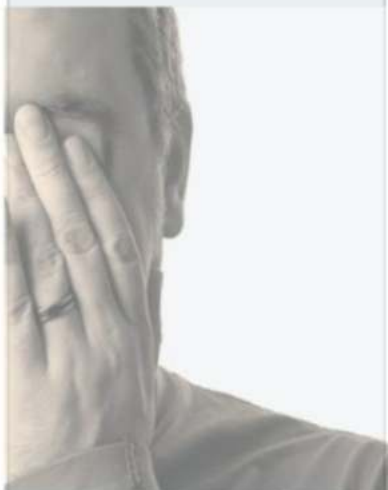
For FCGs we have many programs that can offer assistance for you and your loved ones. **First and foremost, we have a class that we have begun in April which is specific for Family Care Givers** and especially those who care for a loved one with ADRD (Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia's). This class is called **Stress Busters** and it offers many tools to not only help yourself but also those you care for. Furthermore, for FCGs we can provide financial respite for those ADRD care recipients through our **ADRD Supplemental Funding program**. The funds can be used for something as seemingly small as food and clothing to something larger like minor in home repairs.

For our GRGs we have some immediate help we can offer with material items such as literature for the caregiver and school supplies for the care recipients. Furthermore, for both Family Caregivers and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren **we can offer referrals to many other resources within the community** that can provide aid and funding. For any caregivers out there that are seeking help of any kind, please reach out to us and we can offer our services and the services of others in the community to help not only yourselves but also your loved ones.

STRESS DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE

In April, we began our **Stress Busters** course which is designed for **caregivers** who have **loved ones with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia's (ADRD)**. The class has gained a lot of traction and popularity with those attending **every Tuesday from 1:30-3:00pm**. The attendants come out of the class feeling a lot lighter and feeling like they have gained very valuable information and skills that they can use not only to help themselves but also help their care recipients.

It's always heartwarming to be able to help those who have helped others unconditionally. We will have **another Stress Busters course coming at the end of the year** so if you would like to sign up, please give us a call for information.





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Galesburg, Illinois



THE RETURN OF THE SENIOR CENTER

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the landscape of how we view socialization. Many found comfort in staying indoors, which led to many feeling isolated from others. The largest population to feel isolation were older adults who were unable to see friends and family that they counted on seeing. More so, many **older adults looked to the senior centers** in their community as a way to socialize and make friends. The VNA is striving to make itself the senior centers that were once seen pre-pandemic. Here at the VNA we have board **games and card games** that older adults can come in to play, we have a new **television** to watch, we have **books** that can be borrowed, we have a **congregate meal** every day at 11 am to allow for more socialization. Also, the biggest draw we have is **bingo** which is the **last Thursday** of each month at 10am. More than that, all those that work here and gather here strive every day to make newcomers feel welcomed and at home. Come in today to take advantage of all that your senior center has to offer in Knox County.



"The largest population to feel isolation were older adults who were unable to see friends and family that they counted on seeing at family gatherings and events."

VOLUNTEERS AT THE VNA

The VNA stands for the Volunteer Network on Aging. Yet, I find it heart warming that we have had several volunteers help us within the last few months, and many more approaching us who are wanting to help. First, we had Cindy Rescinito and Margaret Luallen offer their help with our Shelf Stable Meals. These two volunteers would come in for a few hours a day and pack 5 meals a bag for all of our older adults. By the end of a few weeks, there were hundreds of Shelf Stable Meals packed waiting to be delivered to our clients that receive Home Delivered Meals. It was astounding to witness how efficiently they worked and how happy they were to offer their help.

Besides these two incredible ladies, we also had an unforgettable person join our ranks at the VNA as well: Debbie Showalter. Debbie was always a lively person at the VNA; however, she was

approached to be our Volunteer Coordinator as a means to find other volunteers in the community who would love to provide a service for us. As Debbie always states, "I know everybody" and true to her word she has become a very valued member of the VNA team, even go so far as offering to help call numbers for bingo and refer people in the community that she knows to us. We are very humbled here to have such amazing people volunteering their time and efforts to help a small non profit like ourselves.



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

Dear readers,

As we age, we may become more susceptible to social isolation, a condition that has been shown to have negative impacts on our mental and physical health. Social isolation is a growing problem, especially amongst the senior citizen population, as they may face unique challenges such as the loss of friends and family members, mobility issues, and limited access to transportation. In this letter, we will explore the importance of battling social isolation amongst senior citizens and some strategies to mitigate this issue.

Social isolation is a major public health issue that can lead to a decline in physical and mental health, as well as an increased risk of premature death. Research shows that seniors who are socially isolated are at a higher risk of developing chronic conditions such as depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline. Moreover, social isolation can also exacerbate existing health conditions, leading to poor medication management, increased

hospitalization, and even mortality.

Fortunately, there are many strategies that can be implemented to mitigate social isolation amongst seniors. One of the most effective ways is to encourage seniors to engage in social activities, such as joining a senior center, taking part in a community group, or volunteering. These activities can help seniors to maintain their social connections and create new ones, which can help to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

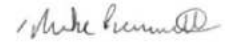
Another strategy is to utilize technology to connect seniors with their loved ones and community. With the rise of social media and video conferencing platforms, seniors can now connect with their family and friends from the comfort of their own home. Moreover, virtual social events and activities can also be organized to keep seniors engaged and connected.

Finally, providing support services such as transportation, meal delivery, and home care services can also help to reduce social isolation amongst

seniors. These services can help seniors to remain independent and engaged in their community, which can help to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

In conclusion, social isolation amongst seniors is a significant public health issue that can have negative impacts on their physical and mental health. However, there are many strategies that can be implemented to curb this issue, including encouraging seniors to engage in social activities, utilizing technology to connect with loved ones and community, and providing support services. By working together, we can help to reduce social isolation amongst seniors and improve their overall well-being. And I am proud to be able to state that the VNA is here to help battle it on all fronts.

Sincerely,



Michael Bennett
Executive Director
VNA Community Services

VNA Community Services
2262 Grand Ave
Galesburg, IL 61401

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

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...better with age

