



Home health  
helps people live  
independently at home  
with extra support from  
their care team.

## ‘Being Home is So Much Better’

John Welsh is a local legend in Shelburne, Williston and surrounding areas in Vermont. He served as a police sergeant and a police chief in Shelburne. Then, as the founder and longtime owner of the Town Cobbler in Williston, his rare craftsmanship was valued by Vermonters for decades. At 81 years of age, John is now grateful to the “souls” of others – his care team from the Adult Home Health program at Home Health & Hospice – whose support and regular visits allow him to successfully manage the challenges of living independently with chronic health conditions.

“Being at home is so much better. My stuff is here. My friends know where to find me. But, I guess sometimes I don’t

realize I’m as sick as I am. This program is a great thing for people like me, who don’t quite need to be in a nursing home. We’re somewhere in between.” John has been a home health patient a handful of times over the last two decades, for post-surgical wound care, and, more recently, for help managing his congestive heart failure. These days, he struggles with the effects of edema and fluid retention. That’s where his Home Health & Hospice care team comes in, comprised of nurses, physical therapists and social workers, who make certain his physical, emotional, and social needs are tended to.

“They came in and evaluated things, and between Michael in Physical Therapy, Martha in Social Work, and Sierra, we put something together. I was very happy with

it,” says John. That “something” was a care plan that removed barriers to his recovery and considered what Welsh identified as most important to him – living at home.

### Helping to make sense of it all

Sierra Gempka, RN, has been working with Welsh for the last year. As a registered nurse with extensive experience in providing home health care, Sierra provides nursing services such as medication management, wound care, nutrition guidance, weight and blood pressure checks, and ongoing education about Welsh’s health conditions. Most insurances cover nursing services when ordered by a patient’s provider. The clinical assessments, care management and patient education that is offered

not only help patients recover and maintain health, but very often prevent trips to the emergency department and hospitalizations.

“Right now, I’m on a lot of meds. My dining room table is covered with pill bottles,” John explains. “I take five pills at night, and ten more during the day. It can get overwhelming. When you go in [for a doctor’s visit] and they just start talking in jargon, assuming you know what they’re talking about. You need someone to tell you in English,” he says.

“

**Without that support system, I don’t know how a lot of people do it. And if it weren’t for Home Health & Hospice, I don’t know what I would have done. Probably the nursing home.”**

Sierra and her colleagues on the Adult Home Health care team have helped Welsh fine-tune his diet and exercise regimen, manage his prescriptions, communicate with his doctors and so much more — all centered on what he identified as important for him. For John, this meant his physical therapist outfitted him with a cane with an ice gripper and helped him develop a routine for safely getting out for car rides with others. Together, they also determined the best compression treatment to reduce the swelling in his legs. Welsh’s social worker helped him establish an account with the local transportation provider, Special Services Transportation Agency (SSTA), to ensure he was

prepared in the event he ever needed a ride to an appointment.

As the registered nurse of the care team, Sierra wrote up daily and nightly pill lists and a prescription-refill call schedule. She gave Welsh some helpful pointers and “translators” to make

clear that his care team is always available when he has a question about his care and feels uncertain about what to do next. That support often gives him the confidence to continue living alone, because he can manage his conditions with the extra help from his care team.

John’s situation is typical for a Home Health & Hospice patient: He’s someone who can still live independently, but who needs a little bit of help with certain aspects of his health care. He still drives, he does his own cooking, dishes and laundry, and a housekeeper stops in once a month. Several friends and neighbors bring his mail from the post office, do his grocery shopping and shovel his sidewalk in winter.

“Without that support

system, I don’t know how a lot of people do it. And if it weren’t for Home Health & Hospice, I don’t know what I would have done. Probably the nursing home,” he says. His face falls a bit as he mentions friends who have left their homes and have not thrived in assisted living facilities, but then adds, “Luckily, I never got to that point.”

April Plante, RN, interim director of the Adult Home Health program, says, “People often think that home health services are just what you get when you go home after a knee surgery and you have a nurse come check on you to make sure your wound is healing. But really, it’s so much more. It’s about surrounding a patient with a team of health care professionals who are focused on making sure the patient achieves the best possible outcomes.” □



*Meet members of our care team: April Plante, RN (left) and Sierra Gempka, RN (right)*

communication with his doctors more straightforward. According to Sierra, “It’s been a bit of a challenge to figure out how he can manage his edema independently, but his is a really good case of how several health care professionals can come together, work as a team, and provide the care and guidance the patient needs to live their fullest life.”

### **A team that truly cares**

John’s gregarious nature makes it easy to wonder what he does on days when his friends can’t stop by. “I like conversation. I’ve been watching a lot of TV lately. Until I get lonesome,” and after a pause, he adds, “Then, Sierra comes over.” A smile spreads over John’s face, that familiar twinkle returning to his eyes, and it is clear how much visits from the care team mean to him. It’s also





## 2023 Fun Run and Jiggety Jog:

### A Community Celebration of the McClure Miller Respite House

The Fun Run and Jiggety Jog event for the McClure Miller Respite House was finally back in person on June 10, 2023, after three years of remote and hybrid style events. Presented by NorthCountry Federal Credit Union, the fundraiser was bigger and better than ever in its 33rd year!

**We had set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$100,000 and successfully raised over \$107,000 for end-of-life care at the Respite House.**

We were joined by more than 250 community members, who showed up in costumes and festive outfits to celebrate the fun event. With a food truck, games, music and post run massages, everyone could feel the joy and strength of this amazing community coming together. We look forward to the next Fun Run and Jiggety Jog in June 2024!

The McClure Miller Respite House has served our community for over 30 years, providing compassionate, high-quality hospice care for those

at the end of their lives. The Respite House offers round-the-clock care and supportive services so residents and their loved ones can focus on what matters most.

“We are grateful for everyone who donated to, participated in, fundraised for, or cheered someone on at the Fun Run & Jiggety Jog. This truly was a community event celebrating the profound impact of the McClure Miller Respite House.

– Maya Fehrs, Director of Development



Members of the Home Health & Hospice team hold a sign made by a Respite House resident.





We are an organization deeply rooted in community. The high-quality, compassionate care we deliver for people wherever they call home is only possible because our shared community rises to support this need and each other.”

— Christine Werneke, President & COO

## HOME HEALTH & HOSPICE BY THE NUMBERS (2022)



234,695

Hours of care  
provided



4,101

Patients served, at all  
ages and stages of life



3,988

Days of care provided  
at McClure Miller  
Respite House



96,007

Home visits by  
caregiving team  
members

## McClure Miller Respite House Honored by Dragonheart Vermont

The McClure Miller Respite House was selected as the 2023 Pledge Partner for Dragonheart Vermont's Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Festival. The annual Dragon Boat Festival raises money for cancer-related causes. The Respite House was proud to receive an incredible **\$33,800**

from our friends at Dragonheart. **Thank you, Dragonheart Vermont, and all who participated in the 2023 Dragon Boat Festival!**

Members of our team participated in the festival as paddlers in a dragon

boat. While we didn't win any races, our incredible team did win a Spirit Award for Best Team Song or Chant! Most importantly, the team had so much fun celebrating our partners at Dragonheart Vermont and bringing awareness to this important cause.



The Home Health & Hospice “Heart of the Home” Dragon Boat team.



“Once I got home, under the care of the home health nurse and my daughter Margaret, things began to pick up.”

## There's No Place Like Home

### Why stay in the hospital when you have the choice to recover at home?

**2**022 was the worst year of Ralph Page's life. “I went into the hospital with a stroke, and I needed some pretty comprehensive care, so they sent me to a long-term-care place,” recalls Ralph, who was 88 at the time and managing chronic heart disease, including heart failure and atrial fibrillation.

“While I was there, I had a more serious stroke, and I wound up staying more than three months before I was able to come home. It was difficult, and even more so because in March 2022 my wife passed away.”

Fortunately, a telehealth option called remote patient monitoring, or RPM for short, allowed Ralph to come home sooner than he might have otherwise, to recover physically and emotionally in a comfortable and familiar environment, surrounded by family.

How does it work? Remote patient monitoring uses technology to track certain aspects of a patient's health while a patient is at home. The technology feeds data about symptoms to health care providers, which allows them to monitor and manage acute and chronic

conditions while still supporting a patient where they want to be – at their home.

The service, offered by Home Health & Hospice, often helps improve recovery outcomes and a patient's quality of life by reducing the length of their hospital stay and, in many cases, preventing a return trip to the hospital. The program allows patients to wirelessly transmit their vital signs from home to a nurse who can call if there are any changes or concerns.

“Hospitals are actually a terrible place to recover,” says Michael Latreille, MD, Primary Care Physician with UVM Medical Center. Patients get poor sleep because they're constantly being woken up for vitals, alerts, blood draws, you name it. And you're connected to all these tubes and wires, which also create an elevated fall risk. People recover better at home whenever it's medically feasible.”

For Ralph, who is one of Dr. Latreille's patients, that was certainly the case. “Once I got home, under the care of the home health nurse and my daughter Margaret, things began to pick up,” he says, noting that he enjoys frequent visits from his children and grandchildren.

Patients, many of whom are in their 80s and 90s, rarely have trouble operating the devices, according to Jaimie McKenzie, RPM Nurse Coordinator. The Home Health & Hospice team takes time to introduce each patient to the monitoring devices, and when questions come in, the team is responsive to patient questions and concerns.

Ralph, who doesn't use email, navigated it easily. “I am the least technical person in the world, but the system was quite easy to use. I had no problem with it,” he says. The technology has evolved to the point where now, everything needed – tablet, stand, Bluetooth-enabled blood pressure cuff, digital scale, and fingertip pulse oximeter – fit in a plastic shoebox-sized container. If necessary, the patient can use their own thermometer and glucometer to monitor their temperature and blood glucose.

“Remote Patient Monitoring gives us all the items of interest, such as daily weight for congestive heart failure patients, glucose levels for patients with diabetes, and so on,” says Dr. Latreille. “If we see something that gets our attention, we can get in contact with the patient before the wheels come off the wagon, so to speak.”

In Ralph's case, the daily weight monitoring alerted his care team that he was starting to retain fluid, a symptom of worsening heart failure. He had a brief trip to the hospital to remove the fluid, and Dr. Latreille prescribed an additional diuretic.

“We nipped things in the bud,” says Dr. Latreille.

Since his program ended in April, Ralph has continued to monitor his vital signs daily. “I like to know how I'm doing. And Dr. Latreille wants to keep pretty close tabs on me. He's been my doctor for a long time, and I have every confidence in the world that I'm getting good care.”

In general, Ralph is feeling good. “I'm in really good shape. I'm not driving anymore, but I don't have much trouble with my mobility. I can walk with a cane. Actually, I can walk quite well without the cane, but nobody wants me to,” he laughs. “I'm 98% back.” □





### Honor a Caregiver Today

There is no better way to acknowledge a wonderful caregiver than through our “Honor a Caregiver” program, which allows you to support Home Health & Hospice in the name of a special nurse, social worker, therapist, or multitude of caregivers who stood by you throughout your home health or hospice journey. Recognize a caregiver’s incredible work today by including their name in a donation online or in the included envelope.

## Our People Make the Difference

**Celebrating our talented staff during National Home Care and Hospice Month — and all year round!**

November is National Home Care and Hospice Month and at Home Health & Hospice we celebrate our team members who do incredible work every day. On any given day, our staff are busy caring for ~1,000 neighbors throughout Chittenden and Grand Isle counties. We operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year in order to be here for you and your family when you need us.

**Please join us in celebrating and thanking our staff!**



# Our Generous Community



## ReArch Company Gives Back

In September, the McClure Miller Respite House welcomed Christa Vandevord, Chief Financial Officer at ReArch Company to present a generous gift of \$10,000 to support our work providing end-of-life care for our neighbors. Support from community partners like ReArch Company helps us care for all of our neighbors who turn to us for care.



## Good Works from JPMorgan Chase

Earlier this fall, our friends at JPMorgan Chase held their annual volunteer day at the McClure Miller Respite House. Their work this year included planting, weeding and power washing the house. They donated their time as well as pumpkins, mums, mulch and hay bales. Thank you for creating a beautiful and peaceful environment for our residents and their families.

## Every one of us has the power to make a difference — right here in our community.

Every dollar we receive is put right to work where it is needed most:

- Providing more than \$1 million in unreimbursed care for the 4,000+ neighbors we care for each year.
- Investing in skill building, training and career pathways for staff to make sure we can meet our community's current and future needs.
- Caring for neighbors at every age and stage of life.

## Leave Your Legacy

Planning a legacy gift offers individuals and families opportunities to be recognized for their generosity now while deferring a gift in the future.

Legacy gifts of all sizes make important contributions to our work and can be easily planned with wills, trusts, IRAs and appreciated stock. You retain flexibility over your giving and can even secure substantial tax benefits—all while investing in the health of your community.

Legacy donors join our most invested supporters as members of our Julia Smith Wheeler Founder's Society.

Please join us with your gift today:  
[UVMHomeHealth.org/donations](https://UVMHomeHealth.org/donations)

Contact Maya Fehrs at: [donate@uvmhomehealth.org](mailto:donate@uvmhomehealth.org) to learn more about how to have your biggest impact.



# About Home Health & Hospice

## CARE AT HOME SINCE 1906

For more than 100 years, we have provided high-quality, compassionate home health and hospice care wherever our community members call home. We support families at every age and stage of life, from pregnancy and early childhood care to adults with acute and chronic illnesses to those at the end of life. The VNA is how we started. UVM Health Network - Home Health & Hospice is who we are today.

## OUR PROGRAMS

- Family and Children's Services
- Pediatric Palliative Care
- Adult Home Health
- Adult Day
- Long-Term Care
- Community Hospice
- McClure Miller Respite House

## TRUSTED LOCAL CARE

We are one of a kind. We are not-for-profit and locally led. We bring the care you need to you, wherever you call home.

As a member of The UVM Health Network, we provide trusted local care connected to a Network of expertise that benefits our patients and our people.

## OUR INTEGRATED, ACADEMIC HEALTH SYSTEM

The University of Vermont Health Network is comprised of five community hospitals, an academic medical center, a multispecialty medical group and our Home Health & Hospice agency. By integrating patient care, education and research in a caring environment, we can improve people's lives. The services provided by Home Health & Hospice are a key part of the continuum of care for our patients and communities.

Together, we are working to preserve access to care for the people we serve by focusing on wellness, in addition to disease prevention and treatment, to improve the health of people across Vermont and Northern New York so our communities can thrive.

### THE University of Vermont HEALTH NETWORK

The University  
of Vermont  
Medical Center

The University  
of Vermont  
Health Network -  
**Home Health &  
Hospice**

The University  
of Vermont  
Health Network -  
**Central Vermont  
Medical Center**

The University  
of Vermont  
Health Network -  
**Champlain  
Valley Physicians  
Hospital**

The University  
of Vermont  
Health Network -  
**Elizabethtown  
Community  
Hospital**

The University  
of Vermont  
Health Network -  
**Medical Group**

The University  
of Vermont  
Health Network -  
**Alice Hyde  
Medical Center**

The University  
of Vermont  
Health Network -  
**Porter Medical  
Center**

### THE University of Vermont HEALTH NETWORK

## Home Health & Hospice

Friendship for Life is a publication of  
The University of Vermont Health Network -  
Home Health & Hospice.

**Want to learn more about any of  
the programs in this issue?**

Visit us online: [UVMHomeHealth.org](http://UVMHomeHealth.org)

Call us: (802) 658-1900

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Your Nonprofit  
Home Health & Hospice Agencies