

Friendship for Life



Celebrating Our People

Tonya Guyette, administrative manager,
McClure Miller Respite House

November is National Care at Home month — a wonderful time to celebrate the incredible team that makes our work possible. Our staff are highly skilled and compassionate professionals who, on any given day, care for more than 1,000 people in their homes, at the McClure Miller Respite House and at our Adult Day Program. But who are they outside of their jobs? In this issue, you're invited to get to know a few of HHH's team members. These stories were previously published as part of UVM Health's Mosaic Project. Read all of the Mosaic stories at www.uvmhealth.org/mosaic.

Trail Tested

I wasn't always outdoorsy; that started with my dog. Jersey had so much energy that I needed to find a way to get him off-leash. I began walking him around the wooded trails near our house, then hiking. Before long, I was tackling sections of the Long Trail with my four sisters and working to complete New Hampshire's 48 highest peaks.

The Long Trail runs the length of Vermont, from the Massachusetts border to Canada. It's the oldest long-distance hiking trail in the country. We've hiked from Massachusetts to Waterbury and tackled the northernmost stretch from the Canadian border down to Jay Peak. My niece joins sometimes, too. We do a sunrise hike most years for her birthday.

She has seven boys. I enjoy most weekends with her, watching my great nephews play sports and taking nature walks with the youngest in search of mushrooms, worms and other creepy crawlies.

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Trail Tested continued...

My bachelor's degree is in education, and I have used that background over the years at work — supporting volunteers, mentoring new staff, educating families.

I started working at the original Respite House in 1997. A friend of mine was in nursing school and said, "You'd be great here." Back then we didn't need health care credentials. Just compassion and training. Hospice teaches you that life's not about having a bucket list — it's about finding meaning in what you've already done and knowing what you're capable of doing next.

Outside of work, I've tried rock climbing and ice climbing. The types of challenging things that reminded me that I can do more than I think. That mindset helped when I decided to go back to school. I'm currently earning my MBA with a health care specialization. The coursework is tough but so is climbing a mountain. And I've done that.

Tonya Guyette is the administrative manager at the McClure Miller Respite House with Home Health & Hospice. She has been with us for 28 years.



Chris Lazar, community health resource coordinator, Adult Home Health

The Boat Life

It all started with my aunt. We're from Staten Island, and one day in Manhattan she saved a woman from getting her leg stuck between a subway platform and the train. The woman asked my aunt how she could repay her. My aunt's reply, god bless, was, "Get my nephew a job."

That job was on the 49th floor at 55 Water St. for Bear Stearns Brokerage House. If you've seen the movie "The Wolf of Wall Street" it's somewhat true, but I plead the 5th. I was young, barely out of high school, and here I was with all these brokers. I got to know some of them pretty well, and one told me, "Go see the world while you're still young."

Next thing I knew, I was on the crew of a 142-foot luxury yacht.

I couldn't believe it. In January 1984, I took my first-ever flight down to Miami where the boat wintered. I stepped aboard and for the next year I basically lived there. The first few weeks blew my mind. We stopped in Virginia and other places on the way to New York City, where the boat spent the summers.

The crew included a chef who posted a daily lunch menu. One day, it read "Flying Fish." I thought, "where are they getting those?" Turns out, lunch literally flew on board — fish stranded on the deck ended up on the plate.

I almost got fired sneaking someone onto the boat. Almost fired again for asking a guest from the owner's self-made millionaires club who was dressed head-to-toe in an argyle suit if he was the one who invented that little tab on scotch tape. I was a little bit of a wise guy.

All summer we'd take guests around the harbor — from the West Side Highway and all the way around lower Manhattan to the eastside Hudson up to the Manhattan Bridge and back. It was an amazing time, and I'll remember it for the rest of my life.

Chris Lazar is a community health resource coordinator with Home Health & Hospice. He has been with us for two years.



Raven Schwan-Noble, RN, telemonitor technical assistant, High-Tech Nursing Program

Close Look, Deep Focus

I've always loved owls. The way they move. The way they watch. The way they wait.

I photograph for Vermont State Parks, usually on hikes in the Champlain Islands. Niquette Bay is a favorite. I'll sit with an owl for hours, waiting for that perfect moment. People ask how I stay so still. But I don't get bored.

What you think you see isn't always there. We miss details, and that's what I love to share in my work. I think in close-ups, bringing those subtleties to the forefront.

That way of seeing started early. When I turned 8, I got a Brownie box camera. That little gift changed everything.

Being adopted created many barriers for me as a child. I always felt different. I struggled in school. That camera gave me something steady.

As an adult, I was never without a camera, snapping photos everywhere I went. I found I could hide behind the lens while still capturing connection.

I met my husband at Knight Point State Park. He was the first park ranger there. After he passed, I stopped photographing for a while. Slowly I started back up again,



Courtesy: Raven Schwan-Noble

but my vision had shifted. My photos became more intimate: a mother, dad and sister holding a child who won't survive. A family gathered at the Respite House. It felt natural and good to help others with their grief.

I've worked with Home Health & Hospice for more than eight years, setting up remote patient monitoring. I don't wear scrubs. I don't look medical. That's on purpose. People have had their fill of white coats by the time I arrive.

Some people are lonely. I take my time. If someone seems especially isolated, I

might show them one of my photos — an owl, a fox, a quiet trail. Something to talk about. I like moving through places slowly, noticing what others overlook. Whether I'm in the woods or in someone's living room, I always try to look closer. Listen longer.

Raven Schwan-Noble is a telemonitor technical assistant for Home Health & Hospice. She has been with us for eight years.



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“Our staff are the heart of everything we do. Their expertise and dedication help create moments of dignity and comfort for clients, patients, residents and families every day. This human connection is the foundation of our work and the reason we can deliver compassionate care that truly makes a difference.”

– Christine Werneke, President & COO

Home Health & Hospice By the Numbers (2024)



234,154

Hours of care provided



4,547

Patients served, at all ages and stages of life



4,320

Days of care provided at McClure Miller Respite House



91,193

Home visits by caregiving team members

Recognizing Outstanding Staff

Home Health & Hospice introduced two new employee recognition awards this year.



The BEE (Being Exceptional Everyday) Award celebrates staff who deliver high-quality, mission-driven work while fostering safety, collaboration, growth and resilience. Home Health & Hospice's first recipient is **Rebecca Grimm, MS, OTR/L**. Her work as an

occupational therapist with pediatric patients and their families has been transformative. Rebecca's thoughtful and reassuring approach has made a significant difference for our families. One mother shared, "Rebecca met me at a time when I was very anxious. She helped my child tremendously and also helped me to grow into a more confident mother."



The DAISY (Diseases Attacking the Immune System) Award™, an international program honoring nurses, recognizes clinical excellence, compassionate patient care, collaboration and leadership. **Laura Turner, RN**, received the inaugural award. In her nine years with Home Health & Hospice, Laura has continued to build her skills, like her recent certification in wound care. Her patients appreciate her attention to detail and positivity, with one referring to her as their "#1 nurse."

Thank you, Rebecca and Laura, for your outstanding contributions and unwavering commitment to our patients and our team.



(Left to right) Jan Watt, Pam MacPherson, Charlotte Kenney and Lil Venner (not pictured) have a combined total of 165 years of volunteering with the hospice program at Home Health & Hospice. Jan, Charlotte and Lil were part of our first cohorts of trained hospice volunteers, and Pam served as our volunteer coordinator in the past. These individuals and all those that give of their time are a testament to the power of volunteers in providing quality, compassionate care and improving the health of our community.

Volunteers at the Heart of Hospice

For generations, volunteers have been a steady heartbeat at UVM Health – Home Health & Hospice. Long before today's programs took shape, community volunteers worked tirelessly to bring hospice care to the Champlain Valley. This tradition of service to community is alive and well at Home Health & Hospice today, with some of our volunteers having served for decades.

There are a number of hospice volunteer opportunities to suit many interests, including companionship, answering phones, preparing or delivering meals and greeting families with warmth and comfort.

In the past year, our team has streamlined and revitalized the volunteer experience — introducing enhanced, flexible training (including self-paced modules) so people can step into service confidently and efficiently. "We've been running at breakneck speed to rebuild capacity, and the new training approach helps us bring volunteers into service faster," explains volunteer coordinator

Megan Carmichael, who works with fellow coordinators Nell Smith and Briana Kohlbrenner to manage a wide range of volunteer programming.

A couple of examples give a sense of the breadth of services our volunteers provide: Dinners with Love pairs local restaurants with hospice families; volunteer callers coordinate weekly orders, and drivers deliver nourishing meals to the doorstep. Our bereavement volunteers extend that circle of care with compassionate calls to loved ones after a hospice patient's death. Across every setting, volunteers are more than helpful hands; they are trusted companions and community ambassadors — "the story keepers of the organization," as Megan likes to say.

This season, we're excited to highlight Pet Peace of Mind (PPOM), a national program that helps hospice patients maintain vital bonds with their pets. Locally, PPOM volunteers walk dogs, tidy litter boxes, transport animals to veterinary and grooming appointments,

maintain the Respite House fish tank and arrange short-term fostering or permanent re-homing. The outcomes are as practical as they are poignant: from keeping a daily routine steady for a patient's pup, to finding the perfect new home for a cherished cat.

"I know how much my own pets mean to me, so it feels really meaningful to help keep our clients and their pets together. When we support them in caring for their animals, it gives them one less thing to worry about — and more space to focus on their own comfort and care," says Robin Wheel, a volunteer since 2015.

Our volunteers are an enduring bridge between our care and our community — neighbors who represent us at church, at the market and at family gatherings, carrying wisdom, experience and grace wherever they go.

Interested in learning more about hospice volunteer opportunities? Email our volunteer office at voloff@uvmhomehealth.org.

“What We’ve Committed Our Hearts To”

By establishing a fund within the Home Health & Hospice endowment, Pam and Bruce MacPherson create a legacy that will live on for generations



Pam MacPherson fell in love with hospice the way so many do — with a deeply personal experience.

In the early 1980s, Pam's beloved aunt died young of cancer at a time when hospice care was very new in the United States. In her aunt's final months, Pam saw firsthand the profound difference compassionate end-of-life care could make — not just for the person dying, but for the entire family. That experience sparked a lifelong passion.

For more than 40 years, Pam has served as an advocate, educator, connector and volunteer — tirelessly working to ensure that people facing the end of life receive care filled with dignity and compassion.

Now, Pam's commitment to these values has inspired her and her husband, Bruce, to establish the MacPherson Family Fund, an endowed fund that will support our hospice program for generations to come. “Pam was so enthusiastic and so ardent in her work in hospice that I felt, and our kids felt, that it needed more of a legacy, something that would live on beyond us,” says Bruce.

The MacPherson Family Fund will exist as part of the Home Health & Hospice endowment, which includes more than 20 named funds established by members of our community. These carefully invested resources provide annual support in perpetuity, ensuring home

health and hospice care in our region remains strong for years to come.

Establishing a way to continue supporting hospice long after their lifetimes was deeply meaningful to both Pam and Bruce. For both, giving back in this way is more than philanthropy — it's an extension of their lives and values. “It's coming from what is meaningful to us and what we've committed our hearts to,” Pam reflects.

Pam's commitment to hospice has changed their lives in ways they never could have imagined. And while the MacPherson Family Fund ensures that her legacy will continue for generations, it's the intimate, human moments that have shaped her journey most profoundly. “It's just so powerful to bear witness and to be given that privilege,” says Pam about sitting vigil with a dying person.

“There isn't anything else in my life that's quite like that for impact. I'm just so grateful. I feel like for years, I have learned about living from people who are dying.”

To learn more about supporting our work or establishing a fund within the Home Health & Hospice endowment, please contact Maya Fehrs, director of development, at 802-860-4475.



Members of the extended Smith Family
at the 2024 John and Theresa Smith
Memorial Golf Tournament

Our Generous Community

Golf, Gratitude, and the Smith Family Legacy

Each August, the siblings Brian, Brenda and Brad Smith host the John and Theresa Smith Memorial Golf Tournament at Champlain Country Club to honor their parents and support hospice, which provided compassionate care at the end of both John and Theresa's lives. What began as a tribute has grown into a joyful tradition filled with sunshine, laughter, and spirited competition. This year, 80 golfers joined in, raising funds through playful "cheats" like mulligans and tosses. The event celebrates not just a cause, but the warmth and fun John and Theresa brought to the game — and to life.

The Gift of Compassionate Care

There are many ways to support Home Health & Hospice. From a one-time online donation to a planned gift, every contribution touches the lives of our local community members. A gift to support our work is a beautiful way to honor a friend or family member or remember a loved one. You can also recognize a Home Health & Hospice caregiver who made an impact on the care you or a loved one received.

For assistance or to discuss your giving options, please contact the Home Health & Hospice Office of Development at: donate@uvmhomehealth.org or 802-860-4475.

Helping Our Team Stay Strong Together with United Way

"We are always thinking about how we can care for our employees the way they care for our community," says Jennifer Archambault, Home Health & Hospice's director of Human Resources, about our partnership with United Way to offer their Working Bridges program to Home Health & Hospice staff.

Working Bridges connects people to community resources like legal services, financial literacy programs and parents groups that

help employees overcome life's challenges without having to miss work or leave their jobs. Jennifer and Jasan Baral, PT, DPT, a clinical educator, were both featured in a recent video about Working Bridges.

We are grateful to United Way and the Working Bridges program for helping our employees reach stability and thrive!

Watch the video here:



About Home Health & Hospice



Introducing UVMHealth.org

A More Personalized, Connected and Convenient Way to Manage Your Health

Home Health & Hospice is part of University of Vermont Health — a rural academic health system serving Vermont and northern New York. To help connect you to providers and services locally and across the entire health system, a reimagined digital experience brings together all the resources of UVM Health in one convenient website.

What's New?

- ▶ **Smarter Search:** Quickly find the care you need with enhanced search tools.
- ▶ **More Provider Info:** Read patient ratings and comments, learn whether they're accepting new patients, and find insurance details and office locations.
- ▶ **Simplified Health Management:** Request appointments, get 24/7 automated chat support and more.
- ▶ **Accessibility and Security First:** Built for all, the new site provides a safe and seamless experience for everyone.

About UVM Health

University of Vermont Health is a rural academic health system with more than 100 years of service to small towns and cities across Vermont and northern New York. We are deeply committed to reimagining rural health in ways that will benefit our communities for generations to come and keep exceptional care close to home.

About Home Health & Hospice

We care about you. In whatever way you connect with UVM Health – Home Health & Hospice, you will feel the love, care and support of our skilled clinicians, caregivers, staff and volunteers.

Our services have endured over 100 years, evolving to meet the changing needs of our community. Today, we support individuals and families at every age and stage of life, from pregnancy and early childhood to adults with acute and chronic illnesses and those at the end of life. Our patients, clients and residents receive high-quality, compassionate care wherever they call home, or in the comfort of our McClure Miller Respite House and Adult Day program.

Our Programs

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

Visit us online: UVMHealth.org/HHH

Call us: 802-658-1900

Friendship for Life is a publication of University of Vermont Health – Home Health & Hospice.

Healthier communities. Healthiest lives. Together.