



The VNA Voice

Edition 35 - Spring 2022 - kansasvna.org

From Our House to Yours

Older adults play vital, positive roles in our communities – as family members, friends, mentors, volunteers, civic leaders, members of the workforce, and more. Just as every person is unique, so too is how they age and how they choose to do it – and there is no “right” way. That’s why the theme for Older Americans Month in May, 2022 is Age My Way. As an organization who serves a population averaging more than 80% Medicare-eligible individuals, VNA celebrates and supports everyone’s opportunity to age in their own way!

While Age My Way will look different for each person, here are common things everyone can consider:

- **Planning:** Think about what you will need and want in the future, from home and community-based services to community activities that interest you. Our community partner, the Senior Resource Center (SRC), provides and promotes a wide variety of activities.
- **Engagement:** Remain involved and contribute to your community through work, volunteer, and/or civic participation opportunities. There are many organizations who benefit from volunteers, and VNA is one of them. In addition to individuals who volunteer for our Hospice program, we also have office and special event volunteers. Feel free to call us to inquire.
- **Access:** Make home improvements and modifications, use assistive technologies, and customize supports to help you better age in place. The Home Safety Evaluation Program featured in this newsletter provides a trained Occupational Therapist to facilitate yours or a loved one’s desire to age in their own home.
- **Connection:** Maintain social activities and relationships to combat social isolation and stay connected to your community. As we know, social isolation has been significant for everyone over the past two years, but even more so for our senior population. As you are able, please seek ways to reconnect with others.

Visiting Nurses is excited to celebrate Older Americans Month with our partners in the aging community. Diverse communities are strong communities. Ensuring that older adults remain involved and included in our communities for as long as possible benefits everyone.



Cynthia Lewis
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

OUR MISSION

Improving quality of life through
compassionate patient care
wherever you call home.



VISITING NURSES

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Heart of VNA: Michael's Incredible COVID Recovery

“I woke up sometime on the 14th, and the doctor told me that I was going to have to go on the ventilator. Everything that I’ve heard about the ventilator, I just knew this was it,” Michael Stephens said.

Michael Stephens was well aware of the threat that COVID-19 posed to him. His doctor told him that, due to suffering from pneumonia three times in his life already, it was likely that he wouldn’t survive if he caught COVID. Michael’s girlfriend tragically lost her daughter to COVID-19, another devastating reminder of the lethality of the virus. Michael acted accordingly. He got vaccinated at his doctor’s suggestion, practiced social distancing, good hand hygiene, and masking, but unfortunately, he still caught COVID. At first, he thought, and hoped, that it was just a cold. After his symptoms worsened, he decided to get tested for COVID-19. The results confirmed he had the virus, and he thought he would be spending the next 10 days or so quarantining and recovering, but unfortunately, COVID hit him hard.

“I found out I had COVID September 4th. That’s when the positive (result) came back,” Michael said. “September 11th, I started coughing up blood and that kind of stuff.”

Later that day, he called 911 and was admitted to LMH Health. He was moved to a step-down unit on the 12th and doesn’t remember much of the next day. On the 14th, he was put on the ventilator. After

being placed on the ventilator, Michael had multiple close calls. His oxygen saturation, which should normally be 95% or higher, dropped to 17% and he coded. Shortly after that, Michael coded again when his right lung collapsed. “At one point in time, I do remember looking down on a building,” Michael said. “I can’t say if it was the hospital or not, I’ve never seen the hospital from the top, but I do remember looking down at a building. Then I remember an indescribable white light. I couldn’t look at it, but I couldn’t look away. There was a calming peace about it. I got the feeling that, Mike, you’re not done yet.”

Michael then woke up to a snapping sound, which a nurse later explained to him could have been the sound his intermittent pneumatic compression boots made when they were full. After that, Michael said he remembers the doctors and nurses preparing him to have the ventilator removed. He remembers hearing a woman’s voice in his ear as he became more alert. He said it was the voice of his “lung doctor” explaining the process to him and telling him what he would need

to do. Michael found out later that the removal of the ventilator was especially significant to the hospital staff, as he was the first patient that was considered “unvaccinated” who survived being taken off of the ventilator. Although Michael had received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, blood tests conducted at the time of his admittance revealed his body no longer showed any sign of it.



Pictured above: Kari, one of VNA’s Occupational Therapists, doing exercises with Michael to help him regain strength.

Once he was off the ventilator, Michael’s long road to recovery began. At first, he didn’t have the strength to lift a glass of water to his mouth for a drink or to hold his cellphone. He couldn’t even press the button to call a nurse or operate the remote for the TV. He was informed that he would have to learn how to do activities of daily living all over again, from taking a shower, to brushing his teeth, buttoning his shirts, and eating. When he was well enough, Michael went to St. Luke’s South for inpatient rehabilitation. He was a patient there from October 13th to November 3rd. After that, he returned home and started receiving care from VNA.



Pictured above: Chad, one of VNA’s Physical Therapy Assistants, checking Michael’s oxygen saturation.

Michael primarily worked with Chad, for physical therapy, and Kari, for occupational therapy.



Heart of VNA: Michael's Incredible COVID Recovery (cont.)

They each worked with him twice a week. Although he was a little anxious about new people coming into his home at first, it didn't take Michael long to feel comfortable with Chad and Kari. "They listened to my story to find out where I was at and put together a game plan, and we just took off," he said. "That bridge between the hospital and outpatient therapy was filled so well with those two, I could have had them here every day. They knew what they were doing."

In addition to their expertise, Michael also benefited from Chad and Kari's positive motivation. Both of them demonstrated and completed exercises along with him for an extra push. "They just kept my attitude so positive and

pointed me in the right direction and kept me going in that right direction," Michael said. He went from only being somewhat aware of VNA from a television commercial to having a close connection with the VNA staff members he worked with. "Chad and Kari, their last visit was very emotional for me because I knew that was another step in my life that they helped me through," Michael said. "Without them, I know for a fact I would not be where I'm at right now. It was with their help that I came off of the oxygen a lot quicker than what I should have. They are truly professionals. They know what they're doing, I could go on and on about them."

Thanks to his positive attitude, determination, and the support and guidance from LMH Health, St. Luke's South and Chad and Kari, six months from his initial diagnosis, Michael is well on his way to a full recovery from COVID-19.



Pictured above: Chad and Kari with Michael and his gait belt that chronicles his COVID journey and recovery milestones.

Aging in Place: Home Safety Evaluation

Many people hope to continue to live in their home as they age, but unfortunately, health and mobility challenges can make it unsafe to do so. Regular activities of daily living can even become more challenging and dangerous. Falls are one of the biggest threats to the safety and independence of seniors. According to the National Council on Aging, falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries for older Americans. The good news is that falls and other threats to the safety of seniors are largely preventable. VNA is offering a new service to help make homes safer for seniors. The Home Safety Evaluation is a comprehensive 64 point inspection conducted by one of VNA's Occupational Therapists (OT). For a one-time fee, the OT will identify specific concerns and provide recommendations to make the home safer for aging occupants.

Who can benefit?

- Anyone who wants to stay independent in their home as they age
- Anyone who is elderly and/or lives alone
- Anyone who has mobility challenges
- Anyone trying to create a safer home environment



Pictured above: Kari, one of VNA's Occupational Therapists, helps a patient practice with a grab bar, which is one of the many alterations that can make the home safer and support independence.

What will you gain?

- A safer home environment
- Confidence in your ability to be self-sufficient
- Reduced risk of falls and the associated effects
- The ability to maintain your independence
- Proven suggestions from an experienced professional

For more information call (785) 843-3738 or visit kansasvna.org

Volunteer Spotlight: Terrific Transformations

On January 29th, board member, Michael Taylor, proudly represented VNA in the Transformations Charity Gala. This popular annual event raises funds for local nonprofit organizations while "transforming the lives of the Lawrence community through culture and awareness." Michael competed on behalf of VNA as "Taylor Durden."

Michael thoughtfully crafted his look and talent for the event. MsAmanda Love, Michael's consultant, also helped him prepare for the unique event. Unfortunately, the night didn't go

quite as Michael had planned. Due to technical difficulties, Michael had to switch his song for the talent portion of the event at the last minute to "That's Life," an apt choice.

Despite the complication, Michael did his best for VNA and enjoyed himself in the process.



Pictured above: Michael Taylor in his full Taylor Durden makeup.

"Such a fun opportunity to brag about my friends at VNA," Michael said. "Saying great things about this organization never gets old."

Michael didn't win the grand prize, but he did help bring attention to VNA's mission and earned VNA a \$500 donation from the event. Thank you to Michael for representing VNA and for all the time and effort that went into preparing for the event! Thank you to Brandon Eisman for putting together such a fun and beneficial event for nonprofit organizations in the community!

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