



# House Calls

SPRING 2012

VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION HEALTH GROUP

VOLUME 23 NO. 2

## Visiting Nurse Association Health Group Turns 100 *Celebrating a century of caring for the community*

In June of 1912, six volunteers met in Monmouth County to talk about their vision for a better, more compassionate society. The site of their meeting was Brookdale Farm, the estate of Geraldine L. Thompson, in the Lincroft section of Middletown. Mrs. Thompson, a social reformer and philanthropist, and her committee swiftly mobilized the community to action. A century later, even these visionaries would likely be astounded at what their small group has become!

Visiting Nurse Association Health Group, headquartered in Red Bank, is celebrating 100 years of providing community health services to those in need, regardless of their circumstance or ability to pay. Today, it is New Jersey's largest nonprofit provider of in-home healthcare, hospice care and community-based health services and the second largest VNA in the nation. To observe its centennial, the organization planned a year-long calendar of events including a three-month historical exhibit at Ellis Island this summer and a Centennial Celebration Gala in Sea Bright on June 23.

"This is a singular opportunity to celebrate the rich history of an organization committed to making our communities a better place to live," said Denise Devine, vice chair of the VNA Health Group Board of Trustees. "We are called to be the safety-net provider, the place people turn when there is nowhere else to turn and where VNA Health Group's mission-centered approach to care can make a difference."

As founder and president, Geraldine Thompson left a legacy that was vigorously pursued by the six board chairs who



In the earliest photo from the VNA Health Group archives (circa 1920), Grace Mott, RN, shows a mother how to bathe her newborn. Maternal child health programs have had an important place in our organization from the beginning.

succeeded her, including the late Judith Stanley Coleman, who held the position for more than 30 years. From an initial budget of \$15 per week, the organization has grown to have a budget of more than \$100 million annually. And from an initial staff of one, it now employs more than 1,700 nurses, social workers, rehabilitation therapists, certified home health aides, nutritionists, administrative professionals and support staff. Where once it touched the lives of a

*continued on page 3*



**Against All Odds**  
A baby girl is turning one with the support of her family and the keen observation of VNA staff.

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**Back in the Swing**  
An enthusiastic golfer benefits from VNA Health Group's at-home joint replacement rehabilitation program.

6



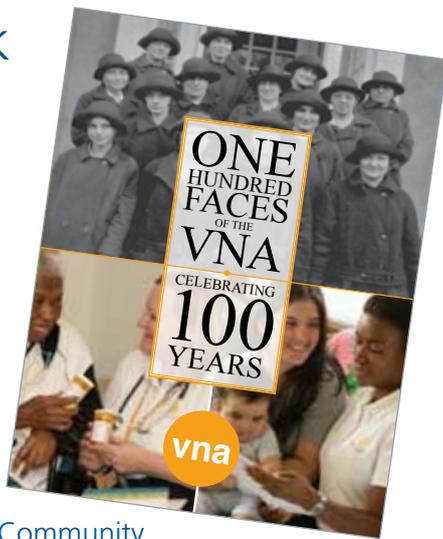
**Heading for Success**  
In collaboration with Stevens Institute, we guide high school students along the path to a bright future.

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# VNA Commemorative Book

## A historical keepsake

The people and programs that shaped VNA Health Group are captured in "100 Faces of the VNA," a commemorative, keepsake coffee-table book to be released in June 2012. Rich in photos both archival and new, the book ranges from the horse-and-buggy days of our 1912 founding to the leading-edge technology of the 21st century. Community residents are invited to show their support with a commemorative listing in the book for a gift of \$100. To participate please call before June 1 to 732.224.6780.



Community residents are invited to become part of our history in a Centennial commemorative book.

## Historic Exhibit at Ellis Island



Plan now to visit our "Caring for the Community" historical exhibit at Ellis Island this summer. Don't miss it!

## Centennial Celebration Gala

Honoring Peter Carton Esq. and the Mulheren Family,  
Sea Bright, NJ June 23, 2012

### Raffle Opportunities

*Enter to Win!*

**Giants Football Experience:** Win 2 tickets, parking and pre-game sideline access, NYG vs Dallas, Wed., Sept. 5 One ticket: \$50, Five tickets: \$200  
*Only 750 tickets will be sold.*

**50/50 Cash Raffle:** \$100 per ticket. *Only 500 tickets will be sold.* You could win up to \$25,000!

For more information please call the Foundation at 732.224.6780 or visit [www.vnahg.org](http://www.vnahg.org).



Ann Gargano (l) and Lynn Spector are two of the co-chairs for the Centennial Celebration Gala.

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Is a publication of  
**Visiting Nurse Association  
Health Group**

For patient care information call:  
**800.862.3330** or visit  
[www.vnahg.org](http://www.vnahg.org)

### Our Mission

Visiting Nurse Association Health Group is a voluntary, nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion, restoration and maintenance of the health status of individuals and the community.

Competence and compassion are the cornerstones of VNA Health Group service delivery.

### VNA Health Group Members:

Visiting Nurse Association of  
Central Jersey (VNACJ)  
176 Riverside Avenue  
Red Bank, NJ 07701

### Regional Offices:

Visiting Nurse and Hospice Services  
204 Creek Crossing Boulevard  
Hainesport, NJ 08036

Essex Valley Visiting Nurse Association  
274 South Orange Avenue  
Newark, NJ 07103

### Partners:

Robert Wood Johnson Visiting Nurses  
[www.rwjvn.org](http://www.rwjvn.org)  
972 Shoppes Boulevard  
North Brunswick, NJ 08902

Cape Visiting Nurse Association  
[www.capevna.org](http://www.capevna.org)  
1940 Route 9 North  
Cape May Court House, NJ 08210

VNA of Englewood  
75 West Demarest Avenue  
Englewood, New Jersey 07631

## VNA Turns 100 *continued from page 1*

hundred people annually, VNA Health Group today cares for 120,000 throughout 13 counties representing 78 percent of the state's population.

The founding principles of the organization were to provide attention to the neediest, to reach out to hidden populations, to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves and to provide ongoing response to community needs. Over the years, these principles have been realized in myriad ways: the fight against tuberculosis, health services for migrant workers, nursing care and primary care in schools and day care centers, health services for the homeless, care for at-risk children and families, and services for other special populations, such as the incarcerated and those at risk for HIV/AIDS.



A warm welcome for her nurse (circa 1950).

## The organization was one of the first agencies in the nation to be certified by Medicare and Medicaid and established Monmouth County's first hospice.

Since its inception, VNA Health Group has been in the forefront of community health. Early home visits by registered nurses have evolved into a comprehensive roster of in-home services that includes nursing, complex care, rehabilitative therapies, medical social services, palliative care, hospice care, private care and live-in services. It was one of the first to offer specialized intravenous (IV) care in the home.

VNA Health Group is the largest nonprofit community healthcare provider in the state. VNA community programs include public health services such as immunizations, health

education, and wellness services for seniors; chronic disease management; prenatal, nutritional and parenting support for mothers and children; case-management support for families of children with special needs; and outreach services to the homeless and those living in shelters and boarding homes. In addition, the organization has continued to collaborate with the community as first responders during state and national crises. It has provided emergency assistance in New Jersey and other states in weather-related disasters, such as hurricanes Katrina and Irene; in industrial accidents, such as the Edison gas pipeline explosion; and following the catastrophic attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

VNA Health Group collaborates with acute-care and community providers to reduce rates of re-hospitalization and assist in transitioning patients across the continuum of care. The organization has taken full advantage of technological advances to benefit its patients. It uses leading-edge technology to communicate with physicians through secure, internet portals and provides up-to-the minute patient data via electronic medical records.



The visiting nurse travels to the places people call home, even a migrant worker's temporary housing (circa 1960).



A nurse at the door is becoming more common as patients and the health care system embrace the advantages of in-home care (2010).

For more information about the history of VNA Health Group or a calendar of centennial events, please visit [www.vnahg.org](http://www.vnahg.org). To find out how you can help, contact the Foundation office at 732.224.6780.

# Against All Odds

## Clinical insight offers a family new hope



Genevieve sleeps peacefully in the arms of her father, George, while (l to r) VNA nurse Veronica Smilovic, RN, mom, Michelle, and sisters, Madison, (back row l to r) Taylor and Ashley look on. Michelle Stracensky, RN and Joy Journe, MSW, LSW, social worker (not pictured) are also part of the VNA team caring for Genevieve.

Michelle was in her fourth month of pregnancy when she and her husband, George, received the devastating news that a routine blood test showed something was seriously wrong with their baby. A sonogram confirmed a serious congenital birth defect. The couple were counseled that while the baby could continue to grow, there was a high risk that Michelle would miscarry or that their child would be stillborn. She would not live more than a few days if she went full term.

**“Thankfully the VNA nurse was waiting... to guide us with Genevieve’s care.”**

“It was good that Michelle and I were by ourselves that weekend,” said George. “It gave us an opportunity to absorb what we were being told.” Michelle’s three other daughters, aged 14, 12, and 9, were visiting their grandmother in Cape May during the school holiday break. Both Michelle and George report having a strong faith. It did not take long for the couple to come to a decision. They were going to carry this precious baby as long as they could. First they told their girls. Then they began to make the plans that no parent wants to make. “I just wanted to meet her and hold her,” said Michelle. “We prepared for her arrival and her funeral at the same time. It was a very emotional.”

On the day of Michelle’s delivery, surrounded by family and their pastor, Michelle took her new daughter, Genevieve Rose, into her arms, grateful for those moments. The

baby nursed right away and seemed to be tracking with her eyes, two things she was not expected to do! Genevieve lived through day one, then day two. On the third day, George took Michelle and their new baby home.

Genevieve was admitted to the VNA Health Group Hospice Program. “Thankfully a VNA nurse was waiting outside of our home to greet us and guide us with Genevieve’s care and to help us make the delicate plans needed for her,” said Michelle. By the end of the first month, both the VNA hospice nurse and the maternal child health nurses caring for Genevieve felt that she was not displaying the traditional signs related to end of life. They suggested that Michelle speak with a specialist. Michelle contacted Dr. Gary Hsichg at the Center of Pediatric Neurology, Cleveland Clinic and after a detailed review; Dr. Hsichg referred Genevieve to Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia for an MRI and further

evaluation. There, the Chief of Neurosurgery, Dr. Leslie N. Sutton performed her life saving surgery to close an opening in her skull.

Today, Genevieve and the family are preparing for her first birthday and christening in May. The girls are excited. The months that followed Genevieve’s surgery have not been easy. She has many developmental challenges. VNA Health Group has supported the family, by providing home nursing, rehabilitation services, counseling, and Reiki therapies.

“Genevieve is where she is today because of this family,” said Veronica Smilovic, RN, maternal child health nurse at VNA Health Group, who visits Genevieve weekly. “They have pulled together and have been amazing.”

“Whatever time we have with Genevieve is time we weren’t expecting to have, every moment is a gift.” says Michelle with a smile. For Michelle, George and the girls, the plan is simple: just love her. Although her future development remains uncertain, she recently surprised staff by performing better than expected on a vision test. It isn’t the first time that, against all odds, Genevieve Rose has surprised people. And there’s a good chance it won’t be the last.

For more information on VNA programs for children including early intervention and maternal child health services, please call 800.862.3330 or visit [www.vnahg.org](http://www.vnahg.org).

**A special note:** Genevieve’s family have asked that a special “thank you” be extended to the donors that participated in the VNA annual Seasons of Hope Adopt-A-Family Program. Your gifts made Christmas possible for four little girls and they wanted to express their deepest appreciation.

# Children's Auxiliary: All About Helping Children

The VNA Health Group Children's Auxiliary presented their bi-annual ladies' night out and purse auction "The Power of the Purse," to benefit the programs and services for children such as Maternal Child Health, Early Intervention and Healthy Families. The event was held April 26 at David Burke Fromagerie, Rumson.

The proceeds of more than \$30,000 will help provide care to children who are acutely and chronically ill and those who have special needs. Funds will also be used to provide support to first-time, at-risk expectant mothers. "The purses donated for this event were spectacular and everyone had a great time, but in the end it's all about helping the children," said Nikie Sourlis, auxiliary chair. For more information or to get involved, contact the Foundation at 732.224.6780 or visit [www.vnahg.org](http://www.vnahg.org).



IT'S IN THE BAG—At a planning meeting for "Power of the Purse," members of the committee admired an array of high-end designer purses donated for the event. They are (l to r) Lisa Halikias, Michelle Barber, Dray Zanetich, Nikie Sourlis, Jill Drummond, Sarah Devine, Kathy Smith, Heather Yockel, Cindy Spitz and Coreen Victor. (not pictured: Laura Balestro, Ana Blank, Danielle Devine Greene, Taryn Iwan, Kristen Masserio, Anne Riddle, Angela Gengaro-Secul, Alexandra Skove, Laura Whisnand, Debra Williams and Lauren Wolfe.)



SHOPPING MATTERS—On a recent family outing to the grocery store, VNA WIC Nutritionist Apryl Hanid, left, taught Idalia Rivera of Carteret how to compare organic and low-fat milks. Ms. Rivera was one of 32 moms enrolled in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutritional Program who visited local supermarkets with VNA Health Group nutritionists. The tour was made possible through a "Share Our Strength" mini-grant to teach families how to shop with a plan, make nutritious food choices, and prepare healthy and affordable meals.

## VNA Staff Recognized for Excellence

**Judy Fancelli, BS, RN, vice president of Business Initiatives** for VNA Health Group was named Administrative Manager of the Year by the Visiting Nurse Association of America (VNAA), the national professional association for VNAs. The national award is given in recognition of outstanding achievement by an administrative manager in improving an organization's ability to add to patients' quality of life and motivate staff to achieve the highest level of nursing excellence.



Judy Fancelli, BS, RN

**Pauline DePalma, BSW, manager of Volunteers** at VNA Health Group was awarded Volunteer Coordinator of the Year by the NJ Hospice and Palliative Care Organization for her work in providing services and programs to hospice patients through the recruitment, training and support of an outstanding group of nearly one hundred volunteers.



Pauline DePalma, BSW

# Dancing at the Party

## An energetic 56-year-old gets back in the swing

For years, osteoarthritis came between Greg and a great round of golf—his passion. To relieve the pain in his hips he tried a number of measures, including cortisone injections and aquatic therapy. He even lost 40 pounds, but still found himself handicapped and in constant pain. Surgical hip replacement was the only remaining alternative. Greg chose Arthur Mark, M. D., of Seaview Orthopedics in Monmouth and Middlesex counties, to perform surgery on his right hip in November.

a smooth transition from hospital to home. “Marie set everything up. She made it so easy,” says Greg, who lives in Manalapan.

Dr. Mark, whose specialty is total joint replacement, is supportive of patients who choose in-home rehabilitation. “I believe VNA Health Group’s rehab therapy is the ideal choice as the bridge between hospital care and living

*Continued next page*

**‘VNA Health Group’s rehab therapy is the ideal bridge between hospital care and living independently.’**

— Arthur Mark, M. D.

One thing that particularly appealed to Greg was that he could receive rehabilitation at home following the surgery, rather than going to a rehab center. That’s because Seaview has an innovative care model with VNA Health Group incorporating in-home rehab in the surgeon’s plan of care. (See sidebar.) Marie Perillo, our nurse-physician liaison, helps to coordinate care with the patient. She ensures



Arthur Mark, MD and Marie Perillo, RN-CC, nurse-physician liaison for VNA Health Group, developed Greg’s customized plan of care.



Greg with physical therapist Rod Justiniani, PT, enjoys his rehab in the comfort of his home.

### VNA At-Home Joint Replacement Rehabilitation includes:

- Customized rehabilitation program as recommended by physician
- 2 week (10-day) at-home plan
- Direct discharge from hospital to home
- Skilled nurse and physical therapy assessment within 24 hours of discharge
- Pre/post-operative patient education
- Home safety assessment
- Strength, balance and endurance training
- Transfer/mobility techniques
- Precaution instruction
- Additional home care and lab services as needed

*Services are covered under Medicare and most commercial insurance plans.*

*Call 800.862.3330 for more information.*

independently," he says. "It helps me feel confident that my patients can transition safely back to their homes."

Greg was highly motivated. "I'd tell him what to do once and he'd do more," says his physical therapist Rod Justiniani. "A patient's drive and desire to recover have a great deal to do with his recovery." Rod visited Greg five times a week for two weeks post-op, before transferring him to outpatient care, where he continued his rapid

improvement. Three weeks after the surgery, Greg astounded his friends by dancing at a Christmas party.

The successful outcome motivated Greg to have surgery on his left hip in early January. With Dr. Mark's permission he returned to work after two weeks of in-home rehab, with Rod again as his therapist. Now that his hips are properly aligned, his knees are also in alignment, resulting in less knee and ankle pain. Golf season is now in full swing... and so is Greg.

## SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS

# On the Right Track

VNA Health Group and Stevens Institute join forces to help students map a path to success

VNA Health Group and Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, have joined to help Asbury Park High School students start out on the track to a bright future through the development of career and academic goals. Stevens, a premier private coeducational institution focused on research and entrepreneurship, is offering a four-phase 'Asbury TECH' program for all interested APHS students.

"We're excited about this program," said Theresa Beck, RN, MPA, CHPN® VNA Health Group vice president of community initiatives and Chief Mission Officer. "It is great opportunity for these students to be mentored by the outstanding, cutting-edge faculty at Stevens and for them to understand the role they can have in shaping their own futures."

The goal of the program is to help maximize the potential of students after they graduate from high school. Through a series of seminars, students will obtain comprehensive personal assessment skills as well as career and academic guidance and planning. The seminars will help students recognize their potential and the personal attributes they need to achieve success. Students will create a career plan focused on personal interests and strengths; develop a resume and interview skills; and explore areas of concentration based on their interests in fields such as technology, arts, healthcare, and higher education. The final phase of the program includes monitoring concrete measurements for success and a comprehensive final evaluation by Stevens faculty, VNA Health Group mentors and APHS representatives.

"The Asbury TECH Program is a terrific opportunity for Stevens once again to make good on its 141 year commitment to New Jersey's best and brightest," said Dr. Don Lombardi, professor and director of the Stevens Healthcare Educational Program. "The stellar confluence of VNA Health Group, Stevens and Asbury Park High School is exceeded in quality only by the outstanding students already involved in the program—and the best is yet to come!"



Asbury Park High School students express their enthusiasm about the 'Asbury TECH' program presented by VNA Health Group and Stevens Institute of Technology. They are with Dr. Don Lombardi, (back row, center), director of the Stevens Healthcare Educational Program.

The new program will take place at "The Spot," the APHS location of the state-funded School-based Youth Services Program implemented by VNA Health Group to reduce absenteeism, reduce high school pregnancy, and raise graduation rates.

## VNA School-based Youth Services Program includes:

- Group activities
- Tutoring
- Primary care by a nurse practitioner
- Mental health counseling
- Individual counseling

*For more information about VNA Health Group school-based services and programs, call 800.862.3330.*

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



*26th Annual Golf Classic*

Mark your calendar for the  
26th Annual  
VNA Health Group  
Golf Classic  
Monday, August 6th, 2012  
at the prestigious, nationally-ranked  
Hollywood Golf Club  
Deal, N.J.

*For reservations or additional information please call  
732.224.6780, email [foundation@vnahg.org](mailto:foundation@vnahg.org)  
or visit [www.vnahg.org](http://www.vnahg.org)*

## VNA Health Group Services

### In-home Services

- Community Health Nursing
- Certified Hospice Services
- Bereavement Counseling
- Palliative Care
- Home Health Aides
- Home Infusion/IV Therapy
- Medical Social Work
- Nutrition Counseling
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Pathology
- Private Duty Services  
Nursing  
Live-in's
- Emergency Personal  
Response System
- Telehealth Program
- Volunteer Program

### Community-based Programs

- AIDS/HIV Services
- Bereavement Counseling
- Cancer Education and  
Early Detection
- Case Management Services for  
Long-term Care
- Chronic Disease Self-Management
- Community Health Education
- Immunization Programs
- Maternal Child Home Visitation
- Mobile Outreach Clinic Program
- Primary and Prenatal Care
- Public Health Programs
- Special Child Health Services/  
Early Intervention
- Senior Wellness
- School-based Health Programs
- Speakers Bureau
- Volunteer Program
- WIC Nutrition Program