Breathe in. Breathe out.

For George Kingsbury, it was to get back to his favorite pastime of fishing. “The best thing is to be outdoors, it makes you feel better,” says George.

As the youngest of five boys, George discovered the joy of fishing at an early age and enjoyed this hobby for over six decades. But with his asthma and recent diagnoses of COPD and congestive heart failure, it became harder to get outside, much less fish.

“It’s tough if an oxygen tank is involved,” says Jen. “There’s a fear of going outside and it can be overwhelming to figure out how to go places with portable oxygen. We try to alleviate the worries by educating people.”

An exacerbation from his COPD sent George to the hospital this past winter. “I said to my pulmonary doctor to get me the VNA and I’ll be fine,” he says. George was referred to the VNA and entered into the Better Breathing program.

“When Jen started with George, he couldn’t do anything,” says his wife, Joan. “But, she’s good with him and he listened to her. He’s doing miraculously now and getting progressively better.”

Through the program, patients are educated on their disease, oxygen use and diet and nutrition. They learn how to manage their medication and techniques for energy conservation. Patients are guided through exercises and breathing strategies for them to use on a daily basis. “We both have benefitted from these exercises,” says Joan, who has also been through the program.

Patients are admitted into the program with a referral from their doctor, often suggested upon hospital discharge or by a VNA nurse who believes a patient would benefit from the services.

Referred patients are identified by their diagnosis, must be non-smokers or working toward smoking cessation and have an order from their doctor. And the patient must be willing to participate in the program and follow through with the instructions and exercises. George met this criteria and has had success since starting the program.

“George’s goal was to get outside, walk, take a ride to the store,” Jen says. “And he ultimately wanted to be able to fish. Now, he’s taking walks, using his portable oxygen tank, getting outside the house.”

“I gained more from Jen than I ever did before,” George says. “I’m fishing, again.”

Do you qualify for the Better Breathing program?

These diseases can affect breathing:

- COPD
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Lung surgery
- Congestive heart failure
- Asthma
- Neuromuscular disease
- If you have one of these diseases and are a non-smoker or trying to quit, ask your doctor for a VNA Referral or call to speak to a VNA nurse at 802 860-4400.

IT’S A SEEMINGLY effortless task our bodies do daily. Breathe in. Breathe out.

But for some, the effort to breathe can be difficult, especially those with acute or chronic diseases that can impair their physical capability and quality of life.

The VNA is helping patients breathe easier with a new pulmonary rehabilitation program. Through the Better Breathing program, patients receive physical and occupational therapies, nursing, and social work services in an effort to improve their functional status. The VNA strives to reduce preventable hospitalizations and emergency room visits, educate patients about their disease, promote self-management, and keep patients at home.

“Each patient’s needs are different,” says Jennifer L’Ecuyer, lead physical therapist for the Better Breathing Program. “We create a plan that is individualized for the patient. And we look at what the patient’s personal goals are and figure out what to do to get to that point.”

LEFT: George and Joan Kingsbury; TOP: George uses a spirometer during an exercise with PT Jennifer L’Ecuyer; ABOVE: Jen and George.
A Change in VNA Leadership

This past June, the VNA said goodbye to Patricia Donehower, MSN, RN, who for 15 years demonstrated outstanding leadership and provided dedicated service to the VNA of Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties, most recently as Vice President of Clinical Services. Known for being an accessible and responsive leader, Pat was committed to the training and education of VNA staff as well as nursing students. She was instrumental in launching the VNA Nurse Resident program, a tailored mentorship program for newly graduated nurses.

The VNA is happy to announce that James Budis, RN, MSN, MPH, has joined the VNA as our new Vice President of Clinical Services. Jim comes to us from Addison County Home Health & Hospice where he served as clinical director. Before this, he spent five years as clinical director for the Home Care division of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York.

In his role at the VNA, Jim oversees all of the VNA’s clinical services and will help lead the VNA’s vision of providing the best possible care for patients, clients, families and communities.

“I’m honored to join a progressive agency that has so many different programs and such a longstanding commitment to meeting the needs of the community,” says Jim, who started out his career as a home care nurse and worked as a nurse practitioner in nursing homes and hospice before returning to the home health field as a clinical director.

The VNA is thrilled to have Jim on board. “Jim’s blend of direct service and leadership experience as well as his work in a variety of health care settings gives him wonderful insight into what we do,” says VNA President and CEO Judy Peterson, RN.

We wish Pat the best of luck in her new endeavors and welcome Jim aboard!

Community Experiences VNA Visits

A few years ago, the VNA introduced its Community Visits program as a way for our community to experience first-hand the care provided by VNA staff. Participants in a Community Visits day travel with VNA nurses, LNAs, therapists and social workers to visit patients in their homes as well as observe care provided at Vermont Respite House, the Family Room or our Adult Day Program sites.

The full-day program gives community partners, policy makers, business leaders, members of the media and friends of the VNA a greater understanding of the scope of work provided daily by VNA caregivers to clients.

One recent participant, Jason Williams, Senior Government Relations Strategist for Fletcher Allen Health Care, shared his insights into the care he saw. “I cherish opportunities to see the delivery of health care from a boots-on-the-ground perspective. And at the VNA, they’re truly boots-on-the-ground! I was struck by the many hats that the caregiver I was with wore in just one visit. She was a nurse, a social worker, a case manager, an advocate, an interested listener, a friend and a physical therapist.”

Jason was so moved by the experience, he wrote about it for the VNA blog. You can read his entry at www.vnacares.org/visits.

If you are interested in attending an upcoming Community Visits day, please contact VP of Development, Ann Irwin, at 802 860-4437 or irwin@vnacares.org.

Sustainable Gift Giving

Corey Mallon is a dad who has set up a monthly donation to support the VNA Janet S. Munt Family Room parent-child center.

“When my son was born, my partner Dana and I were desperate for healthy parenting role models, a safe place outside of our home to relax and let our son be a kid without worrying about being judged, opportunities to meet other parents, caring providers to ask simple health and behavior questions, as well as chances for our son to play with other kids of different ages and backgrounds. The Family Room meets all of these needs and more!”

“We donate money monthly to the Family Room because it is the only resource that has effectively met our family’s needs since our son was born.”

Sustaining gifts provide a reliable funding source for the agency and an easy way to provide ongoing support to your VNA. Please consider a monthly gift to the VNA Annual Fund or designate your gift to a specific program. Call V.P. of Development Ann Irwin at 802 860-4437.
A Successful JIGGETY JOG!

Despite a rainy forecast, there was a break in the clouds for this year’s Vermont Respite House 5K Fun Run and Jiggety Jog. Thanks to our 250 participants and volunteers and our corporate and individual sponsors, over $60,000 was raised for Vermont Respite House, surpassing our goal.

Top fundraising prizes were given to Joannah Ralston, who hula hooped the entire distance, and the Respite Rockers, a team made up of Respite House staff and volunteers. Top running prizes went to (male) Paul Kartschoke of Williston, (female) Liz Hollenbach of Jericho and (youth) Camille Bolduc of South Burlington.

Want to see the results of the timed run? Visit vnacares.org/run. You can also visit our Facebook page to see photos from the event.

A program of the VNA, Vermont Respite House is a unique model in health care today. Not a hospital, nursing home or institution, but Vermont’s only Medicare-certified inpatient hospice residence. Respite House residents come from all walks of life, and from all over Vermont and beyond. Each person is celebrated for the life they have lived and for the special relationships they share with family and friends.

About 40% of Vermont Respite House’s budget comes from community support each year, including money raised at the Fun Run. We do not turn anyone away based on their inability to pay for our services. With the generous community support and the help of nearly 150 dedicated volunteers, we are able to provide 24-hour care seven days a week. Thank you!
VNA’S MADISON-DEANE INITIATIVE invites you to a “Knowledge is Power” community presentation. Renowned best-selling author and award-winning journalist Stephen Kiernan will provide an update on the current status of end-of-life care in Vermont. His talk will propose a clear call to action to help further the understanding of how hospice can help Vermonters and their families at the end of life.

The presentation will take place at 7 pm on Wednesday, October 15, 2014 at the Hampton Inn in Colchester (near Costco). This community program is free and open to the public, but we ask that anyone planning on attending RSVP. For more information or to RSVP, visit www.vnacares.org/mdi.

Stephen Kiernan will speak at a free MDI community presentation on October 15.

Introducing VNAs of Vermont

The statewide organization of the eleven non-profit home health and hospice agencies in Vermont, formerly known as the Vermont Assembly of Home Health & Hospice Agencies (VAHHA), is getting a new look and name – VNAs of Vermont.

The purpose of the new identity is to support increased collaboration among the sister agencies, while highlighting our statewide presence, and to better serve our shared customers through easier access to home health care and hospice services in our respective communities.

VNAs of Vermont grew out of a need identified by the member agencies for a better way to communicate our statewide reach, depth of experience, and value to our referral sources and potential employees.

The new identity is a first step in addressing these goals. The organization is also improving infrastructure to make it easier for customers to access local community-based non-profit home health care, such as an updated VNAs of Vermont website and a new toll-free number with live customer support designed to be used primarily by discharge planners in Vermont hospitals.

The agencies, including VNA of Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties, will continue to maintain local identities while incorporating the new shared identity. We hope this will ensure that our communities know that wherever they or their loved ones live in Vermont, there is a local home health and hospice agency that will continue to provide the excellent care and service they have come to rely on for generations.
In June, the VNA celebrated the hard work and dedication of agency staff with a Staff Appreciation Barbeque. Despite a rainy day, more than 100 staff enjoyed food, activities and games while being recognized for the high quality work and compassionate care they provide on a daily basis to our community.

Two VNA senior managers have joined work groups for the Visiting Nurse Associations of America (VNAA).

Arsi Namdar, Vice President of Information Technology and CIO, currently serves as co-chair of the VNAA’s IT Leaders Interest Group, which examines the expanding role of information technology in non-profit home health care organizations and evaluates issues, concerns and solutions that affect home health care operations.

Christine Werneke, Vice President of Business Development and Marketing, joined the Communications Work Group, which shares best practices and assists members with internal and external marketing and communications. She also serves on the Business Development Work Group, which discusses new product and service development, marketing strategies, and referral source relationship management.

Mary Loney, RN, CHPN, and Patricia Donehower, MSN, RN, were honored recently at the Vermont State Nurses’ Association Centennial Celebration and Awards Banquet. Mary, a VNA hospice nurse, received the award for Outstanding Home Health Nurse for her excellent nursing skills used to enhance the quality of life for people with terminal illness in their final days. Pat, former VNA Vice President of Clinical Services, was awarded the Outstanding Nurse Leader in a Community Setting. During her time at the VNA, Pat developed programs and resources to support nurse development and was instrumental in launching a VNA mentorship program for new graduate students.

VT Dads, a VNA fatherhood program, was celebrated in the media during Father’s Day weekend, including radio and television spots and a feature in an issue of KidsVT. This led up to a Father’s Day celebration at the Lake Monsters’ opening game, which included a speech from Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger about the importance of a father in a child’s life. Offered in collaboration with HowardCenter and Vermont Adult Learning and held at the VNA Family Room, VT Dads allows at-risk dads to spend time with their children and take free classes to hone their parenting, relationship and employment skills.
VNA Calendar

Please visit www.vnacares.org for more information about these and other upcoming VNA activities.

October 15, 2014
VNA’s Madison-Deane Initiative
Knowledge is Power free presentation
With Stephen Kiernan, award-winning journalist and author. Hampton Inn, Colchester, 7 pm. For more information, please visit www.vnacares.org/mdi.

November 2, 2014
VNA End-of-Life Care Services Annual Memorial Service
First Unitarian Universalist Society, 152 Pearl Street, Burlington, 3 pm. For more info, please contact Ally Parker at 802 860-4410 or parker@vnacares.org.

January 2015
Vermont Respite House Memorial Tree Lighting & Remembrance Ceremony
Williston Federated Church, Williston, 2-4 pm. For more info, please contact Ally Parker at 802 860-4410 or parker@vnacares.org.

November 12, 2014
Annual Staff and Volunteer Recognition Dinner
Hampton Inn, Colchester
5:45 - 9 pm

We’ll gather at the Hampton Inn near Costco in Colchester to honor staff and volunteers who have reached milestone anniversaries. We’ll also honor community friends and hear from our CEO Judy Peterson. Please call 802 860-4435 for more info or email Crystal Vendrell at vendrell@vnacares.org.