Visiting Nurse Association

Serving Community Health Care Needs Since 1896

From its inception nearly 120 years ago, the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) has been "The Face of Care" dedicated to improving the health and lives of people in Omaha and surrounding communities. This tradition is evident at the VNA headquarters, 12565 West Center Road, where walls and meeting rooms are decorated with enlargements of historic black and white photos depicting early scenes of nurses attending to patients at their homes or local shelters.

"Services in the early years were largely bedside care of the sick and poor," explained James C. Summerfelt, president and chief executive officer of the VNA. "Volunteers under the direction of VNA founder Anna Millard organized a diet kitchen where they supplied food for the sick and provided bedding and layettes. In 1911, baby summer camps were started in Riverview Park that later developed into year-round child health clinics."

Today, the VNA has a staff of 410 employees and 100 volunteers who cover Douglas and Sarpy counties in Nebraska, and Pottawattamie County in Iowa. Outreach programs also extend into Dodge, Saunders, Washington and Burt counties in Nebraska.

"Ninety-five percent of what we do is still in people's homes, or in homeless shelters where some of our patients call home," according to Summerfelt. "We go where people live, work, and play. Outside of the home, the other five percent of our nurses go into schools, or into businesses to give flu shots."

The range of services provided by the VNA has increased dramatically in recent years and includes physical, occupational, and speech therapists, dietitians, medical social workers, home health aides, and non-medical caregivers for private-pay clients. Typically, post-acute care requires a higher level of nursing skill and is usually ordered and directed by a physician, whereas companion care is arranged by the family.

Summerfelt credited the success of the VNA over the years to the quality of care provided by its clinicians and caregivers. "Our most valuable asset is our employees," he acknowledged. "Without their service, the care they provide, and their compassion and professionalism out in the community, the VNA wouldn't exist."

The VNA administrator is also proud of the organization's use of technology to provide improved health care services to its patients.

"We were the first home care organization to be part of the Nebraska Health Information Initiative, which has allowed us to better transition people from the hospital to home by accessing their health records," Summerfelt shared. "We were also an early adopter of telehealth technology, which allows patients at home to monitor their vital signs such as weight, blood pressure, and oxygen levels. This information is transmitted to the VNA office for evaluation by a nurse who alerts the patient when data is outside of normal limits."

Although the VNA has had a business relationship with First National Bank for more than two decades, the histories of the two organizations date back to the mid-1920s.

"For many years, members of the Davis family that owned the bank served as officers on our Board of Trustees," Summerfelt recalled. "The bank has supported us with contributions and been involved with our annual Art and Soup fundraising event, proceeds from which make up a large portion of the nearly $300,000 annual cost of providing care in area homeless shelters. First National Bank has been a very strong and consistent supporter of that event and the VNA."

Under Summerfelt's leadership, the VNA has earned a 98 percent rating from satisfied clients and low readmission rates are reducing Medicare penalties to partner hospitals.

VNA's daily patient census includes approximately 600 home care patients, 80 hospice patients, 70 pharmacy patients, and 100 companion care clients.

Photos courtesy of Mike Markoff

Supporting the local businesses that support our community.

First National Bank

firstnational.com